

Proposal to Update Residence Requirements for the Doctoral Degree

Text Changes for Policy Update:

Upon approval by the Faculty Senate, the Graduate School policies will be updated as follows:

Note: Shaded strike-through sections indicate proposed deletions; any blue, bolded sections indicate proposed additions

Residence

For the doctoral degree, the residence requirement consists of two parts:

1. A minimum of 36 graduate Oregon State University credits must be completed; and
2. ~~The student must spend at least three terms of full-time graduate academic work (at least 9 credits per term) on campus or at an off-campus site approved by the Graduate School. The requirement of three terms of full-time enrollment does not have to take place in consecutive terms.~~ **Any degree-specific requirements, as described in the degree program's graduate student handbook, that may relate to enrollment requirements, residence requirements, or other non-curricular requirements.**

~~Adequate fulfillment of the residence requirement shall be determined by the Graduate School.~~

Description of Change:

The Graduate Council proposes changing the Residence Requirement for the doctoral degree by replacing the text as shown above. Specifically, this removes both the "full time graduate academic work" and "on campus or at an off-campus site approved by the Graduate School" as overarching policies and, instead, replaces these with "degree-specific requirements" as described in each program's graduate student handbook.

Motivation & Background: The issue with the policy was first brought to the Graduate Council's attention by the Graduate School as an enforcement challenge; while the standards effectively apply to many doctoral programs, what we often thought of as "traditional" programs, there are many and potentially systematic exceptions. In particular, some doctoral degrees can be reasonably earned on a part-time basis, and/or with minimal or no physical residency requirements. However, the current policy may restrict access to these programs of otherwise qualified applicants. This issue may be particularly salient for non-traditional doctoral student populations. Further, we note that some of the likely original motivation for the physical residency requirements are for non-curricular expectations such as lab meetings and colloquia attendance, which are better if more clearly specified in graduate student handbooks. The Graduate Council believes that changing the policy as proposed improves programs' ability to broaden accessibility while maintaining critical standards.