DEPARTMENT OF
MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES
STUDENT HANDBOOK

2015-2016
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PREFACE

Welcome to Rice University. We are pleased that you have chosen Rice for your graduate study. This document will familiarize you with the department, academic policies, and procedures. In addition to this guide, you are expected to stay informed of policies governing financial aid, degree, and course requirements by consulting the university websites.

The policies outlined in this document pertain to graduate studies in the PhD, MS, and MME programs in the Department of Mechanical Engineering (MECH). In case of error, omission, or conflict, policies of the Rice General Announcements supersede those stated here.

If the policies of the program change during a student's tenure at Rice University, the student can elect one of the following two options: continue studies under the complete set of policies in place at the time of his or her matriculation into the program, or continue studies under the complete set of new policies. Students must choose one set of policies or the other; they may not pick and choose policies from each group. In rare cases, the faculty may apply a new regulation to all students who have not passed a specific milestone (e.g., candidacy) in their program if such a change will not materially affect the progress of the students.

The department reserves the right to correct typographical errors in these policies at any time without giving students the above choices. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the rules, procedures, and requirements of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and Rice University. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that policies and timelines are followed in order to allow for timely graduation.

NOTICE:

Students are responsible for meeting all department and university requirements. In addition to being in agreement with the regulations stated in this departmental handbook, students must also be in agreement with the General Announcements (http://ga.rice.edu/) and the Code of Conduct (http://www.students.rice.edu/students/Conduct.asp). A student failing to meet department or university requirements is subject to dismissal from the program.

In cases where there is conflicting information, university-wide regulations take precedence over departmental-wide regulations, which take precedence over research group regulations.

When in doubt, students should first seek help at the department level (starting with the faculty advisor) and then at the central administration level (Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).
DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING ADMINISTRATION

The faculty body is responsible for establishing and maintaining the academic policies of the department aligned with Rice University guidelines. The Chair is primarily responsible for members of the faculty, while the department administrator ensures that the department’s daily activities are executed by staff and run smoothly.

Administrative Staff
Students have access to administrative staff for assistance. The primary administrative contact person for graduate students is Alicia Herrera. She and the other staff are listed below:

Teia Wright – Sr. Dept. Administrator  ext. 5850  wrightt@rice.edu  MEB 104
Manages the departmental funds and budgets and supervises the staff members.
- Go to Teia when you are referred to her for specific questions

Alicia Herrera – Undergraduate & Graduate Admin.  ext. 3933  aliciac@rice.edu  MEB 207
Assists graduate students with academic and administrative issues during their study in MECH. Coordinates the recruitment of graduate students.
Go to Alicia for:
- Questions about academic policies and procedures
- Assistance with processing forms related to your academic progress
- Questions about payroll/paycheck/stipend
- Submission of travel envelopes after your travel to conferences
- Requesting verification letters (student status, etc.)
- Questions about course schedules, classroom locations

Connie Myrick – Accounting & Grants Coordinator  ext. 2042  cm23@rice.edu  MEB 207
Assists faculty with proposal submissions, post award accounting, and reporting.
Go to Connie for:
- Assistance with fellowship applications

Arnetta Jones – Administrative Coordinator  ext. 4906  ayj1@rice.edu  MEB 101
Provides academic support for classes. Assists faculty members. Maintains the department reception area and the workroom. Distributes mail. Coordinates the MECH seminars and other special events.
Go to Arnetta for:
- Questions about course schedules, classroom locations
- Problems with building access with your Rice ID card
- Room/building maintenance issues
- Scheduling appointments with Dr. Andrew Meade
- Assistance with incoming/outgoing mail, the work room, and its equipment (fax, copier, printer, and other office supplies)
- Questions about MECH seminar and other department events
- Issuance of office/lab keys ($10 deposit required for 1st two keys)
- Website/Facebook issues
- Assistance with placing lab supply orders and pick-up
- Tax exemption forms for general purchases and Texas lodging (Rice University does not pay sales tax)
• Reimbursements via check or cash for out of pocket expenses

Joseph Gesenhues (Technician & Shop Manager)

Tiffany Okoye (Assistant to Dr. Spanos)

**Faculty**

The responsibilities of faculty members include the advising and mentoring of students, research, lab management, and instruction at the undergraduate and/or graduate level.

**PhD and MS Students:** The primary faculty contact for PhD and MS students is the student’s individual faculty advisor.

**MME Students:** The primary faculty contact for an MME student is his/her advisor if one has been assigned. If an advisor has not been assigned, the primary contact is the department chair.
ADMISSIONS

Admissions for graduate study in the Department of Mechanical Engineering requires:

- Bachelor’s (undergraduate) degree earned or will be earned before entering our graduate program
- GPA (grade point average) at least 3.0 in a 4.0 scale (U.S. standards) or the equivalent in another grading system
- GRE general test scores taken within last three years
- Recommendation from at least three people who know your academic achievements and potential
- TOEFL score if your native language is not English. The minimum score is 90 on Internet-based, 250 on computer-based, and 600 on paper-based test. This TOEFL/IELTS requirement is waived for a student who has received or will receive prior to entering our graduate program a degree from a university where English is the official language of communication

Upon admission students must sign the departmental agreement and contact form and the Graduate Student Deadline Information Sheet.

The following regulations concerning graduate study in the Department of Mechanical Engineering are in addition to the regulations and deadlines described in the Rice University General Announcements. Students are responsible for meeting both the university and department requirements and deadlines.

Any questions concerning these regulations or their interpretation should be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies in the department.
GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

A) Degrees offered: The department offers a professional masters degree (MME), a master of science degree (MS), and a PhD degree. An automatic master's degree is not offered to PhD degree candidates in the department.

B) Progress review: Earning an advanced degree implies a high level of scholastic performance. In order to evaluate progress, the records and research performance of each graduate student will be reviewed at the end of each academic semester. If the results of this review are not satisfactory, the department will either specify additional course of study and/or research performance requirements, or the student may be dismissed from the university.

C) Grades: The record of a graduate student who receives a failing grade in a course will be reviewed, and the department will make specific recommendations regarding further study at the university. No credit toward an advanced degree will be given for a course in which a grade of D or F is received. In general, a graduate student will be expected to earn grades of B or better in at least 50% of all courses taken (including those in which a grade of D or F is received for the first attempt.) Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to remain in the program. If the GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation within the department for one semester. If the student's GPA continues to fall below 3.0, he/she will be asked to leave the program.

D) Course level: Graduate credits are not given to mechanical engineering graduate students for courses that are required for a BS in Mechanical Engineering degree at Rice.

E) Credit transfer: If a student wishes to have graduate courses taken at another university counted for credit toward an advanced degree offered by the department, he/she should petition the department in writing, listing not only the grades earned but also describing the courses involved. These courses must have been in addition to the requirements for all degrees received from the previous institution(s). The decision as to credits transferred rests with the department.

F) Independent study: For all MECH programs and degrees, during a student's entire graduate studies in the MECH department, of every 18 semester hours of required coursework, no more than 6 of those semester hours can be taken as independent study or as special topics courses conducted as independent study. Students are expected to meet with an advisor to be assigned a topic. At the end of the semester, students should turn in the project to the advisor and present the report if requested by the advisor.

G) Non-coursework courses: Credit received for either Graduate Seminar (MECH 606) or Research and Thesis (MECH 800) will not be counted toward course requirements. These courses will count toward the degree total credit requirements (PhD. 90 hrs and Masters 30 hrs).

H) Graduate Seminar: All graduate students (except professional masters degree students (MME)) must attend at least 75% of the MECH seminars according to the following residence schedule:

- MS students: First 2 years
PhD students: First 3 years

Students must register for MECH 606 in their required seminar attendance periods as stated above. At the end of each semester, students must turn in a list of seminars attended to the graduate coordinator.

I) Instructional Assistance: All graduate students (except professional master's degree students (MME)) are required, as part of their research degree program and educational experience, to provide instructional assistance to the department. This instructional assistance, which could be in the form of grading, lecturing, assisting in labs, or developing course material, will not exceed ten hours per week and will be based on the following schedule:

| MS Students:  | 3 semesters |
| PhD Students: | 6 semesters |

J) Satisfactory Progress: Students are expected to make continuous and satisfactory progress towards fulfilling their degree requirements. Students are encouraged to have a yearly (or more frequent) comprehensive evaluation meeting with their advisor.

Students who fail to meet any of the requirements for satisfactory progress will receive letters of warning. Satisfactory progress includes the following:

- Student must be working on coursework and thesis research on a full time basis.
- Student must continue to maintain a 3.0 GPA in course work.
- Student must pass the Preliminary Candidacy Exam (PCE) and Qualifying exam

Students will be notified in writing of their probationary status. The periods of probation extend to the end of the next semester in which the student is enrolled. Once placed on probationary status, the student has one semester to improve grades. If the GPA remains below 3.0 for two consecutive semesters, the department has the prerogative to immediately dismiss the student from the program.

K) Building code: The Mechanical Engineering Building is a "No Smoking" building. Graduate students found smoking in the building or abusing the premises will lose their office space.

L) Honor system: Rice University operates under the Rice Honor System. All students must read the “Honor Code Student Handbook,” which can be found on the Rice Honor Council web site at honor.rice.edu. It is the obligation of every student and faculty member at Rice to understand and maintain the honor system at all times.
OVERVIEW OF DEGREE PROGRAMS

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
• 90 semester hours of total credit
• Coursework hours:
  o 42 hrs with BA
  o 36 hrs with BS
  o 30 hrs with 5 year BS
  o 18 hrs with MS
• Courses must be graduate level (500 or above)
• No more than 6 hours of independent study per 18 hrs of course credit
• 6 semesters of Seminar
• 6 semesters of Instructional Assistance (grading/TA)
• Residency requirement of 4 full time semesters (9+ hrs)
• Pass a qualifying exam
• Write and present an oral defense of a thesis on original research

Masters of Science (MS)
• 30 semester hours of credit, 24 of which must be taken at Rice
• Coursework hours:
  o 24 hrs with BA
  o 18 hrs with BS
  o 12 hrs with 5 year BS
• Courses must be graduate level (500 or above)
• No more than 6 hours of independent study per 18 hrs of course credit
• 3 semesters of Seminar
• 3 semesters of Instructional Assistance (grading/TA)
• Residency requirement of 1 full time semester (9+ hrs)
• Write and present an oral defense of a thesis
Masters of Mechanical Engineering (MME)

- 30 semester hours of approved coursework at 500 level or higher. Of these courses at least 24 must be taken at Rice.
- A minimum of 18 credit hours from the “MME Course Set” established by the department:
  (MECH 501 or MECH 508) MECH 582
  MECH 502 (MECH 588 or MECH 598)
  MECH 517 MECH 594
  MECH 554 (MECH 665 or MECH 667)
- The remaining credit hours will be elective 500+ level courses approved by the advisor and the department, some of which could be from outside the department. None of the remaining required 12 credit hours can be Independent-Study (MECH 611 or 612) or MME Research Project (MECH 621 or 622) classes.

Note: For each pair of courses listed as (MECH AAA or MECH BBB), only one can be taken to meet the MME Course Set requirement. If a course or its undergraduate version was taken earlier as part of meeting the requirements of an undergraduate degree, it can be replaced according to the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MECH 501 ← MECH 508</th>
<th>MECH 588 ← MECH 598</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MECH 508 ← MECH 501</td>
<td>MECH 598 ← MECH 588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MECH 502 ← (MECH 678 or MECH 679)</td>
<td>MECH 594 ← MECH 596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MECH 517 ← MECH 503</td>
<td>MECH 665 ← MECH 667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MECH 554 ← (MECH 555 or MECH 654)</td>
<td>MECH 667 ← MECH 665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MECH 582 ← MECH 583</td>
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Prerequisite courses may be required for students who have a BA or BS in another engineering field.
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PhD DEGREE

A) Time period for completion: PhD students are expected to complete all the requirements for the degree within 5 years following entrance into the program. Continuation in the program beyond this time limit will require special approval of the department.

B) Courses: The minimum semester credit hours of course work (a course usually consists of 3 semester credit hours) required is tabulated below as a function of the degree held upon entrance into the program. In all cases, a student's course of study is formulated in consultation with their advisor and must be approved by the department. The student is encouraged to obtain approval from their advisor prior to enrollment. A total of 90 semester credit hours (course work + research) are required to receive the PhD. Degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree at entrance</th>
<th>MS-thesis</th>
<th>5-year</th>
<th>4-year BS</th>
<th>4-year BA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum graduate level semester credit hours of required course work</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>42</td>
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C1) Preliminary Candidacy Evaluation (PCE): All entering graduate students pursuing a thesis degree program will be subject to a preliminary evaluation of their candidacy for the highest degree program they intend to pursue. The evaluation will be conducted by the end of the second semester of enrollment. Students are responsible for working with their advisor in order to ensure that their PCE is conducted in a timely fashion. The evaluation will be based on a review of the academic performance up to the time of evaluation, including performance in course work and graduate research in the form of course grades, course ranking, GRE scores, and other relevant information. The reviewed material will be made available to the students. Recommendations for improving or moving forward in the students' graduate career will also be presented to the student. A panel of department faculty members selected by the advisor and approved by the director of graduate studies will conduct the evaluation. The number of panel members will be four (4) for the PhD degree. The evaluation by the panel will normally result in one of the four possible outcomes:

1. Approve preliminary candidacy
2. Approve preliminary candidacy conditionally and specify conditions
3. Extend the period of evaluation and receive candidacy approval no later than the end of the third semester of enrollment in the graduate program
4. Disapprove candidacy

Students not progressing sufficiently within the first year will be dismissed from the program.

C2) Oral Qualifying Examination: By the end of the third year of enrollment in the graduate program, the student must pass an oral qualifying examination. The purpose of this examination is to determine whether the student is qualified to conduct independent research at the technical level required for the PhD thesis. The student's grasp of fundamental concepts in his/her field and related fields of interest will be examined. A committee consisting of at least three (3) faculty members of the department and one (1) member of another department will administer the examination. The result of this examination will be the principal factor in the department's decision as to the student's admission to candidacy. Should the student fail in this examination, he/she may be allowed to repeat it only once with the recommendation of the examining committee. Students not passing their qualifying exams will be dismissed from the program.
D) **Language Requirement:** The department does not have a foreign language requirement for its graduate degrees.

E) **Instructional Assistance:**
All PhD students are required, as part of their research degree program and educational experience, to provide instructional assistance to the department. This instructional assistance, which can be in the form of grading, lecturing, assisting in labs, or developing course material, will not exceed ten hours per week. PhD students will be required to provide instructional assistance for six semesters.

Students providing instructional assistance should adhere to the following responsibilities:
- Follow appropriate codes of conduct. This includes acting in a trustworthy and responsible manner, treating others with respect, treating students fairly, and limiting interactions and relations with students in the class to a professional nature
- Meet with the course instructor prior to the beginning of the teaching assignment to discuss expectations and deadlines
- Disclose, to the instructor, any possible conflicts of interest that may arise
- Attend the classes you are scheduled to assist if requested by the instructor

F) **Research and Thesis:**
- Each candidate for the PhD must complete a thesis that constitutes an original contribution to scientific knowledge. The thesis will be bound in buckram and permanently preserved in the university library. Instructions for preparation of theses can be obtained at the appropriate time through the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
- Candidates for the PhD degree must register for Research and Thesis (MECH 800) during the year preceding the anticipated date of graduation
- A student must select an advisor by the end of the first year of study. A thesis committee should also be formed that consists of the advisor, one or two faculty members from the department, and one faculty member from another department at the university
- Active research should begin by the end of the first year at the latest.
- Candidates for the PhD degree who have completed all requirements except completion of the thesis must register for Research and Thesis (MECH 800) every semester until graduation

G) **Final Thesis Defense:** Upon completion of the thesis, each candidate for the PhD degree must pass a final public oral examination. A committee consisting of at least four members will conduct the examination. Three, including the committee chair, must be members of the department. One member must be from another department within the university. The members of the committee will be announced early enough so that the candidate may discuss with them the nature of the thesis research and the contents of the thesis. The thesis must be made available to the members of the examining committee at least two weeks before the examination date. Although the examination will be concerned primarily with the candidate’s thesis, the questioning may also cover other areas. The oral defense may be scheduled at any time except during official examination periods. Please visit [http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis](http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis) for any questions you may have about your final defense. Public announcements of the oral examinations for the doctoral degree must be made at least two weeks in advance.
H) **Thesis Deadline:** Students must observe the deadlines set by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for submission of the final thesis to receive their degree for either January or May conferral. Otherwise students have six months from the date of defense to submit their final thesis to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

I) **Residency:** The minimum residence requirement for the PhD degree is four semesters (fall/spring) of full-time study at the university.
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MS DEGREE

A) **Time period for completion**: Students seeking the MS degree are expected to complete all the requirements for the degree within two calendar years following entrance into the program. Continuation in the program beyond this time limit will require special approval of the department.

B) **Courses**: The minimum semester credit hours of course work (a course usually consists of 3 semester credit hours) required for the MS degree are tabulated below as a function of the degree held upon entrance into the program. In all cases, a student's course of study is formulated in consultation with his/her advisor and must be approved by the department. The student is encouraged to obtain approval from his/her advisor prior to enrollment. **A total of 30 semester credit hours (course work + research) are required to receive the MS degree.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree at entrance</th>
<th>5-year</th>
<th>4-year BS</th>
<th>4-year BA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum graduate level semester credit hours of required course work</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
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</table>

C) **Preliminary Candidacy Evaluation (PCE)**: All entering graduate students pursuing a thesis degree program will be subject to a preliminary evaluation of their candidacy for the highest degree program they intend to pursue. The evaluation will be conducted by the end of the second semester of enrollment in the graduate program. Students are responsible for working with their advisor in order to ensure that their PCE is conducted in a timely fashion. The evaluation will be based on a review of the academic performance up to the time of evaluation, including performance in course work and graduate research in the form of course grades, course ranking, GRE scores, and other relevant information. The reviewed material will be made available to the students. Recommendations for improving or moving forward in the students’ graduate career will also be presented to the student. A panel of MECH faculty members selected by the advisor and approved by the director of graduate studies will conduct the evaluation. The number of panel members will be three (3) for the MS degree. The evaluation by the panel will normally result in one of the four possible outcomes:

1. Approve preliminary candidacy
2. Approve preliminary candidacy conditionally, and specify conditions
3. Extend the period of evaluation and receive candidacy approval no later than the end of the third semester of enrollment in the graduate program
4. Disapprove candidacy

Students not progressing sufficiently within the first year will be dismissed from the program.

D) **Language Requirement**: The MECH department does not have a foreign language requirement for its graduate degrees.

E) **Instructional Assistance**:

All MS students are required, as part of their research degree program and educational experience, to provide instructional assistance to the department. This instructional
assistance, which could be in the form of grading, lecturing, assisting in labs, or developing course material and will not exceed ten hours per week. MS students will be required to provide instructional assistance for three semesters.

Students providing instructional assistance should adhere to the following responsibilities:

- Follow appropriate codes of conduct. This includes acting in a trustworthy and responsible manner, treating others with respect, treating students fairly, and limiting interactions and relations with students in the class to a professional nature.
- Meet with the course instructor prior to the beginning of the teaching assignment to discuss expectations and deadlines.
- Disclose, to the instructor, any possible conflicts of interest that may arise.
- Attend the classes you are scheduled to assist if requested by the instructor.

F) Research and Thesis:

- Each candidate for the MS degree must complete a thesis demonstrating ability in research of a fundamental nature (analytical or experimental). It is expected that the research will be of sufficient importance and quality that positive results would lead to publication. Instructions for preparation of theses can be obtained at the appropriate time through the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
- Candidates for the MS degree must register for Research and Thesis (MECH 800) during the year preceding the anticipated date of graduation.
- A student must select a thesis director during the first year of study. A thesis committee should also be formed that consists of the thesis director, one or two faculty members from the department, and one faculty member from another department at the university.
- Active research should begin by the end of the first semester.
- Candidates for the MS degree who are not on campus and who have completed all requirements except the thesis must register for Research and Thesis (MECH 800) every semester until graduation.

G) Final Thesis Defense: Upon completion of the thesis, a committee comprised of at least three (3) members will examine each candidate for the MS degree. Two members, including the committee chair, must be department faculty. The thesis must be made available to the members of the examining committee at least two weeks before the examination date. The oral examination will consist of questions concerning the candidate's grasp of the fundamental principles underlying his/her field of study. In connection with this review, the guidance of the advisor should be sought. Should the candidate fail in this examination, he/she is allowed to repeat it once with the approval of the committee. Please visit [http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis](http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis) for any questions you may have about your final defense. A public notice of the MS oral examination must be given by posting an announcement on the departmental bulletin board at least one week prior to the examination.

H) Thesis Deadline: Students must observe the deadlines set by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for submission of the final thesis to receive their degree for either January or May conferral. Otherwise students have six months from the date of defense to submit their final thesis to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

I) Residency: The minimum residence requirement for the MS degree is one semester of full-time (9 hrs) study at the university.
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL MASTERS DEGREE (MME)

Courses:
A) Students are expected to complete thirty graduate level semester hours (500 level and above) Of these courses at least 24 must be taken at Rice.
B) A minimum of eighteen credit hours from the “MME Course Set” established by the department.
C) The remaining twelve credit hours will be elective 500+ level courses approved by the advisor and the department, some of which could be from outside the department. None of the remaining required 12 credit hours can be Independent-Study (MECH 611 or 612) or MME Research Project (MECH 621 or 622) classes.
D) Prerequisite courses may be required for students who have a BA or BS in another field

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<tr>
<th>Degree at entrance</th>
<th>4-year BS</th>
<th>4-year BA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum graduate level semester credit hours of required course work</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
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APPROVAL OF CANDIDACY

Candidacy marks a midpoint in the course of graduate education. Achieving candidacy for the PhD signals that a graduate student has:

- Completed required course work
- Passed required exams to demonstrate his/her comprehensive grasp of the subject area
- Demonstrated the ability for clear oral and written communication
- Shown the ability to carry on scholarly work in his/her subject area

Requirements for achieving candidacy for the MS degree are determined at the departmental level. Students enrolled in research degree programs submit their petitions for candidacy for a master’s or doctoral degree through the department chair to the dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. In the petition sent to the Dean, the department chair identifies the student’s thesis director, recommends a thesis committee, certifies that the applicant has fulfilled the departmental requirements, and provides a course transcript as evidence that work completed within the department is of high quality.

Students in the MME program must submit a certification of non-thesis master’s through the department chair to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Students must file their applications for approval of PhD and MS candidacy in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies on or before November 1 for December conferral and on or before February 1 for May conferral. Students may take the final oral examination in defense of their thesis only after the dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies approves their candidacy. PhD students must be approved for candidacy before the beginning of the ninth (9th) semester of their enrollment at Rice. Master’s students must be approved for candidacy before the beginning of the fifth (5th) semester of their enrollment at Rice.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial support for PhD and MS students is reserved for those who have demonstrated exceptional work in their previous coursework. Generally, financial support is given as a student enters the department. The department will provide those exceptional students with a 9-month stipend at the current stipend rate. Starting the 10th month (usually the summer), the advisor will continue to provide financial support to the student until the student has successfully defended his/her thesis.

Financial support can be reduced or terminated. Each reduction or termination must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

GRADUATE STUDENT VACATION

PhD and MS students paid by Rice University receive two weeks paid vacation annually, in addition to designated staff holidays, including winter break when the university is officially closed. Students do not automatically receive spring break as time off since the university is not officially closed during this time. Specific time off during spring break should be determined in consultation with the student’s advisor. The student’s advisor must approve vacation time in advance.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Leaves of absence (LOA) are granted only by Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office upon recommendation of the department. LOA is granted only to students in good standing. Leave must be approved in advance of the academic semester in question; it will not be granted after the student has registered for courses or after the registration period has passed. Normally, a LOA is granted for no more than two consecutive semesters. No work toward a degree may be done at Rice (or involve Rice faculty/facilities) during a student’s leave of absence.

UNSCHEDULED LEAVES

Active participation in required academic activities, including laboratory work is a basic condition of financial support. The student’s advisor must approve absences, other than medical and family emergencies, in advance. In the case of medical or family emergencies, notification is expected in as timely a manner as possible, depending on the situation.

Students who are absent from required academic activities for two weeks without permission and without mitigating circumstances may be judged as not making adequate academic progress and are subject to termination of financial support they might be receiving.

Situations where the advisor may not have adequate funding to support supplemental stipends will be resolved on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the department chair.
THEESIS COMMITTEE

The thesis committee administers the oral examination for the student’s thesis defense and has final approval/disapproval authority and responsibility for the written thesis.

A thesis committee is composed of at least three members. Two members, including the committee chair, must be department faculty; in a doctoral thesis committee one member must have his or her primary appointment in another department within the university. At least three members of the committee must meet one of the following requirements:

- Tenured or tenure-track members of the Rice faculty
- Research faculty holding the rank of faculty fellow, senior faculty fellow, or distinguished faculty fellow
- Faculty who have been certified as thesis committee members by the dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The composition of the thesis committee must always meet the guidelines above.

The committee chair need not be your advisor. However, the committee chair must be either a tenured, tenure-track, or research faculty member of the department. Additional members for the committee, who may or may not meet the above criteria, may be selected with the approval of the department chair. These would be in addition to the three required members.

Candidates are responsible for keeping the members of their committee informed about the nature and progress of their research. They also must establish a schedule for thesis completion and review. The members of the committee, in turn, should review the thesis in a timely manner, approving a preliminary form of the thesis before scheduling the oral examination.
ORAL EXAMINATION IN DEFENSE OF THESIS

The public oral defense of a thesis is intended to be an examination of a completed body of work and should be scheduled only when the dissertation is essentially completed. At least one copy of the thesis must be available in the department office not less than two (2) calendar weeks prior to the date of the oral defense. The length of the oral examination and the subject matter on which the candidate is questioned are left to the judgment of the committee. The student should schedule the defense after consultation with his/her advisor, who agrees that the thesis is completed and ready to be defended. All members of the thesis committee must be present for the oral defense. A candidate must be enrolled in the semester in which his or her oral examination is held. Students who defend during the summer must enroll in the summer session of classes. For the purpose of the oral defense only, enrollment in a semester is considered valid through the Friday of the first week of class of the following semester. Students passing the oral examination on or before the end of the first week of classes of any semester do not have to register for that or any subsequent semester even though they may be continuing to make minor revisions to the final copy of their thesis.

Students must send a copy of their approval of candidacy form, signed by the thesis committee signifying successful defense of the thesis, to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies within one (1) week after the oral examination. The original approval of candidacy form must be turned in when the thesis is submitted.

Should a candidate fail the oral examination, the committee chair may schedule a second examination. Students who fail the oral examination a second time must withdraw from the university.

No later than six (6) months from the date of the examination, candidates who successfully passed the oral examination in defense of the thesis must submit two signed copies of the thesis to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. If the thesis is not ready for final signature by the end of the six-month period, the “pass” will be revoked and an additional oral defense will need to be scheduled. Applications for an extension without reexamination must be made by the candidate with the unanimous support of the thesis committee, endorsed by the dean of the School of Engineering, and approved by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Extensions of this six-month period for completion without reexamination will be granted only in rare circumstances.

PhD students must defend their theses before the end of the sixteenth (16th) semester of their residency at Rice. Master’s students must defend their theses before the end of the eighth (8th) semester of their residency at Rice.
DISMISSAL

Students are responsible for meeting the requirements of the department and university. The two most common grounds for dismissal of a graduate student are (1) inadequate academic progress, or (2) a disciplinary violation resulting in a university sanction. Inadequate academic progress includes failing to meet grade requirements, failing to pass required examinations by the required time, or failing to advance to candidacy or defend his/her thesis within the required time. The student will be warned in writing of the possibility of dismissal and given clear information about what must be done within a specified time period to alleviate the problem. Email communication is considered to be “in writing.” A student who fails to meet the stated requirements within the time frame specified will receive a notice of dismissal from the department no less than 15 days before removal from the graduate program.

Graduate students whose cumulative grade point average or the average for the most recently completed semester (including the summer semester) falls below 3.0 are placed on probationary status and will be so notified by the department in writing. The period of probation extends to the end of the next semester in which the student is enrolled. Once students are placed on probationary status, they have one semester to improve their grades. If the next semester again results in grade point average below the required grade, the student will be immediately dismissed without further warning. Students will be notified once final grades have been received and posted to their records. Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) grades cannot be used to end probationary status.

A dismissal will be held in abeyance until the petition and appeal process is concluded, as students may petition for a dismissal to be revoked as described below.

Graduate students often receive financial support in the form of graduate stipend and tuition waivers. The termination of financial support to a graduate student, while not equivalent to dismissal, is a serious action that could deprive students of their financial ability to continue graduate studies. Consequently, the procedure to terminate a student’s financial support before the end of the financial-support commitment period will be analogous to those for dismissal as described above.

Active participation in required academic activities (for example, laboratory work in certain science and engineering programs) is a basic condition for continued financial support. Students who are absent from such required activities for two contiguous weeks without permission and without mitigating circumstances may be subject to termination of financial support. In addition, they may be judged to be making inadequate academic progress. Thus, if absences must occur, they must be pre-arranged with the student's advisor, except for medical and family emergencies, in which cases timely notification is required. The advisor and/or the department will provide immediate written warnings when students are not present and carrying out required academic activities for more than one week.
PETITIONS AND APPEALS

Students may petition for exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgments. A course requirement is an example of an academic requirement. Allowed time to degree is an example of an academic regulation. Course grades and dismissals from the department are examples of academic judgments. Petitions for exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgments should be viewed as unusual rather than typical. Extensions of various time limits, such as time to candidacy or time to defense, will not be granted routinely. Students requesting such extensions must document the unusual circumstances justifying the request, demonstrate their academic progress towards the goal, and provide a concrete plan for meeting the goal within the requested extension.

The department’s Petitions, Appeals, and Grievances Committee will handle petitions regarding departmental requirements. A petition regarding university requirements, regulations, or judgment must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies; such a petition must be accompanied by a recommendation from the department. When the department’s recommendation is negative, or when the petition requests a major exception—for example, an extension of allowed time to degree by more than 1/2 semester—the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies may also obtain the recommendation of the School of Engineering and the Graduate Council with regard to such petitions.

Petitions regarding academic decisions must be submitted in writing within 15 days from the time that the student knew or should reasonably have known of the decision being petitioned, or within 15 days after an informal effort to resolve the situation has not been successful. Petitions seeking exceptions to academic requirements or regulations should be submitted in writing at least 30 days before the requirement or regulation takes effect. For example, a petition to extend allowed time to degree should be submitted at least 30 days before the deadline in effect. Late petitions may be dismissed, except for unusual situations when a delay is found justifiable by the unit receiving the petition. Appeals will be acknowledged in writing immediately upon their receipt by the receiving unit. Email communication is considered to be “in writing.”

A student (or other parties affected by the decision) is allowed only one level of appeal from a decision regarding a petition. In general, the appeal process will be resolved at the lowest level possible. When the department decides the petition, the appeal must be submitted to the School of Engineering. When the petition is decided at a school level, the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies must handle the appeal. When the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies decide the petition, the appellant may submit an appeal to the Provost. An appeal must be submitted within 15 days from receipt of the decision that is being appealed. Late appeals will be dismissed, except for unusual situations when a delay is justified. Appeals will be acknowledged in writing immediately upon their receipt by the receiving unit. Email communication is considered to be “in writing.”

A petition/appeal should indicate the requirement, regulation, or judgment that is the subject of the petition/appeal, the specific exception requested, and the grounds for the request. An appeal must indicate why the decision involving the earlier petition was incorrectly decided. Grounds for a petition/appeal could be procedural errors by academic or administrative personnel or special circumstances found to be mitigating by the unit receiving the petition/appeal. Disagreement over evaluation of academic quality will not be considered as an appropriate basis for petitions/appeals unless the evaluation is found to be patently unreasonable by the unit receiving the petition/appeal. Petitions involving a violation of university policy or improper conduct by university personnel will be handled as grievances (see Grievances).
Petitions and appeals should be resolved within 30 days of their submission. When such resolution cannot be achieved within 30 days, the student will be informed of the delay before the 30 days are over. A resolution of the petition or appeal must be achieved within 60 days. A lack of resolution of a petition within 60 days is an acceptable cause for an appeal. All time frames in this procedure refer to academic calendar days, and exclude mid-term, inter-term and summer recesses. (This exclusion does not apply to a student who is enrolled during the summer.) All petitions and appeals, as well as responses to petitions and appeals, must be in writing. Email communication is considered to be “in writing.”
GRIEVANCES

Grievances are different from petitions and appeals. Petitions and appeals involve exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgments. A grievance is a complaint regarding inappropriate conduct by other students, faculty members, or staff. Inappropriate conduct encompasses both inappropriate personal conduct, such as sexual harassment, as well as inappropriate official conduct, such as violation of university policies. Specific policies exist to address grievances based on discrimination or sexual harassment and these policies must be followed in situations involving these issues. Grievances against another student may be raised with the assistant dean of Student Judicial Programs and addressed under the Code of Student Conduct. In other cases, a student may present a grievance in writing at the lowest appropriate level, typically the department or School of Engineering. If a satisfactory resolution is not obtained at that level, the student may appeal the outcome of the grievance by presenting the problem at the next administrative level, such as the School of Engineering, Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Provost, or President. Grievances against non-faculty staff members may also be brought to the Employee Relations Director in Rice’s Human Resources office. The procedures for handling grievances are analogous to those for handling petitions and appeals. Students submitting grievances must so indicate in their submissions.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION

During the course of graduate studies, problems that do not fall under the category of grievances, described above, may arise in the relationship between a graduate student and the department or his/her advisor. Students should attempt to resolve such problems by informing the appropriate faculty members and working together to resolve the problem. When attempts to resolve the problem informally are unsuccessful, the following problem-resolution procedure will be used:

1. The student will submit the problem in writing to the department chair, who will then attempt to resolve it.

2. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem will be presented to the department’s Petitions, Appeals, and Grievances Committee for resolution. Both the student and the department chair will submit a written record of their views to this committee.

3. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem will be referred to a standing subcommittee of the Graduate Council composed of three faculty members (representing diverse disciplines within the university) and a graduate student, with the dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies as an ex-officio member. A written report of proceedings at stage 2 will be presented to the chair of Graduate Council for forwarding to the subcommittee, along with all other written materials generated during the investigation. The decision of this subcommittee is considered final.

The time frame for handling problem resolution is similar to that for handling petitions, appeals, and grievances. Students may seek guidance on any of these procedures through discussions with the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
Title IX
Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available both on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university. Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety, and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.
If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support:
3311/(713) 348-3311 Policies, including Sexual Misconduct Policy and Student Code of Conduct, and more information regarding Title IX can be found at safe.rice.edu

FINANCIAL AID
Rice participates in all federal student loan programs, and the Rice University Financial Aid Office can assist graduate students in the preparation of applications. Both the Rice Graduate Student Association and the Graduate Studies Office provide loans to graduate students who require emergency assistance.

UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIPS AND OTHER FUNDING
Adams/Moseley Graduate Student Loan Fund
http://graduate.rice.edu/mosleyadams.aspx
Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate at Rice Program
http://graduate.rice.edu/AGEP/
Envision Grants (from Leadership Rice)
http://leadership.rice.edu/
Office of Financial Aid
http://financialaid.rice.edu/
Graduate Student Loan Closet
http://gradloancloset.blogs.rice.edu/
BEFORE YOU TRAVEL....

Prior to any travel, students must submit an Approval form for travel/flight Accommodations. Your advisor must approve your travel budget/expenses.

If you travel to a meeting on Rice University business and any part of your trip is paid by, or charged to, Rice money or a grant administered by Rice, you must submit a travel statement within 14 days of your return. Be sure to keep all your receipts. Travel envelopes are available in MEB 207.

Meeting Registration: May be charged to a departmental card by the graduate coordinator if desired. Memberships, in contrast, are not reimbursable on a Research fund.

Meals: Reimbursement for meals is for exact cost including tip, so keep itemized receipts and a log. Amount must be reasonable for food costs in the region where you travel. Meals can also be reimbursed on a per diem basis. Your advisor should decide on the per diem rate (using the rate for the area as a guide). Alcoholic beverages are non-reimbursable. You must stay overnight for meal reimbursement. No meal reimbursement for travel of 1 day or less. If you share a group meal and will be turning in a copy of the receipt, you must include a note stating who has the original receipt.

Airline Tickets: As with registrations, the graduate coordinator can charge tickets for you on a departmental card. This charge must be listed on your travel statement. When you return, you must submit the original receipt (the last page) of your ticket with your travel statement. For e-ticket travel, you need something that says “receipt” or “fare information” and how paid on it. International flights must be on a U.S. flag carrier in order to be charged to a research fund.

Graduate Student Travel Advances: If you need cash for your trip, you may request a travel advance for meals, ground transportation etc. Please request this not more than three (3) weeks before you leave. You must account for cash spent and return any excess with your travel statement.

Dean’s Awards (for graduate students): You must be presenting at a meeting, not just attending. The graduate coordinator has the form that must be signed by the applicant and professor. This award is available one time per fiscal year (July 1- June 30). Keep your award approval form. You will need to include it with your travel statement.

Lodging: As with registrations, the graduate coordinator can reserve a hotel room for you, but you must be prepared to pay the bill. Alternatively, you can call the hotel (prior to your trip) and have them fax us the form that allows the hotel to charge a departmental card. You can share a room and have the hotel issue a separate bill for each person. If the meeting is in Texas, the state hotel tax is not reimbursable; an exemption form is available to take to the hotel. The final folio will be submitted with your travel statement for reimbursement.

Auto: Mileage is reimbursable only up to the amount of an airline ticket to the same destination. For a rented car, Rice will pay rental and gas but not mileage. DO NOT buy property damage and liability insurance on a rental car. Rice carries coverage for this and will not reimburse for these charges. If you need a copy of the liability card, please see the graduate coordinator at least 2 weeks before your departure. Parties of three or fewer must rent a compact or intermediate size car.

International Travel: Must include printed proof of foreign currency exchange rate. Federal research grants require a U.S. carrier for air travel.

Excluded Expenses: Alcoholic beverages, movies, long distance phone calls, and entertainment (such as meals) of non-Rice persons are not reimbursable expenses. Long distance calls for business are reimbursable (explanation required). Expenses for spouses are not reimbursable. Please see Rice Travel Policy and Procedures for further questions.
IMPORTANT LINKS ON RICE WEB SITE

Academic Calendar: http://registrar.rice.edu/calendars/

Campus Book store: http://rice.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/BNCBHomePage?storeId=19052&catalogId=10001&langId=-1

Cashier’s Office (tuition rates, etc.): http://www.students.rice.edu/students/Rice_University_Cashier's_Office.asp

Class Schedule: http://courses.rice.edu/admweb/swkscat.main

Ester Account login: https://webapps2.rice.edu/esther.html

ESL Program: http://www.esl.rice.edu/

Fondren Library: http://library.rice.edu/


Graduate Student Association (GSA): http://gsa.rice.edu/

Graduate Studies: http://graduate.rice.edu/students/

Health Insurance: http://studenthealthinsurance.rice.edu/

Honor System (Honor Code): http://honor.rice.edu/

Office of International Students and Scholars: http://oiss.rice.edu/

Rice IT (Rice email, Net ID, etc.): http://it.rice.edu/

Registrar’s Office: http://www.registrar.rice.edu/students/

Transportation and Parking (campus parking, bus schedules, etc.): http://park-trans.rice.edu/

Wellness Center (Recreation Center): http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~ricerec/fitness/index.html