

2024-2025 Graduate Student Handbook  
School of Information Technology  
College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services  
University of Cincinnati

Department Head: Hazem Said  
AD Grad Education - Faculty: Jess Kropczynski  
AD Grad Education - Staff: Nicole Cochran

Welcome Statement

Welcome to graduate studies in the School of Information Technology! Congratulations on your acceptance to our program. This handbook is designed to help you navigate your way through your program and become aware of important policies so that you can make the most of your time here. Graduate studies are a different experience from undergraduate studies. The coursework is more rigorous, the expectations are higher, and the workload is heavier. However, based on your application, we believe that you are prepared for this challenge. You will have the chance to learn from some leading experts in your field, and there will be opportunities for you to conduct original research and significantly contribute to your discipline.

The School of Information Technology (SoIT) aims to empower individuals to become passionate, solution-minded Information Technology professionals by fostering continuous innovation, research, leadership development, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and real-world experience.

All graduate students are subject to the standards and rules of the Graduate College. Specific details and changes in information can be found in the [UC Graduate Handbook](#) on the Graduate College Website.

For more information, please submit [a ticket](#) to the School of Information Technology Graduate Office.

<https://www.uc.edu/about/non-discrimination.html>

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAMS .....4**

**FINANCIAL AID .....5**

**THE MASTER OF SCIENCE .....6**

**PhD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY .....11**

**THESIS INSTRUCTIONS .....13**

**GRADING .....17**

**Incomplete Grade Policy.....17**

**ADVANCED STANDING.....18**

**MAINTAINING GRADUATE STUDENT STATUS .....18**

**DEGREE TIME LIMITATIONS .....19**

**GRADUATION .....20**

**POLICY ON ACADEMIC PROBATION AND DISMISSAL .....21**

**GRADUATE STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES.....22**

**LEAVE OF ABSENSE .....22**

**REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE.....23**

## OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Graduate study in Information Technology consists of the Graduate Certificate in Information Technology, the Graduate Certificate in Data-Driven Cybersecurity, the IT Accelerated Program, the Master of Science in Information Technology, and the PhD in Information Technology.

The [Graduate Certificate in Information Technology](#) offers two distinct pathways:

1. **Competency-Based Education (CBE) Track:** This track is ideal for high school teachers who want to teach core classes in the School of Information Technology as part of the Early IT program. It focuses on practical skills and allows teachers to gain expertise without pursuing a full undergraduate degree in computing.
2. **Bridge Track:** Designed for students transitioning from non-computing backgrounds to a master's in information technology (MSIT), this pathway helps them develop essential skills for MSIT core courses. The four required courses cover topics like programming, networking, databases, and security, and they are available every term.

Admission into the Graduate Certificate in Information Technology is open each semester, except for the CBE track, which only admits students during the summer term. You can explore the online curriculum map for each track [here](#).

The [Data-Driven Cybersecurity Graduate Certificate](#) is comprised of 12 credit hours and prepares individuals who already have a foundational background in IT for a workforce that can understand the concepts of cybersecurity, analyzing cyber threats, responding to incidents, protecting data networks, and maintaining IT infrastructure continuity. The curriculum emphasizes teaching cybersecurity and data analytics software tools that are broadly used by industry cybersecurity professionals. Applications for this program are reviewed in the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters, and courses are offered in both an online and in-person modality throughout the course of the year. [View the online curriculum map here](#).

The [IT Accelerated Program](#) at the University of Cincinnati allows students to achieve both a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology/Cybersecurity and a Master's degree in an accelerated timeframe.

- Eligibility: University of Cincinnati students currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Information and Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity programs can participate.
- Timeline: Students can start graduate-level courses as early as the first semester of their third year.
- Curriculum: The program combines coursework from both the BSIT and MSIT programs.
- Co-op Experience: Students have the opportunity to complete five co-op rotations during their studies.
- Application: Applications open on November 1 and close on the last day of February each year.

For more information, you can visit the [University of Cincinnati's IT Accelerated Program page](#).

The [Master of Science in Information Technology](#) offers practical skills, customizable studies, and excellent career prospects in the growing field of IT. This program is comprised of 30 credit hours, can be completed in three semesters, and is offered both online and on-campus, catering to students both with and without a computing background. Students who do not have a background in IT may be assigned one or more bridge courses. [View the online curriculum map here.](#)

Prospective domestic and international students are encouraged to apply before one of the priority deadlines to receive priority consideration for both admission and scholarship funding. The application for domestic and international applicants is subject to close if enrollment capacity has been met prior to the final deadline.

The [PhD in Information Technology](#) aims to advance applied research in evidence-based, human-centered and secure IT practice. Graduates contribute to educating future IT professionals at various levels, from K-12 to graduate programs.

#### **Post-Master's Track:**

- a. Minimum of 60 credit hours.
- b. Tailored based on individual transcripts and prior coursework.

#### **Post-Baccalaureate Pathway:**

- c. Minimum of 90 credit hours.
- d. Distributed across four key areas:
  - i. Core Area (33 semester credit hours):
    1. 15 hours in Information Technology Foundations.
    2. 12 hours in an Area of Specialization.
    3. 6 hours of research preparation.
  - ii. Methodology (12 semester credit hours).
  - iii. Electives (15 semester credit hours):
    1. Distributed among analytical, quantificational, computational, social, and experiential themes.
  - iv. Dissertation (30 semester credit hours)

[View the online curriculum map here.](#)

### **FUNDING AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

The School of Information Technology considers MSIT students for partial scholarships each academic year. Scholarship amounts are established upon admission to the program and are not adjusted based on in-program GPA due to the short duration of the program and the need for consistent funding allocation. All applicants will automatically be considered for financial aid, and

selected recipients will receive an award letter along with admission. All financial aid is based on annual availability.

Full-time PhD Information Technology students are fully funded with a Graduate Assistant Scholarship and Graduate Assistant stipend.

There are also many sources of financial aid from external sponsors and federal and state sources. Please discuss financial aid needs with the [UC Financial Aid department](#).

### External Employment and UC Assistantships:

Our primary goal is to ensure that graduate students have the time and resources necessary to excel in their academic pursuits. A full-time graduate student workload already involves significant commitments to coursework, research, and independent study. Exceeding these academic demands through additional work may hinder timely milestone completion, research progress, and overall dissertation quality. The School of Information Technology has invested in assistantships and tuition support as a resource for academic success, and we encourage students to make full use of these resources during fall and spring semesters.

Graduate assistants are limited to working a maximum of 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters. If you wish to work more than 20 hours per week, you must decline your assistantship and the associated scholarship.

To decline your assistantship and/or scholarship, please notify your direct supervisor and the Graduate Office. Please note that tuition support is only provided to students with active assistantships.

CPT will only be granted to International PhD students who are not receiving an assistantship for the semester in which CPT is granted. This means that a student with tuition support for fall and spring may engage in CPT during the summer semester. Alternatively, a student may decline an assistantship in the fall or spring semester in order to engage in full-time CPT. You must enroll in one credit in the semester that you take CPT (fall or spring), as an international student, you will need to apply for a Reduced Courseload through iBearcatsGlobal. Thus, you will need to pay for the credit out-of-pocket. Please note that you must be finished with all other in-class required coursework to be approved for a reduced course load. If you register for less than six credit hours, you will not be charged for the university student health insurance policy. If needed, graduate international students who are registered for one credit hour are eligible to purchase university student health insurance by enrolling through the student health insurance office. If you decide not to get the university policy, you MUST have insurance while in U.S.

## THE MASTER OF SCIENCE

### Special Conditions of Admission:

In some cases, students without a sufficient background in IT may be admitted and assigned bridge courses as a condition of their admission. These courses must be completed within one semester for full-time students and within two semesters for part-time students. Students who do not complete courses in this timeframe with a B or better but are in otherwise good standing with the program will be placed on academic probation and given a one semester probationary period to complete the bridge courses with a B or better. If the courses are not completed during the probationary period, students will be dismissed from the program.

### Deferral of Admission:

Students admitted into the MSIT program are permitted to defer admission up to one semester and will be required to submit a written request via the [SoIT Graduate Office ticketing system](#). Scholarship funding is not eligible for deferral; however, students who have paid the \$100 confirmation deposit will not be required to pay this amount a second time. Requests to defer admission for a year are considered based on extenuating circumstances and will need to include a strong rationale and supporting documentation.

### First Semester Requirements for On-Campus, Fulltime Students:

To ensure success in the program, the following guidelines have been set for on-campus students when planning their schedule: 1) enroll in no more than 12 credit hours, and 2) only enroll in in-person courses (may include hybrid courses, but no online classes). Students awarded a scholarship by the School of Information Technology may have their scholarship revoked if they do not adhere to these guidelines.

### Thesis Instructions

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION AND DEPOSITING OF MASTER THESIS

According to the UC Graduate Handbook, “Each master’s degree student undergoes an individual evaluation process at the end of his/her program. This evaluation process is defined as satisfactory demonstration of mastery of subject matter in which the graduate student is seeking the master’s degree. This demonstration is an individualized evaluation of each master’s candidate that is monitored and documented by at least two faculty members, at least one of whom must be a member of the graduate faculty “.

To meet this requirement, the MS Information Technology program requires either the completion of a final capstone project or thesis.

#### Requirements for Master’s Thesis

The program's coursework and related elements provide students with the necessary background to undertake the research required to complete an MSIT thesis. The following steps will be taken to complete the thesis process:

1. The completion of the thesis requires two committee meetings:
  - (1) The Thesis Proposal,
  - (2) The Oral Defense of the Thesis.

Each of these meetings is a step to ensure successful completion of the process. Following each meeting, the appropriate form should be completed and submitted to the graduate director. Note that any significant changes in the thesis should be reflected by the completion of a new form.

2. During the initial 30 days of the first semester, students opting for the thesis track will select a thesis advisor from the School of Information Technology Graduate Faculty. The student will directly approach the advisor, who can then decide whether to accept the student. Subsequently, the thesis advisor and student will meet to discuss potential thesis topics. Students who have obtained approval from the faculty to form their committee (comprised of one advisor that is a member of the graduate faculty and at least two committee members) should send an email to the graduate director with the completed **Thesis Committee Agreement Form (Form A)**. If, in consultation with the graduate director, the student or advisor feels that the project could be completed more successfully by changing advisors and/or committee members, such change should be formally announced by the completion of a new form.

3. The thesis proposal should be completed and copied and provided to each committee member one week prior to the thesis proposal meeting. The student and advisor are responsible for setting the time for the meeting. The proposal includes reasons for undertaking the research topic, the student's qualifications for pursuing the research question, a statement on the literature to be searched, and the proposal method. Once the committee approves of the proposal, the signed form for this meeting should be provided to the graduate director (Form B). The approval of proposal must happen at least six months prior to the final thesis defense. If the student fails the first try of the oral defense, he or she can have a second attempt after 3 months. If he or she fails again, he/she will be dismissed from the program.

5. The oral defense of the thesis will be conducted at the research's completion with all committee members present. The student will schedule the defense with the thesis advisor and committee and the Coordinator of Graduate Studies. The defense must be conducted at least 10 days prior to the Graduate College's electronic submission deadline. The Department will publicize the defense.

#### **Before the defense:**

1. The completed thesis must be submitted to committee members at least 10 days before the oral defense.
2. Begin the Electronic Submission Process with the Graduate College at <http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd.html>.
3. Generate the Committee Approval form within the ETD system and bring it with you to your defense.
4. Send your thesis title, a brief description, and date, time, and location of your defense to the graduate coordinator at least two weeks before your defense.



## The defense:

1. The defense is a public meeting, which means that other members of the department and university communities are welcome to attend. The student will defend the thesis and answer questions for committee members during the meeting.
2. If rejected, the student will receive another attempt for oral defense. The student has up to 2 semesters to prepare for the oral defense. If the student does not defend again within 2 semesters, they will not have a chance to defend the thesis for the master's program. If accepted with revisions, the student has 15 days to submit with revisions. If not submitted within the time frame or if incorrect revisions are made, the thesis will be rejected.

## After the Defense:

1. Once the advisor and the committee give final approval, the student must have each member provide an original signature on the Graduate College's Committee Approval Form. This form will be scanned and electronically uploaded to the Electronic Thesis Dissertation (ETD) website.
  2. The approved thesis should be typed according to Graduate College requirements and submitted by the published deadline. Follow the guidelines on the website.
  3. Students should publish their thesis after reviewing the publishing options and work with their advisor to select keywords.
  4. The advisor will receive an email asking for confirmation of your submission. The student must be sure that the Advisor receives the email and approves the submission.
6. Final approval of the thesis signals completion of the MS degree. In addition to the two copies required by the university, the student must provide one bound copy of their finished thesis to the advisor.

Please note that new students in the MSIT program will be placed in the non-thesis track by default.

## Thesis Format

The University of Cincinnati Graduate College maintains specific formatting criteria which can be found here: <https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd/formatting.html>

The required contents and page order can be found here: <https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd/page-order.html>

Please review University of Cincinnati Graduate College Instructions for the preparation and depositing of master's theses and doctoral dissertations for any guideline updates: <http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/graduation.html>



## **PHD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

Doctoral study in The School of Information Technology at the University of Cincinnati involves satisfactory completion of a minimum of 60 semester hours of graduate coursework beyond the master's degree, or 90 credit hours if entering the program with a baccalaureate degree. In addition, part-time doctoral students are required to complete two out of three consecutive semesters of full-time study in residence at the University of Cincinnati prior to admission to doctoral candidacy. Full-time UC employees using tuition remission to complete the program part-time may request a waiver of this requirement from the Associate Dean of the Graduate College.

All doctoral students are required to complete one teaching practicum or co-op/internship experience. These courses instruct students in the art of teaching Information Technology and prepare students to practice their research skills.

### **Annual Review**

Each year, doctoral students will receive a written annual review of their degree progress. The annual review helps implement a continuing assessment of, 1) the quality of the student's work, 2) progress towards degree completion, 3) and, to provide the student with formative feedback. At this time, the Graduate Director may make recommendations to the student regarding satisfactory progress toward the degree.

As part of the annual review process, students initiate their review by filling out the student section of the Doctoral Annual Progress Report by the end of each Spring semester. Once the student has completed the form, they must provide the form to their advisor to complete the next step. Following the advisor review, the advisor will submit the form to the Graduate Director for review and feedback. The finalized written review will be provided to the student by June 1st and kept on file with the Graduate Director and Graduate Coordinator.

### **Comprehensive Examination**

Students are required to complete a comprehensive examination (also known as Candidacy or Qualifying examination) to achieve doctoral candidacy. Students should complete relevant coursework (IT 7001, IT 7010C, IT 8002, IT 8003, IT 8004, IT 8005, IT 8006) before taking the comprehensive examination.

The comprehensive examination is composed of three steps:

#### **Step 1: Research Topic:**

The first step is to select a research topic and submit the topic, abstract, and a minimum of ten papers a student intends to review by the end of the first year (last day of the Spring term) for

full-time students or end of the second year for part-time students. It is highly encouraged that students work with a faculty advisor or the Graduate Director to identify relevant literature to include in their submission.

The comprehensive topic form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator. The Graduate Director will review the submission and approve or recommend changes by the second Friday of the summer semester following the submission. The topic must be approved by the Graduate Director before the student can proceed to Step 2. The Graduate Director will appoint a comprehensive Examination Committee and set a deadline for the completion of Step 2 at this step. The Examination Committee will consist of 3-5 School of Information Technology faculty and will be responsible for evaluating the comprehensive exam, including reviewing the literature review and attending and asking questions in the oral defense.

#### Step 2: Written Literature Review Report:

Following approval of the comprehensive exam topic, students will study the topic (from the papers that were identified in Step 1) and submit a literature review report by the last Friday in September following the approval of the topic, or as indicated in Step 1. The written report must follow the ACM academic paper format and be a maximum of 25 pages, excluding references.

The Examination Committee will review the report and provide a Pass/Fail determination. The graduate director will notify the student of the result by the last Friday of October. The committee may determine that the report Failed. In this case, students will be given two weeks to make amendments and resubmit. Students will have only these two attempts to pass Step 2.

#### Step 3: Oral Examination:

Upon successful completion of Step 2, students will schedule an Oral Examination by the last day of the Fall semester of the same year they completed Steps 1 and 2.

The Oral Examination will focus on the report submitted in Step 2. It is the student's responsibility to schedule Step 3 with the Examination Committee by the deadline. Failure to schedule the Step 3 Oral Examination by the deadline will be considered failure of Step 3.

If the student fails Step 3, they can reschedule a second Examination by the last Friday of the next January. Students will have only these two attempts to pass Step 3.

#### Comprehensive Examination Result:

The student must pass all three steps to successfully pass the Comprehensive Examination. Under the guidance of the Committee Chair (Graduate Program Director or appointed representative), the committee will deliberate and award a pass or fail of the comprehensive

examination. If the Examination Committee decides that an examination has failed, they will provide formal written feedback to the student.

The Graduate Director will notify students of the results of their examination by email. Students are responsible for providing the school with an active email address and mailing address. The result will be communicated to students within 4-8 weeks after the completion of Step 3.

Those who fail the Comprehensive Examination will be terminated from the PhD program. They will have the option to utilize their course work towards a Master's degree and graduate at the end of the semester in which they received the results.

To ensure successful completion of the Comprehensive Examination, students are encouraged to communicate regularly with the Graduate Director or their Faculty Advisor.

### **Selection of Dissertation Committee Chair**

Students may select their Faculty Advisor (who will serve as their Dissertation Committee Chair) any time after entering the program, but no later than the end of the semester in which they successfully complete the Comprehensive Examination. Students must complete the PhD Dissertation Committee Chair form and submit it to the Graduate Program Coordinator by the deadline.

Upon admission to the program, the Graduate Director, or representative, will serve as a temporary faculty advisor until the student selects their advisor. Students are encouraged to select their faculty advisor early in the program and submit the *Dissertation Advisor Agreement form* to the Program Coordinator. However, the final faculty advisor must be selected by the last day of the semester in which the student successfully completes the Comprehensive Examination. No change in the faculty advisor will be accepted after this deadline.

### **Advancement to Candidacy**

Advancement to candidacy connotes a fundamental milestone in a graduate student's status. Candidacy signifies that the student has completed all coursework and assessment and is completing their dissertation research. Doctoral candidates may be considered for Doctoral Research Graduate Assistant Scholarship (GAS), Graduate Assistantships, and Graduate Incentive Awards (GIA).

A student advances to doctoral candidacy when all the following requirements have been completed:

- All required coursework has been completed with a grade point average of at least 3.25.
- Comprehensive Exam and Proficiency requirements completed.
- Required residency met (two of three consecutive semesters of full-time study).
- Grades of I, N, and F removed or processed in accordance with college policy.
- Select dissertation chair, form a committee, and complete and submit the form.

- Complete University Admission to Candidacy Form.
- Admission to candidacy should be at least seven months prior to receipt of degree.

## **Doctoral Dissertation**

Each doctoral student must complete a dissertation. The dissertation is the capstone graduate experience wherein the candidate conducts and presents original research. The dissertation project is planned with the consent and guidance of a faculty committee. The first step in the dissertation research process is the selection of a faculty advisor. With guidance from the faculty Advisor who has the expertise to guide the research topic, the student selects the dissertation topic and forms a Dissertation Committee. This is followed by development and presentation of a dissertation proposal. The proposal presentation is open to all faculty members. The proposal must be accepted by the committee before the completion of the research and dissertation. The final step is the presentation and defense of the dissertation. The defense hearing is open to the public. Each of these steps are addressed below.

### **Dissertation Committee**

Any time after successful completion of the comprehensive exam, but before the end of the second year (third year for part-time students), the student shall compose the dissertation committee and send their completed Dissertation Committee form to the Graduate Program Coordinator and Graduate Director.

Dissertation committees must meet the following conditions:

- They must include at least four faculty members.
- At least three of the committee members must be from the faculty of the School of Information Technology.
- At least one faculty member will be from outside the school.

Committee members may be replaced by the Graduate Director upon review of a petition from the advisor, the student, or a committee member.

### **Dissertation Proposal**

#### **Proposal Preparation**

Full-time students must present an acceptable dissertation proposal to the doctoral committee within one year of advancing to candidacy. Additionally, students can register for Doctoral Dissertation Research (IT 8030) in the semester that follows admission to candidacy. Students not admitted to candidacy may register for Doctoral Dissertation Research credit after completing 50 credit hours with the permission of the Graduate Director. The dissertation proposal presentation will take place as a proposal hearing. The candidate must provide the

dissertation committee with a copy of the proposal at least two weeks prior to the proposal hearing.

### **Proposal Hearing**

When the dissertation proposal is completed, a formal examination by the dissertation committee occurs and is either accepted, accepted conditionally, or rejected. This examination is accomplished at the proposal hearing. The proposal hearing is conducted as follows:

- The committee chairperson schedules and chairs the dissertation proposal hearing.
- A notice of the proposal hearing will be sent to the Graduate Office.
- A notice of the proposal hearing will be posted in the School, and School faculty may attend.
- All members of the students' doctoral committee must attend the proposal hearing.
- The committee sitting at the dissertation proposal hearing must conclude that the proposal is acceptable as is, accepted subject to stipulated modifications, or rejected.
- The committee members, with no more than one dissenting vote, must concur in a decision to accept or modify the proposal.
- If the proposal is rejected, the candidate may submit another proposal at any mutually convenient time after at least 30 days have elapsed.

### **Dissertation Writing and Submission**

Once the candidate's proposal has been accepted by the dissertation committee, on behalf of the School of Information Technology, the candidate is encouraged to execute the research plan swiftly.

Submission of the dissertation is subject to the following conditions:

- An acceptable dissertation must be delivered to the dissertation committee and a satisfactory defense thereof must be made within four years of the date of advancement to candidacy.
- To maintain status as a student during the dissertation writing, the candidate must maintain effective contact with the chair of the committee and other members of the committee as appropriate. The definition of "effective contact" is to be negotiated between the candidate and their committee.
- After completion of the required credits, the candidate must register for at least one credit hour of IT 8030 IT Dissertation each Fall semester.
- The candidate must provide each member of the committee with a copy of the draft dissertation. Any committee member with substantial criticisms of the dissertation should inform the candidate and the committee chair before the oral defense.
- When the dissertation is judged to be acceptable by dissertation committee members, the student and the committee chair will schedule an oral defense and notify the Graduate

Program Coordinator. The student must provide a copy of the draft dissertation to the dissertation committee no later than two weeks prior to the oral defense. Committee members will provide the candidate with written comments and suggestions for revision of the dissertation at or before the oral defense.

## **Dissertation Format**

The University of Cincinnati Graduate College maintains specific formatting criteria which can be found here: <https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd/formatting.html>

The required contents and page order can be found here: <https://grad.uc.edu/student-life/etd/page-order.html>

Please review University of Cincinnati Graduate College Instructions for the preparation and depositing of master's theses and doctoral dissertations for any guideline updates: <http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/graduation.html>

## **Defense of the Dissertation**

The dissertation defense is designed as the final examination of a candidate's dissertation and provides the candidate with a public forum for presenting findings. A dissertation defense must satisfy the following requirements:

- All members of the candidate's doctoral committee must attend the defense.
- The candidate must be physically present at the dissertation defense.
- The defense will be open to all members of the University community. The School will announce the defense and invite stakeholders to attend.
- The dissertation defense is held at the University of Cincinnati.
- The defense will include a concise oral summary of the work and integration of the dissertation into prior work on the topic.
- At the chairperson's discretion, any faculty member present has recognition for posing questions to the candidate.
- Each member of the dissertation committee will judge the defense as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A defense will be judged satisfactory if no more than one committee member dissents.
- If the defense judgment is unsatisfactory, written feedback provided to the candidate will prompt a second oral scheduled defense. It is the faculty and students' responsibility to follow all policies and procedures.

## **PROGRAM POLICIES**



## Adding a Course After the Deadline

University policy allows students to enroll in classes as late as three weeks into the start of term. To promote student success and minimize classroom disruptions, the SoIT Graduate Office has implemented the following enrollment policy:

- Week 1: Students are permitted to add or swap classes freely, as Catalyst remains accessible.
- Week 2: Students seeking to enroll in a class with available seats must obtain written approval from the course instructor. Upon approval, students are required to submit the instructor's authorization through the SoIT Graduate Office ticketing system to facilitate the addition of Class Permission in Catalyst.
  - Students should include the following information in their ticket submission: M#, course number, section number, 5-digit class number, and course title of the subject they are hoping to add.
- Week 3: Enrollment requests during the third week of the semester will not be considered unless there are extenuating circumstances warranting an exception.

This policy ensures a structured and efficient enrollment process while supporting the academic integrity of our programs.

## Grading

UC Graduate student performance is graded A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, F, P, U, T, I, I/F, NG, W, UP, N, SP, UW, and IP. The following grades are not graduate grades and prohibited from assignment: C-, D+, D, or D-.

## Incomplete Grade Policy

The School of Information Technology advises instructors to avoid assigning incomplete grades.

Under extenuating circumstances, an incomplete grade is awarded as a final course grade (without grade point assignment) at the end of a term when a significant portion of course work has been satisfactorily completed, but not all the course work has been completed. The incomplete grade is appropriate only when the completed course work is of passing quality and the student has had such hardship that completion of the remaining course work within the term timeline would present an additional hardship. An "I" grade should only be awarded if it is possible for students to complete the work without class attendance. Initially, the "I" does not factor into the grade point averages. After a 350-day period, if the incomplete grade has not been resolved, the "I" grade is converted to an "I/F" grade which carries zero (0.00) quality points and affects the student's GPA the same as a "F" grade.

## ADVANCED STANDING

Any student transferring from an accredited graduate program can have advanced standing granted towards their completion. A total of six semester hours can be applied to the MS Information Technology Program. Advanced Standing will not be accepted for the graduate certificate. Students seeking advanced standing must petition the SoIT Graduate Director for acceptance of their credits prior to the start of their program.

The following policies guide the Graduate Director in determining whether to grant advanced standing.

- Credit is granted for graduate courses with a grade of “B” or better
- If there are excess credits when course equivalence is granted, the excess can be applied toward elective requirements.
- The credits must have been earned within the past 3 years.

## Independent Study:

Students may choose to take Independent Study (IT 6005) in their graduate program. While not required, it provides students with the opportunity to work on a project with a faculty member. Independent Study only counts towards the degree requirement with special approval from the Graduate Program Director. All students must complete the following process in order to enroll in Independent Study. \*

1. Students initiate the independent study request.
2. Students speak directly with individual graduate faculty members, seeking mutual interest.
3. Faculty and students provide a one-page description on the scope of the project/study, estimated workload, and planned assessment on deliverables.
4. The director reviews and approves/denies independent study plan.
5. If the study plan is approved, the coordinator adds the independent study credits to the student’s degree plan.

**A copy of the required Independent Study form to be completed should be requested from the Program Coordinator. Once completed, the form should be submitted to the Program Coordinator and Graduate Director.**

\*Students with graduate assistantships will enroll in Independent Study in their first year of study in order to have sufficient time to work on developing their thesis. Independent study in this case does not count towards the 30-credit hour requirement but is taken with the approval of the faculty advisor. Requests to enroll should be sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator and should include a copy of the faculty member's approval.

## Maintaining Graduate Status

Maintaining graduate student status signifies that the student is actively engaged in making progress towards his or her degree and meeting program requirements. A University of Cincinnati graduate student must hold a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent and must have been accepted for admission into graduate study by the appropriate graduate program.

**Minimum Credits/Registration Requirements** - To maintain graduate status at the University of Cincinnati, a student must register at UC for at least one graduate credit that contributes to degree requirements in an academic year. Credits that are audited or in which a student receives a W or UW do not count toward the minimum credit requirement. A student whose status has automatically terminated because of failure to register during an academic year will no longer be considered a graduate student but may seek reinstatement. Also note that students must register for at least one graduate credit hour during each semester (excluding summer semester) if they are using University resources such as libraries, University housing, campus laboratories, office space, equipment, recreational or computer facilities.

**Full-Time Course Load** - Students must be registered for 10 or more graduate credits each semester to be considered full-time students, 12 graduate credits if holding a Graduate Assistantship. Audit credits do not count toward full-time status and may not be supported by a University Graduate Scholarship.

**Part-Time Course Load** - Students who can devote less than full time to graduate study may register for the number of graduate credits judged by their program advisors to represent the appropriate fraction of a full-time load.

**Reduced Course Load (International Students)** - Once an international student has finished all required course work and will no longer be enrolling full time, she/he may choose to enroll with a reduced course load. In order to do this, the student must obtain the "reduced course load certification" from UC International Services. See the UC Graduate Handbook for detailed information.

**Minimum Academic Performance** - A student must accumulate a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 to obtain a master's degree at the University of Cincinnati. All doctoral students must maintain at least a 3.25/4.00 grade point average (GPA) for their program. Students cannot graduate with any invalid grades on their student record. A student who receives an "F" in any graduate course may be suspended or terminated from the graduate program. No grade of "I" (incomplete) is permitted for more than one semester without the approval of the instructor of the course. Students who fail to finish an "I" by this time may be suspended or terminated from the program. All invalid grades, including "I" and "F", must be resolved prior to graduation. In order to resolve invalid grades, the course must be retaken with a passing grade. Please note that there is no grade replacement and both grades for the course will count towards the GPA. Please see the UC Graduate Handbook for detailed information.

**International Student Requirements-** International students on an F-1 visa must be registered full-time (10 credits or more) per semester for the Fall and Spring semesters. Additionally, 9 credits per semester must come from on-campus courses. Additional courses beyond the 9 on-campus credits may be taken in an online format.

**Thesis requirements-** Please see appendix B for thesis instructions.

Failure to fulfill these requirements will subject a student to suspension or termination from the program. Please be advised that the academic performance of all students is monitored each semester to ensure they are making satisfactory progress toward their degree. An unfavorable evaluation may mean that a student will be suspended or terminated from the graduate program. Suspended students may not take courses until they reapply and have been accepted for readmission by the faculty. Please be aware that students may appeal a suspension decision by contacting the Graduate Director and/or other authorized appeals committees/persons within the College of Education, Criminal Justice, Human Services, and Information Technology and of the University of Cincinnati Graduate College. The School of Information Technology adheres to the grading practices specified in the Graduate Handbook of the University of Cincinnati Graduate College.

### Degree Time Limitations

#### MS Information Technology

The minimum requirement for the Master's degree is the equivalent of 2 semesters consisting of at least 30 semester graduate credits. Students must complete the master's degree no later than 3 years from the date of first registration in the degree program. Failure to complete the degree within the time limits established may require the student to take courses again or take additional courses to make certain the skills are up to date. Support for time extensions beyond the 3 years will be considered and granted in some circumstances. In order to be considered for a time extension, the student must petition the SoIT Graduate Director.

#### PhD Information Technology

A doctoral student must complete all degree requirements no later than nine years from the date of first admission to the doctoral program. In general, students not meeting the time limits outlined here can expect to be terminated from the program. Requests for time extensions will be supported only in extreme circumstances and must be approved by the Graduate College. Students requesting an extension must communicate with the Graduate Director to request a review of their degree completion to date and form a plan for degree completion.

### Graduation

Students who have successfully completed all requirements for their degree program may apply for graduation. The graduation application typically opens one semester prior to the graduation term. The application, deadlines, and requirements for graduation can be found on the UC Graduate College website at <http://grad.uc.edu>.

Before applying to graduate, it is the student's responsibility to ensure all completed and currently enrolled courses count towards their degree. Students are able to enroll in many courses across the University, however not every course will count towards their degree. Any approvals for courses not pre-approved in the curriculum must be approved by the Program Director. Students must maintain written documentation of any such approval. Students should run their degree audit in Catalyst at the start of every term. Students are encouraged to meet with the Program Coordinator before the beginning of every semester to ensure they are on track.

Students who apply to graduate but are not on-track to graduate will receive notification of their status mid-semester. Therefore, students should ensure their status prior to applying to graduate.

### **PhD Information Technology**

Students who have successfully defended their dissertation will have satisfied all degree requirements. Students will be eligible for graduation when the following conditions are met:

All records are complete and in good order;

- Finalization and submission of an online application to graduate by the deadline;
- Confirmation of registration for at least one credit in their graduate program in each academic year;
- Receipt and approval of the student's electronic dissertation and related forms by the Graduate College (see Graduate College website for instructions);
- The candidate is required to complete the Doctoral Exit Survey on their doctoral experience.

### **Application for Degree**

All graduate students who expect to receive a degree at any of the three (3) university commencements must make a formal application for their degrees. As a rule, applications should be made early in the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. Specific dates are established by the Registrar and the University of Cincinnati Graduate College ([uc.edu/registrar](http://uc.edu/registrar)).

## **[Policy on Academic Probation and Dismissal](#)**

### Academic Probation:

Several situations can lead to an Academic Probation status including: (a) failure to secure a minimum “B” grade in a required bridge course, (b) failure to complete assigned bridge course(s) in the time designated in the admission letter, (c) program GPA has fallen below 3.0, or (d) repeated academic misconduct. Failure to remediate probationary status may lead to dismissal from the Program. A student who has been terminated under this policy may appeal the decision by following the University Graduate Student Grievance Policies (<http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/policies/grievances.html>).

During the probationary period, students will be:

- Restricted to enroll in a maximum of 12 credit hours during the probationary period
- Required to remediate concerns which may include:
  - Taking and completing required bridge courses with a final grade of a B or better
  - Make progress toward remediating GPA below 3.0
  - Abstain from additional instances of academic misconduct
- Required to complete an academic success plan and schedule a meeting with a member of the SoIT course success team before the mid-point of the semester (week 6) to strategize best practices for academic success.

Dismissal from Program:

A student who is dismissed from the program will be notified in writing. A student who has been terminated under this policy may appeal the decision by following the University Graduate Student Grievance Policies (<http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/policies/grievances.html>).

## Graduate Student Grievance Procedures

The University of Cincinnati provides an opportunity for the resolution of disputes involving graduate students in a fair and collegial manner. The Graduate Student Grievance Procedures establish a formal process for graduate students to request review and redress of certain grievances arising out of their academic relationships with their programs, their colleges, or the University. The grievance begins with a mediation process and may proceed, if necessary, through the more formal fact-finding and decision or appeal processes. In general, however, it is expected that grievances will be resolved by the parties within their programs.

The procedures are applicable to the following types of grievances:

- Grievances alleging improper probation or suspension from a graduate program.
- Grievances alleging the improper withholding or termination of financial support of any kind.
- Grievances alleging any other improper treatment of a graduate student by a faculty member or university agency except:
  1. allegations of discriminatory treatment arising from the student complainant’s age, race, gender, sexual preference, disability, national origin, or religion.\*
  2. allegations of improper evaluation of the quality and quantity of academic work.
  3. allegations of unfair recommendation for employment or further graduate study.

Note\*: Allegations of discrimination will be handled according to the University Discrimination Procedure administered by the Equal Opportunity Office. Allegations of sexual harassment will be handled according to the University Institutional Policy on Sexual Harassment administered by the Equal Opportunity Office (556-5503).

Up-to-date procedures to and University Graduate Student Grievance Policies can be found here: <http://grad.uc.edu/student-life/policies/grievances.html>.

## Leave of Absence

Under special circumstances, graduate students may apply for a leave of absence from full-time study at the University for a specific period of up to one year. Circumstances justifying a leave include but are not limited to personal or family medical conditions, call to active military duty, maternity leave, or death in immediate family. The rationale must be independently documented by the applicant. Students are eligible for a leave of absence during their first two years of graduate study. An approved leave of absence preserves the student's active status in his or her degree program. Time granted as official leave does not count against time limits for awarding degrees. A leave may be renewed for up to one year if the student applies for a leave extension at least four months prior to the expiration of his or her initial leave. Renewal of a leave is subject to the approval of the program, college and Graduate College. A student will not be granted a leave of absence totaling more than two years.

### NOTE:

Students with financial aid and/or student loans should confer with the Office of Financial Aid prior to requesting a leave of absence to ascertain any implications for their financial support. Students with a scholarship from the SoIT should confer with their advisor prior to requesting a leave of absence to ascertain any implications for their financial support.

## Request for Leave of Absence

Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence under special circumstances. In order to submit a request, students must login to GradTracker to complete the request form and include appropriate documentation to explain the reason for leaving.

### University Policies

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)**, is the federal law that governs the release of and access to student education records. FERPA affords students certain rights

with respect to their education records. For the complete FERPA information, consult the [FERPA and Records Privacy page](#) of the Registrar's Office website.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The University of Cincinnati does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, military status (including veteran status), ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, pregnancy, parental status (including status as a foster parent), or any other status protected by law (collectively, "protected class"), in its academic, education, and employment programs and activities. View UC's complete Notice of Non-Discrimination..