

# American Public University System

## Doctoral Handbook

This handbook is designed for doctoral students at American Public University System to understand the policies related to doctoral study. Students should review this handbook carefully to familiarize themselves with program expectations, milestones, and policies. University policies described in the Student Handbook apply to doctoral students, unless otherwise stated. This Doctoral Student Handbook explains the unique features of the doctoral programs and policies pertaining to those features.

The Doctoral Student Handbook may be [downloaded in a PDF format](#).

## Message from the Provost

Welcome to APUS!

Greetings –

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to the American Public University System. I am thrilled that you are part of this university family that seeks to provide you with quality education that will serve you throughout your student journey, your career, and your lifetime. Welcome aboard!

By enrolling as a student at APUS, you have taken the first step toward the completion of your goal—obtaining a degree in higher education. Your sense of accomplishment will only grow as you complete each class and move one step closer to graduation.

As a new student, the path to fulfill your academic dreams and goals can seem daunting—overwhelming even—but I encourage you to take each day in turn and do your absolute best each day. Our faculty and staff are here to support you throughout your academic journey. To help you succeed, I encourage you to work to establish good academic habits, become familiar with student policies, and ask questions as often as you can for clarification and understanding.

Our faculty have extensive backgrounds in their subjects, and many of them work within the field they teach, making them excellent resources who offer a wide range of knowledge and experience. We encourage you to stay engaged within your classes, join a student group, and become involved with organizations within your field to enhance your learning experience.

Finally, I invite you to explore the many resources we have available to assist you throughout the pursuit of your degree and hope that you will be energized and inspired during your academic career.

I wish you the absolute best in the pursuit of your degree here at American Public University System.

My best,

Dr. Elizabeth J. Johnson

Provost

American Public University System

# Definition and Purpose of Professional Practice Doctorates

A Professional Practice Doctorate is an applied degree that focuses on the scholar-practitioner model. In this model, students will conduct research related to their professional experience to bridge theory and practice, advance knowledge in the field, and contribute to organizational change. While maintaining the rigor of a doctoral program, the emphasis on application of theory to practice differentiates the applied doctorate from the traditional PhD program.

# Statement of Purpose

APUS professional practice doctorates are multidisciplinary degrees that address intellectual, cultural, and organizational challenges in the respective profession of study. These programs educate and prepare the next generation of global leaders to advance academic and professional practice in their fields embracing a scholar-practitioner model of education in which practice, research, and multidisciplinary approaches are integrated components. This transformational approach concurrently integrates and develops knowledge, skills, findings, and insights applied to solve or provide greater understanding of complex problems. Likewise, we aim to advance theory and practice to enhance the related disciplines, areas of professional practice, and communities wherein our students, faculty, and University serve.

# Characteristics of Applied Doctoral Programs

Based on the literature, applied or professional practice doctorates differ from PhD programs in several respects:

According to the Council of Graduate Schools' *Task Force Report on the Professional Doctorate*, "a professional doctoral degree should represent preparation for the potential transformation of that field of professional practice, just as a Ph.D. represents preparation for the potential transformation of the basic knowledge in a discipline." Further, this report articulates the following characteristics of the professional doctorate:

1. It addresses an area of professional practice where other degrees are not currently meeting all employer needs.
  2. It emphasizes applied or clinical research or advanced practice.
  3. It includes in its ranks the leaders of the profession who will drive the creative and knowledge-based development of its practices and the development of standards for others.
- Applied doctorates tend to have more structure in their program milestones and timelines for completing these milestones.
  - Applied doctorates focus on problem-solving and research applied to professional practice.
  - Applied doctorates often include a practicum experience.
  - Applied doctorates integrate a variety of assessment types for the dissertation or other milestones, with emphasis on portfolios.
  - Applied doctorates aim to produce "researching professionals" who combine "discovery with application."
  - Applied doctorates involve industry professionals who offer feedback on the curriculum and professional trajectories of graduates.

Building on these characteristics of the applied doctorate, our teaching model draws on evidence-based practices for this type of doctoral degree with an emphasis on adult learners who are working professionals. The core concepts in our teaching model focus on integrating applied research with professional practice. Our programs will:

- Promote autonomous, self-directed learning in our doctoral students.
- Provide in-class and out-of-class opportunities for peer-to-peer and faculty-to-student interactions to enhance the community of learners and student success.
- Create programmatic assessments to develop students' research and writing skills for applied research projects, for complex analyses aimed at diverse audiences, and for professional practice skills.
- Challenge students to advance the discipline by expanding theory and its application through original research and dissemination.

# Program Objectives

American Public University System structures its institutional learning objectives according to the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). As designed by the Lumina Foundation, the DQP includes several broad categories of knowledge and skills: Broad and Integrative Knowledge, Specialized Knowledge, Intellectual Skills, Applied and Collaborative Learning, and Civic and Global Learning. In addition, APUS has added the categories of Digital Information Literacy and Professional Skills to doctoral programs. Doctoral program objectives align with these areas to provide students with a range of skills needed for career advancement and lifelong learning. Specific program objectives speak to the unique knowledge, skills, and abilities within the program and align with the institutional learning objectives. Through the curricular design of the doctoral programs, students will be introduced to key skills, develop them through structured practice, and master those skills by the conclusion of the program.

# Admissions Requirements

## Doctoral Admissions

Admission to APUS doctoral programs is selective. Students are expected to have earned a master's degree (minimum 3.0 GPA) and have work experience in a discipline related to the doctoral program for which they are applying. The Doctoral Admissions Representative communicates with prospective students and answers questions about completing the application. The Doctoral Admissions Representative compiles the necessary documentation and forwards it to the Doctoral Admissions Committee for review.

## Admissions Requirements

The programs' public web pages provide the definitive list of admissions requirements. The list below provides an outline for reference.

- I. *Prior Education and Professional Practice*: MA/MS in the discipline, or closely-related discipline, plus 3-5 years work experience in the field, or closely-related field.
- II. *Curriculum Vitae (CV) or Resume*: This biographical statement document includes work history, professional accomplishments, service to the profession, and, as appropriate, teaching and research experience.
- III. *Grade Point Average (GPA)*: A master's degree with a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or equivalent) is required.
- IV. *Three Doctoral Reference Forms*: Applicants will be prompted to enter the contact information for at least three academic or professional reference providers.
- V. *Official Transcripts*: All official transcripts verifying the award of a master's degree must be sent to APUS from the issuing institution and arrive in sealed envelopes or by official electronic copy. No faxed or unsealed transcripts sent by applicants will be accepted, even for preliminary review purposes. Once received, all admission and transfer credit documents are a permanent part of the student record and the property of APUS. They cannot be returned to the applicant.
- VI. *Unofficial Transcript*: Applicants must provide an unofficial or official copy of other graduate-level work as well as an undergraduate transcript, showing a conferred BA/BS degree.
- VII. *Doctoral Admissions Essay*: Applicants should follow the writing prompt provided.
- VIII. *Admissions Interview*: Final candidates are interviewed by the Doctoral Admissions Committee.
- IX. *English Proficiency*: If an applicant is from a country whose native language is not English (regardless of current residence), they must provide proof of English proficiency in one of the following ways:
  - A. Transcripts from a conferred bachelor's degree or higher in residence at an accredited college/university in the United States.
  - B. Transcripts from at least 12 semester hours of graduate coursework with a GPA of 3.0 (out of 4.0) in residence at an accredited institution in the United States.
  - C. Standardized Test Scores. Please view information on the [admission of international students](#) for more information.
- X. Nonrefundable Application Fee of \$100 (Applicants may request a fee waiver due to financial hardship through the Doctoral Admissions Representative).
- XI. Applications will only be evaluated once the application package is complete.

## Categories of Admission

- I. Admission to Doctoral Program: This category is used for students who satisfy all requirements. There is no conditional acceptance status due to Federal Student Aid requirements.
- II. There is no Post-Baccalaureate entry. Students must have already earned a master's degree in the discipline or closely related discipline, and 5 years of experience in the field, or closely related field.

- III. Prospective students who do not meet the required grade point average of 3.0 in their master's degree course work may choose to take a graduate certificate, micro credential, or learning track from APUS in their prospective field of study prior to admission into APUS doctoral programs. The resulting GPA must be 3.0 or higher.

## **Doctoral Admission Deferral**

After acceptance, students may choose to defer, not to exceed one year from date of acceptance with a guaranteed place during that year. Students who do not enter the program within one year from date of acceptance may subsequently request to be reconsidered for admission. To do so, students should update their application materials and must submit the nonrefundable admissions fee. Such requests will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee.

# Application Information

**Application Deadlines:** Complete applications with supporting materials must be received by April 1st . Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Decisions regarding admissions are generally made by June 15th. New doctoral students start in September of each year.

**Application Review:** Completed applications are reviewed following a holistic admissions model by a Doctoral Admissions Committee composed of the Department Chairs and program faculty. The committee selects students based on evidence of outstanding intellectual ability, strong commitment to applied research and practice in the discipline, and demonstrated ability to successfully complete post-baccalaureate study. The process includes an evaluation of an applicant's curriculum vitae/resume, professional goal essay, official transcript, three reference forms, admissions interview, and prior education and professional practice.



# How to Pay for a Course

The following information is covered in this section of the APUS Student Handbook:

- [APUS Doctoral Student Fees & Tuition](#)
- [APUS Doctoral Programs Refund Schedule](#)
- [Methods of Payment Available](#)
- [Consequences of Unpaid Balances](#)
- [Definition of Full-Time Status](#)
- [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\)](#)
- [Code of Conduct - Student Loans](#)

# **APUS Doctoral Student Fees & Tuition**

## **APUS Doctoral Student Fees**

Application Fee: \$100

Course materials: Through our University Book Grant, textbooks and/or e-books are provided at no charge to students in the doctoral program.

Graduation fee: \$100

## **APUS Doctoral Programs Tuition**

### **Doctor of Strategic Intelligence: \$50,054**

- Course work: 58 hours at \$863\* per credit
- Dissertation phase, one credit per term (\$863) until the dissertation is defended and all graduation requirements are complete.
- Residency Costs: First and third residencies are virtual; student pays the cost for the second residency
- Course Materials: Included in tuition

### **Doctor of Global Security: \$50,054**

- Course work: 58 hours at \$863\* per credit
- Dissertation phase, one credit per term (\$863) until the dissertation is defended and all graduation requirements are complete.
- Residency Costs: First and third residencies are virtual; student pays the cost for the second residency
- Course Materials: Included in tuition

\* Tuition rate is effective starting with the May 2025 courses.

# APUS Doctoral Programs Refund Schedule

## 16-Week Term – Doctoral Tuition Refund Schedule

The tuition refund schedule is based on term progression, not individual courses. Effective May 2025, doctoral students will have the [same refund schedule as other APUS students](#).

Withdrawal Request Date	Tuition Refund Percentage
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Before or During Week 1	100%
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During Week 2	100%
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During Weeks 3 and 4	75%
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During Weeks 5 through 8	50%
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During Weeks 9 through 16	No Refund
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# Methods of Payment Available

Students are ultimately responsible for all tuition and fees incurred, regardless of any anticipated third-party payments (e.g., tuition assistance, loans, etc.).

A number of payment methods are available for covering tuition costs. The below links provide more information about each payment method.

- [Automatic Debit Plan](#)
- [Credit Card](#)
- [Department of Defense Training Funds](#)
- [Employer Voucher](#)
- [Federal Government Employee Tuition Reimbursement](#)
- [Federal Student Aid](#)
- [Federal Grants](#)
- [Outside Scholarships](#)
- [State Grant Programs](#)
- [VA Benefits](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation Funding](#)

# Automatic Debit Plan

The University System offers an Automatic Debit Plan (ADP) to enable students to spread tuition payments over time by having them automatically charged to a credit card on a preset schedule. The amount and number of payments are proportional to the length of the course and ensure course tuition is paid before the end of the academic period. Students in 16-week courses make four ADP payments. Students in 8-week courses make two ADP payments. To be eligible for the ADP plan, a student must be registered for credit-bearing courses. Audit students are not eligible for ADP.

## ADP Eligibility

To be eligible to use ADP, students must:

- Have declared an undergraduate or graduate degree as their academic goal
- Use a credit card as payment
- Have an acceptable credit history with APUS

For more information regarding our payment plans, please visit the [AMU](#) or [APU](#) tuition & finance site.

# Credit Card

Students may pay their tuition and any other charges with a Master Card®, Visa® or Discover® card.

# Department of Defense Training Funds

If a student serves in the military or the Federal Civil Service, they should contact their Education Services Officer (ESO) or Civilian Training Representative to find out if they are eligible for training funds before registering for classes. These funds are not administered by DANTES and are typically reserved for courses that apply directly to a student's job. If eligible, a student may pay tuition with command or agency training funds by submitting a DD-1556 (or other applicable form).

# Employer Voucher

Many corporations and companies, including the federal government, offer educational benefits to their employees through an Employer Voucher process. Students should check with their Human Resources representative for specific details. Our university system will provide any necessary documentation regarding tuition, fees, accreditation, course content, or other information that may be required.

Because direct billing cannot be contingent upon a final grade or completion of a course, students will need to pay upfront if their employer requires a specific minimum final grade before a guarantee of tuition payment can be made. We recommend considering using our ADP Payment option if the student falls under this employer reimbursement system. Students can learn more at our [AMU](#) or [APU](#) tuition & finance site.

## Employer Voucher Requirements

- A student's employer must provide our Finance Office with a guarantee of tuition payment through an Employer Voucher. This voucher should be faxed to our Finance Office prior to the start date of the course.
- Prior to course registration, students must obtain their Employer's Identification Number (EIN), which can be found on any W-2 form or supplied by the employer's Human Resources Office.
- At the time of registration, students must choose "Employer Voucher" as payment type and enter the EIN.



# Federal Government Employee Tuition Reimbursement

If a student is a full-time employee of the federal government, they may be eligible for reimbursement of their tuition and course material costs associated with their studies. The Office of Personnel Management supports job-related studies with up to 100% tuition reimbursement and may also cover the cost of all required course materials. The extent of this coverage depends on:

- Approval by both the student's immediate supervisor and their local Civilian Training Director confirming the course to be directly related to their job requirements and professional development.
- Funds available for the course. In some cases, limited funding may preclude full tuition reimbursement and/or course material cost coverage.

Students should confirm approval and financial assistance before registering for any courses.

# Federal Grants

Grants are a type of federal aid that does not need to be repaid. APUS participates in the Federal Pell Grant program.

Federal Pell Grant eligibility is based on financial need, as well as other eligibility requirements for Federal Student Aid (FSA).

Students at APUS may be eligible for the Federal Pell Grant. For more information, please visit our [AMU](#) or [APU](#) tuition & finance site.

# Federal Student Aid

An APUS student may be eligible to use the two primary types of Federal Student Aid at APUS.

- Loans, which need to be repaid.
- Grants, which do not need to be repaid.

Students should visit our [AMU](#) or [APU](#) tuition & finance site to determine Federal Student Aid eligibility.

# Outside Scholarships

Students may use an outside scholarship to cover their tuition at APUS. We encourage students to investigate the availability of grants or scholarships from all sources - review the APUS website, research the Department of Education resources, and contact local or private organizations like AMVETS, Rotary Clubs, community foundations, or the local Chamber of Commerce.

For more information on outside scholarships, please visit our [AMU](#) or [APU](#) tuition & finance site.

# State Grant Programs

We encourage students to research grants from the state in which they currently reside. To find out more about grants in a student's home state, please contact our [Financial Aid Office](#).

## West Virginia Higher Education Grant

The West Virginia Higher Education Grant is a need-based financial aid program designed to ensure West Virginia students who have financial need are given an opportunity to pursue a college education. Graduate students do not qualify.

### Award Amounts

Award amounts are based on demonstrated financial need and may be used in conjunction with other forms of state, federal, and institutional financial aid. Awards may vary from year to year and are contingent upon annual funding by the WV State legislature.

The grant may be renewed until the student's course of study is completed but may not exceed an additional three academic years beyond the initial award.

### Eligibility Requirements

In order to qualify for a West Virginia Higher Education Grant a student must meet all eligibility requirements which include:

- A citizen of the United States
- West Virginia residency for at least 12 months before the date of application
- Be a high school graduate or earned a General Education Development (GED diploma)
- Demonstrate an established level of financial need
- Demonstrate academic promise
- Enroll at a participating institution as a full-time undergraduate student
- Have not previously earned a bachelor's degree

### Application

To apply students must file the [FAFSA](#) as soon as possible and no later than April 15th of the year for which they plan to enroll in school.

### Contact

Financial Aid Advising

Email: [finaid@apus.edu](mailto:finaid@apus.edu) ([doctoralfinance@apus.edu](mailto:doctoralfinance@apus.edu) for doctoral students)

Phone: 877-755-2787

[Learn more about the WV Higher Education Grant.](#)

## West Virginia HEAPS Grant Program

The goal of the Higher Education Adult Part-Time Student (HEAPS) Grant Program is to encourage and enable West

Virginia students who demonstrate financial need to continue their education on a part-time basis at undergraduate institutions of higher education.

## **Award Amounts**

For students enrolled part-time at APUS, the award is based upon the average per credit hour tuition and required fees charged. Total aid, including a HEAPS award, may not exceed the recipient's total cost of attendance.

Recipients are selected each year by institutions based on the student's eligibility and the availability of funds. Awards will be made on a first come, first served basis. Students will be made aware of their award through the school.

The WV HEAPS grant award can be renewed until the program of study is completed but cannot exceed an additional nine years beyond the first year of the award. Renewal consideration will be based on meeting satisfactory academic progress, filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), demonstrating financial need, and completing an institutional application.

Awards are contingent upon annual funding of the program by the West Virginia State Legislature.

## **Eligibility Requirements:**

- A West Virginia resident for at least 12 months prior to applying
- Citizen or a permanent resident of the United States
- Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [StudentAid.gov/FAFSA](https://studentaid.gov/FAFSA)
- Have a high school diploma, TASC (formerly GED) or high school equivalent
- Demonstrate financial need as verified through submission of the FAFSA;
- Not be in default on a higher education loan
- Not incarcerated in a correctional facility
- Is in compliance with all Standards of Academic Progress

## **Application**

To apply, and for priority consideration, students must file the [FAFSA](#) for the award year during which they plan to enroll. Students identified as eligible may be asked to complete additional certifications.

## **Contact**

Financial Aid Advising

Email: [finaid@apus.edu](mailto:finaid@apus.edu) ([doctoralfinance@apus.edu](mailto:doctoralfinance@apus.edu) for doctoral students)

Phone: 877-755-2787

[Learn more about the WV HEAPS Grant.](#)

# VA Benefits

If a student is a veteran of the U.S. military, there are multiple GI Bill® benefits for which they might qualify.

If a student is using VA benefits to cover their tuition, they will need to initially pay their tuition with a credit card upon registration or set up the automatic debit plan. Also, *due to Veteran's Administration (VA) Consent Compliance regulations in relation to the Principles of Excellence Executive Order, APUS is now required to gain and log a student's consent, for each course, prior to submitting their enrollment to the VA.*

If a student is eligible to combine Department of Defense (DoD) tuition assistance with VA benefits, they must notify their VA office.

To determine eligibility for VA benefits, students should contact the VA office online at [www.GIBill.va.gov](http://www.GIBill.va.gov) or call them toll free at 888-442-4551.

For information on the number of semester hours required for full-, three quarter-, or half-time VA benefit levels, go to the [Definition of Full-Time Status for VA Students](#).

For more information regarding using VA benefits for APUS courses, please visit our [AMU](#) or [APU](#) tuition & finance site.

If a student is experiencing difficult circumstances while coordinating VA benefits and tuition payment, they should contact [vaquestions@apus.edu](mailto:vaquestions@apus.edu) for assistance.

# Veteran Readiness and Employment Service (VR&E), Chapter 31 Funding

As a veteran, students may be entitled to Veteran Readiness and Employment Service (VR&E), Chapter 31, education benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. VR&E benefits allow the student to receive benefits that may cover the cost of tuition, fees, and related education expenses. VR&E may also pay a stipend for course enrollments, based on their enrollment status.

If a student is interested in determining their eligibility for this program, they may call the VA at 1-800-827-1000 and ask about Veteran Readiness and Employment Service benefits. Students may also learn more online by visiting the [VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment \(VR&E\) website](#). From this site, students can also [apply](#) for the benefit online. If it is determined by the VA that a student is eligible, the VA will direct them to a VA Regional Benefit Office (in their local area) to meet with an assigned VR&E counselor to review their goals and be approved to begin enrolling in courses.

Once a student has been approved for Veteran Readiness and Employment Service benefits, their VR&E counselor will need to submit a Purchase Order authorization for educational benefits to APUS using the Tungsten Network portal. This Purchase Order authorization will allow APUS to grant course access for upcoming registrations and submit a student's enrollment (22-1999) to their VR&E counselor.

We recommend that the student's VR&E counselor submit a Purchase Order authorization with starting and ending dates to supply the student with authorization to coincide with our monthly course start dates to allow students the flexibility to schedule courses based on their personal schedule (courses start the first Monday of each month). Students can contact [VocRehab@apus.edu](mailto:VocRehab@apus.edu) with any questions or for further assistance.

The [State Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation Program](#) provides grants to states to support a wide range of services designed to help individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Eligible individuals are those who have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment, who can benefit from vocational rehabilitation (VR) services for employment, and who require VR services. Priority must be given to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities if a state is unable to serve all eligible individuals.

If a student is a disabled civilian, they should visit the [Rehabilitation Services Administration website](#) for more information regarding Vocational Rehabilitation benefits.

Students can contact [vaquestions@apus.edu](mailto:vaquestions@apus.edu) with any questions regarding how to use their Vocational Rehabilitation benefits at APUS.



# Consequences of Unpaid Balances

APUS provides high quality educational programs at an affordable cost. Students are responsible for understanding their charges and meeting financial obligations associated with their education. While we understand that students may receive financial assistance from third parties, including federal student aid, the ultimate financial responsibility belongs to the student.

For students using U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs educational benefits, please refer to the section in the student handbook: “ [Department of Veteran Affairs \(VA\) Payments](#).”

If for any reason a payment is not received and a balance exists on a student account, students will be placed on Financial Hold. This status includes third-party payments, such as TA, FSA, or scholarships that have not been received as expected.

Students with a Financial Hold will be blocked from the following while the balance is remaining:

- Registration for another term.
- Having a diploma or certificate issued.
- Being readmitted to the University.
- Students should contact Student Support at [finaidaccounts@apus.edu](mailto:finaidaccounts@apus.edu) as soon as possible to resolve any outstanding balances on their accounts.

## Payment Policies

Tuition and fees are due in full prior to the beginning of each academic period (session or semester) through direct payment or approved payment arrangements. Balances may be viewed through a student's online ledger.

Students are responsible for making payment or entering into an approved payment arrangement prior to the start of the academic period regardless of whether notification was received regarding an unpaid balance.

Students are financially responsible for all unpaid balances including those that result from payments not received from, or payments returned to, third parties. Third parties include, but are not limited to, Veteran's benefits, employer education benefits, scholarships, and Federal Student Aid (FSA).

Notifications regarding account balances are sent to a student's email address on record. Students are responsible for maintaining their correct contact information with APUS.

## Outstanding Accounts and Collections Policy

Students are responsible for charges assessed to their accounts. There may be financial impacts related to dropping or withdrawing from a course or the University.

Student accounts are considered to be in good standing if by the payment deadline at the beginning of each academic period: (a) tuition and fees are paid in full; (b) students have an approved payment arranged (approved by the Business Office) that is current in its payments; (c) students have approved tuition assistance through a third party; or (d) students have approved financial aid through Federal Student Aid; or (e) a scholarship sufficient to cover their account balance.

A student account is not in good standing if there is an outstanding balance that is past due that will not be paid through an approved payment plan, third party, scholarship, or Federal Student Aid.

A student account will be placed on a balance due hold if third party payments, including but not limited to, Veteran's

benefits, employer education benefits, scholarships, and Federal Student Aid are not received or are returned due to participation or eligibility rules. For students using U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs educational benefits, please refer to the section in the student handbook: [Department of Veteran Affairs \(VA\) Payments](#).

If activity on a student account results in a balance later in, or after the term, a balance due hold will be placed on the account at that time.

If a student account is not in good standing it may, among other things, result in:

- Cancellation of enrollment
- Denial of registration for future classes
- Referral to collections agency
- Denial of readmission
- Denial of graduation

In the event a student becomes delinquent, the account may be referred to a collection agency and additional costs may become an additional obligation.

When an account is referred to an outside collection agency, the past due account may be reported to all national credit bureaus.

Once the account is referred to a collection agency, students will be contacted by a representative of that agency. Payments are then made directly to that agency and not the University.

## Billing Rights Summary

If a student believes their account balance is incorrect, or would like more information about a transaction on their account, they should contact us as follows:

- Telephone: 877-755-2787 ext: 8227
- E-mail: [finaidaccounts@apus.edu](mailto:finaidaccounts@apus.edu)
- Mail:  
American Public University System  
Attn: Business Office  
111 West Congress Street  
Charles Town, WV 25414

The following information should be included in the request:

- Student name and student ID#.
- The dollar amount of the suspected error.
- A description of the error and an explanation, if possible, of why the student believes the error occurred or the reason for disputing the balance.

Students do not have to pay the amount in question while the University investigates, but are obligated to pay the portion of the bill that is not in question.

# **Definition of Full-Time Status**

## **Definition of Full-Time Status for VA Benefits**

Any questions regarding doctoral studies enrollment status should be directed to the VA counselor designated to the doctoral student.

## **Definition of Full-Time Status for FSA Benefits**

For FSA, students in the doctoral program will be considered full-time for each 16-week term\*. This includes terms during which the dissertation is being worked.

- Full-Time = 6+ credit hours (courses) or 1 credit hour dissertation course
- Half-Time = 3 credit hours (courses) per term

Any questions regarding doctoral studies enrollment status should be directed to the assigned Financial Aid Advisor.

# Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) indicates the successful completion of coursework towards a degree or certificate.

- According to federal regulations, students who fail to make SAP in their education program will lose their eligibility to receive Federal Student Aid (FSA) funds (i.e., financial aid).
- SAP rules apply to all students applying for financial aid, including those who have not previously received financial aid.
- APUS evaluates a student's SAP at the end of each payment period (i.e., semester). If APUS determines that a student has failed to meet the University's SAP standards, the student may be placed on a "financial aid warning" semester during which they may retain their FSA eligibility. This determination is made at APUS's discretion.
  - Students are only eligible for financial aid warning status if the following criteria is met:
    - The student was previously meeting SAP without a warning or appeal in the most recent completed semester or was in the first payment period of their program when they failed to meet SAP.
    - The student had no "unearned F's" in the previous semester.
- If APUS determines that a student has failed to meet the University's SAP standards and determines that a financial aid warning is inappropriate, the student will lose their FSA eligibility. Students who lose their FSA eligibility may appeal the loss provided there are extenuating circumstances that inhibited their academic progress (e.g., student illness or injury, death of a relative.)
- Students who submit an appeal must provide:
  - A statement that explains the extenuating circumstances that contributed to the student's failure to meet SAP and what has changed in the student's situation that will allow the student to either meet SAP at the next evaluation or to meet the requirements of an academic plan that would lead to meeting SAP in the future.
  - Documentation that confirms the extenuating circumstances and date(s) during which the events occurred.
- If an appeal is approved, the student is placed on "financial aid probation" and their FSA eligibility is reinstated for one semester. The student must meet SAP at the next evaluation or meet the requirements of the academic plan in order to remain FSA eligible for future semesters.
- If a student's appeal is unsuccessful, the student may take classes to demonstrate improvement for a future appeal, but they cannot receive FSA to pay for those classes. A student cannot meet SAP simply by paying for their classes on their own but must earn the necessary GPA or completion rate.
- To otherwise restore FSA eligibility, students must achieve the GPA and credit hour completion targets as defined in the policy.

SAP is evaluated based on grades posted at the end of each semester (defined as a 16-week period of academic study).

- The criteria used to measure Satisfactory Academic Progress include:
  - Cumulative grade point average (qualitative)
  - Credit hour completion/Program Pace (quantitative)
- The requirements of each criterion must be met and are described in detail below.

## Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)

- Cumulative GPA is the qualitative measure of SAP, meaning that it looks at the quality of the grades that each student earns in their courses.
- CGPA is initially calculated after 6 undergraduate credits, or 6 graduate credits are completed at APUS. Evaluation thereafter occurs at the end of each semester according to the table below.
- Only credits completed at APUS with a final grade of A through F are included in the CGPA calculation.
- If a failed course is retaken, the later grade will replace the failed grade and factor into the CGPA.
- To meet SAP requirements, students must maintain a CGPA that meets or exceeds our minimum as shown in the

chart below.

- Students who fail to meet CGPA requirements will be determined ineligible for FSA.

## **SAP Criteria on Cumulative GPA (CGPA) and Credits Completed**

### **Total Credits Completed Minimum CGPA Required for Financial Aid**

**Doctoral Students 6+**

**3.00**

## **Credit Hour Completion and Program Pace**

Credit hour completion is the quantitative measure of SAP, meaning that students must complete a certain percentage of courses toward certificate or degree completion in order to maintain FSA eligibility. Each academic program within our university system has a defined number of credit hours required for completion. To maintain SAP, students must achieve a minimum percentage of credits completed (i.e., earned) versus credits attempted.

- A student must complete their program within 150% of the published length of the program. For example, a student in a two-year program must be on track to complete their program within three years.
- Any course in which the student remains beyond Week One (add/drop) will count towards attempted credits regardless of the grade received.
- Undergraduate courses with a final undergraduate grade of A through D- will be counted towards credits attempted and completed.
- Graduate courses with a final grade of A through C will be counted towards credits attempted and completed.
- Final grades that fall below the minimums (D- for undergraduates and C for graduates) are not counted as credits completed but will be considered credits attempted.
- Courses with grades of incomplete (“I”) will not be considered attempted until a final grade is earned by the student, or the Registrar or instructor converts the “I” grade to an “F”.
- Doctoral courses with a final grade of Satisfactory (“S”) will be counted towards credits attempted and completed.
- Doctoral courses with a final grade of Unsatisfactory (“U”) are not counted as credits completed but will be considered credits attempted.
- Courses from which a student has withdrawn (“W”) will be counted towards credits attempted.
- Courses dropped within the add/drop period will not be counted towards credits attempted.
- Course retakes: All attempted courses are factored into the credit hour completion percentage.
- Remedial courses do not count towards attempted credits; however, APUS does not offer remedial courses.
- Repeated courses will count as attempted courses.
- For students who change programs, credits that apply to the new program will be counted in credit hour completion and program pace.

*Note: All students are required to log into each of their courses during Week One and submit an academic activity. Students who do not submit this assignment during the first week of class will be administratively dropped from any courses for which this assignment has not been completed.*

## **SAP Criteria Based on Credits Attempted versus Credits Completed**

### **Credits Attempted Credits Completed %**

Doctoral Students 6-9 67%

10+ 75%

## **Financial Aid Appeal Process**

If APUS determines that a student has not met SAP, the student will be placed on “Financial Aid Denial” status, meaning they have lost their FSA eligibility. Any student placed on “Financial Aid Denial” status may appeal their denial due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., situations that have had a negative effect on the student’s ability to successfully meet SAP standards, such as student illness or injury, death of a relative, or other special circumstances).

An electronic SAP Appeal Form is made available to students who are not meeting SAP through their ecampus. This form may be found in the ecampus FINANCE CENTER under the subsection for “Satisfactory Academic Progress”. Students who complete an appeal are required to provide supporting documentation. A hard copy SAP appeal form is also available, as needed.

Appeals must include a written statement submitted to APUS Financial Aid Services that addresses the extenuating circumstances that contributed to the student’s failure to meet SAP and what has changed in the student’s situation that will allow the student to either meet SAP at the next evaluation or to meet the requirements of an academic plan that would lead to meeting SAP in the future. The student also must provide documentation to support the existence of the extenuating circumstances. The deadline to submit the completed appeal form, with supporting documentation, to Financial Aid Services is the Thursday of the start week of the semester after the student has been informed of their “Financial Aid Denial” status. No appeals will be accepted for after that date. An appeals Committee will consider all appeals. Students will be notified by email of the committee’s decision. All decisions made by the committee are final.

## **Loss of Financial Aid Eligibility**

Students failing to meet or maintain SAP during any period of evaluation will be placed on "Financial Aid Denial" status and will lose FSA eligibility. Students who receive veterans’ education benefits will also lose eligibility for that funding. Students will be notified of their “Financial Aid Denial” status by our university system financial aid staff. To regain FSA eligibility, students must successfully appeal the determination or otherwise satisfy all SAP requirements.

## **Re-establishing Financial Aid Eligibility**

Students placed on “Financial Aid Denial” status may reestablish their FSA eligibility by attending and earning the GPA and semester hour requirements of the SAP policy without the use of FSA funding. Once students meet SAP requirements, APUS will package and disburse eligible aid for which they have applied.

## **Financial Aid "Warning" Period**

The school may reinstate eligibility for aid for one payment period and may do so without a student appeal. This “financial aid warning” status may be granted only to students who were making SAP in the prior payment period in which they were enrolled or who were in the first payment period of their program when they failed to meet SAP. The financial aid warning is applied through APUS automation; the student is sent an email notification, and the status is noted on the Financial Information Screen in PAD.

- Students do not qualify for financial aid warning status if there are any “unearned F’s” in last semester
- Typically, a financial aid warning is granted only once. APUS in its discretion may permit a second warning status if the student meets SAP standards at the next evaluation, then subsequently fails to meet SAP.

# **SAP Policy Provisions (Waivers and Flexibility) Related to the COVID-19 National Emergency**

Section 3509 of the CARES Act allows institutions to exclude from the quantitative component (pace measurement) of satisfactory academic progress (SAP) attempted credits a student was unable to complete as a result of the COVID-19 national emergency. APUS has opted not to exercise this flexibility and instead directs students to use the appeal process if a determination is made that the student has not met SAP and is therefore FSA ineligible. APUS may exercise discretion and flexibility with document requirements if it is determined that circumstances related to Covid-19 contributed to the student's inability to meet SAP.

# Code of Conduct - Student Loans

American Public University System subscribes to the code of conduct set forth in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. As APUS currently participates in both Private and Direct Loans, the APUS Financial Aid Office has not and will not participate in revenue sharing with Lenders, Guarantors, or Servicers of these loans. Staff is banned from receiving gifts from any of the above agencies other than those considered of minimal value by the federal regulations.

The Financial Aid/Financial Services Offices will in no way influence the choice of lender for private loans. APUS has posted private lender information based on past student choice and availability by local regional and national options; no specific lender is recommended over any others. The information is posted to assist in student research only. Processing is not affected by the student's choice of lender by APUS, but service levels may vary based on individual lenders operating models.

Caveat: APUS does not have and will not have any contractual agreement with any lender to provide private loans to our students. APUS may make available information on lenders who participate in these programs and the rates and benefits that apply to each. APUS and APUS employees will not encourage the use of any particular lender for private or alternative loans. APUS will supply the student seeking a private loan with the required Truth in Lending information. APUS employees requested to serve on advisory boards for lenders, guarantors, servicers, or state agencies will not accept any compensation for service other than direct expenses such as travel, lodging, and food related to such service.

All APUS Financial Aid/Financial Services employees are required to sign that they have read and understand the Code of Conduct. Violations of this Code of Conduct may result in termination of employment.



# How to Register for Courses

Once a student has been admitted into the program and has committed to attending, they will register for courses in accordance with their academic plan, as well as in consultation with doctoral advising as needed.

## Minimum Courses Required Per Year

In order to remain enrolled as a student at APUS, a student must register and complete at least one course in each 12-month period. If students do not complete at least one course every 12 months, they will be considered as having left the university and will be disenrolled. Courses from which a student withdraws do not meet this requirement. Other activities with the university other than course completion do not prevent a student from being disenrolled.

If a student knows they will need to take a break from their studies, they should submit the online **Program Hold Request Form** at no charge, so that their place in their program is reserved.

Students who have questions regarding the annual requirement should contact [DoctoralStudies@apus.edu](mailto:DoctoralStudies@apus.edu).

## Registering from the Academic Plan

*Effective May 2025:*

If students have enrolled in a degree or certificate program, they can register directly from the program requirements displayed on **My Academic Plan** by clicking on any course. Registering this way will help prevent students from registering for a course that will not fulfill a requirement in their program.

Students can register for a course as early as 5 months before it begins and up to 1 week before the course starts. View the **academic calendar** schedule for open and close registration dates for each 8- or 16-week session.

As students complete courses, they will see that progress reflected on their Academic Plan. For questions regarding the online academic plan, students should contact [doctoralstudies@apus.edu](mailto:doctoralstudies@apus.edu).

## Maximum Number of Courses Permitted

During the first 16 weeks, students may take no more than the three courses required by their program.

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# Veteran's Benefits

Students interested in applying for VA Educational Benefits should complete an application for benefits on the [VA website](#). Please note that the VA Certifying Official (VACO) at APUS cannot determine if students are eligible for VA Educational Benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs may approve or deny benefits, based on the information provided on the application.

## Students who have never applied for VA Benefits

Students who have never completed an application for VA benefits should complete the online application, VA Form 22-1990, using the VA's [online application](#) program. When applying online, the application will be electronically submitted to the VA Processing Center.

Students should print an application and confirmation page for personal records, before completing the online application. Once the VA has completed a review of a student's application, the VA will mail a Certificate of Eligibility (COE), outlining the entitled chapter benefit and the number of months of benefit available for use. A copy of the COE is not submitted to the school. APUS requires students to fax, 877-480-4236, or email, [VAQuestions@apus.edu](mailto:VAQuestions@apus.edu), a copy of the COE to the school.

## Students transferring or receiving transferred benefits

Students who are receiving benefits transferred by a service member (Chapter 35) will need to complete a [22-5490](#), Application for Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance. The completed form will need to be sent to the St. Louis RPO for processing.

If a student has been transferred Chapter 33 benefits, the VA will send a Certificate of Eligibility, which will need to be submitted to APUS. Please see the Chapter 33 process for more information.

## Applications for VA Benefits

- For prompt form processing, students should complete the application for [VA benefits](#).
- Students who have never used VA benefits should complete the [22-1990](#).
- Veterans transferring the Montgomery GI Bill® (Chapter 35) to a spouse or dependent, should complete the [22-5490](#).
- Veterans transferring the Post 9/11 GI Bill® (Chapter 33) to a spouse or dependent, please complete the [22-1990e](#).

\*GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

## VA Enrollment Information

Enrollment verification cannot be submitted until the APUS Military Assistance Office receives a copy of the completed VA paperwork and students have successfully enrolled in a class. Once the paperwork is processed and students have started classes, the VA Certifying Official will electronically submit the Certification of Enrollment (22-1999) to the VA. All VA enrollment verifications will be submitted after the session drop period, beginning the second week of courses. Once enrollment has been submitted, students will receive an email from the VA as verification.

## WAVE Enrollment Verification

The VA requires that students using GI Bill<sup>®</sup> benefits (excluding Ch. 33) verify their enrollment monthly. Verification begins on the last day of the month that courses students are enrolled in. Students will not receive VA benefits if they do not verify through WAVE. Please note that it may take up to 6 weeks for enrollment information to be available in WAVE. Attendance can be verified through the [WAVE website](#) or by calling the VA at 1-877-823-2378.

## VA Payments

Students using Chapters 30, 32, 35, 1606, and 1607 will receive monthly payments from the VA based on their enrollment status each month enrolled in courses. The VA makes payments based on monthly attendance and not semester attendance. Payments are sent from the VA by direct deposit or check after a student has verified their monthly attendance through WAVE. APUS requires students using Chapters 30, 32, 35, 1606, and 1607 to make payment arrangements with the University before the start of courses. A 22-1999 Enrollment Verification **will not** be submitted until payment arrangements have been finalized.

Tuition and Fees for Chapter 33 are paid directly to APUS. If students are not receiving the 100% benefit rate, payment arrangements will need to be made with the University before course access. Current VA payment rates may be viewed on the [VA's website](#).

## Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)

Beginning for courses starting on or after 1 October 2011, students (other than those on Active Duty) will receive a housing allowance for courses solely in distance learning with the Chapter 33 benefit. The housing allowance payable is equal to ½ the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents. A student *must* be enrolled at a rate of pursuit greater than half-time (.51%) to receive this benefit. Please remember that the housing allowance is pro-rated based on enrollment status, percentage of eligibility, and dates of course enrollments.

## Using VA Benefits at Multiple Institutions

The VA requires students to declare an institution in which they will receive a degree or certification. VA benefits cannot be used at multiple institutions without a declaration of a primary school and subsequent secondary school. For more information regarding using benefits at APUS and another institution, please contact [VAQuestions@apus.edu](mailto:VAQuestions@apus.edu).

## VA Consent to Enrollments Submitted

When a student selects a VA payment option (Ex. Ch. 33 payment) at the time of registration, they are consenting that they wish to have their enrollment for that particular course(s) submitted to the VA on their behalf. Students who select a payment other than VA during registration will be prompted for consent to have the course(s) submitted to the VA on their behalf. Students who register before submitting VA documents to APUS may be required to complete a VA Consent Form to identify courses or terms students would like to have submitted to the VA.

## Submitting Enrollments to the VA (VA 22-1999)

APUS will submit all enrollments to the VA electronically, beginning after the course drop period (second week of courses). Once enrollment has been submitted to the VA, students will receive an automated email from the VA notifying them that the enrollment has been received.

## Yellow Ribbon Program

The Yellow Ribbon Program is an agreement between the VA and participating institutions to cover all or a portion of

tuition and fees charged after a student has exceeded the maximum benefit rate. APUS is a Yellow Ribbon participating institution. Students can learn more about the [Yellow Ribbon Program online](#) or contact [VAQuestions@apus.edu](mailto:VAQuestions@apus.edu) with additional questions about this program.

## **Term (Course) Drops/Withdrawals**

A 22-1999 enrollment verification will be sent to the VA by the school VACO within 30 days of a change of enrollment, which may include a course drop or withdrawal. VA enrollments will be adjusted or terminated as of the date of student drop/withdrawal. A drop or withdrawal after the first date of the term may result in a VA request for repayment of BAH, Books/Supplies, or tuition from the student as of the date of the enrollment change.

## **Mitigating Circumstances**

Mitigating circumstances are circumstances beyond the student's control that prevent the student from continuing in school or that cause the student to reduce credits. The VA requires schools to document potential mitigating circumstances. Any withdrawal with a mitigating circumstance selected will require additional documentation of the mitigating circumstance to be submitted to APUS before the mitigating circumstance is reported. [Learn more about information on mitigating circumstances](#). If mitigating circumstances cannot be validated, the VA may request repayment of BAH, Books/Supplies, or tuition from the student, as of the first date of the term.

## **Graduations**

When a VA student has successfully completed the requirements for the program of study and has officially conferred the program of study, APUS will report the student's graduation to the VA via electronic certification. All Chapter 33 students will have the graduation fee accessed by APUS added to the last VA enrollment submitted for the program being conferred.

## **Course Extensions**

Please note that if a student is granted a course extension from their professor, they will *not* receive VA benefits during the extension period. The VA will automatically discontinue benefits on the day after the original term ending date. Benefits will not start until a new course has been enrolled and the verification has been sent to the VA. Submission of a course extension for VA benefits will likely result in an overpayment to the student and will require future repayment.

## **Academic Probation /Unsatisfactory Academic Progress**

VA requires institutions to report students who are not meeting an institution's academic standards. When APUS is made aware of a VA student no longer meeting academic standards, notification will be electronically submitted to the VA on the student's VA record.

## **Excessive Credits**

Students who are using VA benefits for courses may not register for courses that are not applicable to the current program of study. Any courses that are deemed not applicable to the current degree program will be considered excessive credits and an enrollment for the courses will not be submitted.

## **Prior Credits**

The VA requires that all prior credit must be evaluated by APUS before a student's initial enrollment. Students must

identify any prior credit that has been earned. Additionally, a Joint Services Transcript or Community College of the Air Force transcript must be received by APUS for all students who will be using VA benefits for any courses with APUS. Students who are currently having prior credits evaluated are strongly encouraged to register only for courses in which they know they will not receive prior credit. If prior credit is later given for a course a student is currently taking, APUS must terminate the enrollment, as this would constitute excessive credits. Terminations of enrollment will likely result in a reduction in BAH and/or books and supplies payment for the course/term a prior credit was awarded.

## **Student VA Tuition & Fees Debts**

A debt is established on the student for tuition/fees/Yellow Ribbon when:

- The student withdrew after the first day of the term.
- The student reduced hours whether the reduction occurred before or during the term.
- If the student attended more than one day of any of the classes certified and a payment has been issued, any debt created by the withdrawal should be charged to the student.
- The school submitted a change in enrollment (1999b) and reported a reduction in tuition, fees, and/or Yellow Ribbon due to student action reducing or terminating training.
- If a student drops a course and adds a course so that there is no net change in training time, any change to tuition, fees, and/or Yellow Ribbon is a student debt.

Learn more about additional information and [helpful websites for GI Bill® information & Veteran success](#).

\*GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

# Academic Policies

The following information is covered in this section of the APUS Student Handbook:

- [Expectations of a Doctoral Student](#)
- [Degree Requirements and Progression](#)
- [Doctoral Program Milestones](#)
- [Support Roles within Doctoral Studies](#)
- [Maintaining Contact Information](#)
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- [Program Deadline and Program Hold](#)
- [Course Attempts Limits for Graduation Eligibility](#)



# **Expectations of a Doctoral Student**

To succeed in a doctoral program at APUS, students must be actively engaged in the community of scholarship by seeking innovative applications of theory to professional practice issues. Students should be able to evaluate and synthesize scholarly literature and develop application strategies for their workplaces. Likewise, students advance their knowledge and practice in the field by critiquing theory and extending theory to real-world situations. To accomplish these tasks, students need to approach their study as an advanced practitioner and contribute new ideas to the scholarly dialogue through in-depth interactions with peers and faculty. In this program of doctoral study, engaging in conversation and debate throughout the program enables students to hone their ideas and develop an evidence-based dissertation project.

## **Academic Integrity and Professionalism**

Students are expected to maintain scholarly integrity, adhere to the University's Student Code of Conduct, demonstrate professionalism in their interpersonal interactions, and practice responsible conduct of research. In their coursework, students will receive research ethics training to help navigate the research process, including human subjects research. Note that violations of academic integrity or professionalism, whether through plagiarism, human subjects research, or inappropriate behavior, will result in penalties up to and including expulsion. The Student Code of Conduct can be referenced for more information on academic integrity, professional conduct, and the conduct process.

# Degree Requirements and Progression

Doctoral programs at APUS can be divided into several phases based on coursework, residencies, and dissertation. The general program structure includes 30 hours of core requirements, 8 hours of professional practice coursework, virtual residencies, and dissertation research. The program structure is designed to create a learning community that provides mutual support and accountability to keep students on track and promote student success. A recommended course progression is designed with options for electives.

The following program components and milestones create a degree path for completing the doctoral degree. Note that all doctoral courses and program milestones (portfolio defense, dissertation proposal defense, dissertation defense) must be completed successfully in order to continue progressing toward the degree. Students have a period of seven years from their start date to complete all program requirements, including the dissertation.

## Program Requirements

Students are encouraged to follow the recommended course path with options for three elective courses. In addition to coursework, students will complete virtual residences, an e-portfolio with oral defense of the portfolio, a dissertation proposal with an oral defense, and a dissertation with oral defense.

**Residencies:** Doctoral programs contain three residencies at crucial program points.

1. The first course, Professional Practice 1 and Doctoral Foundations, establishes expectations for the program, develops rapport with peers, and introduces students to doctoral faculty. During this course, students learn in greater detail about program milestones, engage with program faculty, and participate in a seminar class.
2. The second residency depends on the specific degree program and may include presentations at professional conferences or international experiences.
3. The third residency focuses on practicum and dissertation requirements. At this stage, students are preparing for their dissertation proposal and planning their research.

**Coursework:** Students should view their academic plan in the e-campus for their specific course progression.

Following the suggested model, most doctoral coursework can be completed in accordance with the End of Program (EOP) timeline. Doctoral coursework includes several components: core coursework, major requirements, electives, professional practice, practicum, and dissertation credits. Most core coursework is interdisciplinary and focuses on fundamental skills for conducting research, such as research methods and statistics. Core coursework also includes foundational concepts for the field of study. Major coursework focuses on content knowledge in greater depth. Electives provide opportunities to specialize and explore different sub-areas to prepare for dissertation research or career advancement. Professional practice courses include topics such as research ethics, conference presentations, and preparing for the e-portfolio defense. The practicum course accompanies the practicum experience in which students implement an approved project that promotes professional growth. Finally, dissertation credits include preparing the dissertation proposal and maintaining enrollment while completing the dissertation.

### Practicum:

The practicum requirement provides students with the opportunity to propose and implement a workplace project that stretches their skillset to connect research and practice. Students may choose to conduct the practicum in their current workplace under a different supervisor, they may make arrangements to spend time in a different sector of the workplace, or an organization that is completely separate from their work. The practicum project represents a new or aspirational area for students rather than an existing job duty. The project aims to apply knowledge from the doctoral program to address a workplace challenge, explore a new area of expertise, or focus on a problem of practice in the field. Practicum supervisors need to sign an agreement for the project, and the accompanying practicum course provides

a venue to report on the progress and lessons learned. Projects are a collaborative agreement between the student, the Department Chair and the site supervisor.

**Recommended Degree Timeline:**

Year 1 - Coursework; Progress Check

Year 2 - Coursework and Residency 2

Year 3 - Residency 3, complete coursework, defend portfolio, complete practicum, defend dissertation proposal

Year 3+ - Complete and defend dissertation. The program deadline for the doctoral degree is seven years.

# Doctoral Program Milestones

All doctoral program milestones must be completed successfully in order to continue progressing toward the degree. Failure to complete a program milestone will result in academic dismissal.

## Portfolio

The electronic portfolio provides a means for students to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning objectives of the program. This portfolio is developed throughout the doctoral courses by contributing artifacts from a student's courses and projects. Students will be prompted to add polished artifacts (e.g., paper, project, multimedia presentation) as they complete their coursework. Before advancing to the dissertation, students must complete an oral defense to demonstrate how they have met programmatic learning objectives. The portfolios, written assessment, and oral defense are evaluated by a committee of doctoral faculty.

## Dissertation

In order to receive approval for the dissertation project, students will write a dissertation proposal and complete an oral defense with their dissertation committee. This proposal occurs in year three of the doctoral program.

**Dissertation Proposal:** The dissertation proposal establishes the background and need for the study, the literature review, the research questions or hypotheses, the theoretical framework, the methods, the data analysis procedures, and the significance of the study for the field. More detailed information on the proposal can be found within the instructions for the program.

Students must pass an oral defense of their proposal by their dissertation committee in order to proceed with the dissertation research. Outcomes of the oral defense may be “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Fail.”

- Pass - Committee approves dissertation proposal and the student may proceed with dissertation research.
- Pass with Revisions - Committee members designate specific revisions to the proposal and stipulate that the student may proceed upon satisfactorily completing the revisions.
- Fail - The student is requested to substantially rewrite the proposal and then conduct another oral defense. Students must pass the dissertation proposal defense within 3 attempts or they will receive a Fail.

**Human Subjects Research:** When the dissertation project involves human subjects research, students are required to seek approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before conducting the study. Before seeking IRB approval, students must first have the dissertation proposal approved by their dissertation committee via their Dissertation Proposal Defense. The Dissertation Chair will assist the student in developing and submitting an IRB protocol and is responsible for overseeing the research project.

**Dissertation Completion and Defense:** Please see the Dissertation Manual for more detailed explanations of the dissertation process.

**Dissertation Chair:** The student and their dissertation chair establish dissertation timelines, including a schedule for submitting work and providing feedback, in order to ensure timely progress on the dissertation project. The student and their dissertation chair also agree on when to share dissertation drafts with committee members and what role each committee member plays in providing feedback on the project (e.g., methodological support, statistical advice).

**Dissertation Committee:** The dissertation committee is composed of a student's dissertation chair and at least one other faculty member from APUS. In addition, students are required to have one external member who must be approved by the Department Chair and whose curriculum vitae must be submitted as part of committee formation. Students are responsible for forming their dissertation committees, gaining approval for their committees, and submitting appropriate

committee forms. Dissertation committees must be formed and approved before students can defend their dissertation proposal. Each doctoral program at APUS provides guidance on the appropriate timeline for forming a dissertation committee and a specific deadline for committee approval. Students should seek assistance from their Department Chair if they are having difficulty creating a dissertation committee. Each member of the committee must approve a student's dissertation proposal and the final dissertation through the oral defense and review process.

**Change in Committees:** To request a change in committee chair or member, a doctoral student must fill out the Change in Committee form and write a letter of justification to submit to the Department Chair. A change can only be made with the approval of the Department Chair.

In the event of a dispute between the student and members of the committee or between members of the committee, the committee chair will call a meeting to resolve the problem. If no resolution is reached, the dispute can be appealed to the school dean. This will be the final level of appeal.

**Defense Timeline:** When the dissertation is determined by the chair to be complete, students submit a full copy of the dissertation to committee members at least four weeks in advance of the scheduled defense. If committee members have substantial reservations about the defensibility of the dissertation, they must inform the dissertation chair and the student at least two weeks before the scheduled defense date.

**Defense Format:** At the defense, students will give an oral presentation, open to the public, which summarizes their project and the contribution of the dissertation to professional practice in the field. Following this public defense, including questions and answers from audience members, the dissertation committee may hold a closed-door session with the student to address the remaining questions with the study.

**Defense Outcomes:** Possible outcomes for the dissertation defense are “Pass with Distinction,” “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Fail.” Committee members award a “Pass with Distinction” if they believe students have produced a study worthy of publication in a top-tier venue (either academic or trade publication).

- Pass with Distinction - Indicates that the dissertation is of superior quality and would meet standards for publication in a peer reviewed journal.
- Pass - Indicates that the student has successfully completed the dissertation and is ready to submit it for graduation.
- Pass with Revisions - Indicates that the student needs to complete specific revisions and receive approval from the committee before submitting the dissertation for graduation.
- Fail - Indicates that the dissertation needs substantial revisions. Students must schedule another oral defense within 6 months of the original defense, in coordination with the faculty advisor and committee.

**Submitting the Dissertation:** After the committee has approved the final draft of the dissertation, students are required to submit it to the APUS Repository and to the ProQuest Theses and Dissertations database in order to graduate.

# Support Roles within Doctoral Studies

## Doctoral Advising

Faculty will serve as mentors throughout the program. Throughout the program residencies and interactions during coursework, students will develop relationships with faculty members in order to select a dissertation chair and committee members (see the Dissertation Requirements section). From the beginning of the doctoral program, students are provided avenues to interact with doctoral faculty through courses, residencies, and informal discussions. These opportunities enable students to foster intellectual and personal connections that lead to advising relationships. Students will participate in periodic reviews of their academic progress to ensure that they are meeting program milestones and to discuss ideas for the dissertation.

**Doctoral Admissions Representative:** This representative works with applicants from initial interest in the program and will guide them through the application process before holistic review by the Doctoral Admissions Committee. If an applicant is accepted and begins the doctoral program, the Student Admission Representative will remain a student's point of contact for questions about university and program policies.

**Doctoral faculty:** The doctoral faculty members teach courses in the doctoral programs. Doctoral faculty may also serve as mentors, dissertation chairs, and dissertation committee members.

**Dissertation Chair:** The dissertation chair is the leader of the dissertation committee and the student's primary contact in writing the dissertation. The dissertation chair is a coach and advocate through the dissertation process.

**Dissertation Committee:** The dissertation committee advises students on the dissertation and evaluates the dissertation oral defense. The dissertation committee consists of the chair, one additional APUS faculty member, and one external member who is an expert in the professional practice area.

**Dean of Research and Academic Excellence:** The Dean of Research and Academic Excellence collaborates with the doctoral programs for curricular planning, student success, and admissions. This director serves on the Doctoral Admissions Committee and consults with program faculty for a student's program milestones.

**Director of Research Experiences:** The Director is available to provide advice and guidance on the Institutional Review Process as well as grants and funding opportunities.

# Maintaining Contact Information

The doctoral programs utilize a student's mycampus email address as the primary mode of communication and expect doctoral students to access this address. This is to ensure that our offices can communicate with students regarding pending academic actions, document requirements, financial alerts, engagement opportunities, etc. There will be times when the communication students receive is time-sensitive and may require action on a student's part.

While in class, instructors will communicate with students using their MyCampus email address. Students can access their MyCampus email via the Office 365 tool, which is on the home page of all courses. Logging onto MyCampus email requires a username, password, and a second identity verification means via a mobile phone or other phone.

APUS will also use the following methods to communicate with students:

- Email
- Mailing Address
- Personal Email
- MyCampus Email
- Phone (home/mobile)
- Text Message (mobile)
- eCampus Alerts
- Announcements in the classroom

Per university information security policy, students cannot establish automated rules in their MyCampus account to automatically forward email to a personal or business account. Students can manually forward single emails.

The university uses a student's mailing address, provided during the application process, to determine their location at the time of enrollment.

Students are required to maintain current contact and location information in their student record as long as they are an active student. Students may update their contact information via the Edit Profile link in the dropdown next to their name at the top of their eCampus.

Students will receive emailed invitations to share their feedback with us through various surveys about their experiences with the university, their needs as a student, etc. Although students are required to receive the emailed survey invitations, participation in a survey is voluntary. We value and encourage student participation in our surveys, as student feedback plays a significant role in our continuous improvement processes. If students have any questions about the survey process, please contact [feedback@apus.edu](mailto:feedback@apus.edu).

If students are disenrolled or have graduated, and do not wish to have APUS contact them again, students may submit a Do Not Contact request by emailing us at [enrollments@apus.edu](mailto:enrollments@apus.edu). Doing so will remove a student's email address from our student record system so that they no longer receive any emails from the University.

# Changing Programs

If students wish to transfer within doctoral programs at APUS, they are only permitted to do so during the first 16 weeks of the program, upon review and approval of the Doctoral Admissions Committee. Students must submit a revised professional goal essay and assume tuition costs for any courses that must be taken in the new program. If students are on probation and/or carry incompletes, they may not transfer programs.



# Transfer Credit

The doctoral program is based on the model of students entering with a master's degree equivalent to 30 graduate credits. The doctoral program requires 58 credits beyond the master's degree for completion. For this reason, the doctoral program does not accept any transfer credit to fulfill requirements of the doctoral degree.

# Academic Status

Changes in academic status occur when:

- students are placed on academic probation, or
- students are dismissed from the program.

Students will have periodic reviews through a progress check and program milestones. These reviews will ensure that students are on track for program milestones and meeting program expectations.

- Academic Probation: Students must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average to remain in good academic standing. If a student's GPA falls below 3.0, the academic probation policy will be in effect.
- Doctoral students are expected to abide by the academic and professional conduct standards established in the Student Code of Conduct. Through the conduct process, students who commit conduct violations will receive consequences up to and including suspension and expulsion.

Appeal procedures in all instances of grievance are handled according to [APUS Appeal Policy](#).

# Academic Probation Policies

*Effective for May 2025 courses and beyond:* For doctoral students in graded courses, Academic Probation begins after they have attempted at least 6 semester hours and have a cumulative GPA below 3.0. If the student’s cumulative program GPA falls below the minimum required by APUS, they will be notified by the Registrar's Office that they have been placed on Academic Probation. The intent of Academic Probation is to provide the student with the opportunity to raise their cumulative GPA to minimum levels so that they may continue to pursue their academic goals. Once placed on Academic Probation, their GPA will be reviewed after 6 hours, or if at the end of their graded coursework, their next course attempt. Students may have up to 2 probation periods before being placed in a 30 day suspension pending dismissal.

Doctoral students cannot be on probation and must hold at least a 3.0 GPA at the conclusion of coursework in order to proceed into the dissertation phase. During the dissertation phase of the program, they will be placed on probation if they receive a “U” (unsatisfactory performance). Probation will be reviewed upon completion of the next dissertation course; two consecutive "U's" will result in dismissal.

Doctoral students may be placed on academic probation up to twice during their academic program.

The student will need to discuss their options with their academic advisor and their funding source as their eligibility for funding may be affected.

## Academic Probation

Event	Cause	Result	Outcomes
Student’s GPA falls below 3.0	Failed a course(s) with a grade of F	The student will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>placed on probation and must repeat the failed course before progressing</li><li>limited to repeating the failed course(s) and withdrawn course(s) if applicable.</li><li>The probationary term must include a course with letter grades to impact the GPA. Students in a term with only pass/fail courses will continue into a term with graded courses before probation review.</li></ul>	Upon successful completion of the repeated course(s), the new grade, which must be at least a B, will replace the F.
			Alternative Scenarios
			IF: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the student fails to achieve at least a B- in the repeated course, the student will be removed from the program.</li><li>the replacement grade lifts GPA to 3.0 (or above), the student is removed from probation.</li><li>the replacement grade is at least a B, but does NOT lift GPA to 3.0 (or above), the student will be allowed a second</li></ul>

Students who fall below 3.0	Due to one or more grades of B- in the program	The student will be placed on probation and will be allowed to continue taking courses as a probationary term. The probationary term must include a course with letter grades to impact the GPA. Students in a term with only pass/fail courses will be allowed to continue into a term with graded courses before probation review.
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- probation term to raise the GPA;
- Failure to raise the GPA during the second probation term will result in the student being dismissed from the program.
- Doctoral students must hold at least a 3.0 GPA at the conclusion of coursework in order to proceed into the dissertation phase.

- Students who are able to raise their GPA to 3.0 following the first probationary term will be removed from probation.
- Students who fail to raise their GPA to at least 3.0 during the first probationary term will be allowed a second probation term to raise the GPA.
- Failure to raise the GPA during the second probationary term will result in the student being dismissed from the program.
- Doctoral students must hold at least a 3.0 GPA at the conclusion of coursework in order to proceed into the dissertation phase.

Student who does not make satisfactory	Student receives a U (Unsatisfactory) grade in the	The student will be placed on probation and will be required to complete an improvement plan to meet
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- If the student receives an S (satisfactory) grade in the probationary term, the student will be removed from probation.
- If the student receives a U (unsatisfactory) in the first probationary term, the student will be given a second probationary

dissertation progress	dissertation course	dissertation milestones during the next term.	term to demonstrate satisfactory progress.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress during the second probationary term will result in the student being dismissed from the program.</li> </ul>

Academic Level	Number of Probation Periods	Probation Rules
Doctoral students	<p>Doctoral students may be placed on academic probation up to twice during their academic program. Placement on academic probation beyond the first time will be based on completing the previous academic probation period with a GPA above a 3.0.</p>	<p>Minimum period GPA of 3.0</p>

If a student raises their cumulative GPA above the minimum level at the end of the review period, they will be placed on academic good standing.

## Appeals

Students will have 30- calendar days to appeal their pending academic dismissal in writing before it is processed. Students should refer to the [Appeals Information](#) for more information.

# Program Deadline and Program Hold

The APUS doctoral program has a deadline to complete a student's program requirements. The student's official program start is Week 2 of their first course. This date is called the initial enrollment date. If a student does not have their program conferred before the program deadline, the University can issue a letter of program completion; however, students will not earn the degree or certificate.

Each program has an established program length:

- Doctorate Degree: 7 years

If students are less than 6 months away from their program deadline, they will be blocked from registration until they have met with their Department Chair to discuss a program completion plan.

## Program Deadline Extensions

If a student is unable to complete their program in 7 years, they may request an extension of their program deadline; there is no guarantee the request will be granted. While the University assess every extension request under consideration, whether to grant or deny an extension is solely at the University's discretion.

Steps to obtain an end of program extension:

1. When a student is approaching 7 months away from their program deadline and do not already have a conferral date planned, they should meet with their dissertation chair to discuss a realistic timeline for completion.
2. Formulate a completion plan with the best estimate as to when the student can complete their dissertation.
3. Submit the request in writing to the program chair, copying the student's dissertation chair, at least 7 months prior to reaching the program deadline to avoid disrupting the student's ability to register for courses.

Students may only be granted an extension of up to 25% of their initial program length.

*Students with questions pertaining to program deadline extensions should contact the Office of the Registrar at [doctoralregistrar@apus.edu](mailto:doctoralregistrar@apus.edu).*

If a student finds that they need more than a 25% extension, contact [doctoralregistrar@apus.edu](mailto:doctoralregistrar@apus.edu) to request a program extension appeal.

## Program Hold

Students who need to stop out from their doctoral program may request a Program Hold by communicating with the Doctoral Admissions Representative and completing the Program Hold Request form. Students may request one or more Program Holds during the program, but must still complete the program within the approved timeframe of 7 years. Students may return from a Program Hold by contacting the Doctoral Admission Representative to initiate the return process.

A student's program deadline is not extended if they are on an approved Program Hold; students will have the same program deadline when they return from a Program Hold and may need to work with the Doctoral Admissions Representative if their program deadline is nearing or expired upon return.

## Disenrollment

Students who exhaust their program hold time and/or exhaust their program deadline will be automatically disenrolled from the university.

## **Voluntary Disenrollment**

If a student is an active doctoral student and no longer wants to pursue their education with the university, they should contact the Doctoral Admissions Representative at [doctoralstudies@apus.edu](mailto:doctoralstudies@apus.edu) to commence the process.

## **Uncertain on Withdrawing**

Before a student takes steps to withdraw, their Doctoral Admissions Representative will discuss options for requesting course extension(s) or Program Holds. Because we serve students who are busy professionals, we understand that there may be times when circumstances make it challenging to complete coursework within the prescribed timeframe. If this happens, the student should contact their course instructor, Chair, or Doctoral Admissions Representative to discuss their situation.

# Course Attempts Limits for Graduation Eligibility

Students must have completed all course requirements within a certain percentage of course attempts to be eligible for graduation at the end of their program. This percentage is 150% of courses attempted vs. courses successfully completed. This includes any courses a student completed prior to changing their major, even if those courses do not apply to their current major.

Course attempts include:

- Courses that a student withdraws from (grade is W).
- Any courses that a student completes (grade is A-F).
- Any current course or courses for which a student is on extension.

The following do NOT count as course attempts:

- Courses that a student has dropped (grade is DP)
- Course credit that a student transferred into the program as transfer credit, Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), or residential credit.

Maximum number of semester hours per academic level:

- Doctorate degree – maximum number of semester hours attempted is 86 semester hours or 28 courses.



# How to Get a Course Extension

If a student does not complete course requirements on time because of illness or other extenuating circumstances, they may be eligible for an extension if they have successfully completed at least 50% of the course work.

Before requesting an extension, students should attempt to complete requirements within the time allotted for the course to maintain progress in the program. Students should reach out to their course faculty if they believe they will need an extension and create a concrete plan for completing the course requirements.

Extensions are 30 days from the final day of the regularly scheduled course. All work to rectify incomplete grades must be completed within the extension period. Students may only have one Incomplete grade and one Extension at a given time.

Students with special circumstances who need to complete more than one course should work with their Department Chair to determine the best course of action for completing courses with the least disruption to program progression. All incompletes must be resolved before students are permitted to defend the dissertation proposal. Incomplete grades do not count toward graduation.

A special case for a longer extension may occur in the context of a student's portfolio defense. If a student does not pass their first attempt at the portfolio defense, the Department Chair may allow a 60-day extension of the corresponding course to provide additional study time before attempting the portfolio defense a second time.

# How to Drop or Withdraw from a Course

If students are experiencing an academic or personal challenge that impacts their ability to complete any courses, they should contact their Department Chair. Once a student has spoken with their Department Chair, they may choose to request a drop or withdrawal by completing and returning a form provided by the Doctoral Admissions Representative. Students should also decide if they would like to “stop out” of their program through a Program Hold or disenroll from the program completely.

Students who need to pause their doctoral program for a year or more may request a Program Hold by communicating with the Doctoral Admissions Representative and completing the Program Hold Request form. Students may request one or more Program Hold during the program, as long as they complete the program within the approved timeframe of 7 years.

A student's program deadline is not extended if they are on an approved Program Hold; students will have the same program deadline when they return from a Program Hold and may need to work with the Doctoral Admissions Representative on if their program deadline is nearing or has expired upon their return.

## Effective for May 2025 courses and beyond:

Students must use the online “Course Drop/Withdraw Form” found under the University Forms column on the Academic Plan & Forms navigation menu of the student eCampus. Students will need to select which course(s) they are dropping or withdrawing.

If students do not have access to the Internet and need to drop or withdraw from a course, they should contact [DoctoralRegistrar@apus.edu](mailto:DoctoralRegistrar@apus.edu) or call the university's toll free number and ask to be transferred to the Office of the Registrar. In an emergency, including technical difficulties, APUS will honor the drop or withdrawal date as the date a voicemail or email in the Office of the Registrar was received. Informing a university staff member who is not part of the Registrar's office is not considered an official drop or withdrawal request.

Students will not be able to submit a withdrawal request if the last week of the course has already started, or if a student is already on an approved extension of the course. See [Appealing to Withdraw from a Course after Withdrawal Period Ends](#).

## Deciding Whether or not to drop or Withdraw from a Course

### Important Definitions

- **Course Drop:** The removal of a course from a student's schedule before the end of the first week of class.
- **Course Withdrawal:** The removal of a course from a student's schedule after the end of week one.
- **End of Week One:** 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time on the first Sunday of the course.
- **Drop or Withdrawal Date:** The date a student submitted the online “Course Drop/Withdraw” Form, the date a student contacted the Office of the Registrar with their official request by email, phone call, or voicemail.
- **SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress):** One measure used to determine eligibility for both federal student aid and for graduation. Withdrawals impact SAP, as they count against a student's maximum cap of 150% of courses attempted vs. courses successfully passed.

### Consequences of a Course Drop

- **Grades:** Students will see a "DP" for the course when viewing grades inside the Records Menu area of the eCampus under My Academic Plan or My Academic Records under Grade Reports.
- **GPA (Grade Point Average):** A student's GPA is not impacted.

- **Transcript:** If a student has a transcript sent out, it will NOT show any record of the dropped course.
- **SAP:** Classes that a student drops do not count as “attempted” in calculations used to determine eligibility for Federal Student Aid or for graduation eligibility.
- **Federal Student Aid:** If a student does not complete a course they were scheduled to attend, their aid may be subject to a Return of Title IV (R2T4) calculation.
- **Course Access:** Students will no longer have access to a course once they drop it.

## Consequences of a Course Withdrawal

- **Grades:** Students will see a "W" for the course when viewing grades inside the Records Menu area of the e-campus under My Academic Plan or My Academic Records under Grade Reports.
- **GPA:** A student's GPA is not impacted.
- **Transcript:** If a student has a transcript sent out, it will show this course with a “W” grade.
- **SAP:** Withdrawn courses **do** count as “attempted” in calculations used to determine eligibility for Federal Student Aid or for graduation eligibility.
- **Federal Student Aid:** If students do not complete a course, their aid may be subject to a Return of Title IV (R2T4) calculation.
- **Course Access:** Students will no longer have access to a course once they withdraw from it.

# Failing Grades – Repeating Courses

APUS allows students one opportunity to retake a failed course and have the original failed grade forgiven from a student's GPA. The original failing grade will show as “R” on the transcript, and the previous failing grade will be removed from a student's GPA as long as they complete the course retake. However, students will still see the original failing grade on their personal online academic plan and on their individual online grade reports.

## Important Information:

- The course retake policy only applies if the exact course that was previously failed is still offered or if a course equivalency has been established in the curriculum and University systems.
- Original failing grades of retaken courses will still be used to calculate SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress) for financial aid and for the 150% rule of course credit attempted vs course credit earned for graduation eligibility.

# Dissertation Defense

To complete the doctoral program, students must write and defend their dissertation. The dissertation must be approved by the dissertation committee via the oral defense.

**Oral Defense of Dissertation:** Possible outcomes for the dissertation defense are “Pass with Distinction,” “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Fail.” Committee members award a “Pass with Distinction” if they believe a student has produced a study worthy of publication in a top-tier venue (either academic or trade publication).

- The “Pass with Distinction” indicates that the dissertation is of superior quality and would meet application standards for peer-reviewed journals. This will only be awarded to the top ten percent of dissertations.
- A “Pass” indicates that a student has successfully completed the dissertation and is ready to submit for graduation.
- A “Pass with Revisions” indicates that a student needs to complete specific revisions and receive approval from the committee before submitting the dissertation for graduation.
- A “Fail” indicates that the dissertation needs substantial revisions. Students must schedule another oral defense within 6 months of the original defense, in coordination with the faculty advisor and committee.

**Submitting the Dissertation:** After the committee has approved the final draft of the dissertation, students are required to submit it to the APUS Repository and Proquest Theses and Dissertations database in order to graduate. The dissertation chair will provide students with guidance about this process.

**Dissertation Committee:** The dissertation committee is made up of the dissertation chair and one other faculty member from APUS. Students are required to have one approved external member. Qualifications for this person are spelled out in the Dissertation Manual. Each member of the committee must approve the dissertation proposal and the final product.

# APUS Grading System (Chart)

A student's cumulative GPA at APUS is determined solely by the courses they have taken at APUS towards their current degree. If a student changes their major, the previous APUS courses will roll over into the GPA for a student's new major. However, if a student graduates from a program, they would start over with a new GPA when they start on their next program. For example, grades towards a conferred Master's degree at APUS do not impact a student's subsequent GPA in their Doctoral program.

## Doctoral Courses:

WP/WF grade designators are no longer used as of October 5, 2007.

Grade Quality Points/ Grading Percent		Description
A	4.0/ 100 - 94	Very high quality, clearly above average work
A-	3.67/ 93 - 90	Accepted performance level
B+	3.33/ 89 - 87	Accepted performance level
B	3.0/ 86 - 84	Accepted performance level
B-	2.67/ 83 - 80	Below Average
F	0.0/ 79 - 0	Failing
P	NONE	Pass
I	NONE	All: Incomplete
S	NONE	Satisfactory progress during dissertation course
U	NONE	Unsatisfactory progress during dissertation course
DP	NONE	Dropped
W	NONE	Withdrawn

WP    NONE                      Withdrawn Passing

WF    NONE                      Withdrawn Failing

# Ordering and the Release of APUS Transcripts

Students must wait 24 hours after a grade is posted to their Academic Record before ordering a transcript to ensure that the grade will be reflected on their transcript. This will give adequate time for all information to be posted to a student's transcript.

Students may order APUS transcripts through the online student portal, with the option of either electronic or paper transcripts. Once a student is logged in to their student ecampus, they will hover over Academic Plan and Forms, then select Order APUS Transcripts from the University Forms Menu. If a student has forgotten their student ID or password, they should call our Student Support Services at 877-755-2787.

APUS offers the options of electronic transcripts, paper transcripts, or a free download of a student's academic Student Agreement. Fees for our transcript orders may be found in the APUS [fee schedule](#).

The electronic transcript is the cheapest and fastest way to get a transcript to a third party quickly. For military students, the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) now accepts our electronic transcripts!

If a student is utilizing a government or military computer that has blocked access to this website, they must utilize a personal computer to place their order.

Students must have attended an APUS course to be eligible for the release of a transcript. This means students have either completed a course for a final grade, passed an APUS-offered competency exam, or withdrawn from an APUS course after the first week.

Students will not be able to order an unofficial or official APUS transcript if:

- They have not submitted all of their required admission documents yet. A student's record status will still show in their portal as INCOMPLETE.
- They have never attended an APUS course or passed an APUS competency exam.
- They have not completed a course with APUS.

**Students who have a financial balance due to the university can order and pay for their transcripts.**

Students on Incomplete Admission status who have completed a course must email [APUSTranscripts@apus.edu](mailto:APUSTranscripts@apus.edu) to obtain a complementary unofficial transcript for their personal use.

## Degree Conferrals

Degree conferrals will appear on a student's transcript AFTER the actual conferral date of their degree. APUS cannot post conferrals before the official conferral date. It is recommended that students wait 24 hours after their conferral date to order a transcript to ensure the conferral date has been posted to the transcript.

## Transcript Display

APUS transcripts do NOT include any of the following information:

- Dropped courses (DP grades)
- Academic Probation
- Academic Suspension
- Notation of any Disciplinary Action
- Failed grades for courses retaken after August 2008\*



\*These course grades will appear as “R” on a transcript but will continue to show as “F” on a student's personal academic plan and individual grade reports in the student portal.

## **Exceptions to APUS Transcript Release Policy**

### **Graduation**

When ordering a transcript after graduating, students should confirm the conferral date has been posted in their student record first or the awarded degree will not show up on the transcript. It is recommended that students wait 24 hours after their conferral date to order a transcript to ensure the conferral date has been posted to their transcript.

# Graduation Process

The following information is covered in this section of the APUS Student Handbook:

- [General Graduation Information](#)
- [Applying for Graduation](#)
- [Fees](#)
- [Program Review Process](#)
- [Shipping of Diplomas](#)

# General Graduation Information

## Graduation and Conferral of Degree

Unlike most universities that only confer degrees twice a year, APUS confers degrees quarterly.

"Conferral date" is defined as the date on which a student's degree is officially awarded. Due to outstanding financial obligations, outstanding grade appeals, or established conferral schedules, students may actually complete their degree many months before their degree is officially conferred.

To be eligible for conferral of a degree, a student must:

- have fulfilled all course requirements in their program.
- have a minimum GPA of 3.0.
- have their dissertation accepted by their dissertation committee and submitted to the library.
- have fulfilled all program requirements for their degree.
- have applied for graduation and passed an academic review of their courses.
- have no outstanding balances.

Graduation applications are due six weeks before the conferral date. It is critical that students maintain an accurate shipping address in their student record. Students will incur additional charges if we need to reship misdirected diplomas or transcripts due to a shipping address that was no longer valid. A student's conferral could also be delayed if they are not receiving notifications of outstanding graduation process requirements.

## Transcripts

A student's graduation date will not be reflected on any transcript ordered until the day of conferral, regardless of when they were academically cleared for their program.

For more information on GPA requirements, program deadline requirements, or Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements (150% rules), students should view the [Before a Course Begins](#) section of the Student Handbook.

# Applying for Graduation

**When to submit:** Students are encouraged to apply for graduation once they have successfully completed and received a pass status on their 3rd milestone.

## Applicant Information:

**Name on Diploma** - The student’s name on their diploma or certificate must match the legal last name APUS has on file. Students may spell out their middle name, as well as add generational suffixes (Sr, Jr, etc.). No prefixes, ranks, or titles will be placed on the diploma.

In order to allow a different legal name on their diploma, students must contact the Record Updates Department at [recordupdates@apus.edu](mailto:recordupdates@apus.edu) for assistance with updating their name on file. Once updated, the student may then proceed with applying for graduation, or contact the Graduations Office at [graduations@apus.edu](mailto:graduations@apus.edu) to update their name if an application has already been submitted. All changes must be made before the student’s conferral or certificate award date.

## Application Deadlines for Degree Conferral

The Graduation Application must be received before a student's projected conferral date. If a student is currently on any course extensions, it doesn’t matter if they turn their coursework in before the extension end date. The extensions must be officially scheduled to end before the anticipated conferral date selected on the graduation application.

Students should follow the due dates below for graduation application deadlines:

**For conferral on: Application due no later than:**

February 1	December 2
April 1	February 2
June 1	April 2
August 1	June 2
October 1	August 2
December 1	October 2

# Doctoral Graduation Fees

There is a one-time, nonrefundable fee of \$100 per degree. The fee covers administrative costs associated with completing the graduation review, as well as printing and shipping the diploma.

# Program Review Process

The program review process begins when a student submits the online Graduation Application. Once a student submits the Graduation Application, the following processes are triggered:

- **Academic Audit** – An Associate Registrar must review the student record and confirm that all program requirements for completion have been met.
- **Finance Audit** – The APUS Finance Office must confirm that the Student Account has no outstanding balance or monies owed.
- **Library Audit** – The APUS Librarian must confirm all books or materials reserved from the library have been returned to APUS and there are no outstanding fees.
- **Direct Loan Exit Counseling** - If students have used Federal Student Aid to cover any portion of their college costs, they may be required to complete Direct Loan Exit Counseling. Our Financial Aid Office will contact students by email to provide the link for exit counseling. Exit counseling provides important information students will need as they prepare to repay their federal student loan(s).

If the Associate Registrar confirms that academic requirements have not been met by the intended conferral date, the student will be notified by email that their conferral has been moved to the next available date.

If a student is academically cleared for graduation but does not meet all requirements before their conferral date, they will remain assigned to the declared conferral. However, the final diploma will not be mailed until the student completes all of the program audit requirements.

## Tracking Graduation Information Online

Students may track their graduation process in the ecampus under “My Graduation Info.” The information in this section is updated once a student applies for graduation. The information below will explain each of the fields listed under the graduation audit section.

- **Auditor:** An Associate Registrar will be with the student throughout the graduation process.
- **Projected Conferral Date:** This is the date selected by the student during the application process, identifying when they anticipate graduation from the American Public University System.
- **Declared Conferral Date:** This is the date that the Associate Registrar confirms as the conferral date the student is eligible for graduation once the academic audit has begun.
- **Graduation Application:** Once the Graduation Application has been submitted electronically, the status will state, “Submitted”, and a date will post.
- **Academic Audit:** This field will remain blank until the initial academic review has been completed. Once the initial academic review is completed, one of the following statuses below will be listed:

## Status Definitions

- **Clear:** The student has successfully completed all academic requirements for their current degree.
- **Grades not posted:** The student has registered for all courses needed to complete the current degree; however, not all course grades have been posted.
- **Incomplete Grade:** The student is currently on a course extension or has additional courses to complete their program.
- **Ineligible:** The student failed the final course requirement or does not meet the minimum GPA requirement for their degree.

**Finance Audit and Library Audit:** These will be completed once the student has been cleared academically for

graduation. A status of “Not Clear” will show if they have an outstanding issue with any of these reviews. Students will not be able to receive any transcripts or have their diploma shipped if they have any outstanding balance or monies owed.

**End of Program Survey:** If students are required to complete the End-of-Program (EOP) survey, they will be emailed the survey on a weekly basis after submitting their Graduation Application until it has been successfully submitted. Questions about this EOP survey can be sent to [feedback@apus.edu](mailto:feedback@apus.edu). Students should ensure their current email is listed in their Online Campus to ensure a timely delivery of this survey.

Once all graduation requirements have been successfully completed, students will be notified by email with their final clearance date.

*Questions regarding a student's academic audit status should be directed to [studentservices@apus.edu](mailto:studentservices@apus.edu).*

# Shipping of Diplomas

Once students receive final clearance for their program, they will be scheduled to have their degree conferred during the next conferral or award date listed in the Application Deadlines section.

In order to receive final clearance, it is necessary to have cleared all audits on the graduation checklist. This includes:

- Financial Audit
- Library Materials Audit
- Any Required Financial Aid Exit Counseling

## Diplomas

Within two weeks of a student's degree conferral, a digital diploma will be emailed to the primary email address on the student record. Within six weeks after a student's degree conferral, the diploma will be mailed to the mailing address on the student's record. Please allow an additional 30 days for international shipments.

Students may check the status of their diploma shipment by using the “track delivery” link located on their Parchment Award learner account. If a student has not received their diploma within 6 weeks of their conferral date, please send an email to [Diploma@APUS.EDU](mailto:Diploma@APUS.EDU) for additional information.

Diplomas contain the following information

- Student Name as listed on the graduation application - Please Note: Only a student's legal name may appear on the diploma. No titles or ranks will be included. If a student's legal name has changed since applying to the school, they must update their student record by providing legal documentation of the name change to [RecordUpdates@APUS.EDU](mailto:RecordUpdates@APUS.EDU).
- The APUS institution the student attended (American Military University or American Public University).
- The student's degree program level and program name (Concentrations are not listed on the diploma).

## Copies of the Diploma

Students may place orders for additional copies of their final diplomas before or after their conferral date. The cost of each additional diploma is \$35. To place an order for an additional diploma, students must use the Additional Diploma Request Form located in the FORMS menu in their ecampus portal. Additional diploma orders will not be sent out until after a student's degree has been conferred.

## Diploma Reshipments

Students will be notified by email at the time of academic clearance and final clearance reminding them to confirm or update their email and mailing address on their student record.

If APUS needs to reship a diploma because a student's mailing address in their record was not current, the student must submit the Additional Diploma Request Form for reshipment of their diploma. Students will be responsible for paying the \$35 fee, which will be used towards the cost of materials and reshipment.

Note: Students should allow up to 6 weeks for processing AFTER we receive payment confirmation. If a student's payment confirmation is received after the 4<sup>th</sup> of the month, please allow an additional 2 weeks for processing. A digital diploma is also provided with each additional diploma request order.



*Questions regarding the shipment of diplomas should be directed to [studentservices@apus.edu](mailto:studentservices@apus.edu).*

# **Student Resources**

## **Richard G. Trefry Library**

The Trefry Library offers extensive access to online databases, books, open access resources, and research guides. Librarians are available to provide personalized research assistance.

## **Communities and Writing Groups**

Students are strongly encouraged to form communities, such as study and writing groups with fellow students to motivate each other and provide accountability during the dissertation process.

## **Professional Development**

Students are encouraged to attend professional events, such as conferences organized by the Policy Studies Organization, which has an affiliation with APUS, American Council on Education (ACE), and other discipline-specific conferences.

## **Institutional Review Board**

The Institutional Review Board assists researchers in conducting research ethically and protecting human subjects during a research project. If students plan to complete a research project with human subjects, they should become familiar with the IRB website and process before submitting a proposal.