



جامعة الفيصل  
Alfaisal University

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# Graduate Policies & Procedures

## 2016-2017

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Office of Research & Graduate Studies

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# 1. Introduction

As The *Office of Research & Graduate Studies* (ORG) has prepared the *Graduate Policies & Procedures* document for students, faculty and staff to help define their responsibilities and to explain the policies and procedures that govern graduate study at Alfaisal University [http://research.alfaisal.edu/graduate\\_policies\\_procedures.html](http://research.alfaisal.edu/graduate_policies_procedures.html). For information about programs, curricula & study plans students, faculty and staff should access the *Graduate Catalog* ([http://research.alfaisal.edu/courses\\_study\\_plans](http://research.alfaisal.edu/courses_study_plans)).

## 1.1. The Office of Research & Graduate Studies

As the administrative arm of the *Research & Graduate Studies Council* (RGC), the *Office of Research & Graduate Studies* (ORG) monitors the progress of students enrolled in different graduate degree programs, from the time they are admitted to Alfaisal University until they complete their degrees. This is done in coordination with the *College Graduate Studies Committees* and the *Office of Student Affairs*. The document also describes the admission cycle and the policies that govern the application, applicant evaluation, and admission of new graduate students. Students may apply for admissions to master's and doctoral programs at Alfaisal University from any other university both within and from outside Saudi Arabia. The *Research & Graduate Studies Council* (RGC) sets the minimum application requirements and has the ultimate authority to approve or deny graduate admission.

The *Office of Research & Graduate Studies* facilitates the operation of graduate programs in all colleges and departments in the following ways:

- Through the *Research & Graduate Studies Council* advises on and administers the development and approval of new graduate programs proposed by colleges, and coordinates programs that involve more than one college as well as interdisciplinary programs.
- Home for special arrangements programs and post-doctoral fellows.
- Facilitates the use of non-Alfaisal research laboratories for graduate students, if needed.
- Organizes/administers postgraduate training programs such as writing a thesis, conducting literature reviews, writing for journals, how to get your work published & presenting at conferences.
- The Vice President Research and Graduate Studies oversees the Office of Research & Graduate Studies. Since the University is in the early stage of development, the *Research & Graduate Studies Council* will monitor the quality for graduate studies at Alfaisal.
- The Vice President serves as an advocate for graduate education, teaching, and research, working closely with the Council in developing new policies and procedures related to graduate education.

- The Office of Research & Graduate Studies staff reviews appointments of graduate students to academic titles, such as Teaching Assistant (TA) and Research Assistant (RA) to ensure compliance with policies and procedures established by Academic Affairs and the *Research & Graduate Studies Council*. The Office also monitors eligibility for fee and tuition remission.
- Ensures that applications for admission meet MOHE standards.
- In charge to send acceptance and rejection letter to all applicants after the ORG and Colleges approval.

## **1.2 Graduate Studies Partners**

The graduate experience at Alfaisal University and the work of the Office of Research & Graduate Studies are dependent upon the efforts of the *Research & Graduate Studies Council*, the *Student Affairs Office*, Graduate Advisers, and Graduate Teaching and Research Assistants

### **1.2.1 Research & Graduate Studies Council**

The *Research & Graduate Studies Council* (RGC), which is chaired by the Vice President for Research & Graduate Studies, is responsible for safeguarding the excellence of graduate education. The *Office of Research & Graduate Studies* is the administrative arm of the Council and is empowered on its behalf to enforce its regulations and policies. The Council membership will consist of faculty members from the different colleges and disciplines within the institution. The duties and functions of the RGC consist of the following:

- The *Research & Graduate Studies Council* sets the policies and standards for graduate admission, and degrees in coordination with the Colleges.
- The Council reviews established degree programs and proposals for new fields of study or degrees; establishes qualifications and policies for Graduate Student Teaching Assistants and Graduate Student Research Assistants; responds to issues referred to it by the Vice President, the Provost's Office, and the Deans, and participates in reviews of existing graduate programs.
- Propose internal regulations, in coordination with academic departments and Student Affairs, for the organization of graduate studies.
- Propose, implement and supervise admission criteria into graduate studies.
- Study and recommend new programs for endorsement and coordinate them with current ones.
- Recommend graduate courses for approval, amendment and modification, extending last two to programs as well.
- Recommend titles of graduate degrees in both Arabic and English on recommendation of colleges' councils.
- Recommend awarding of graduate degrees.

- Decide on all matters related to graduate students in the university with Student Affairs.
- Issue approval of theses supervision committees and Judging Panels.
- Set the general framework for research plans, rules for theses writing, format for their production and templates of theses exam reports.
- Periodically assess graduate programs at the university through specialized committees from inside or outside the university.
- Examine periodic reports submitted by the departments of the university.
- Study matters forwarded to it for consultation by the University Council, the Council of Deans or Provost Office and offer suggestions and advice.

### 1.2.2. Role of Student Affairs

- Ensures that applications for admission meet University standards.
- Is responsible for keeping and maintaining graduate student records on the student information system.
- Assists students in resolving individual as well as systemic problems.
- Provide ORG and *College Graduate Studies council* in each semester a report of Graduate Students status such cumulative GPA, need for dismissal and withdrawal).

## 2. Admissions

This section describes the admission cycle and the policies that govern the application, applicant evaluation, and admission of new graduate students. Students may apply for admissions to master's and doctoral programs at Alfaisal University from any other university both within and from outside Saudi Arabia. The Student Affairs and Office of Research & Graduate Studies (ORG) sets the minimum application requirements and has the ultimate authority to approve or deny graduate admission after submitting the Admission Form to the Students Affairs Office.

### 2.1 The Admission Process

All colleges accept applicants for the fall semester; some may also elect to consider students for spring. The application deadlines may vary by Student Affairs.

The admission process for graduate programs consists of the following:

1. Students submit their application and admission papers to the *Office of Student Affairs* during the first semester of the academic year preceding the one they would wish to enroll in. The Office of Research & Graduate Studies (ORG) will provide the initial review of student applications for admission based upon the Graduate Admission Standards and Ministry of Education (MOE) regulations.
2. The College will interview applicants and make recommendations to ORG.
3. ORG based will send the admission, rejection letters to Students.

4. ORG will provide respective colleges/departments lists of admitted students at least two weeks prior to registration period.

### **2.1.1 Applying for Graduate Admission**

All prospective graduate students must apply online by filling a formal admission application ([http://admissions.alfaisal.edu/graduate\\_studies.html](http://admissions.alfaisal.edu/graduate_studies.html)). An application may be obtained from Student Affairs or through the Alfaisal University website. Applicants may apply to only one college, joint, or concurrent degree program, and they should make note of that college's application deadline and any college application requirements in addition to those set by the ORG. Any student, who was previously registered at Alfaisal University as a graduate student, no matter how long ago, must apply for readmission and not admission, when he or she wishes to return.

### **2.1.2 Readmission**

Students who withdraw from the University must submit to the Student Affairs a petition for readmission if they want to register for subsequent semesters. Whether a student is readmitted is at the discretion of the university; readmission applicants may also be in competition with applicants for admission.

### **2.1.3 Minimum Requirements for Admission**

The minimum requirements for admission to graduate study at Alfaisal University are as follows:

- A bachelor's degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution accepted by MOE.
- A satisfactory scholastic average; usually for a masters a minimum grade average of "very good" in the Bachelor degree. However, the *Research & Graduate Studies Council* (RGC) can admit a student with a "high good" average, provided that student has scored a minimum of "very good" in specialization courses in the bachelor degree. Applicants who do not meet these requirements of MOHE and Alfaisal University and who want to be considered for admission to graduate studies may complete a Preparation exam in any Public University based upon MOHE regulations.
- The graduate study application must be accompanied by a nonrefundable application fee payable to Alfaisal University.
- Official transcripts of all college-level work must be submitted as issued by the school.
- If applicant is non-Saudi, then they should have an official residency (Iqama).



- Applicant should submit two letters of recommendations from professors who taught him/her.
- Applicant for a doctorate program should enroll as a full-time student.
- Admission requirement for doctorate program is a minimum grade average of “very good” in the master’s degree, if awarded by a university that uses such a grading system.
- If the applicant comes from a country or political entity where English is not the official language, adequate proficiency in English to do graduate work, as evidenced by a TOEFL score of at least 65 on the Internet test or an IELTS Band score of at least 5.5.
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Management Admission Test (GMAT) or an equivalent exam held by Qias center <http://www.qiyas.sa/Tests/LearningTests/Pages/AcademicAbilitiesTest.aspx>
- No Student shall be allowed enrolment in two graduate programs at the same time.

## **2.2. Informing Applicants of Admission or Denial**

### **2.2.1 Notifying Applicants who are admitted**

Colleges through ORG should fill the interview form with their recommendations and submit to the ORG. The College should not notify successful applicants that they have been admitted until the official letter has been sent by Student Affairs in the name of the Research & Graduate Studies Council. Colleges may, however, inform applicants that they have been recommended for admission.

### **2.2.2. Notifying Applicants who are Denied Admission**

ORG will notify applicants who are not recommended for admission by means of an official letter.

## **3. Registration**

Registration will be conducted through the *Office of Student Affairs*. New students should get acquainted with the courses of their colleges depending on the field of study so that their choice of courses for each semester be in their best interest and as harmonious as possible with student’s capabilities. The Registration Department takes the responsibility of registering fresh, newly accepted students for the first semester. After that, students can modify their schedules (add or drop) as they see fit within a certain timeframe.

Other students in all levels will take the responsibility of registering themselves in the chosen courses at the beginning of each semester and during a specified time. To make students able of registering themselves independently, they will be given access to an

electronic channel called Net Classroom. Students will find choices which enable each one of them to conduct completely the registration process as he/she desires.

## 4. Course Work, Grading, Probation, and Dismissal

### 4.1 Course Work

#### 4.1.1 Minimum & Maximum Course Loads

The minimum enrollment requirement is 3 credit hours per semester for all graduate students who are not yet advanced to doctoral candidacy; including those holding TA and RA that require registration. Students who have been advanced to candidacy may enroll for fewer than 9 credit hours.

Students can be enrolled for a maximum of 9 credit hours. This requirement is already met by compliance with the general 9 credit hour maximum enrollment requirement per semester. However, if in an exceptional circumstance a student must send a reasonable justification with a high GPA, he/she must notify the Student Affairs/ORG for approval.

#### 4.1.2 Grading System

Alfaisal University uses the 4.0 grade point average system. The grades described in Table 1 are approved for use in Alfaisal University and are included in the determination of the grade point average (GPA). For example “very good” is a GPA of 3.00 out of 4.00.

**Table 1.** Grading system

Letter Grade	Points (GPA)	Grades in English
A	4.00	Excellent
A-	3.67	Excellent
B+	3.33	Very Good
B	3.00	Very Good
C+	2.33	Good/High Good
C	2.00	Good
D	1.00	Fair
F	0.00	Fail
S/U	-	Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
I	-	Incomplete
W	-	Withdrawn
WP	-	Withdrawn Penalty
AU	-	Audit
CR	-	Credit
CC	-	Continual course
NC	-	No Credit
R	-	Retake

4.1.2.1 *Cumulative Average*: Cumulative GPA should not be below a grade average of “very good”.

4.1.2.2 *Noncredit grades*: The following symbols are approved for use in the cases indicated, but will not be included in the determination of the grade point average (see also Table 1):

**S/U** Graduate students in good standing may take courses on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) basis with the consent of their graduate advisers. A Satisfactory grade implies work of B minus quality or better. Courses graded S/U are not included in the grade-point average. A course graded U may not be counted toward students’ degree programs. Credit for courses taken on an S/U basis is limited to one-third of the total credit hours that students have taken and passed.

**I** Students are doing satisfactory work but, for reasons beyond their control, they are unable to meet the full requirements of the course and as such is incomplete “I”. Unless otherwise specified by the respective college, an “I” will be changed to the grade of “F” by the ORG. The course Instructor must submit the final grade no later than 7 weeks after the last day of final exams for the previous semester. If a student is assigned an “I”, the Instructor must notify the student in writing of the requirements for removal of the “I” and of the deadline for removal of the “I” using an extension form. The student will be required to sign the extension form. A copy of the form must be submitted to the ORG at the time the “I” is submitted.

**W** The student was permitted to withdraw without penalty. Any student who withdraws on or before midterm will receive a W. Withdrawals without penalty will not be permitted after the 8th week of the semester except in cases of hardship as determined by the appropriate academic dean. Students must complete the official withdrawal form provided by the Office of the Registrar and have it signed by their academic advisor or faculty advisor.

**WP** The student was withdrawn by the instructor without penalty. The instructor must withdraw the student no later than the 12th week of classes to ensure a withdrawal without penalty.

**AU** The student was given permission to audit this course. After the last day of late registration (last day of drop/add), students may not transfer from audit to credit status. Students may change from credit to audit up to the official withdrawal date.

**CR** The student was given credit for the course via a credit by examination program approved by the respective college’s

faculty, the Curriculum Committee, and the Vice Provost of Academic Programs (AP, IB, Proficiency, etc).

- CC** At Alfaisal University, this symbol designates a course that extends beyond the semester (Continued Course). The grade is not given until the course is completed. This symbol cannot be substituted for an "I" (Incomplete).
- NC** This symbol indicates a course that was taken by the student but no credit was given and no penalty is attached to the cumulative GPA. This grade may in used in transfer credit only.
- R** Retake of a course. A student may exercise this option for no more than two courses, totaling no more than 6 credits. A student may use this option only once for a given course. For the course retaken, the lower grade will initially show as "R" in the transcript. Once the new grade is obtained it will replace the "R" on the transcript. Only the new grade shall be counted in the determination of the student's grade-point average (GPA).

4.1.2.3 *Repetition of courses:* Graduate students may repeat courses in which they received a D, F, or U for up to a total of 6 credit hours. They must repeat courses for which they received below a C grade if a passing grade in the course is required by the college/ department as part of the degree program. Also, students can repeat courses if they received more than one C in several courses. If a student repeats a course in which he or she received a grade of D or F, the credit hours are counted only once, and only the most recently earned grade and grade points are counted for a total of 6 credit hours of repeated work.

4.1.2.4 *Substitution of courses:* Students may substitute one course for another for which they received a D, F, or U only if:

- Circumstances beyond their control prevent them from retaking the course before the date they expected their degree to be conferred (e.g., the course was not offered or was renumbered, or scheduling conflicts existed between the original course and other courses required for the degree).
- The Graduate Adviser certifies that the content of the course to be substituted is equivalent to that covered in the original course. Any substitution of courses in a student's master's degree program requires the approval of the Graduate Adviser and the Office of Graduate Studies. If approved, the student must follow the procedure under the "Repetition of courses" section (above) to avoid having the units counted twice by the Registrar.

### 4.1.3 Academic Standing

Graduate students may be classified as in good academic standing, on some form of probation, or subject to dismissal. Students are normally in good academic standing if they:

- are making adequate progress toward the completion of degree requirements,
- Have a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.0.
- do not have more than 2 Incomplete grades on their records, and
- Have not received warning letters from the Student Affairs/college or been placed on formal probation for academic or, in certain professional programs, clinical deficiencies.

### 4.1.4 College and ORG Review of Student Progress

*College Graduate Studies Council* in coordination with ORG are responsible for monitoring their students' overall progress toward graduate degrees. In fairness to students and to avoid problems later on, Colleges through ORG should let students know by written evaluations what the faculty considers to be satisfactory progress.

4.1.4.1 *Warning letters:* Whether the College through *Student Affairs* sends the student a warning letter or requests the ORG to place the student on formal probation, the *Research & Graduate Studies Council* requires that the *Student Affairs* supply the following for the student's information:

- the nature of the problem or deficiency;
- the steps to be taken to correct the deficiency;
- a reasonable period in which to correct the problem or to show acceptable improvement;
- an approximate date on which the student's record will next be reviewed.

## 4.2 Academic Probation

Students will be placed on academic probation by Student Affairs at the end of any semester in which their cumulative GPA is below 3.0. Students on probation have one semester in which to achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Probation will be removed at the end of any semester in which the student attains a cumulative GPA of 3.0. Students may be dismissed if they fail to remove their probation by the end of the second semester on probation. Actions involving academic probation and dismissal are entered on the student's permanent record.

Students who leave Alfaisal University not in good standing and remain out of the university for no more than two semesters may submit a written request for reinstatement to the Student Affairs and reviewed by Office of Research & Graduate Studies. The request should outline activities since leaving Alfaisal University that contributed to the student's academic development. Courses taken at another

institution during this interim period are not transferable. Students who have been out of the university for more than two semesters must submit a new application for admission to the Student Affairs. Dismissed students may also be considered for reinstatement after a one-year waiting period. Students requiring additional time to complete a degree will be required to appeal for an extension through the Dean of the College in which they are enrolled. The student must notify the Dean in writing of the necessity to extend enrollment for purposes of graduation and cite reasons for the need. (Notification will be hand delivered and sent by email.)

Students on probationary status may register and enroll, but they may not hold academic appointments (i.e. TA, RA), receive graduate scholarships, or be awarded advanced degrees.

Student Affairs/Colleges may recommend probation and dismissal on the basis of a written evaluation of the student's progress. However, only the Office of Research and Graduate Studies has the authority to place a student on probation, to remove probationary status, and, if necessary, to dismiss a student from graduate standing. Some colleges/departments may choose to issue warning letters to apprise students that they are not making satisfactory progress rather than request formal probation for a student. Special requests for probation and dismissal should be addressed to the VP Graduate Studies Office.

## **4.3 Dismissal**

There are generally two reasons a graduate student may be dismissed: for disciplinary reasons due to violations of the Code of Student Conduct and for academic deficiencies. The former is determined by the Vice President of Student Affairs and with the concurrence of the VP of the Research & Graduate Studies Office. Dismissal for academic reasons is entirely under the purview of the VP of the Research & Graduate Studies Office.

### **4.3.1 Academic Dismissal**

A student is subject to academic dismissal for the following reasons:

- the student's academic deficiencies as determined by the Student Affairs/college and the Office of Graduate Studies were not corrected after a reasonable, established period of probation, or
- the student failed the comprehensive, or qualifying exam, or
- a Student Affairs/college assesses that a student's academic progress, although sufficient for the award of a master's degree, was insufficient to merit the student's proceeding to the doctoral level, or
- the student failed to meet the necessary clinical standards in a professional program.

### **4.3.2 When a Student is dismissed**

After the student's record and the Student Affairs/college's Dean Recommendations, if applicable, are reviewed by the Office of Research & Graduate Studies (ORG), the VP of ORG Approves a letter to be sent by The Student Affairs dismissal to the student and so informs the college. The

Student Affairs Office blocks the student from further registration. The student is ineligible to apply for readmission to the program from which he or she has been academically dismissed. However, the student is not excluded from applying to another academic program; this program has the right to review the student's academic records to inform its decision on whether or not to admit the student.

#### **4.4 Graduate Student Appeal Procedure**

The Graduate Student Appeal procedure is to be used by graduate students with complaints about dismissal from graduate standing, placement on probationary status, denial of readmission, and other administrative or academic decisions that terminate or otherwise impede progress toward academic or professional degree goals. For graduate students, this procedure may also be used to resolve disputes over joint authorship of research in accordance with joint authorship policies of campus departments or units. Through the Graduate Appeal Procedure, graduate students have the right to appeal academic or administrative decisions that have resulted in termination or have interfered with their progress toward a degree if the decision is alleged to have been based on the following criteria:

- Procedural error or violation of official policy by academic or administrative personnel;
- Judgments improperly based upon nonacademic criteria including, but not limited to, discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, medical condition (cancer related), ancestry, marital status, or citizenship;
- Special mitigating circumstances beyond the student's control not properly taken into account in a decision affecting the student's academic progress.

## **5. Drop, Postponement, Withdrawal, Interruption, and Termination of Enrolment**

### **5.1. Drop of a Semester**

The student may (after registering) drop all courses in a semester according to the following regulations:

- Apply to the Head of the Department at least five weeks before the final exam period.
- Receive approval of Department Council and Deans of both College and Graduate Studies.
- Semester should not be part of the Additional Opportunity period.
- Semester counts as part of Postponement Period.
- Student shall be considered as having failed all courses he/she registered in (in the dropped semester) if not abiding by the above rules of dropping.

## **5.2 Admission Postponement**

Student Affairs, College Deans and the VP of Research & Graduate Studies may approve postponement of students' admission into a program for a maximum period of two semesters; the period will not be counted within the time limit for obtaining the degree.

## **5.3 Registration Postponement**

VP of Graduate Studies may approve postponement of students' registration under the following conditions:

- The student must have successfully completed at least one semester in the program or covered a substantial part of the thesis.
- The time limit of postponement should not exceed four semesters (two years of study).
- Requests for postponement should be submitted at least two weeks before the start of the semester.
- Postponement Period will not be counted within the maximum time limit for obtaining the degree.

## **5.4 Withdrawal and Interruption**

### **5.4.1 Withdrawal**

A student who voluntarily withdraws from a master program will be treated as a new applicant on deciding to rejoin. All updates of conditions will be applied to his case. Withdrawal becomes effective when accorded with the following regulations:

- The student should apply (for withdrawal) through the College to the ORG before commencement of final exams.
- The ORG ought to notify the Office of Student Affairs of a student's withdrawal.

### **5.4.2 Interruption of Study**

Students shall be considered as dropouts and their records as closed in the following cases:

- If accepted in the program and did not register on time.
- If registered in the courses and did not attend them.

## **5.5 Termination of Enrolment**

Student's enrolment in the graduate program will be terminated by a decision of the *Research & Graduate Studies Council* in the following cases:

- If accepted in the program and did not register during regular registration period.
- If failed to pass supplementary courses in accordance with the required conditions set out in the following (Department Councils may stipulate that students applying for a master or a doctorate program ought to complete a number of supplementary courses from the previous level. The time limit allotted to such courses should not exceed three semesters.



The following conditions should also be taken into account:

- A student should pass each supplementary course at first sitting with a minimum grade of “Good.”
- The cumulative grade average of total number of supplementary courses should be a minimum of “Very Good.”
- Registration in the graduate program becomes possible after proper completion of supplementary courses; Department Councils/Boards may permit registration in some graduate courses hand in hand with one or two of the supplementary courses towards the end of this preliminary stage.
- Time spent in supplementary courses is not counted within the time limit for obtaining the degree.
- The grades of the supplementary courses are not included in the computation of the cumulative grade average of the graduate courses.)
- If dropping courses for a whole semester or withdrawing from the program without an acceptable excuse.
- If proving not to be serious in study or neglecting academic obligations. in stated in (Item 5.4.2) of this Regulations Article.
- If cumulative average drops below “Very Good” in two consecutive semesters.
- If using up all permissible postponement periods, identified in (Item 5.3) without completing the degree.
- If breaching ethics during course work or thesis writing, or breaking university rules or regulations.
- If failing the comprehensive exam (where applicable) twice.
- If thesis exam committee finds it not discussable before or unacceptable after the defense.
- If not obtaining the degree within maximum time limit specified in the following:  
The duration for obtaining a master degree is a minimum of four semesters and a maximum of eight; summer sessions are not counted within this period;2  
The duration for obtaining a doctorate degree is a minimum of six semesters and a maximum of ten; summer sessions are not counted within this period.)

## **5.6 Resuming Study**

A dropout or a terminated student who was impeded by personal obstacles, that both Department and College Councils excuse, may resume studying in a program on the subsequent recommendation of the Graduate Studies Deanship Council and the final approval of the University Council. However, the following conditions should also be taken into account:

- On the lapse of more than six semesters, a terminated student shall be treated as a new student regardless of the number of semesters completed in the program.
- On return after six semesters or less, a terminated student may be asked to repeat some of the courses already covered. Courses should be specified by Department and College Councils and approved by the Graduate Studies Deanship Council; the courses studied earlier are to be counted within the cumulative grade average after resuming study; the period spent in the

program before termination is also to be counted within the maximum time limit for obtaining the degree.

Transferring students who get accepted in the University will be treated specially, in which, their previous courses will be evaluated by assigned college(s). Credit transfer will be granted to approve courses and student will be assisted to register in next courses at Alfaisal. Also, students who take courses in summer semester (after taking approvals from the Dean of Admission & Registration) will have their courses credited (if they maintain proper GPA in each course) and will be assisted to register in the following courses.

A student should be familiar with the registration policies and guidelines. Understanding fully all registration aspects will definitely help avoiding any mistakes or confusing which might cause aggravating results.

For Registration dates and timelines regularly each semester, you can visit this link- in the Alfaisal university academic calendar: [http://www.alfaisal.edu/academic\\_calendar](http://www.alfaisal.edu/academic_calendar)

A student should be familiar with the courses description and study plan by having a copy of the Graduate Catalog: [http://research.alfaisal.edu/courses\\_study\\_plans](http://research.alfaisal.edu/courses_study_plans)

Registration Staff will make sure that all current students are registered appropriately as per regulations and policies. Students from the other hand should communicate with designated Staff when facing any problem or confusion for the aim of perfecting the registration of the semester and/or seek help in regard of registration.

## 6. Degrees

### 6.1. Academic Degree

On recommendations of Departments and College Councils and endorsement of the Research & Graduate Studies Council, the University Council/BOT grants the following degrees:

- Masters Degrees (global)
- Doctorate Degrees (global high)

### 6.2. Master's Degrees

The study for a master's degree can follow two modes or options as per *Article 33 of the Unified Law Organizing Graduate Studies in Saudi Universities (2009)*:

- Thesis option: masters' students must take at least 24 credit hours of courses plus a thesis.
- Course only option: master's students must take at least 42 credit hours of courses inclusive of a capstone/research project.

The duration for obtaining a master's degree is a minimum of four semesters (i.e. 2 years) and a maximum of eight semesters (i.e. 4 years) (*Article 36 of Unified Law*)

The academic year has two semesters of at least fifteen weeks each. A summer session is minimally eight weeks (*Article 35 of Unified Law*).

A graduate student at Alfaisal University must take at least 75% of the program's credit hours at the University (*Article 38 of Unified Law*).

The same course work cannot be used toward two different master's degrees unless it is part of an approved concurrent master's program. Colleges/departments set their own subject requirements for degrees. If colleges/departments change requirements, they must obtain approval from the Research & Graduate Studies Council (RGC). All affected students must be informed in writing. Colleges/departments also must permit students who entered under the former requirements to elect to follow either the new or old rules

### **6.2.1. Thesis Option**

#### *6.2.1.1. Committee Roles and Responsibilities:*

A *Master's Advisory Committee* will be formed for each student. The committee will consist of three members with a faculty member as the main academic advisor/supervisor and Chair. The Chair of the Committee must have research and graduate student advising experience and should be an Associate or full Professor as per article 45 of the *Unified Bylaws for Graduate Studies of the Council of Higher Education*. In addition there are two other members, one of whom may be from an organization outside of the University. The Committee as per Article 42 of the Unified By-laws will assist the student in the formulation and approval of the *Thesis Proposal*, and later advise the student in the execution of the research, the Thesis write-up, and help the student to prepare for the oral defense. A faculty member may supervise a maximum of five (5) theses/dissertations as per article 48 of the Unified Laws for Graduate Studies in Saudi Universities.

On completion of the student's thesis and approval by the Advisory Committee, the ORG upon the recommendation of the supervisor/major advisor sends the manuscript to an *External Evaluator*. Once the External Evaluator approves the thesis then the ORG sets a date the thesis defense. The College Graduate Studies Council recommends the names of the proposed voting members of the *Thesis Examination Committee* to the ORG for approval as per Article 51 of the Unified Laws.

*Thesis Examination Committee* will consist of at least four members: a non-voting chair appointed by ORG and three voting members recommended by the College and approved by ORG, one of whom should be the Major Advisor and another may be the *External Evaluator* from an outside university.

#### 6.2.1.2. *Thesis Defense:*

Once the Thesis has been approved by the Master's Advisory Committee and the External Evaluator, the Office of Research & Graduate Studies (ORG) will convene the *Thesis Examination Committee*.

At the defense, the Chair is non-voting and is present to ensure that proper procedures are followed. The initial part of the defense is open to the public including a brief question period. Thesis presentation suggested being 15- 20 minutes followed by 5-10 minutes of questions from audience. After this the public will be asked to leave by the Chairperson. The *Thesis Examination Committee* will continue asking questions for up to 30 minutes. The candidate is then asked to leave the room by the Chair. The Committee after deliberation decides by majority vote on one of four decisions: Pass, Pass with Minor Revisions (corrections to be confirmed by the Chair/Supervisor), Pass Pending Major Revisions (corrections to be confirmed by the Advisor & the Chair), Not Passed. Decisions will be based on a majority (i.e. at least 2/3) vote as per article 55 of the Unified Bylaws for Graduate Studies of the Council of Higher Education.

All Thesis Examination Committee Members sign a Report Sheet Form. The candidate is then asked to come back into the room and is informed of the decision. The Chair will submit the report to the Office of the VP for Research & Graduate Studies. The Chair may add a page of comments, if necessary.

Students whose Theses are not-passed may repeat the defense one more time but not earlier than two months after the first defense.

#### **6.2.2 Courses-only Track**

This track is ideally suited to, for example, people holding full time jobs in the public or private sectors who want to enhance their careers through continuing education. Students in this track will have a Graduate Advisor appointed by the College and/or the Office of Research & Graduate Studies. Master's students must take at least 42 credit hours of courses inclusive of a capstone/research project

#### **6.2.3 Transfers of Credit toward the Master's Degree**

A master's student may transfer up to 6 semester credit hours or 6 quarter credit hours of course work completed as a graduate student at another institution. The units must be equivalent to courses in the student's graduate program at Alfaisal University, and the student must have received at least a B in the course(s). However, students cannot use units from another institution to satisfy the minimum requirement courses or the minimum academic residence requirement. In addition, they may not present course work previously used to satisfy requirements for another degree program at Alfaisal University or at another in another institution.

#### **6.2.4 Changes in Master's Advisory Committee Membership**

Before planning to file their theses, students who wish to change the membership of their Master's Advisory Committee must be sure that such a change has been approved by the College Graduate Committee and the *Research & Graduate Studies Council*. A student may request a change in committee by submitting a written request to their Graduate Adviser. The Graduate Adviser should consult with any faculty members as appropriate to assure that they are aware of membership changes. However, the Graduate Adviser, rather than any committee member, has the final authority to recommend approval of the changes.

#### **6.2.5 Completion of Courses for the Degree**

Master's students must finish all courses required for the degree by the last day of the semester in which they expect the degree to be conferred. If students have Incompletes, No Reports, or In Progress grades, the college/department must indicate on the list of courses-only master's candidates whether the courses are required for the degree. After completion of requirements for the degree for which they were admitted, students may not register and enroll for a subsequent semester unless they have been previously approved for a new degree goal or a new major.

#### **6.2.6 Time in Candidacy**

The duration for obtaining a master's degree is a minimum of four semesters (i.e. 2 years) and a maximum of eight semesters (i.e. 4 years) (*Article 36 of Unified Law*). If they do not finish in that period, their candidacy will lapse unless the Major Adviser/Supervisor requests an extension of time from the Research & Graduate Studies Council (RGC).

### **6.3. Doctoral Degrees**

Doctoral programs consist of at least 12 credit hours of graduate courses and a dissertation (*Article 34 in Unified Laws*).

#### **6.3.1. Committee Roles and Responsibilities**

*6.3.1.1 Doctoral Advisory Committee:* The Committee, which will be formed for each student, will consist of three members; an Alfaisal faculty member as the main academic advisor and Chair, and two additional members one of whom may be from an outside institution. The Chair of the Committee must have research and graduate student advising experience. This Committee will assist the student in the formulation of the research proposal, and later advise the student in the execution of the research project, the Thesis write-up, and help the student to prepare for the oral defense. A faculty member may supervise a maximum of five (5) theses/dissertations as per article 48 of the Unified Bylaws for Graduate Studies in Saudi Universities

6.3.1.2 *Dissertation Examination Committee*: Once the Committee and Evaluator have approved a thesis, the *Office of Research & Graduate Studies* will convene the Dissertation Examination Committee. Only the Examination Committee members may be present during the defense. The Examination Committee will consist of at least Three teaching staff members (Professors and Associate Professors)

- Related department council sets up a committee of at least three teaching staff members (professors and associate professors) with competence in student's main specialization or sub-specialization (where applicable)..
- The committee may seek help from other specialized members of the department.
- The committee shall be responsible for preparing, evaluating and determining the outcome of the exam.
- In cases where a program includes specialization or sub-specialization outside the department, a specialist from the relevant department should participate in exam committee.
- The committee for both written and oral exam should be the same.

Upon completion of the defense, the Committee will deliberate and vote. There will be four decision options: Passed, Passed with Minor Revisions, Passed Pending Major Revisions, and Not-Passed. Minor revisions could be completed in a few days; major revisions may take a month or more. Students whose dissertation is not-passed may repeat the defense one more time but not earlier than two months after the first defense.

### **6.3.2. PhD Comprehensive Exam**

In order to maintain the quality of the program, doctoral students will be required to take a comprehensive exam at the end of their first year of doctoral study. Depending of the program, the comprehensive exam may assess a student's course knowledge, general knowledge in the field and knowledge of proposed research area. It shall have a written component, as per Article 40 (XL) of the Unified Law. There may be an oral component which is left as an option to the individual department/college (ref. KFUPM Graduate Bulletin pg 66). The comprehensive exam will be administered by the Department/College Graduate Committee in coordination with ORG.

The related Department/College sets up a committee of at least three teaching staff (professors and associate professors) in the student's main specialization. The committee shall be responsible for preparing, evaluating and determining the outcome of the exam. The exam is graded as a unit (i.e. pass or fail). Students may have up to a total of two attempts to pass this exam.

### **6.3.3. Oral Defense of Dissertation Proposal**

Doctoral students will also be required to pass an oral exam at which they defend their research proposal before their Doctoral Advisory Committee. This should normally be done after the PhD Comprehensive Exam is passed.

### **6.3.4. Public Seminar**

Just before the Dissertation Defense, a student must give a public seminar on the study. The main aims of such a presentation is to give the student experience at presenting the results, answering questions and getting free/additional feedback from the scientific community as well as other students.

### **6.3.5. Dissertation Defense**

Once the Dissertation has been written and approved by the Doctoral Advisory Committee; it will be forwarded to an External Evaluator for final review and approval. Once both the Committee and Evaluator approve the dissertation the *Office of Research & Graduate Studies* will convene the *Dissertation Examination Committee*. A typical defense, for example, will last from one to two hours and will consist of a brief presentation by the student of the significant results of the research project, followed by a question and answer period.

The Examination Committee will consist of at least four members: a non-voting Chair and three voting members, one of whom may be from the Advisory Committee and another may be the External Evaluator from an outside university. Membership of the Examination Committee will be limited to Associate and Full Professors. Decisions will be based on a majority (i.e. at least 2/3) vote as per article 56 of the *Unified Bylaws for Graduate Studies of the Council of Higher Education*.

## **6.4. Policies Affecting Both Master's and Doctoral Students**

### **6.4.1. Preparing and Submitting the Dissertation or Thesis Manuscript**

Students are responsible for preparing the manuscript in the proper form, including formatting, pagination, margins, and paper type. All of the requirements are provided in the *Instructions for Preparing and Filing Your Thesis or Dissertation* which is available from the *Office of Research & Graduate Studies*.

### **6.4.2. Use of Human and Animal Subjects**

Students who plan research or development activities that involve human and animal subjects must also have their work reviewed and approved by the Alfaisal University *Institutional Review Board (IRB)* before they begin their research. Protocols involving human subjects must be filed with the Office of Research & Graduate Studies. The Office of Research & Graduate Studies will not accept dissertations or theses that include human or animal subject materials obtained or produced without IRB authorization.

#### **6.4.3. Withholding a Thesis or Dissertation**

Sometimes there are extraordinary situations under which a student may prefer that the manuscript not be published. These circumstances may involve the disclosure of patentable rights in the work before a patent can be granted, similar disclosure detrimental to the rights of the author, or disclosure of facts about persons or institutions before professional ethics would permit such disclosure. The VP of the Office of Research & Graduate Studies may permit with a supportive explanatory letter from the *Thesis or Dissertation Examination Committee* chair, the manuscript to be withheld from public access for a specified and limited period of time.

#### **6.4.4. Copyright**

The University does not provide a copyright service. Students may copyright their work independently.

#### **6.4.5. Time Limits on Use of Courses for Degrees**

Sometimes students return to the University after an absence and request to use courses that they completed in the past. A time limit of 4 years has been established for use of these courses.

#### **6.4.6. Change or Add a Major or Degree Goal**

Graduate students may petition to change majors, degree goals, or designated emphases or to add them. However, these students should be ranked with other applicants to ensure that available slots in the program are not taken up by relatively weak continuing students to the detriment of stronger new applicants.

#### **6.4.7 Financial Support**

KACST Graduate Students Grants Program is available (nationals) with awards in the amounts of 100,000 SAR and 150,000 SAR annually for Master's and Doctoral students, respectively.  
<http://gdrq.kacst.edu.sa/Site/en/Default.aspx>

## **7. References**

- The University of California, Berkeley
- The *Graduate Policies* from the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM). [http://regweb.kfupm.edu.sa/docs/graduate\\_bulletin\\_2003\\_2005.pdf](http://regweb.kfupm.edu.sa/docs/graduate_bulletin_2003_2005.pdf)
- The *Unified Bylaws for Graduate Studies of the Council of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia*.



## 8. Glossary of Terms

This section explains commonly used terms in graduate studies.

**Academic Standing:** Students are normally in good academic standing if they are making adequate progress toward the completion of degree requirements; have a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.0; and do not have an excessive number of incomplete grades on their records.

**Appointments:** Graduate Appointments on the Alfaisal University campus are assigned the following titles: Graduate Student Teaching Assistant (TA) and Graduate Student Research Assistant (RA).

**Comprehensive Exam:** An exam given to masters as well as doctoral graduate students. Colleges/ departments decide the content and format of the comprehensive exam. The examining committee should be composed of at least two (and preferably three) regular faculty members to conduct the exam, which should cover the knowledge and skills reasonably expected of a graduate degree recipient in the field. The exam may be written, oral, or a combination of the two. A student may be advanced to candidacy before taking the exam.

**Concurrent Program:** A concurrent program is the combination of two master's degree programs, normally on the same campus, in which a limited number of units may be used in common to reduce the time needed to earn both degrees.

**Student Affairs/College:** Student Affairs/college is an administrative unit with space and resources. also includes budgeted faculty members who offer instruction in a titled, specialized discipline. At the graduate level, programs of study lead to the M.Sc, EMBA, and doctoral degrees. For a list of graduate programs at Alfaisal University, consult the Office of Graduate Studies as well as individual colleges.

**Designated Emphasis:** A designated emphasis is a specialization, such as a new method of inquiry or an important field of application, which is relevant to two or more existing doctoral degree programs. Faculty members who wish to offer a designated emphasis must form a Graduate Group to administer the program. Approval by the Graduate Council is required.

**Dissertation:** Doctoral candidates are required to complete an extensive, original work based on independent research. The dissertation must be approved by a *Doctoral Advisory Committee* and be filed with the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Dissertation Examination Committee:** This Doctoral examination committee will consist of four members: a non-voting Chair, and three other members, one of whom may be from the Doctoral Advisory Committee and another may be the External Evaluator.

**Doctoral Advisory Committee:** The Doctoral Advisory Committee facilitates the student's exams, guides the research and writing, and administers the doctoral defense (if required). The Doctoral Committee typically must be made up of three faculty members, and must include a faculty member from outside the department.

**Doctoral Degree:** A doctoral degree is awarded in recognition of a student's knowledge of a broad field of learning and for distinguished accomplishment in that field through an original contribution of significant knowledge and ideas. To be eligible to receive the doctoral degree, the student must complete a minimum of two years of academic residence, pass a qualifying examination administered by their committee, and submit

an approved thesis project proposal (i.e. dissertation) completed under the guidance of Alfaisal University faculty members.

**Filing a Dissertation:** Doctoral degrees are awarded at the end of semesters. The deadline to file a dissertation is the last working day of the semester.

**Graduate Adviser:** Graduate Advisers are nominated by College Deans or Department Chairs and appointed by the VP of the Office of Research & Graduate Studies, who acts on behalf of the Research & Graduate Studies Council. They provide guidance for entering and continuing students concerning the various steps necessary to earn their degrees.

**Research & Graduate Studies Council:** The Research & Graduate Studies Council is a committee of Alfaisal University faculty. Composed of faculty members, the Council is responsible for all academic matters related to graduate education on campus. One of the major duties of the Council is to conduct periodic reviews of all graduate programs to make sure they are functioning at the highest possible level, and to plan for the future.

**Graduate Group:** A graduate group is an academic unit, comprised of a core faculty from two or more existing colleges/departments, which offers a doctoral degree in a new method of inquiry or new field of study that has been approved by the Graduate Council. An established college/department is designated to host the graduate group since the group has no funding of its own or administrative support.

**Major Adviser:** Also called Thesis or Dissertation Adviser, a Major Adviser is usually chosen by the student in consultation with the Graduate Adviser. The Major Adviser guides a student's thesis or dissertation research and writing.

**Master's Advisory Committee:** The Master's Advisory Committee, selected by the student in conjunction with the Graduate Adviser, guides the research and writing of the master's thesis. The committee is made up of three faculty members, at least two of whom must be from the student's home college/department. Typically, the committee chair is the student's research adviser.

**Office of Graduate Studies:** The Office of Graduate Studies serves as the administrative arm of the Graduate Council by overseeing graduate students' progress from admission to completion of their degree programs. The Office of Graduate Studies Monitors students administration and regulations to guide students through the various steps required for the degree.

**Probation:** Students who are not in good academic standing are considered to be on academic probation or subject to dismissal. Students may also be placed on probation for not meeting Student Affairs requirements or expectations. Probation is intended to provide students whose performance is less than satisfactory with a period of time in which to correct the deficiencies and to raise their performance to a level consistent with the minimum standards set by the Student Affairs/Office of Graduate Studies. Students on probationary status may register, but they may not hold academic appointments, receive graduate scholarships, or be awarded advanced degrees.

**Program (also known as a track or plan):** A program is a sequence of course work and supervised study leading to a degree, normally within a department of instruction. The term is used synonymously with field or subfield and also to refer to a subspecialty in which undergraduates or graduates may concentrate their study.

**Public Seminar:** Toward the end of the Master's Thesis project or Doctoral Dissertation and just before the Oral Defense, a student gives a public seminar on the study.

**Qualifying Examination:** The Qualifying Examination is an oral examination for doctoral candidates and is conducted by four or five faculty members (this varies by major). Students, in consultation with the Graduate Adviser, select the three subject areas for the exam as well as the committee members. The exam is usually between two and three hours in length. The purpose of the exam is to ascertain the breadth of a student's knowledge and preparation. Faculty examiners will judge whether students have the ability to think incisively and critically about both the theoretical and the practical aspects of their major. Some programs expect students to present a topic for the dissertation as part of the Qualifying Exam (although the exam must not be limited to such a topic). Others do not. In those programs that do, students may be expected to have in mind one or two areas from which the dissertation might be developed and to answer questions on its potential significance and possible design. In either case, the examiners should satisfy themselves, by unanimous vote, that students have mastered their subject areas and can, in all likelihood, design and produce acceptable dissertations.

**Researcher Assistant (RA):** A Research Assistant (RA) is a graduate student at Alfaisal University who is engaged in research projects related to his or her dissertation under faculty supervision. There are no specific eligibility requirements regarding level of skills or previous experience, which permits colleges/departments and organized research units to make RA appointments at levels appropriate to resources and recruitment needs.

**Teaching Assistant (TA):** A TA must have fulfilled the necessary academic, spoken English language proficiency, and registration and enrollment requirements for appointment. Chosen for excellent scholarship and promise as a teacher, a TA serves as an apprentice under the active supervision of the instructor in charge of the course. An appointment as a TA is for one academic year or less. TA appointments may not exceed half time.

**Thesis:** Students completing a Thesis Track master's degree are expected to write a report, referred to as a thesis, on the results of an original investigation, in conjunction with the Master's Advisory Committee. Length and style of the thesis vary by college. All theses are filed with the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Thesis Examination Committee:** This master's level examination committee will consist of four members: a non-voting Chair, and three other members, one of whom may be from the Master's Advisory Committee and another may be the External Evaluator.

**Tutor:** A tutor provides training to individuals or small groups of students who require additional teaching help. Tutors at Alfaisal University work under the direct supervision of a faculty member holding an appropriate instructional title.