

RHETORIC AND WRITING GRADPLAN GUIDE

for PhD Students

Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures
Michigan State University



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1. Introduction

GradPlan was developed for Ph.D. students to lay out their Ph.D. program of study, record faculty approval, and make notes on all degree requirements as they are completed.



Note: Once you submit your GradPlan, your committee members, the Form Checker, Department Delegate, and College Delegate are alerted to approve your GradPlan. But do note that “submitting” your GradPlan does not mean “finalizing.” When you need to make changes (e.g., add more information, adjust information), you need to retract your plan and resubmit it. After resubmitting it, the system will again alert the necessary individuals for approval.

GradPlan will be the **only way** final degree certification/degree audit will be conducted. The Graduate Secretary (Melissa Arthurton is WRAC's) or other department- or college-level designee has the final GradAudit sign off. The Office of the Registrar and the departments will access Degree Audit to complete degree certification once a student completes an application for graduation and all degree requirements are met in Grad Audit with appropriate approvals. GradPlan, GradInfo, and GradAudit help guides may be found at: <https://gradinfo.msu.edu/help.asp>

1.1 Initiating GradPlan

WRAC doctoral students should begin and submit the GradPlan process when two steps are completed: (1) at the end of their first year and (2) after their first meeting with their guidance/advisory committee.

Students will update their GradPlan as they progress through the PhD program (e.g., after completion of each exam: core, concentration, research prospectus) by retracting and resubmitting their plan for approval.

By the last semester in the program, students must enter their IRB number (if applicable), Dissertation Defense Date, and the Final Dissertation title in GradPlan to assure timely processing of their degree certification.

Doctoral students should have the following **BEFORE** they begin the GradPlan process:

1. your department-filed Report of the Guidance Committee (RoGC), which can be requested from Melissa Arthurton (arthurtl@msu.edu). The RoGC will include tentative dissertation subject, which you need to report in GradPlan, and the courses your committee signed off on you taking;
2. names or NetIDs of all committee members;
3. concentration exam area and courses taken to fulfill concentration;

4. access to STUINFO for the list of courses taken (or will take)
5. applications for independent study forms.

1.2 Transfer Credits

When “transferring” approved course credits from another university, you will need prior approval from the department for these courses to be visible in GradPlan. You will need:

1. to contact Melissa Arthurton (arthurt1@msu.edu), stating where the courses are being transferred from and a listing of which courses;
2. the timeframe that the transfer courses were taken must fall within the 8-year degree timeframe;
3. a maximum of 9 credits can be transferred with committee approval;
4. to order an official transcript from the university that courses are being transferred. Please send to Academic Programs, Department of Communication, 404 Wilson Road, Room 466, East Lansing, MI 48824-1212;
5. to follow up with transfer credits appearing in GradPlan after 2–4 weeks of processing the transfer equivalency form. Once this information is received by the Academic Programs Office, the online transfer equivalency form will be completed by the Academic Programs Office.

2. Timeline

Task	When	Link
Complete and submit GradPlan (Steps 1–15)	End of first year and after first meeting with guidance/advisory committee	https://gradplan.msu.edu/
Update GradPlan throughout PhD progress by retracting submitted form and resubmitting form (Step 16)	After successful completion of core exam After successful completion of concentration exam After successful dissertation prospectus defense After receiving IRB approval number	https://gradplan.msu.edu/
Complete online graduation application form (Steps 17–18)	On or before the end of the first week of the semester you expect to complete your PhD	https://reg.msu.edu/stu/forms/gradapp/gradapp.aspx

3. Steps for Completing GradPlan

1. Go to <https://gradplan.msu.edu/>
2. Click on “Ph.D. Degree Plan” link
3. Log in with your MSU NetID
4. Before creating your Ph.D. Degree Plan online, be sure to gather applicable materials from the “Information You Will Need” check list in the sidebar. We also recommend the following:
 - a. Report of the Guidance Committee (RoGC), which can be requested from Melissa Artherton (arthurt1@msu.edu). The RoGC will include tentative dissertation subject, which you need to report in GradPlan, and the courses your committee signed off on you taking;
 - b. names or NetIDs of all committee members;
 - c. concentration exam area and courses taken to fulfill concentration;
 - d. access to STUINFO for the list of courses taken (or will take);
 - e. applications for independent study forms.
5. Creating a PhD plan will involve providing the following tasks:
 - a. designating committee chair and members
 - b. selecting doctoral program courses
 - c. answering questions about your research
 - d. filling out other requirements
 - e. reviewing the plan and submitting the plan for approval
6. Select “Create Ph.D. Degree Plan”
7. Search by “Name” or “MSU NetID” for your committee members
8. Add all your committee members. A total of four committee members are required and at least one committee member should be designated as chair/dissertation director.



Note: by selecting committee members, you are authorizing them to see your data. Faculty can access data in GradInfo, but do not have access to the GradPlan system. Your “Chair” and “Dissertation Director” should be the same person. Multiple co-chairpersons/dissertation directors are possible.



Note: Non-MSU faculty and non-tenure stream MSU faculty need to be approved by WRAC so that their names can show up in GradPlan. This means that the faculty has to be entered into Grad Info: <https://grad.msu.edu/non-regular-faculty-committees> **BEFORE** you submit your GradPlan. Then, WRAC has to confirm approval; CAL has to confirm approval; and the Graduate School has to confirm approval.

9. Add current and/or previous courses. Select from courses that you are already enrolled in or have completed at the graduate level. You should

not have courses that do not pertain to your PhD (e.g., 100-level). Be sure to remove these courses from your GradPlan

10. Choose the category for your courses.
 - a. 805, 885, 870, 882, 878 are Core courses.
 - b. For independent studies/directed readings, waived courses, courses for certifications, and non-core/non-concentration courses, please follow this information and substeps:
 - for independent studies or directed readings (WRA or AL 890), include the topic/focus/name in the text box for "Add any additional notes here about courses that your approvers will need to know" at the bottom of the GradPlan course list page. For example, you may write: "AL890 Independent Study (Visual Methodologies): Focus on visual methodologies; exploration of various digital-visual methodologies and methods, with a focus on testing methods to study activism in digital spaces"
 - for a waived course, note the course that was waived and why it was waived in the text box for "Add any additional notes here about courses that your approvers will need to know" at the bottom of the GradPlan course list page. For example, you may write: "AL878 (Composition Studies: Issues, Theory, and Research) was waived because of fulfillment course taken during Master's degree at University XYZ. Guidance/Advisory committee approved this waive at the end of first year."
11. For self-designed concentrations, provide a description in the text box for "Add any additional notes here about courses that your approvers will need to know" at the bottom of the GradPlan course list page for what courses satisfied the concentration. For example, you may write: "Self-designed concentration: Courses AL860 (Visual Rhetoric for Prof Writing), AL891 (Embodied Rhetorics), and AL890 (Independent Study on Visual Methodologies) fulfill the self-design concentration." These courses will then be catalogued under "Concentration."
12. Complete "Research" page: Tentative dissertation subject (255 characters maximum), which should be on your RoGC form; comprehensive examination areas, which will be the areas of focus in your concentration exam; and the six questions (please see note below on IRB).



NOTE: your guidance/advisory committee must approve this waive before you claim in GradPlan a course to be waived

- if you took courses for a certification, those courses are catalogued under "Specialization"
- courses **NOT** part of your core or concentration should be catalogued under "Elective"



Note on IRB: if you select "yes" for question on "Human Subjects," you will receive an email that asks for you to provide the IRB

number (e.g., IRB Number: x15-1410e) after submission of your GradPlan and approval of it. If you initially did not anticipate having any human subjects in your dissertation project, but end up having human subjects, then be sure you make this change when you retract and resubmit your GradPlan.

13. Complete “Other Requirements” page. The language requirement is only what WRAC requires and means traditional notions of language (e.g., Spanish, French, Chinese, etc.). International students do not have to put down their home language. If you negotiated with your committee on a “non-traditional” language satisfaction (e.g., Statistics, Teaching ESL/EFL, etc.), then that should have been documented by your committee and in a memo filed with Melissa Arthurton. In GradPlan, enter that information in the “Additional notes for your Ph.D. Plan regarding Other Requirements details” textbox with the date of satisfaction at the bottom of the page. If you are unsure, consult with your WRAC file with how you fulfilled the department’s language requirement.
14. Review your information for accuracy.
15. Select “Submit plan for approvals” button in GradPlan at the end of your first year and after your first meeting with your guidance/advisory committee.
16. Retract and resubmit your GradPlan as you progress through the PhD
17. Complete an online graduation application form **ON** or **BEFORE** the end of the first week of the semester you expect to complete your PhD: <https://reg.msu.edu/stuforms/gradapp/gradapp.aspx>
18. To see the status of your plan, select “PhD Degree Plan” tab in the website’s header.

4. Plan in Progress

4.1 Dissertation research credits requirement

A minimum of 24 and a maximum of 36 dissertation research credits (999) are required. Only those marked “applied” will apply to the Ph.D. plan. Please see Melissa Arthurton (arthurt1@msu.edu) if you have any questions.

4.2 Language requirement

The language requirement is only what WRAC requires and means traditional notions of language (e.g., Spanish, French, Chinese, etc.). International students do not have to put down their home language. If you negotiated with your committee on a “non-traditional” language satisfaction (e.g., Statistics, Teaching ESL/EFL, etc.), then that should have

been documented by your committee and in a memo filed with Melissa Arthurton.

In GradPlan, enter that information in the “Additional notes for your Ph.D. Plan regarding Other Requirements details” textbox with the date of satisfaction at the bottom of the page” textbox (and NOT in Language Requirement) with the date of satisfaction at the bottom of the “Other Requirements” page. If you are unsure, consult with your WRAC file with how you fulfilled the department’s language requirement.

4.3 Apply for graduation requirement

To apply for Graduation, complete an online graduation application form. Application should be submitted on or before the end of the first week of the semester you expect to complete your Ph.D.

<https://reg.msu.edu/stuforms/gradapp/gradapp.aspx>

For more details on some of the processes for completing your Grad Plan, visit the extended user guide:

<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/gradplan/GradPlanUserGuide.pdf>

5. Submission of GradPlan

5.1 Final check

Before you officially submit your GradPlan, you should check thoroughly that all the information is accurate. Once you submit your GradPlan, your committee members, the Form Checker, Committee, Department Delegate, and College Delegate are alerted to approve of the GradPlan. If you make any changes after submitting, the system will again alert the committee members.

We thus suggest that you enter and submit your GradPlan info when you are 100% confident all is correct, and only make changes if you have to make significant changes. This prevents numerous alerts/emails being sent to the committee members and any confusion.

5.2 Approval

After the GradPlan is submitted, your committee will receive an email with instructions on how to approve the GradPlan Report.



Note: You can track approvals in GradPlan. If, 2 weeks or so after you have submitted your GradPlan and it has not been approved, check with your committee chair and/or the individual committee members who have not indicated approval in the system yet.