

# DEGREE PROGRAM ADMISSIONS

## Graduate Academic Programs Policy

Accommodations for individuals with disabilities in accessing these policies are available upon request by emailing [accessiblepolicy@wcupa.edu](mailto:accessiblepolicy@wcupa.edu)

### Purpose and Policy Statement

The Graduate Academic Programs Policy outlines governing criteria and definitions for graduate academic programs at West Chester University (WCU). The policy is also in alignment with applicable PA State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) Board of Governors Policies, State System of Higher Education System Procedures and Standards, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, and PA Commonwealth Statutory Requirements. WCU graduate certificates, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees will be aligned as such to the curricular requirements to include associated residency, transfer, and accelerated bachelors to masters policies outlined in the Policy Framework.

### Policy Framework

#### Certificates

A certificate is a formal credit-based credential designated on the academic record and awarded by an educational institution to indicate completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level that does not culminate in a degree. Certificates are not the same as certifications or licenses, which are typically awarded by third party, standard-setting bodies (not academic institutions), based on an assessment process that recognizes competencies in a particular occupational specialty as measured against a set of standards. Certificates may be awarded at the undergraduate or graduate level. Unless stated otherwise, admission criteria for certificates align with non-degree admission standards.

There are two types of graduate certificates. Admission standards can be made specific to the purpose of each graduate certificate and may include earned degree(s) and/or other relevant criteria as recommended by the department and CAPC and approved by the Provost. Successful completion of a graduate certificate requires a minimum GPA of 3.0.

#### Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate:

A credential that requires completion of an organized program of study beyond the bachelor's that does not meet the requirements of a master's degree. It is designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree. Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificates require a minimum of 9 credits of graduate coursework. As an organized program of study, a certificate leads to the attainment of program-level student learning outcomes. Any exception to the minimum number of credits must be justified in terms of the program-level student learning outcomes.

#### Post-Master's Certificate:

A credential that requires completion of an organized program of study beyond the master's degree that does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctoral level. Post-Master's Certificates require a minimum of 9 credits of graduate coursework. As an organized program of study, a certificate leads to the attainment of program-level student learning outcomes. Any exception to the minimum number of credits must be justified in terms of the program-level student learning outcomes.

#### Certification

A certification program is a program of study that leads to professional education licensure. Certification programs may or may not be credit bearing and may be offered at the undergraduate or graduate level. Students completing certification programs may be recommended by WCU for certification, but WCU does not confer certification.

Certification is conferred by a professional body such as the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

A credit-bearing Certification program may also be considered for the Certificate credential provided it meets the requisite definition and requirements in this policy and is recommended by CAPC and approved by the Provost.

### Master's Degrees

Master's degrees represent advanced study beyond the baccalaureate degree and signify mastery in a discipline or professional field.

- Requires a minimum of 30 semester credit hours
- Usually includes three basic components:
  - A common core of courses related to the discipline or field of study
  - Concentration or specialization in a focused area of the discipline
    - Required concentrations/specializations must include a minimum of nine credits.
  - Cognate courses which broaden perspective or mastery, or provide special skills such as statistics or foreign language
- Master's degree programs require that all students participate in a culminating experience. This requirement may be met through a thesis, research project, comprehensive examination, practicum, internship, or other work that synthesizes theory and practice.
- At least 50% of coursework (including thesis, research, or internship hours) to complete a master's degree must be identified as primarily directed at graduate students with the majority of students in the course obtaining graduate credits.
- Graduation Residency Requirements for master's students: At least 2/3 of the credits meeting program requirements must be taken from the University offering the degree. It is the intent of this policy to not exceed this credit residency requirement unless specified by discipline accreditation or licensure requirements.
  - For example, a 30-credit program would require at least 20 credits be taken at WCU. Programs that do not compute in whole numbers will round to the nearest whole number such that a 32-credit program would round to 21 credits from 21.33.
  - Collaborative Programs approved by the Office of the Chancellor can specify residency requirements consistent with the collaborative degree.
- WCU offers Accelerated Bachelors to Master's Programs and Early/Dual Admission to First Professional Master's Degree Programs. The instructions, processes, and standards are outlined in the linked Standard/Procedure ([https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Standards/Guidelines%20for%20Accelerated%20Bachelor%20to%20Masters%20Degree%20Programs%20.%20.%20.2016-25-A.pdf](https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies_Procedures_Standards/Guidelines%20for%20Accelerated%20Bachelor%20to%20Masters%20Degree%20Programs%20.%20.%20.2016-25-A.pdf)).

Master's degrees include:

- Master of Arts (M.A.)
- Master of Liberal Arts (M.L.A.)
- Master of Science (M.S.)
- Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)
- Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.)
- Master of Music (M.M.)
- Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.)
- Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.)
- Master of Social Work (M.S.W.)
- Master of Public Health (M.P.H.)
- Master of Urban and Regional Planning (M.U.R.P.)
- Professional Science Masters (P.S.M.)
- Master of Education (M.Ed.) or Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.)

- This is intended for the person who has been working within the PreK-12 environment and desires to acquire advanced or updated knowledge within the discipline, in human development, in assessment and/or in pedagogy.
- Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.)
  - This is intended for the person with expertise in a discipline (e.g. chemistry or history or music) who needs to develop the skills and strategies to convey an understanding of the discipline to children and adolescents within the PreK-12 context.

### Educational Specialist (Ed.S.)

This degree is intended for the person who requires advanced knowledge of research and practice in selected specialty fields in education. Such programs are grounded in extensive field work to develop the appropriate levels of clinical practice. The educational specialist degree provides focused study beyond the master's level and is designed to develop skills in special areas of professional practice. For certain areas it may be considered a terminal professional practice degree, and not all Ed.S. coursework is compatible with doctoral study. As this degree typically represents advanced study, all of the coursework should be designed for graduate students with backgrounds in the relevant areas of study.

### Doctoral Degrees

The doctorate is the highest academic degree awarded in American higher education and is of two general types: the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) and the Professional Doctorate. Though the primary distinction is that the Ph.D. is a research degree and professional degrees are applied degrees, most doctoral degrees include both research and applied studies. Within PASSHE, the Doctor of Philosophy is offered only through Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP); jointly in cooperation with IUP; or jointly with another institution approved to offer Ph.D. degrees by the Chancellor (Act 188 (<https://www.passhe.edu/offices/legal/documents/Act188.pdf>)). While West Chester University is approved to offer Professional Doctorate degrees by state statute (2012 Higher Education Modernization Act) and subsequent BOG Policies and Procedures/Standards, it should be noted that Middle States Commission on Higher Education has identified WCU doctorates within our scope as:

#### Doctoral Degree - Professional Practice:

A Professional Practice Doctorate is an applied degree that focuses on the scholar-practitioner model. In this model, students 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 Ph.D. program.

#### Doctoral Degree - Research/Scholarship:

A Research/Scholarship Doctorate is an applied degree that focuses on research and scholarly work toward the development of new knowledge.

A doctoral program usually follows completion of a master's degree, except in some fields where admission after the baccalaureate degree is permitted or encouraged, such as first professional doctorate degrees (e.g., Physical Therapy). The minimum credit requirements for the doctoral degree are at least 60 graduate credits beyond the baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 30 graduate credits beyond the Master's degree. Furthermore, the following are common required elements of a doctoral degree:

- Core of increasingly advanced subject-area studies, culminating in seminars involving research; and
- Development of research skills necessary for such studies, e.g., second languages, statistics, or computing, and/or internships or practica in applied fields; and

- Culminating experiences such as comprehensive examinations and a dissertation; and
- Must include an expectation for research education in the field as part of the program requirements.

Doctoral residency requirements are determined at the program level, but they cannot preclude the potential for students to transfer in one-third of the credits. Each doctoral program shall stipulate its own residency requirement. Collaborative Programs approved by the Office of the Chancellor can specify residency requirements consistent with the collaborative degree.

### External Resources:

Academic Degrees ([https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG\\_Policies/Policy%201990-06-A.pdf](https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG_Policies/Policy%201990-06-A.pdf)) and companion System Procedures ([https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Standards/Academic%20Degrees%202012-13.pdf#search=academic](https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies_Procedures_Standards/Academic%20Degrees%202012-13.pdf#search=academic))

Requirements for Initiation or Change in Credit-Based Academic Programs ([https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG\\_Policies/Policy%201985-01-A.pdf](https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG_Policies/Policy%201985-01-A.pdf)) and companion System Procedures ([https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Standards/Requirements%20for%20Initiation%20or%20Change%20of%20a%20Credit-Based%20Academic%20Program%202016-23-A.pdf#search=1985-01-%20A](https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies_Procedures_Standards/Requirements%20for%20Initiation%20or%20Change%20of%20a%20Credit-Based%20Academic%20Program%202016-23-A.pdf#search=1985-01-%20A))

Student Transfer ([https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG\\_Policies/Policy%201999-01-A.pdf](https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG_Policies/Policy%201999-01-A.pdf))

Program Review ([https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG\\_Policies/Policy%201986-04-A.pdf](https://www.passhe.edu/inside/policies/BOG_Policies/Policy%201986-04-A.pdf)) and companion System Procedures ([https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Standards/Review%20of%20Academic%20Programs%20and%20Programs%20in%20Support%20of%20the%20Student%20Experience%202018-35.pdf](https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies_Procedures_Standards/Review%20of%20Academic%20Programs%20and%20Programs%20in%20Support%20of%20the%20Student%20Experience%202018-35.pdf))

Subsequent Degrees ([https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Standards/Subsequent%20Degrees%202018-34.pdf#search=subsequent](https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies_Procedures_Standards/Subsequent%20Degrees%202018-34.pdf#search=subsequent))

Guidelines for Accelerated Bachelors to Masters Programs and Early/Dual Admission to First Professional Master's Degree Programs ([https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Standards/Guidelines%20for%20Accelerated%20Bachelor%20to%20Masters%20Degree%20Programs%20.20.20.20.2016-25-A.pdf](https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies_Procedures_Standards/Guidelines%20for%20Accelerated%20Bachelor%20to%20Masters%20Degree%20Programs%20.20.20.2016-25-A.pdf))

Graduation Residency Requirements ([https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Standards/PS%202016-24-A%20Graduation%20Residency%20Requirements.pdf#search=2016-24](https://www.passhe.edu/policies/documents/Policies_Procedures_Standards/PS%202016-24-A%20Graduation%20Residency%20Requirements.pdf#search=2016-24))

### Student Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the applicant to observe all program admissions policies and procedures.

### Admission Requirements for Degree Students

1. An earned baccalaureate degree is required for admission into a master's program. A baccalaureate and master's degree, if applicable, are required for admission to a doctoral program. All degrees must be awarded from a college or university that is regionally accredited in the United States or the equivalent from a foreign college or university prior to enrollment. A minimum 2.80 undergraduate GPA (on a 4.0 scale) is required. Please note that some programs may have higher GPA minimum requirements. Doctoral program GPA requirements are set by each program. Provisional acceptance may be possible, but is not guaranteed, under some circumstances for applicants who do not meet minimum requirements.
2. Applicants must submit scores from the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) if these are required for admission to the program in

which the student wishes to enroll. Students applying to a program with any of the above requirements who have an earned, recognized, post-baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university may have this requirement waived. A student with an earned graduate-level certificate from West Chester University (see policy concerning certificates (<https://catalog.wcupa.edu/general-information/admissions-enrollment/graduate-admissions/certificate-admissions/>)), applying to a graduate program, may have the standardized test waived at the recommendation of the graduate coordinator.

3. The department offering the desired degree program must recommend acceptance. Before such recommendation is given, an interview with a faculty member may be required. The applicant also must meet any other additional requirements established for the degree program, including grade point averages that exceed the minimum graduate admission requirements.
4. The Dean of The Graduate School must give official acceptance. Only written notice from the dean constitutes approval of admission, not correspondence with a department or an individual faculty member.
5. Space must be available in the program.
6. Requirements to ensure applicants have the requisite academic and/or professional preparation are to be met prior to registering for graduate courses. Individual departments may have more rigorous requirements.

At the graduate level, West Chester University performs an individualized and holistic review of all applications for admission to the University. Graduate admission decisions are rendered using multiple criteria that includes an evaluation of all college transcripts, letters of reference submitted independently by an evaluator, an applicant's goal statement, and if required by the program, standardized test scores, and other similar program-specific requirements. Individuals who have questions regarding admissions criteria are encouraged to contact The Graduate School ([gradschool@wcupa.edu](mailto:gradschool@wcupa.edu)) or the appropriate graduate coordinator.

Provisional admission may be offered, but is not guaranteed, when admissions requirements are not met. The departmental graduate coordinator will specify course work which must be taken to ensure that applicants have adequate academic and/or professional preparation. This course work, including undergraduate prerequisites, may not be credited to graduate degree requirements.

Admission to degree study does not constitute admission to degree candidacy. After a student has satisfactorily fulfilled course requirements specified in certain degree programs and has completed 12 to 15 semester hours of work, the student must apply for admission to degree candidacy.

## The Application Procedure

Students who have earned or will successfully complete a bachelor's or master's degree prior to enrollment from an accredited college or university in the United States or the equivalent from another country are eligible to apply for admission to a graduate program.

Electronic applications are available on The Graduate School (<http://www.wcupa.edu/grad/>) website. Students must submit the completed application and supporting documentation, including the following:

1. One official copy of academic records (transcripts) from every college and university attended (except West Chester University).
2. Two professional recommendations sent directly to West Chester University by the person writing the letter. (Please note: Some programs may require additional recommendation letters or customized forms formatted by the department.)
3. A written statement of professional goals. Language candidates (French, German, and Spanish) must write the statement in the program language. (Please note that some programs have specific

requirements regarding the personal statement. Specific program requirements will be listed as part of the application instructions.

4. Several programs require a recognized test of scholastic aptitude, e.g., Graduate Record Examination (General and/or Advanced), and/or the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT). Upon the student's request, test scores are sent by the originating source directly to West Chester University.
5. Additional requirements may include the following:
  - An audition (music applicants only)
  - Resume
  - Any supplemental information (e.g., forms, writing samples required by department)
  - A personal interview
6. Applicants should consult with the graduate coordinator of the primary interest area to assure compliance with admission requirements for a particular degree program.

The applicant is responsible for assuring that the The Graduate School receives all necessary materials by the recommended application deadlines.

All application materials become the property of West Chester University and may not be returned or forwarded to another institution.

## Application Deadline

Most of the graduate programs allow for rolling admissions. Some programs have established different recommended application deadlines. Please see application information under individual programs listed in this catalog.

The application and all supporting credentials should be submitted by the deadline. Late applications may be accepted; however, admission will be on a space-available basis for applicants who meet all other admission requirements. Applicants who have missed the deadline should consult with the graduate coordinator for that program to receive advice regarding the possibility of enrolling as a non-degree student for a maximum of nine credits while awaiting action on their application.

Students interested in receiving a graduate assistantship should indicate their interest in the area designated on the electronic admissions application.

## Notification of Admission

All applications are reviewed by both the appropriate department or program and The Graduate School. Applicants will be notified of acceptance or rejection of their applications. If accepted, students must follow all program advising and scheduling policies and procedures. Accepted students should meet immediately with their advisors to outline a program of study.

## Matriculation Deposit

All newly accepted students are required to pay a \$100 matriculation deposit as proof of intention to enroll. The PsyD program requires a \$400 matriculation deposit and the Physical Assistant program requires a \$1,000 matriculation deposit. This is a nonrefundable tuition deposit that will be credited to the student's account upon enrollment. The Graduate School reserves the right to cancel a student's admission if they fail to submit a deposit prior to specified deposit deadline.