



GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Graduate Handbook
Department of Religious Studies
University of Kansas

Welcome to the MA Program in Religious Studies at the University of Kansas! This handbook is meant to help you navigate the regulations and procedures that govern the program. Keep it bookmarked, save a copy, and refer to it frequently. Please note that the information in the handbook can change frequently; the most up-to-date version will always be posted on the department’s website: religiousstudies.ku.edu

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DIRECTORY

Important Departmental Contacts

Graduate Director: Main contact for prospective and current graduate students regarding admission, research progress, course credit towards degree, MA Thesis/Portfolio, and department policies and procedures.

Dr. Molly Zahn, Smith 104, mzahn@ku.edu 785-864-4665

Department Chair: Main contact for questions about financial support for conference travel or summer funding. Secondary contact for all other questions of department policy and procedure.

Dr. Michael Zogry, Smith 101, mzogry@ku.edu 785-864-7257

Graduate Academic Advisor: Main contact for advising questions regarding university requirements, resources, petitions, program milestones, exam scheduling, graduation, and any other questions related to student success or KU policy.

Clare Thoman, Bailey 310, clarethoman@ku.edu 785-864-9814

Administrator: Archivist at the Moore Reading Room, contact for assistance with departmental forms, room scheduling, travel fund disbursement, and any other administrative matters.

Trish Baudino Cecil, Smith 109 (Moore Reading Room), pbcecil@ku.edu
785-864-4341

Key Offices at KU

The Religious Studies Department's Graduate Director and Graduate Academic Advisor are your first stop for any questions related to graduate study or requirements. If you would like to research an issue in advance of speaking with the Graduate Director or if you still have questions, the following offices can provide assistance:

[College Office of Graduate Affairs \(COGA\)](#)

COGA oversees graduate affairs and administers University policy for programs within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The [COGA website](#) contains comprehensive information on requirements and processes pertaining to graduate education at KU. Most common questions can be answered with the information provided there, including questions regarding [enrollment changes or forms](#), University policies regarding [exams](#) and committee requirements, and University [graduation requirements](#). The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences' [Master's Hooding Ceremony](#) is coordinated by COGA.

COGA reviews all [student petitions](#) of University and College policy, issuing decisions on behalf of the College or referring as required to a faculty committee and/or the Office of Graduate Studies. The more common student petitions relate to [Enrollment](#), [Leave of Absence](#), and [Time Limit Extensions](#).

COGA is a resource if you have questions about petitions or graduation requirements that your department is unable to answer. Refer to the COGA website for current staff contact information.

[Office of Graduate Studies](#)

Graduate Studies is the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies at KU. The Executive Council of Graduate Studies sets policies and regulations governing graduate study, and offers various programs for graduate students throughout the year. While COGA should be your first stop for any questions your department cannot answer, you may be referred to Graduate Studies for certain matters, especially for questions about [GTA/GRA/GA appointments and policies](#).

[Graduate Admissions](#) (Within the Office of Graduate Studies)

Your Graduate Academic Advisor should be your first stop for questions regarding the KU application for Graduate Study, ADMIT system / Prospect, English proficiency requirements, and official transcripts. However, you may be referred to Graduate Admissions for certain matters.

[Office of the Registrar \(OUR\)](#)

Contact OUR for questions related to enrollment (if the question cannot be resolved via the enrollment changes link provided above under COGA), tuition, campus fees, the Academic Calendar, and fee petitions.

[Financial Aid](#)

Contact Financial Aid for questions related to the disbursement of scholarships, fellowship award, loans, and FAFSA.

[International Student Services \(ISS\)](#)

Contact ISS for questions related to international students, including enrollment requirements, international student insurance, obtaining a social security card, I-20 questions, and any issue related to student visas. While other offices on campus such as the [Applied English Center](#), [Human Resources](#), or the [Registrar](#) may also handle related matters, because the students' legal status in the country may be affected, it is recommended that students contact ISS first.

[Center for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#)

The Center for Teaching Excellence is a University office dedicated to assisting instructors, including GTAs, to develop effective instructional techniques. The expert staff of CTE can introduce instructors to the pedagogical technology available at the University and help instructors develop new approaches to teaching. CTE specialists work with instructors individually, and also offer a diverse array of workshops and discussions. They also can guide instructors to useful scholarly literature on the subject of college teaching and learning.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Admission

All applicants to the MA program in Religious Studies must complete the KU Graduate School Online [Application](#). Application fees are as follows: \$65 domestic, \$85 international

1. Deadline. To apply for Fall admission, please submit all application materials no later than **February 1**. The department does not admit new M.A. students for the Spring or Summer terms.

2. Minimum Requirements and Prerequisites. For [University Requirements](#) for admission to graduate study, please see "Admission" in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook.

In addition to these requirements, the Department requires substantial undergraduate coursework in Religious Studies or a related field. An undergraduate major in Religious Studies is **not** required.

3. Application Materials and Procedures. Applicants should complete the KU [Application for Graduate Study](#). The following items will need to be prepared in advance and uploaded with the online application:

- A current C.V. (Curriculum Vitae) or resume.
- A Statement of Purpose describing your interest in the academic study of religion, purpose in pursuing the M.A., and expected areas of emphasis in the program (generally 500-800 words).
- An academic writing sample that demonstrates your writing skills and basic research capacity. A research paper from a previous upper-level undergraduate course will suffice (2500-5000 words).
- Three letters of recommendation, preferably from professors with whom you have studied. Your recommenders should be well acquainted with your academic work and able to evaluate your potential for success in graduate study. It is the applicant's responsibility to communicate with recommenders and ensure that they have uploaded their letters into the online system.

[One official transcript](#) from **each** of the former institutions of higher education at which you have studied (all post-secondary education). Official transcripts should be sent from those previous institutions directly to KU.

By mail: Graduate Admissions, 313 Strong Hall, 1450 Jayhawk Blvd. Lawrence, KS 66045

Or by email: gapc@ku.edu

- An official GRE score report. Although the online application will ask you to self-report your scores, official scores must also be sent directly from GRE. KU's university code is 6871.

4. Non-Native Speakers of English. The Office of Graduate Studies requires applicants, [international](#) or domestic, whose native language is not English to [demonstrate English proficiency](#). International students must send official TOEFL, IELTS, or PTE scores to provide proof of English Proficiency. See "Admissions" under the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook for more information regarding the University's requirements for providing proof of English proficiency.

5. Financial Aid. Applicants who wish to be considered for [financial aid](#) should check the appropriate box in the checklist provided in the online application. Funding

decisions are made based on the quality of the application for admission; no further materials are required.

6. Provisional Admission. On rare occasions the department may recommend an applicant who does not meet the University's minimum requirements for provisional admission. This may occur, for example, if a student's overall undergraduate GPA is deficient but the major GPA, GRE scores, and admissions essay suggest strong potential for success in graduate study. All recommendations for provisional admission are contingent on approval by the College and University. To continue in the program, students admitted provisionally must meet with the Graduate Director at the start of the academic term, must comply with any requests for additional meetings or communications, and must earn at least a 3.0 GPA in the first semester of graduate coursework at KU.

7. Admissions Contact Information. Questions about admission to the M.A. in Religious Studies should be directed to the department's [Graduate Director](#) (see Directory). Technical questions regarding the online application or required documentation, you may contact the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) .

General Guidelines

1. [Grading](#) and [Good Standing](#). The University requires a grade of C or higher for a course to count towards a graduate degree. To be considered in "good standing," the University requires graduate students to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or "B" average) and be making timely progress toward meeting their degree requirements. For more information, see "Grading" and "Probation & Dismissal" in the University Policies & Degree Requirements section of the Handbook.

2. Academic Integrity and Misconduct. Graduate students are expected to adhere to principles of academic integrity in every aspect of their scholarship. This means that students acknowledge the sources they use in their academic work and cite them fully; not acknowledging a source constitutes plagiarism. Students should consult with faculty well before due dates if they are not sure about how to handle a source. Academic integrity also means that work on examinations and assignments must be carried out by authorized means. Students are subject to sanctions by the University for Academic Misconduct if they violate these principles. See [University Senate Rules and Regulations, Article 2, Section 6](#).

3. Advising. The Graduate Director serves as the primary advisor for all students with regard to course selection and completion of program requirements. In addition, all

students must select an official Academic Advisor by the end of their first year of coursework. The role of the Advisor is to supervise the preparation and defense of the student's Portfolio or Thesis, and to serve in a mentorship capacity regarding progress through the program and the articulation and exploration of future professional goals (e.g., application to PhD programs).

Students are responsible for contacting the faculty member with whom they would like to work and, with the faculty member's agreement, for notifying the Graduate Director and the Department's Administrator of their selection. This should be done by the last day of classes of the student's second term in the program (i.e., end of Spring semester). If a student wishes to change Advisors, the student should first discuss this intent with the Graduate Director. A new Advisor may be selected by the student with the agreement of the faculty member and the Graduate Director.

[The COGA Graduate Advisor](#) serves as the official advisor for all technical aspects of students' progress to their degree. The COGA Graduate Advisor is the point of contact for all questions regarding departmental and university policies and procedures including: admission, enrollment, GTA/GRA/GA employment requirements, academic policies, required training, petitions, final exams, and graduation requirements.

4. Annual Review. Each spring the Department conducts a review of current graduate students, in which all regular faculty members participate. Results of the review are communicated in writing to each student by the Graduate Director. The review is meant to help students understand how well they are meeting departmental expectations and to assist them in planning the remainder of their time in the program. It also aids in financial aid decisions for the upcoming year.

5. Grievance Procedures. The Department of Religious Studies advises that graduate students make an attempt to resolve issues directly with the instructor or party involved, or with the department chair. If a grievance arises that cannot be resolved directly, or if the student does not feel comfortable attempting to resolve the issue with the department chair, the student should then follow the department's [official grievance procedure](#).

6. Petitions. If a graduate student has compelling reason to seek exemption from program requirement or University policy, they may submit a petition to the department's graduate faculty.

Petitioners should write a letter, addressed to the graduate faculty, explaining the reasons why the student is seeking exemption from specific rules, as well as how the

educational goals the rules reflect will still be fulfilled. Where applicable, this petition should be accompanied by a letter of support from the student's advisor and/or the appropriate supporting materials. The letter should be sent to the Graduate Director, who then refers the petition to the graduate faculty, which will convene to consider the petition.

In cases where the policy or requirement is a departmental requirement (for example, a course requirement for degree) the graduate faculty will issue a final decision.

In cases where the policy or requirement being petitioned is a University policy, the graduate faculty will decide whether to support the student's petition. If the faculty is in support, the department will submit a petition form to the College Office of Graduate Affairs accompanied by supporting materials as required. The COGA Graduate Advisor will submit a petition form to the College Office of Graduate Affairs accompanied by supporting materials as required. The [petition form](#) specifies the supporting material needed for each kind of petition. These materials must accompany the petition sent to COGA. COGA's [petitions webpage](#) provides additional information regarding University petitions, including supplemental documentation that may be required by the University.

Additional information regarding the more common university petitions, such as Leave of Absence, Enrollment requirements, and Time Limit Extensions may also be found in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of this document. The COGA Graduate Advisor is also available to answer any questions regarding petitions and the supplemental materials that are required.

In cases where the graduate faculty declines to support a University petition, no paperwork may be submitted to COGA. COGA only accepts student petitions in cases where there is documented departmental support and when the petition itself is submitted by a representative of the department.

Students should always consult with the Graduate Director prior to submitting a petition to the graduate faculty to ensure that a petition is necessary and that all the appropriate supporting documentation is accounted for.

Financial Aid

1. Graduate Teaching Assistantships carry a fixed stipend and list of benefits. Stipends are disbursed as a biweekly paycheck through Human Resources. (See Information for Graduate Teaching Assistants below).

2. Departmental Scholarships are disbursed twice annually, at the beginning of Fall and Spring semesters. Scholarships generally require that the recipient is in good academic standing (GPA of 3.0 or above) and is enrolled full-time (9 credit hours). For help with scholarship questions, see the department's Administrator.

3. Reapplication: Returning students must reapply for funding each year, unless multi-year funding was part of the student's aid package at the time of admission. The simple application form is available on the Department's webpage and is due each **February 1**.

4. Special Funding Opportunities:

- **Conferences.** The department has limited funds available to support graduate student travel to present at or attend academic conferences. Guidelines for application can be found via the [Graduate Travel Awards](#) link.
- **Research/Academic Development Travel Award.** Occasionally funds are available to support activities directly related to a student's academic program that are not otherwise funded by scholarships, grants, or other university or departmental funds. Eligible activities could include, for example, intensive language study, field or archival research, or short-term workshop or skill development opportunities. Interested students should can also apply through the department's [Graduate Travel Awards](#) page.

Information for Graduate Teaching Assistants

1. Course Assignment. GTAs in the Department of Religious Studies assist with one course per semester, typically the same course in both Fall and Spring semesters. Assignments are made on the basis of a variety of factors, including area of interest, previous experience, and departmental needs. GTAs will be informed of their course assignments for the following academic year in early summer.

2. Workload. GTA workload and responsibilities vary from course to course and throughout the semester, but are not to exceed an average of 20 hours/week. In some courses, the GTA is primarily responsible for grading, administration, and student advising, while in others, the GTA leads discussion sections (with guidance from the course's instructor of record). GTAs should contact the professor with whom they will be working a few weeks before the start of the Fall semester to learn more about the specific duties required for their course.

3. Evaluation. The University requires that all GTAs be evaluated on an annual basis, and that GTAs in their first year be evaluated once each semester. GTA evaluations are

conducted by the instructor of record and must be discussed with the GTA. The results are then reported to Human Resources.

- [GTA Performance Evaluation page](#) (Human Resources)
- [Policy on Performance Evaluations for GTAs](#)

4. Reappointment. For students who serve as GTAs in their first year of graduate study, reappointment for a second year is conditional upon successful performance as demonstrated by the annual evaluation, maintenance of good academic standing, and departmental needs. Students who extend their program to a third year are not typically awarded GTAships except in cases of department need.

5. Resources

- Information about the [Mandatory GTA Training](#) for all new GTAs on campus
- [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) (PDF)
All GTA/GRA appointments are governed by the MOA between the University of Kansas, Lawrence, the Kansas Board of Regents, and the Kansas Association of Public Employees.
- [GRA, GTA, and GA Appointments: General Guidelines and Eligibility](#)
- Full list of [GTA/GRA/GA Benefits](#)
- [GTA/GRA/GA Health Insurance Information](#)

- [HR/Pay System](#)
GTA paychecks are viewable in the HR Pay System beginning the Monday before a pay day. If using the system for the first time, the system will need to register the login and then go through an update before any information is accessible. Log in and then log out. Wait a few hours and then log in again. The system has registered you as a user when the main home page menu shows the Self Service option. Navigate to Self Service → View Paychecks. Current deductions and direct deposit information may also be viewed and updated via the HR/Pay system.
- [Center for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#)
The CTE is a University office dedicated to assisting instructors, including GTAs, to develop effective instructional techniques.
- CTE's [GTA Guide To Teaching at KU: A Handbook of Resources](#) (PDF)

Degree Requirements (See also Appendices 1 and 2).

Master's Degree Requirements

The primary mission of the Master of Arts in Religious Studies is to provide an interdisciplinary introduction to the study of regions, history, languages, and cultures, with skills appropriate for a wide range of professional careers. Many of our students are interested in gaining further training before pursuing a PhD in Religious Studies or a related discipline, while others use the M.A. as preparation for careers in areas as diverse as journalism, law, nonprofit work, NGOs, and chaplaincy.

1. Course Requirements (see also the [KU Academic Catalog](#))

Students pursuing the thesis option are required to complete 30 graduate credit hours (500 level or above), 18 of which must be courses in Religious Studies.

Students pursuing the non-thesis option are required to complete 33 graduate credit hours (500 level or above), 21 of which must be courses in Religious Studies.

In addition to developing a general competence in the larger field of religious studies, its approaches, and its methods, students pursuing the M.A. demonstrate depth of knowledge in one particular area by crafting their programs of study around an area of concentration. Areas of concentration are designed and articulated by the student to best reflect their own areas of interest, and can be either geographic/historical or theoretical/methodological in nature. All students must articulate a concentration and complete at least 12 hours of coursework in that concentration. Examples include:

- Indigenous religions
- Islam
- Judaism
- Religion in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean
- Religion in Asia
- Religion in the U.S.A.
- Religious ethics
- Performance and ritual

In addition, all students must complete the following coursework as part of their 30/33 hours:

- REL 601 Approaches to the Study of Religion
- Three seminar courses (courses numbered 700 or above, excluding REL 800 Directed Readings and REL 899 Thesis). Two of these courses must come from the following set of theory and method-oriented seminars. These seminars rotate

in specific content and may be taken more than once provided the instructor and subject matter differ.

- REL 727 Seminar in Religion, Text and Textuality
- REL 737 Seminar in Religion, Media and Performance
- REL 747 Seminar in Religion, Society and Social Change
- REL 757 Seminar in Religious Subjectivity, Experience, and Narrative
- REL 767 Seminar in Theory, Method, and History in Religious Studies
- One course focusing on “Western” religious traditions. A list of approved courses can be found [here](#), though substitutions may be possible.
- One course focusing on “Non-Western” religious traditions. A list of approved courses can be found [here](#), though substitutions may be possible.

2. The Portfolio. Students who select the non-thesis option must produce and give an oral defense of a research portfolio.

Components of the Portfolio:

- a. Two revised research papers (major research papers of 15+ pages; at least one must be from a 700+-level seminar), with description of revisions
- b. Bibliography
- c. Intellectual Biography/Professional Essay

a. The Research Papers:

- Should represent a student’s best work.
- Should have undergone revision since the end of the class for which the paper was written
 - Incorporate comments from the faculty member who taught the course
 - Incorporate comments from the faculty advisor
 - Incorporate any further ideas or connections added after completing the paper
- Should be accompanied by a short (~1 page max) description of the revisions made

b. The Bibliography:

- Should be two (2) to four (4) pages long and be a mix of books and articles.
- Should be drawn from course work, research projects/seminar papers, and consultation with faculty advisor and other faculty members.
- Will be examined in the oral defense. Students should be prepared to answer questions from their committee about the items on the bibliography.

c. The Intellectual Biography/Professional Essay:

- Should be at least (ten) 10 to (twelve) 12 double-spaced pages
- Is meant to help articulate development as a scholar over the course of the MA program. Examples: How would you describe your scholarly identity, and how did you arrive at it?
- Should be rooted in the Bibliography. Think of the essay as a sort of key to understanding the Bibliography; it should shed light on what is included there.
- Should discuss the theoretical and methodological approaches that have most influenced your thinking and interests, as well as other formative elements of the program (coursework, projects, summer experiences, conferences, etc.).

d. Timeline:

- Be thinking about which papers you want to include in your portfolio, and significant works to include in the Bibliography throughout the entirety of the program.
- By the **end of the semester prior to graduation** (i.e. Fall for a Spring graduation), you should turn in to the Graduate Director a prospectus, signed by your advisor, indicating the papers you intend to use and who the other members of your committee will be.
- By **February 15** (for Spring graduates) you should have revised your papers in light of the instructor's comments and submitted them to your advisor (along with a brief description of the revisions) for another round of comments. You should also have composed a first draft of your bibliography and professional essay and submitted it to your advisor for comments.
- By roughly **April 1** (for Spring graduates) you should have revised your papers and professional essay in light of your advisor's comments, have chosen a defense date, and have submitted your portfolio to your committee.

3. The Thesis. Students who select the thesis option must produce and give an oral defense of a thesis. A Masters thesis in the Department of Religious Studies should represent a substantial piece of independent, original research, equaling in quality an article in a scholarly journal.

- **Topic:** The topic of the thesis is to be determined by the student, in consultation with the advisor.
- **Length:** There is no set minimum or maximum, but successful theses typically range from 35–80 double-spaced pages.
- **Methodology (or Approach):** Explain by what means you plan to answer, determine, or evaluate your hypothesis or thesis statement. It is especially important that your methodology be appropriate to the issues or questions you

are investigating, the available data, and both legal and ethical considerations pertinent to your field of study. Depending on your topic, methodology, and field, this section may include a wide diversity of sources, including: primary documents, secondary sources, and interviews and/or questionnaires. Please note that human subject research, including interviews and questionnaires, requires approval prior to the start of your research by the [Human Subjects Committee-Lawrence Campus](#).

- **Overview of Content:** Provide an outline of your chapters, sections, and subsections.
- **Technical Requirements and Timeline:**
 - Up to 3 hours of REL 899 Thesis may be counted towards the 30 credit hours required for graduation. Thesis students **must** complete at least one hour of REL 899 in order to graduate.
 - Thesis students must submit a **prospectus** for approval by their advisor. The prospectus must be approved at least one semester prior to the expected date of graduation (i.e. the end of Fall semester for Spring graduates).
 - The makeup of the **thesis committee** (see “The Oral Defense” below) should be finalized early in the student’s final semester.
 - Students and their advisors should determine well in advance a schedule for the production and revision of thesis drafts, and whether other committee members will read early drafts or only a version considered “final” by the advisor and the student. Remember that it is typical to allow 1–2 weeks for a faculty member to read and comment on thesis drafts.
 - The University has special rules for the electronic formatting and submission of theses and dissertations. See “Graduation Requirements” in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook.

4. The Oral Defense (Non-Thesis and Thesis Option)

Non-thesis students must defend their portfolio in an oral exam, while thesis students must orally defend their thesis. These oral exams are mandated by the University for completion of the MA degree. This is a presentation followed by questions from the Committee and other individuals in attendance.

See “Oral Exams” in the University Policies and Degree Requirements section of the Handbook for more details on the requirements for University-mandated oral exams.

The Committee. The portfolio or thesis defense committee typically includes the student’s advisor and 2 (or 3) additional members. At least two of the three members must be regular tenured/tenure-track faculty in the Department of Religious Studies.

Lecturers or other non-tenure-track faculty may serve on exam committees as long as they have graduate faculty status. Students are responsible for selecting committee members (in consultation with their advisors and the Graduate Director) and for securing the agreement of faculty members to serve on their committee.

Scheduling an Exam. Ensure completion of all graduation requirements before and following the oral defense (see: [Master's Degree Checklist](#)). The University-mandated oral exam (portfolio defense for non-thesis students; thesis defense for thesis students) must be pre-approved by the College Office of Graduate Affairs (COGA) at least **two weeks prior** to the intended exam date. Students and their advisors should therefore begin finalizing a defense date at least one month in advance. It is the student's responsibility to work with committee members to determine a mutually agreeable defense date and time. Work directly with the Graduate Academic Advisor to reserve a room for the oral defense as well as any necessary equipment (computer, digital projector, etc.).

Outcomes. For both the portfolio and the thesis defense, the committee may judge the candidate to have passed, to have failed, or to have passed with honors. Honors is reserved for extraordinary work substantially exceeding what is normally expected of Masters students (i.e., approaching the level of established scholars). Thus, a simple "pass" should be regarded as an excellent result and in no way a sign of a committee's dissatisfaction with the quality of a student's work. After successful completion of the oral defense, the Committee signs the Exam Outcome Form and forwards it to the Graduate Academic Advisor.

5. Choosing Between the Thesis and Non-Thesis Option. Students should carefully consider their choice to pursue either the thesis or the non-thesis option. Completing a thesis is a substantial undertaking: to be successful, thesis students need a well-defined topic, strong intrinsic motivation and the capacity for independent work, and sufficient time to devote to research, writing, and revision. Thesis students may find that they need to extend their program by a semester or two in order to give their project the time it deserves.

For students with a strong interest in a particular topic, the thesis can provide a rich opportunity to explore in depth a subject they are passionate about. Students considering continuing on to a PhD can get a feel for what it is like to pursue extended independent research, and may even use the thesis to conduct a preliminary investigation of issues they may want to pursue further in their doctoral studies. (Note, however, that students interested in doctoral study should not feel required to choose

the thesis option. While writing a thesis can demonstrate your scholarly aptitude and interests to prospective doctoral programs, these can also be established in other ways.)

For students with more general interests or whose interests have not yet crystallized around a particular research area, the thesis may not be the best choice. These students may find more benefit in exploring a variety of topics through shorter seminar papers than in sustained investigation of a single topic.

Students should discuss their ideas, questions, and concerns regarding the choice between thesis and non-thesis options with the Graduate Director early and often.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

This section contains information on requirements and policies of the Office of Graduate Studies and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, both hereafter referred to as “the University”. It is not a complete list of all policies pertaining to graduate students. Only those policies that most commonly affect graduate students are included.

Policies are described in general terms and are intended to help students understand what is expected. They do not reflect the exact language of the official policy and should not be confused with official policy. Specific information and restrictions as well as links to relevant forms may be accessed by clicking on the policy headings. Links to the official policies in the KU policy library are found at the bottom of each policy description. Students are accountable to and should familiarize themselves with the University's official policies.

General Policies

The following University policies apply to ALL graduate students regardless of degree, program, or department. These are minimum general requirements. Your department or program may have more restrictive policies in any of these areas.

[Admission](#)

Degree or non-degree seeking applicants must have a bachelor's degree (as evidence by an official transcript from the institution the degree was obtained) and a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the most recent degree that was obtained.

Students not meeting these requirements *may* be admitted provisionally upon recommendation by the department; however, restrictions on certain type of funding, including GTA/GRA/GA funding, apply to students on provisional admission status.

Students should consult the program admissions advisor or Director of Graduate Study (DGS) on their eligibility for funding with admission.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Admission to Graduate Study](#)

[English Proficiency Requirements](#)

The University requires applicants, international or domestic, whose native language is not English to demonstrate English proficiency for admission to any graduate program at KU. There are two ways to prove English proficiency:

- Graduation with a baccalaureate degree or higher from an accredited U.S. institution of higher education, or from such an institution in an English-speaking country where the medium of instruction is English. This first option is not sufficient, however, to be appointed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant.
- Submitting results of the TOEFL iBT examination taken no more than two years prior to the semester of admission. A score of at least 20 in each part is required for regular admission. A score of 24 on the speak section is required to receive a Teaching Assistantship.

Applicants that do not meet the minimum scores should review the English Proficiency Chart, provided via the link above, for information about provisional admission.

Applicants should submit their scores directly to the Office of Graduate Studies:

Office of Graduate Studies
213 Strong Hall
1450 Jayhawk Blvd.
Lawrence KS 66045-7535

Related Policies and Forms:

- [English Proficiency Requirements for Admission to Graduate Study](#)
- [Spoken English Language Competency of Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants, Kansas Board of Regents Policy](#)
- [Graduate Credit](#)

[Transfer of Credits](#)

The transfer credit option allows master's students to count graduate-level coursework completed at another institution toward their KU degree. Restrictions apply to what non-KU graduate courses can be counted toward a KU master's degree, so students should carefully review the information provided in the link above and the related

policies below, as well as consulting with their DGS. In all cases, transfer credit must first be approved at the department of program level. To begin the transfer process, students should consult with their DGS to submit the required transfer materials. These include a transcript reflecting the courses to be transferred and descriptions and/or syllabi for the courses in question.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Graduate Credit](#)
- [Count Toward Degree Form](#)
- [Co-enrollment](#)
- [MA and MS Degrees](#) (on Reduced Hour Master's Degree)

Enrollment

For graduate students in the College, advising on enrollment and course selection take place at the department level. While units within the College may define full-time enrollment more stringently, the University defines it as follows:

Fall and Spring semesters:

- Enrollment in 9 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 6 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;

Summer sessions:

- Enrollment in 6 credit hours;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours plus a GTA, GRA, or GA appointment, regardless of percentage of appointment;
- Enrollment in 3 credit hours for graduate students using the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB-AD) and Post-9/11 GI Bill – Active Duty;

Graduate students are not normally permitted to enroll for more than 16 hours a semester or more than 8 hours in summer session.

While these are KU's definitions of full-time enrollment, other institutions may have different definitions. Be sure to consult with your financial aid and/or health insurance providers before making enrollment decisions.

Students not enrolled by the first day of classes will be assessed a late fee. Students not enrolled by the 60th of classes will be automatically discontinued in Enroll & Pay.

Students who wish to leave their graduate program should inform the department of such plans in writing so that a Voluntary Discontinue form may be submitted on his or her behalf.

Deadlines for adding, changing, dropping, or withdrawing from courses entirely, as well as any fines associated with the change, are set by the University. **Deadlines vary from year to year. Students should carefully review the current [Academic Calendar](#).**

The College Office of Graduate Affairs' (COGA) website has a very useful [Enrollment Changes Guide](#), which provides comprehensive guidance on the forms and endorsements required for different enrollment situations, including late enrollment changes after the published deadlines.

You may also wish to consult the Registrar's page on [Effects of Dropping or Withdrawing on your Transcript](#).

Related Policies:

- [Discontinued Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment](#)
- [Enrollment Regulations](#) (CLAS)
- [Full-time Enrollment for Graduate Students](#)
- [Graduate Coursework Expiration Dates](#)
- [Master's Enrollment Requirements](#)

[Probation & Dismissal](#)

Probation is an academic status that can be assigned to a graduate student if he or she is not making [satisfactory progress](#) toward completing his or her degree. The department initiates the probation process and will inform the student what he or she must do to return to good standing.

Students are most commonly placed on probation if their graduate cumulative [GPA](#) drops below a B average (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). In these cases, probation occurs automatically and is reflected on the student's record for the semester following the semester in which the student's GPA drops below 3.0. If the student's overall graduate average is raised to 3.0 by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be automatically returned to good academic standing.

Students may also be placed on probation by their departments for other reasons that constituting a failure to make satisfactory progress towards degree. These may include, but are not limited to; failure to make adequate progress on a thesis or dissertation,

unacceptable academic performance on program components outside of coursework (e.g. exams), an unsatisfactory result in their department's annual evaluation, or as a result of going beyond their official time to degree. Students should carefully review the [Good Academic Standing policy](#) for graduate students at KU for more information on what constitutes making satisfactory academic progress.

Individual programs may also have additional measures of progress. Students should also consult the Annual Review section of their department graduate handbook and with their program advisor for more information.

If a student is unable to raise his or her GPA or otherwise meet departmental expectations for adequate academic progress by the end of the probationary period, he or she may be dismissed from the graduate program. Once dismissed, a student will no longer be able to be enrolled in coursework and cannot complete his or her degree. Students dismissed from any College graduate program may not be admitted to any other graduate programs in the College.

A student on probation or facing dismissal should discuss his or her status with their advisor.

Related Policies:

- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [CLAS Regulations on Probation and Dismissal](#)
- [Good Academic Standing policy](#)

[Grading](#)

The Office of Graduate Studies' [Grading policy](#) governs requirements for the grading of graduate students above those described in [Article II](#) of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Additionally, individual schools, departments, or programs may have grading policies that are more stringent than those of Graduate Studies. Students should review the [College-specific grading information](#) and consult their adviser and the departmental section of this handbook for additional information that may affect them.

At minimum, for all graduate students at KU, at least a B average is required on course work counted toward any of the master's degrees at KU, and only courses graded A, B, or C (excluding C-) may be counted. Course work counted toward a doctorate, including that for a master's degree if obtained at KU, should average better than a B.

Additional information pertaining to graduate grading can be found on COGA's pages for the [Credit/No Credit Option](#), [Incomplete Grades](#), and [Graduate GPA](#).

Related Policies:

- [University Senate Rules & Regulations](#)
- [Grading](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Dismissed Enrollment](#)
- [CLAS Regulations on Probation and Dismissal](#)

[Credit/No Credit](#)

The University supports and encourages interdisciplinary study, which may include graduate students enrolling in coursework at the graduate level that is outside of their primary discipline. The Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) is an option for graduate students who are taking a course that is not required for their degree or certificate and who do not wish to have the course grade reflected in their overall graduate GPA. Rather than a grade appearing on the transcript, the student receives a designation of CR or NC, which does not factor in the GPA.

No course graded CR/NC will count toward the satisfaction of any graduate degree or certificate requirement. This includes, but is not limited to, courses taken to fulfill the

Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship requirement for doctoral students.

If a student elects to take the CR/NC option, they must make this election during the CR/NC time frame, which can be found in the Registrar's current [Academic Calendar](#).

This period typically begins after the last day to add a class and extends for approximately two weeks. This process must be initiated in the COGA office.

The student should consult with their own program advisor about the appropriateness of the course prior to enrolling. In cases where CR/NC is elected, the course instructor is not informed of the election unless the student chooses to share this information.

Additional restrictions apply. Students should carefully review the information in the link above.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [University Senate Rules and Regulations \(USRR\), Section 2.2.7](#)

[Time limits](#)

The University expects that master's degree should typically be completed in two (2) years of full-time study. Students who anticipate exceeding these targets should review the information in the link above and in the policies below, as well as consult with their program advisor to create a timeline for degree completion. In order to support this process, COGA offers DGSs and advisors a [Mentoring Agreement Template](#) to use and/or adapt to their own needs. The template may be used with students in danger of going beyond the program's expected time limits, or simply as an advising tool for all their students.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Degree Time Constraints](#)
- [Doctoral Degree Time Restraints](#)
- [Doctoral Program Profiles with Time To Degree Information](#)
- [Graduate Degree Completion Agreement](#) (PDF)
- [Mentoring Agreement Template](#) (Doc)

[Leaves of Absence](#)

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave, to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals) it may be necessary for graduate students to take a break from their program temporarily, without having to withdraw entirely from the program. An approved leave of absence allows a student to take a temporary break from enrolling in graduate coursework while remaining in good standing with the University and the department and while "stopping the clock" on their time to degree.

Requesting a Leave of Absence is done via a University petition. University petitions must first be approved and supported at the program level, so students wishing to initiate the petition process should first consult with their Director of Graduate Studies and review their department's internal petition procedures. Units or the Director of Graduate Study may request documentation to support the student's need for a leave of absence; however, the only document that COGA requires for the petition is the Leave of Absence Petition form, linked below.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Leaves of Absence](#)
- [Leave of Absence Petition Form](#) (PDF)

Oral Exams

All graduate students must complete one or more exams as part of their degree requirements. In addition to department or program guidelines, the University has several policies for University Mandated Oral Exams:

Before a student is allowed to sit for any exam, pre-approval from COGA is required. This approval must be sought by the department at least two weeks prior to the exam date. COGA checks to ensure that the student has fulfilled certain University requirements. The full list of requirements that COGA checks for may be found via the link in the heading above. Students should work with their departments and COGA advisor well in advance of their planned exam date, to schedule their exams in a timely fashion and to ensure that all University policies relating to oral exams are being followed.

The following are University policies pertaining to the oral exam:

Oral Exam Committee Composition

For all oral exams, the committee members must be appointed members of the Graduate Faculty of KU. In addition, a majority of committee members serving on a graduate student oral examination committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty holding regular graduate faculty or, in the case of doctoral committees, dissertation faculty status in the candidate's department/program of study.

Many additional restrictions apply. Master's students should carefully review the University policies and [Master's Degree Checklist](#) pertaining to exams, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies when forming an exam committee.

Oral Exam Attendance (Physical Presence)

The Oral Exam Attendance policy describes rules for physical versus mediated attendance (e.g. Skype or phone) at oral exams.

In all cases, a majority of committee members must be physically present with the student for an exam to commence. The chair must form part of this majority. In cases where the student prefers that all committee members are physically present, the student's preference shall be honored.

Master's students should carefully review the policies below, as well as consult with their Director of Graduate Studies in the formation of an oral exam committee.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Master's Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition](#)
- [Oral Exam Attendance](#)
- [Graduate Faculty Appointments](#)

Graduate Certificate Requirements

The University offers a variety of [Approved Graduate Certificate Programs](#) to encourage current graduate students to pursue interdisciplinary study. Certificate programs also provide an option for a coherent course of advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. There are certain restrictions on the timing of admissions to a Graduate Certificate program and the granting of credit for courses completed. Students whose interests or career goals may be served by a Graduate Certificate should familiarize themselves with the University's policies relating to Certificate programs (found below) early in their graduate career, in addition to individual certificate program requirements.

Related Policies and Forms:

- [Graduate Certificate Programs: Eligibility and Admission Criteria](#)
- [Policies & Procedures for Graduate Certificate Programs](#)

Graduation Requirements (M.A.)

In addition to all program requirements, students planning to graduate must complete all University graduation requirements **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

COGA's graduation checklists contain a comprehensive list of all University requirements for graduation and should be used by every graduating master's student in the College.

[M.A. Degree Checklist](#)

Submission of the final draft of the thesis is done electronically. Students must comply with all University requirements for [formatting](#) and [electronic submission](#) of the thesis. There is no University requirement that students provide a bound or printed copy of the draft.

Students who have concerns or questions about fulfillment of graduation requirements may arrange for a Graduation Appointment with their COGA Advisor following the defense or final exam and in advance of the applicable Application for Graduation deadline. While this appointment is not a requirement, it can be useful to review all

degree requirements with a COGA staff member, verify that the Application for Graduation and Thesis/Dissertation submissions have been completed, and receive guidance on any pending items.

Graduate Studies Funding Opportunities

The Office of Graduate Studies offers [funding opportunities](#) in several different categories. Students interested in applying should direct inquiries to the department's Director of Graduate Studies or to the Office of Graduate Studies. Some of the available funding includes:

[Graduate Travel Awards:](#)

Mabel Jenson Travel Award: intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award (\$500) only once, and funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Graduate Student Research/Academic Development Travel Award: Contingent upon available funds, the Department of Religious Studies is able to support activities directly related to a graduate student's academic program that are not otherwise funded by scholarships, grants, or other university or departmental funds. Eligible activities could include, for example, intensive language study, field or archival research, or short-term workshop or skill development opportunities.

APPENDIX 1: Graduate Program Worksheet – Master of Arts in Religious Studies

Name _____ Email _____

I am taking the option of: Thesis ____ Nonthesis ____ Undecided ____

REQUIRED COURSE WORK (see <http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/>)

Thesis option: 18 of the 30 graduate hours must be in courses in religious studies, the rest in fields related to a declared concentration.

Nonthesis option: 21 of the 33 graduate hours must be in courses in religious studies, the rest in fields related to a declared concentration.

Both Thesis and Nonthesis option programs require the following: REL 601; two theory and method-related seminars; one course in a Western religious tradition and one course in a non-Western religious tradition; three 700 level (or above) seminar courses; twelve hours in the articulated concentration; production and oral defense of a thesis or research portfolio.

REL 601

Semester:

THEORY AND METHOD SEMINARS (see list p. 3)

Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:
------------------	------------------

**WESTERN RELIGIOUS TRADITION
(see list p. 3)**

**NON-WESTERN RELIGIOUS TRADITION
(see list p. 3)**

Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:
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700+ LEVEL SEMINARS (9 hours required) (Theory and Method Seminars also count here)

Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:
Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:

CONCENTRATION (12 hours required)

Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:
Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:

OTHER COURSES

Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:
Course/Semester:	Course/Semester:

THESIS AND NONTHESIS OPTION REQUIREMENTS (After 12 hours)

Declared Concentration	
Advisor	

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS: NONTHESIS OPTION

Additional Committee Members	1.)
	2.)
Oral Portfolio Defense: Date/Results	

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS: THESIS OPTION

Thesis Advisor	
Additional Committee Members	1.)
	2.)
Approval of Thesis Prospectus by Supervisory Committee/Date	
Thesis/Title	
Date of Thesis Defense/Results	

LIST ALL COURSES TAKEN (Thesis: 30 Credits/10 Courses. Non-thesis: 33 Credits/11 Courses)

1.	9.
2.	10.
3.	11.
4.	12.
5.	13.
6.	14.
7.	15.
8.	16.

THEORY AND METHOD SEMINARS (6 credits/2 courses required):

REL 727	Seminar in Religion, Text and Textuality
REL 737	Seminar in Religion, Media and Performance
REL 747	Seminar in Religion, Society and Social Change
REL 757	Seminar in Religious Subjectivity, Experience, and Narrative
REL 767	Seminar in Theory, Method, and History in Religious Studies

COURSES IN WESTERN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS (3 credits/1 course required):

REL 515	Studies in Early Christian Literature and History
REL 525	Jews and Christians
REL 530	Christian Origins: from the Beginnings to Augustine
REL 531	Studies in Christianity
REL 532	Studies in Islam
REL 557	Modern Islamic Reform Movements
REL 560	Classical and Contemporary Jewish Thought
REL 570	Studies in Judaism
REL 732	Seminar in Western Religious Texts: _____
REL 761	Seminar in Western Religious Thought: _____
REL 775	Seminar in Religion and Society in the West: _____

COURSES IN NON-WESTERN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS (3 credits/1 course required):

REL 507	Religion in India
REL 508	Religion in China
REL 509	Religion in Japan
REL 510	Religion in Korea
REL 541	Gods and Goddesses of South Asia
REL 543	Hindu Epics, Past and Present
REL 545	Yoga in Theory, Practice, and History
REL 555	Buddhists and Buddhism in China
REL 733	Seminar in Eastern Religious Texts: _____
REL 762	Seminar in Eastern Religious Thought: _____
REL 776	Seminar in Religion and Society in Asia: _____

APPENDIX 2: KU MA in Religious Studies: Timeline (Rev. 8/2016)

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- If you wish to complete the program in 2 years, you should plan to take 3 courses/semester towards your degree, especially in the first year. The Thesis Option requires 30 total credit hours (10 courses), while the Non-thesis Option requires 33 total credit hours (11 courses).
- Keep in mind that few language courses at KU are offered for graduate credit; if your goals include acquiring language proficiency, you should plan on taking more than 3 courses in some semesters, or on extending your program beyond 2 years. Summer is a great time for intensive language study!
- Be aware that, though many students are able to find funding for a third year of study, third-year students are prioritized below first- and second-year students in departmental funding decisions.
- The following timetable gives you an idea of what you will have to do and when *if you have the goal of graduating in 2 years/4 semesters*. Adding more time to your program will (obviously) allow more flexibility.

SEMESTER 1:

- Coursework: 3 classes (9 credit hours)
 - Take REL 601
 - Take at least one seminar (700+)

SEMESTER 2:

- Coursework: 3 classes (9 credit hours)
 - Take at least one seminar (700+)
 - Make sure you are thinking about how to fulfill other requirements (theory and method seminars; western/non-western courses)
- Other things to think about:
 - Choose Advisor
 - Decide on Concentration
 - Decide Thesis or Nonthesis

REQUIREMENTS for Semester 2:

- By end of 2nd semester (min. 12 credit hours), submit Program of Study for approval by Advisor and Graduate Director (means choosing Advisor and articulating concentration).

SEMESTER 3:

- Coursework: 2–3 classes (6–9 credit hours)
 - Make sure you have a plan to meet all coursework requirements
- Other things to think about:

- **NONTHESIS OPTION:**
 - Think about seminar papers to use for portfolio
 - Begin to compile portfolio bibliography
 - Identify portfolio committee members (Advisor + 2; may include 1 from outside REL)
- **THESIS OPTION:**
 - Decide on topic; compile prospectus.
 - Identify thesis committee members (Advisor + 2; may include 1 from outside REL)

REQUIREMENTS for Semester 3:

- Thesis students should plan to submit their prospectus to their Advisor *no later than the end of the semester prior to their intended semester of graduation.*

SEMESTER 4:

- Coursework: 1–3 classes (3–9 credit hours) – note GTAships and some scholarships require a minimum of 6 credit hours/semester.
 - Finish up any remaining requirements; make sure you will have enough total hours.
 - **THESIS OPTION:** Enroll in REL 899 Thesis.
- Other things to think about:
 - **NONTHESIS OPTION:** Prepare portfolio: revise seminar papers, finalize bibliography, compose intellectual biography.
 - **BOTH:** Establish schedule with committee for distribution, revision, and defense of portfolio or thesis.
 -

REQUIREMENTS for Semester 4:

- You must apply for graduation **early** in the semester in which you intend to graduate.
- Plan your defense dates well in advance!! Defense dates (for portfolio and thesis) must be approved by the College Office of Graduate Affairs at least two weeks before they occur.
- See the Graduate Handbook for more information on deadlines for the completion and defense of the thesis and/or portfolio.
- Be aware also of deadlines by which all defenses must be completed in order to graduate in a given term (typically the Friday of Finals Week). You can find these on the COGA website:
<http://coga.drupal.ku.edu/sites/coga.ku.edu/files/docs/CLAS%20Graduation%20Calendar%2C%2017-18.FINAL.pdf>