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# American Public University System

## Doctoral Handbook

This handbook is designed for doctoral students at American Public University System to understand the policies related to doctoral study. Please review this handbook carefully to familiarize yourself with program expectations, milestones, and policies. University policies described in the Student Handbook apply to doctoral students, unless otherwise stated. This Doctoral Student Handbook explains unique features of the doctoral programs and policies pertaining to those features.

For your convenience, you may [download the entire handbook](#) in PDF format

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### Message from the Provost

Welcome!

On behalf of our faculty, staff, and administration, welcome to American Military University (AMU) and American Public University (APU). I wish to offer you congratulations on your acceptance to join the ranks of scholars as you pursue your doctoral degree. This decision is an important one for your life and your career. It is a decision that will demand a deep commitment and dedication on your part and require the support of family and friends that surround you. This process and scholarly journey will set you apart. Pursue this profession with vigor, and you will grow in many ways - personally, emotionally, intellectually, and professionally.

You will have support on this journey. Family and friends will be there to encourage you during the process. You will also have the opportunity to connect with a select cohort of your peers. These individuals, like you, had to meet the standards of preparedness to pursue doctoral studies. You will travel this journey together, so be sure to challenge one another to rise to the highest level of achievement possible. The rigor of this scholarly journey will help you build connections, both personal and professional, that will benefit you throughout your professional career.

Faculty selected to teach and develop doctoral scholars are chosen to mentor you with their expertise. These Doctoral Faculty have made this journey in their lives, and now coach and facilitate the learning process of contribute to the development of high-quality doctoral scholars as part of your program. Get to know your faculty and strive to develop relationships that will offer support during the courses and milestones that you will encounter as you work toward completing your degree. Be proactive in seeking feedback on your progress and seek suggestions for your improvement.

Do not hesitate to ask questions. The dedicated department chairs, advisors, and staff are here to assist you on this journey. The leadership within Graduate Studies and in your academic school are also resources and will have open ears to listen, encourage, and work with you along the way.

Again, congratulations on accepting the challenge of pursuing your doctoral degree. We wish you all the best. I hope to see you in the future contributing and expanding your field as a shining example of the quality of your well-earned American Public University System doctoral degree!

Sincerely,

Dr. Marie Gould Harper

Interim Provost

American Public University System

## **About Doctoral Programs**

### **Definition and Purpose of Professional Practice Doctorates**

A Professional Practice Doctorate is an applied degree that focuses on the scholar-practitioner model. In this model, you will conduct research related to your professional experience to bridge theory and practice, advance knowledge in the field, and contribute to organizational change. While maintaining the rigor of a doctoral program, the emphasis on application of theory to practice differentiates the applied doctorate from the traditional PhD program.

### **Doctoral Program Statement of Purpose**

APUS professional practice doctorates are multidisciplinary degrees that address intellectual, cultural, and organizational challenges in the respective profession of study. These programs educate and prepare the next generation of global leaders to advance academic and professional practice in their fields embracing a scholar-practitioner model of education in which practice, research, and multidisciplinary approaches are integrated components. This transformational approach concurrently integrates and develops knowledge, skills, findings, and insights applied to solve or provide greater understanding of complex problems. Likewise, we aim to advance theory and practice to enhance the related disciplines, areas of professional practice, and communities wherein our students, faculty, and University serve.

### **Characteristics of Applied Doctoral Programs**

Based on the literature, applied or professional practice doctorates differ from PhD programs in several respects:

According to the Council of Graduate Schools' *Task Force Report on the Professional Doctorate*, "a professional doctoral degree should represent preparation for the potential transformation of that field of professional practice, just as a Ph.D. represents preparation for the potential transformation of the basic knowledge in a discipline". Further, this report articulates the following characteristics of the professional doctorate:

1. It addresses an area of professional practice where other degrees are not currently meeting all employer needs.
  2. It emphasizes applied or clinical research or advanced practice.
  3. It includes in its ranks the leaders of the profession who will drive the creative and knowledge-based development of its practices and the development of standards for others.
- Applied doctorates tend to have more structure in their program milestones and timelines for completing these milestones.
  - Applied doctorates are typically offered in a cohort model.
  - Applied doctorates focus on problem-solving and research applied to professional practice.
  - Applied doctorates often include a practicum experience.
  - Applied doctorates integrate a variety of assessment types for the dissertation or other milestones, with emphasis on portfolios.
  - Applied doctorates aim to produce "researching professionals" who combine "discovery with application."
  - Applied doctorates involve industry professionals who offer feedback on the curriculum and professional trajectories of graduates.

Building on these characteristics of the applied doctorate, our teaching model draws on evidence-based practices for this type of doctoral degree with an emphasis on adult learners who are working professionals. The core concepts in our teaching model focus on integrating applied research with professional practice. Our programs will:

- Promote autonomous, self-directed learning in our doctoral students.
- Provide in-class and out-of-class opportunities for peer -to- peer and faculty- to- student interactions to enhance the community of learners and student success.
- Create programmatic assessments to develop students' research and writing skills for applied research projects, for complex analyses aimed at diverse audiences, and for professional practice skills.
- Challenge students to advance the discipline by expanding theory and its application through original research and dissemination.

## **Program Objectives**

American Public University System structures its institutional learning objectives according to the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). As designed by the Lumina Foundation, the DQP includes several broad categories of knowledge and skills: Broad

and Integrative Knowledge, Specialized Knowledge, Intellectual Skills, Applied and Collaborative Learning, and Civic and Global Learning. In addition, APUS has added the categories of Digital Information Literacy and Professional Skills to doctoral programs. Doctoral program objectives align with these areas to provide students with a range of skills needed for career advancement and lifelong learning. Specific program objectives speak to the unique knowledge, skills, and abilities within the program and align with the institutional learning objectives. Through the curricular design of the doctoral programs, students will be introduced to key skills, develop them through structured practice, and master those skills by the conclusion of the program.

## **Your Admission to APUS**

### **Admissions Requirements**

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#### **Doctoral Admissions**

Admission to APUS doctoral programs is selective. Students are expected to have earned a master's degree (minimum 3.0 GPA) and have work experience in a discipline related to the doctoral program for which they are applying. The Doctoral Admissions Coach communicates with prospective students and answers questions about completing the application. The Admissions Coach compiles the necessary documentation and forwards it to the Doctoral Admissions Committee for review. The committee is composed of the Dean for Graduate Studies, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Doctoral Program Director, and doctoral faculty.

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#### **Admissions Requirements**

The programs' public web pages provide the definitive list of admissions requirements. The list below provides an outline for reference.

- I. *Prior Education and Professional Practice*: MA/MS in the discipline, or closely-related discipline, plus 3-5 years work experience in the field, or closely-related field.
- II. *Curriculum Vitae (CV) or Resume*: This biographical statement document includes work history, professional accomplishments, service to the profession, and, as appropriate, teaching and research experience.
- III. *Grade Point Average (GPA)*: A master's degree with a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or equivalent) is required.
- IV. *Three Doctoral Reference Forms*: Students will be prompted to enter the contact information for at least three academic or professional reference providers.

- V. *Official Transcripts:* All official transcripts verifying the award of a master's degree must be sent to APUS from the issuing institution and arrive in sealed envelopes or by official electronic copy. No faxed or unsealed transcripts sent by you will be accepted, even for preliminary review purposes. Once received, all admission and transfer credit documents are a permanent part of your student record and the property of APUS. They cannot be returned to you.
  - VI. *Unofficial Transcript:* Applicants must provide an unofficial or official copy of other graduate-level work as well as an undergraduate transcript, showing a conferred BA/BS degree.
  - VII. *Doctoral Admissions Essay:* Please follow the writing prompt provided to you.
  - VIII. *Admissions Interview:* Final candidates are interviewed by the Doctoral Admissions Committee.
  - IX. *English Proficiency:* If you are from a country whose native language is not English (regardless of current residence), you must provide proof of English proficiency in one of the following ways:
    - A. Transcripts from a conferred bachelor's degree or higher in residence at a regionally accredited college/university in the United States.
    - B. Transcripts from at least 12 semester hours of graduate coursework with a GPA of 3.0 (out of 4.0) in residence at a regionally-accredited institution in the United States.
    - C. Standardized Test Scores. Please see this link for more information.
  - X. Nonrefundable Application Fee of \$100 (You may request a fee waiver due to financial hardship through the Admissions Coach).
  - XI. Applications will only be evaluated once the application package is complete.
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### **Categories of Admission**

- I. Admission to Doctoral Program: This category is used for students who satisfy all requirements. There is no conditional acceptance status due to Federal Student Aid requirements.
- II. There is no Post-Baccalaureate entry. Students must have already earned a master's degree in the discipline or closely related discipline, and 5 years of experience in the field, or closely related field.
- III. Prospective students who do not meet the required grade point average of 3.0 in their master's degree course work may choose to take a graduate certificate, micro credential, or learning track from APUS in their prospective field of study prior to admission into APUS doctoral programs. The resulting GPA must be 3.0 or higher.

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## **Doctoral Admission Deferral**

After acceptance into a specific cohort, students may choose to defer admission by one or two cohorts, not to exceed one year from date of acceptance with a guaranteed place in a cohort during that year. Students who do not enter the program within one year from date of acceptance may subsequently request to be re-considered for admission. To do so, students should update their application materials and must submit the nonrefundable admissions fee. Such requests will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee.

## **Application Information**

Application Deadlines: Complete applications with supporting materials must be received by the following dates. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

- I. January cohort deadline for admissions is August 1. Decisions made by October 1.
- II. September cohort deadline for admissions is April 1. Decisions made by June 1.

Application Review: All complete applications are reviewed following a holistic admissions model by a Doctoral Admissions Committee composed of the representative of Graduate Studies and Research, Department Chairs or Assistant Chairs from the doctoral program, and program faculty. The committee selects students based on evidence of outstanding intellectual ability, strong commitment to applied research and practice in the discipline, and demonstrated ability to successfully complete postbaccalaureate study. The process includes an evaluation of your curriculum vitae/resume, professional goal essay, official transcript, three reference forms, admissions interview, and prior education and professional practice.

## **Financing Your Education**

### **How to Pay for Courses**

The following information is covered in this section of the APUS Student Handbook:

- APUS Doctoral Student Fees & Tuition
- APUS Doctoral Programs Refund Schedule
- Methods of Payment Available
- Consequences of Unpaid Balances
- Definition of Full-Time Status
- Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)
- Code of Conduct—Student Loans

## Fees & Tuition

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### APUS Doctoral Student Fees

Application Fee: \$100

Course materials: Through our University Book Grant, textbooks and/or e-books are provided at no charge to students in the doctoral program.

Graduation fee: \$100

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### APUS Doctoral Programs Tuition

Doctor of Strategic Intelligence: \$50,054

- Year One = \$20,022 (3 terms x \$6,674)
- Year Two = \$20,022 (3 terms x \$6,674)
- Year Three = \$10,010 (2 terms x \$5,005)
- Dissertation phase, one credit per term (\$863) until the dissertation is defended and all graduation requirements are complete.
- Residency Costs:
  - Year 1, Year 3: You pay travel costs (room and board are included in tuition)
  - Year 2: You pay all costs
- Course Materials: Included in tuition

Doctor of Global Security: \$50,054

- Year One = \$20,022 (3 terms x \$6,674)
- Year Two = \$20,022 (3 terms x \$6,674)
- Year Three = \$10,010 (2 terms x \$5,005)
- Dissertation phase, one credit per term (\$863) until the dissertation is defended and all graduation requirements are complete.
- Residency Costs:
  - Year 1, Year 3: You pay travel costs (room and board are included in tuition)
  - Year 2: You pay all costs
- Course Materials: Included in tuition

Doctor of Global Security: \$50,054

*For students starting their program in the January 2018 or May 2019 Cohorts*

- Year One = \$24,021 (3 terms x \$8,007)
- Year Two = \$24,021 (3 terms x \$8,007)

- Year Three = \$12,012 (2 terms x \$6,006)
- Dissertation phase, one credit per term (\$863) until the dissertation is defended and all graduation requirements are complete.
- Residency Costs:
  - Year 1, Year 3: You pay travel costs (room and board are included in tuition)
  - Year 2: Room, board, and travel costs are included in tuition
- Course Materials: Included in tuition



## Refund Schedule

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### Doctoral Programs Tuition Refund Schedule

#### 16-Week Term – Doctoral Tuition Refund Schedule

The tuition refund schedule is based on term progression, not individual courses.

Withdrawal Request Date	Tuition Refund Percentage
Before or During Week 1	100%
During Week 2	100%
During Weeks 3 and 4	75%
During Weeks 5 through 8	50%
During Weeks 9 through 16	No Refund

## Methods of Payment Available

As a student, you are ultimately responsible for all tuition and fees incurred, regardless of any anticipated third-party payments (e.g., tuition assistance, loans, etc.).

A number of payment methods are available for covering your tuition costs. Please follow any link below to find out more about each payment method.

- Automatic Debit Plan
- Credit Card
- Department of Defense Training Funds
- Employer Voucher
- Federal Government Employee Tuition Reimbursement
- Federal Student Aid
- Federal Grants
- Outside Scholarships
- State Grant Programs
- VA Benefits
- Vocational Rehabilitation Funding

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### Automatic Debit Plan

APUS offers an Automatic Debit Plan to enable you to spread tuition payments out over time by having them automatically charged to a credit card on a pre-set schedule. The amount and number of payments is proportional to the length of the term. If you are in 16-week term, you will make four ADP payments. Tuition is billed separately for each 16-week term of the doctoral program. The ADP plan applies to the tuition for each term.

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### ADP Eligibility

To be eligible to use ADP, you must:

- Have declared an undergraduate, master's, or doctoral degree as your academic goal
- Use a credit card as payment
- Have an acceptable credit history with APUS

For more information regarding our payment plans, please visit the AMU or APU tuition & finance site.

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## Credit Card

You may pay your tuition and any other charges with your Master Card®, Visa® or Discover® card.

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## Federal Student Aid

The federal government offers a number of financial aid options to help you pay for school. Graduate and professional degree students may be eligible to receive aid from the following Federal Student Aid program:

The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program—This is the largest federal student loan program. Under this program, the Department of Education is your lender rather than a bank or other financial institution. There are two types of Direct Loans that graduate and professional degree students may receive:

- Direct Unsubsidized Loans—Eligible students may borrow up to their cost of attendance, not to exceed \$20,500, per school year.
- Direct PLUS Loans—Eligible graduate and professional degree students who need to borrow more than the maximum unsubsidized loan amounts to meet their cost of attendance may apply for a PLUS loan. A credit check will be performed during the application process.

The U.S. Department of Education ([studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov)) website provides information on all Federal Student Aid programs. You will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA<sup>SM</sup>) to apply for federal aid.

## Automatic Debit Plan

The University System offers an Automatic Debit Plan (ADP) to enable students to spread tuition payments over time by having them automatically charged to a credit card on a preset schedule. The amount and number of payments is proportional to the length of the course and ensures course tuition is paid prior to the end of the academic period. Students in 16-week courses make four ADP payments. Students in 8-week courses make two ADP payments. To be eligible for the ADP plan, any student must be registered for credit-bearing courses. Audit students are not eligible for ADP.

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## ADP Eligibility

To be eligible to use ADP, you must:

- Have declared an undergraduate or graduate degree as your academic goal
- Use a credit card as payment
- Have an acceptable credit history with APUS

For more information regarding our payment plans, please visit the AMU or [APU](#) tuition & finance site.

### **Credit Card**

You may pay your tuition and any other charges with your Master Card®, Visa® or Discover® card.

## **Department of Defense Training Funds**

If you serve in the military or the Federal Civil Service, you should contact your Education Services Officer (ESO) or Civilian Training Representative to find out if you are eligible for training funds before registering for classes. These funds are not administered by DANES and are typically reserved for courses that apply directly to your job. If eligible, you may pay tuition with command or agency training funds by submitting a DD-1556 (or other applicable form).

## **Employer Voucher**

Many corporations and companies, including the federal government, offer educational benefits to their employees through an Employer Voucher process. You should check with your Human Resources representative for specific details. Our university system will provide any necessary documentation regarding tuition, fees, accreditation, course content, or other information that may be required.

Because direct billing cannot be contingent upon a final grade or completion of a course, you will need to pay upfront if your employer requires a specific minimum final grade before a guarantee of tuition payment can be made. We recommend consider using our ADP Payment option if you fall under this employer reimbursement system. Learn more at our AMU or APU tuition & finance site.

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To qualify for the Employer Voucher payment option

- Your employer must provide our Finance Office with a guarantee of tuition payment through an Employer Voucher. This voucher should be faxed to our Finance Office prior to the start date of the course.
- Prior to course registration, you must obtain your Employer's Identification Number (EIN), which can be found on any W-2 form or supplied by the employer's Human Resources Office.
- At the time of registration, you must choose "Employer Voucher" as payment type and enter the EIN.

## **Federal Government Employee Tuition Reimbursement**

If you are a full-time employee of the federal government, you may be eligible for reimbursement of your tuition and course material costs associated with your studies. The Office of Personnel Management supports job-related studies with up to 100% tuition reimbursement and may also cover the cost of all required course materials. The extent of this coverage depends on:

- Approval by both your immediate supervisor and your local Civilian Training Director confirming the course to be directly related to your job requirements and professional development.
- Funds available for the course. In some cases, limited funding may preclude full tuition reimbursement and/or course material cost coverage.

You should confirm approval and financial assistance before registering for any courses.

## **Federal Student Aid**

As an APUS student, you may be eligible to use the two primary types of Federal Student Aid at APUS.

- Loans, which need to be repaid.
- Grants, which do not need to be repaid.

To determine if you are eligible for Federal Student Aid, please visit our AMU or APU tuition & finance site.

## **Federal Grants**

Grants are a type of federal aid that do not need to be repaid. APUS participates in the Federal Pell Grant program.

Federal Pell Grant eligibility is based upon financial need, as well as other eligibility requirements for Federal Student Aid (FSA).

As a student at APUS, you may be eligible for the Federal Pell Grant. For more information, please visit our AMU or APU tuition & finance site.

## **Outside Scholarships**

You may use an outside scholarship to cover your tuition at APUS. We encourage you to investigate the availability of grants or scholarships from all sources - review the APUS Web site, research the Department of Education resources and contact local or private organizations like AMVETS, Rotary Clubs, community foundations, or your local Chamber of Commerce.

For more information on outside scholarships, please go visit our AMU or APU tuition & finance site.

## **State Grant Programs**

We encourage you to research grants from the state in which you currently reside. To find out more about grants in your home state, please contact our Financial Aid Office.

## **VA Benefits**

If you are a veteran of the U.S. military, there are multiple GI Bill® benefits for which you might qualify.

If you are using VA benefits to cover your tuition, you will need to initially pay your tuition with a credit card upon registration or set up the automatic debit plan. Also, *due to Veteran's Administration (VA) Consent Compliance regulations in relation to the Principles of Excellence Executive Order, APUS is now required to gain and log your consent, for each course, prior to submitting your enrollment to the VA.*

If you are eligible to combine Department of Defense (DoD) tuition assistance with VA benefits, you must notify your VA office.

To determine your eligibility for VA benefits, contact the VA office online at [www.GIBill.va.gov](http://www.GIBill.va.gov) or call them toll free at 888-442-4551.

For information on the number of semester hours required for full-, three quarter-, or half-time VA benefit levels, please go to the [Definition of Full-Time Status for VA Students](#).

For more information regarding using VA benefits for your APUS courses, please visit our AMU or [APU](#) tuition & finance site.

If you are experiencing difficult circumstances while coordinating VA benefits and tuition payment, please contact [vaquestions@apus.edu](mailto:vaquestions@apus.edu) for assistance.

### **Veteran Readiness and Employment Service (VR&E), Chapter 31 Funding**

As a veteran, you may be entitled to Veteran Readiness and Employment Service (VR&E), Chapter 31, education benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. VR&E benefits allow the student to receive benefits that may cover the cost of tuition, fees, and related education expenses. VR&E may also pay a stipend for course enrollments, based on your enrollment status.

If you are interested in determining your eligibility for this program, you may call the VA at 1-800-827-1000 and ask about Veteran Readiness and Employment Service benefits. You may also learn more online by visiting <http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOCREHAB/index.asp>. From this site, you can also apply for the benefit online. If it is determined by the VA that you are eligible, the VA will direct you to a VA Regional Benefit Office (in your local area) to meet with your assigned VR&E counselor to review your goals and be approved to begin enrolling in courses.

Once you're approved for Veteran Readiness and Employment Service benefits, your VR&E counselor will need to submit a Purchase Order authorization for educational benefits to APUS using the Tungsten Network portal. This Purchase Order authorization will allow APUS to grant course access for upcoming registrations and submit your enrollments (22-1999) to your VR&E counselor.

We recommend that your VR&E counselor submit a Purchase Order authorization with starting and ending dates to supply you with an authorization to coincide with our monthly course start dates to allow you the flexibility to schedule courses based on your personal schedule (courses start the first Monday of each month). If you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact [VocRehab@apus.edu](mailto:VocRehab@apus.edu). The State Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation Program provides grants to states to support a wide range of services designed to help individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. Eligible individuals are those who have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment, who can benefit from vocational rehabilitation (VR) services for employment, and who require VR services. Priority must be given to serving individuals with the most significant disabilities if a state is unable to serve all eligible individuals.

If you are a disabled civilian, please go to <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsabvrs/index.html> for more information regarding Vocational Rehabilitation benefits.

If you have any questions regarding how to use your Vocational Rehabilitation benefits at APUS, please contact us at [vaquestions@apus.edu](mailto:vaquestions@apus.edu).



## Consequences of Unpaid Balances

### Doctoral - Consequences of Unpaid Balances

APUS provides high quality educational programs at an affordable cost. You are responsible for understanding your charges and meeting financial obligations associated with your education. While we understand that you may receive financial assistance from third parties, including federal student aid, the ultimate financial responsibility belongs to you.

For students using U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs educational benefits, please refer to the section in the student handbook: "Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Payments." If for any reason a payment is not received and a balance exists on your student account, you will be placed on Financial Hold. This status includes third-party payments, such as TA, FSA, or scholarships that have not been received as expected.

If your financial status is on Financial Hold, you will be blocked from the following while the balance is remaining:

- Registration for another term.
- Having your diploma or certificate issued.
- Being readmitted to the University.
- You should contact Student Support at [finaidaccounts@apus.edu](mailto:finaidaccounts@apus.edu) as soon as possible to resolve any outstanding balances on your account.

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### Payment Policies

Tuition and fees are due in full prior to the beginning of each academic period (session or semester) through direct payment or approved payment arrangements. Balances may be viewed through your online ledger.

You are responsible for making payment or entering into an approved payment arrangement prior to the start of the academic period regardless of whether notification was received regarding an unpaid balance.

You are financially responsible for all unpaid balances including those that result from payments not received from, or payments returned to, third parties. Third parties include, but are not limited to, Veteran's benefits, employer education benefits, scholarships, and Federal Student Aid (FSA).

Notifications regarding account balances are sent to your email address on record. You are responsible for maintaining your correct contact information with APUS.

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### Outstanding Accounts and Collections Policy

You are responsible for charges assessed to your account. There may be financial impacts related to dropping or withdrawing from a course or the University.

Your account is considered to be in good standing if by the payment deadline at the beginning of each academic period: (a) your tuition and fees are paid in full; (b) you

have an approved payment arranged (approved by the Business Office) that is current in its payments; (c) you have approved tuition assistance through a third party; or (d) you have approved financial aid through Federal Student Aid; or (e) a scholarship sufficient to cover your account balance.

Your student account is not in good standing if there is an outstanding balance that is past due that will not be paid through an approved payment plan, third party, scholarship, or Federal Student Aid.

Your student account will be placed on a balance due hold if third party payments, including but not limited to, Veteran's benefits, employer education benefits, scholarships, and Federal Student Aid are not received or are returned due to participation or eligibility rules. For students using U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs educational benefits, please refer to the section in the student handbook: Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Payments.

If activity on your student account results in a balance later in, or after the term, a balance due hold will be placed on the account at that time.

If your student account is not in good standing it may, among other things, result in:

- Cancellation of enrollment
- Denial of registration for future classes
- Referral to collections agency
- Denial of readmission
- Denial of graduation

In the event you become delinquent, the account may be referred to a collection agency and additional costs may become an additional obligation for you.

When an account is referred to an outside collection agency, the past due account may be reported to all national credit bureaus.

Once the account is referred to a collection agency, you will be contacted by a representative of that agency. Payments are then made directly to that agency and not the University.

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## Billing Rights Summary

If you believe your account balance is incorrect, or you would like more information about a transaction on your account, contact us as follows:

- Telephone: 877-755-2787 ext: 8227 • E-mail: [finaidaccounts@apus.edu](mailto:finaidaccounts@apus.edu)
- Mail:

American Public University System  
Attn: Business Office  
111 West Congress Street  
Charles Town, WV 25414

Please include the following information in the request:

- Your name and student ID#.

- The dollar amount of the suspected error.
- A description of the error and an explanation, if possible, of why you believe the error occurred or why you are disputing the balance.

You do not have to pay the amount in question while the University investigates, but you are obligated to pay the portion of the bill that is not in question.

## **Definition of Full-Time Status**

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### Definition of Full-Time Status for VA Benefits

Any questions regarding doctoral studies enrollment status should be directed to the VA counselor designated to the doctoral student.

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### Definition of Full-Time Status for FSA Benefits

For FSA, students in the doctoral program will be considered full-time for each 16-week term\*. This includes terms during which the dissertation is being worked.

- Full-Time = 6+ credit hours (courses) or 1 credit hour dissertation course
- Half-Time = 3 credit hours (courses) per term

*\*Students who must retake any course(s) must do so within a subsequent term. Enrollment status may differ for this term and will be based on course credit hours. Students must maintain at least half-time status to be eligible for FSA Direct Loans.*

Any questions regarding doctoral studies enrollment status should be directed to the assigned Financial Aid Advisor.

## **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)**

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) indicates the successful completion of coursework towards a degree or certificate.

- According to federal regulations, students who fail to make SAP in their education program will lose their eligibility to receive Federal Student Aid (FSA) funds (i.e., financial aid).
- SAP rules apply to all students applying for financial aid, including those who have not previously received financial aid.
- APUS evaluates a student's SAP at the end of each payment period (i.e., semester). If APUS determines that a student has failed to meet the University's

SAP standards, the student may be placed on a “financial aid warning” semester during which they may retain their FSA eligibility. This determination is made at APUS’s discretion.

- Students are only eligible for financial aid warning status if the following criteria is met:
  - The student was previously meeting SAP without a warning or appeal in the most recent completed semester or was in the first payment period of their program when they failed to meet SAP.
  - The student had no “unearned F’s” in the previous semester.
- If APUS determines that a student has failed to meet the University’s SAP standards and determines that a financial aid warning is inappropriate, the student will lose their FSA eligibility. Students who lose their FSA eligibility may appeal the loss provided there are extenuating circumstances that inhibited their academic progress (e.g., student illness or injury, death of a relative.)
- Students who submit an appeal must provide:
  - A statement that explains the extenuating circumstances that contributed to the student’s failure to meet SAP and what has changed in the student’s situation that will allow the student to either meet SAP at the next evaluation or to meet the requirements of an academic plan that would lead to meeting SAP in the future.
  - Documentation that confirms the extenuating circumstances and date(s) during which the events occurred.
- If an appeal is approved, the student is placed on “financial aid probation” and their FSA eligibility is reinstated for one semester. The student must meet SAP at the next evaluation or meet the requirements of the academic plan in order to remain FSA eligible for future semesters.
- If a student’s appeal is unsuccessful, the student may take classes to demonstrate improvement for a future appeal, but they cannot receive FSA to pay for those classes. A student cannot meet SAP simply by paying for their classes on their own but must earn the necessary GPA or completion rate.
- To otherwise restore FSA eligibility, students must achieve the GPA and credit hour completion targets as defined in the policy.

SAP is evaluated based on grades posted at the end of each semester (defined as a 16-week period of academic study).

- The criteria used to measure Satisfactory Academic Progress include:
  - Cumulative grade point average (qualitative)
  - Credit hour completion/Program Pace (quantitative)

- The requirements of each criterion must be met and are described in detail below.

### **Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)**

- Cumulative GPA is the qualitative measure of SAP, meaning that it looks at the quality of the grades that each student earns in their courses.
- CGPA is initially calculated after 6 undergraduate credits, or 6 graduate credits are completed at APUS. Evaluation thereafter occurs at the end of each semester according to the table below.
- Only credits completed at APUS with a final grade of A through F are included in the CGPA calculation.
- If a failed course is retaken, the later grade will replace the failed grade and factor into the CGPA.
- To meet SAP requirements, students must maintain a CGPA that meets or exceeds our minimum as shown in the chart below.
- Students who fail to meet CGPA requirements will be determined ineligible for FSA.

### **SAP Criteria on Cumulative GPA (CGPA) and Credits Completed**

	Total Credits Completed	Minimum CGPA Required for Financial Aid
Doctoral Students	6+	3.00

### **Credit Hour Completion and Program Pace**

Credit hour completion is the quantitative measure of SAP, meaning that students must complete a certain percentage of courses toward certificate or degree completion in order to maintain FSA eligibility. Each academic program within our university system has a defined number of credit hours required for completion. To maintain SAP, students must achieve a minimum percentage of credits completed (i.e., earned) versus credits attempted.

- A student must complete their program within 150% of the published length of the program. For example, a student in a two-year program must be on track to complete their program within three years.

- Any course in which the student remains beyond Week One (add/drop) will count towards attempted credits regardless of the grade received.
- Undergraduate courses with a final undergraduate grade of A through D- will be counted towards credits attempted and completed.
- Graduate courses with a final grade of A through C will be counted towards credits attempted and completed.
- Final grades that fall below the minimums (D- for undergraduates and C for graduates) are not counted as credits completed but will be considered credits attempted.
- Courses with grades of incomplete (“I”) will not be considered attempted until a final grade is earned by the student, or the Registrar or instructor converts the “I” grade to an “F”.
- Doctoral courses with a final grade of Satisfactory (“S”) will be counted towards credits attempted and completed.
- Doctoral courses with a final grade of Unsatisfactory (“U”) are not counted as credits completed but will be considered credits attempted.
- Courses from which a student has withdrawn (“W”) will be counted towards credits attempted.
- Courses dropped within the add/drop period will not be counted towards credits attempted.
- Course retakes: All attempted courses are factored into the credit hour completion percentage.
- Remedial courses do not count towards attempted credits; however, APUS does not offer remedial courses.
- Repeated courses will count as attempted courses.
- For students who change programs, credits that apply to the new program will be counted in credit hour completion and program pace.

*Note: All students are required to log into each of their courses during Week One and submit an academic activity. Students who do not submit this assignment during the first week of class will be administratively dropped from any courses for which this assignment has not been completed.*

**SAP Criteria Based on Credits Attempted versus Credits Completed**

	Credits Attempted	Credits Completed %
Doctoral Students	6-9	67%
	10+	75%

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## **Financial Aid Appeal Process**

If APUS determines that a student has not met SAP, the student will be placed on "Financial Aid Denial" status, meaning they have lost their FSA eligibility. Any student placed on "Financial Aid Denial" status may appeal their denial due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., situations that have had a negative effect on the student's ability to successfully meet SAP standards, such as student illness or injury, death of a relative, or other special circumstances).

An electronic SAP Appeal Form is made available to students who are not meeting SAP through their e-campus. This form may be found in the e-campus FINANCE CENTER under the subsection for "Satisfactory Academic Progress". Students who complete an appeal are required to provide supporting documentation. A hard copy SAP appeal form is also available, as needed.

Appeals must include a written statement submitted to APUS Financial Aid Services that addresses the extenuating circumstances that contributed to the student's failure to meet SAP and what has changed in the student's situation that will allow the student to either meet SAP at the next evaluation or to meet the requirements of an academic plan that would lead to meeting SAP in the future. The student also must provide documentation to support the existence of the extenuating circumstances. The deadline to submit the completed appeal form, with supporting documentation, to Financial Aid Services is the Thursday of the start week of the semester after the student has been informed of their "Financial Aid Denial" status. No appeals will be accepted for after that date. An appeals Committee will consider all appeals. Students will be notified by email of the committee's decision. All decisions made by the committee are final.

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## **Loss of Financial Aid Eligibility**

Students failing to meet or maintain SAP during any period of evaluation will be placed on "Financial Aid Denial" status and will lose FSA eligibility. Students who receive veterans' education benefits will also lose eligibility for that funding. Students will be notified of their "Financial Aid Denial" status by our university system financial aid staff. To regain FSA eligibility, students must successfully appeal the determination or otherwise satisfy all SAP requirements.

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## **Re-establishing Financial Aid Eligibility**

Students placed on "Financial Aid Denial" status may reestablish their FSA eligibility by attending and earning the GPA and semester hour requirements of the SAP policy without the use of FSA funding. Once students meet SAP requirements, APUS will package and disburse eligible aid for which they have applied.

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## **Financial Aid "Warning" Period**

The school may reinstate eligibility for aid for one payment period and may do so without a student appeal. This “financial aid warning” status may be granted only to students who were making SAP in the prior payment period in which they were enrolled or who were in the first payment period of their program when they failed to meet SAP. The financial aid warning is applied through APUS automation; the student is sent an email notification, and the status is noted on the Financial Information Screen in PAD.

- Students do not qualify for financial aid warning status if there are any “unearned F’s” in last semester
- Typically, a financial aid warning is granted only once. APUS in its discretion may permit a second warning status if the student meets SAP standards at the next evaluation, then subsequently fails to meet SAP.

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## **SAP Policy Provisions (Waivers and Flexibility) Related to the COVID-19 National Emergency**

Section 3509 of the CARES Act allows institutions to exclude from the quantitative component (pace measurement) of satisfactory academic progress (SAP) attempted credits a student was unable to complete as a result of the COVID-19 national emergency. APUS has opted not to exercise this flexibility and instead directs students to use the appeal process if a determination is made that the student has not met SAP and is therefore FSA ineligible. APUS may exercise discretion and flexibility with document requirements if it is determined that circumstances related to Covid-19 contributed to the student’s inability to meet SAP.

## **Code of Conduct - Student Loans**

American Public University System subscribes to the code of conduct set forth in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. As APUS currently participates in both Private and Direct Loans, the APUS Financial Aid Office has not and will not participate in revenue sharing with Lenders, Guarantors, or Servicers of these loans. Staff is banned from receiving gifts from any of the above agencies other than those considered of minimal value by the federal regulations.

The Financial Aid/Financial Services Offices will in no way influence the choice of lender for private loans. APUS has posted private lender information based on past student choice and availability by local regional and national options; no specific lender is recommended over any others. The information is posted to assist in student research only. Processing is not affected by the student's choice of lender by APUS, but service levels may vary based on individual lenders operating models.



Caveat: APUS does not have and will not have any contractual agreement with any lender to provide private loans to our students. APUS may make available information on lenders who participate in these programs and the rates and benefits that apply to each. APUS and APUS employees will not encourage the use of any particular lender for private or alternative loans. APUS will supply the student seeking a private loan with the required Truth in Lending information. APUS employees requested to serve on advisory boards for lenders, guarantors, servicers, or state agencies will not accept any compensation for service other than direct expenses such as travel, lodging, and food related to such service.

All APUS Financial Aid/Financial Services employees are required to sign that they have read and understand the Code of Conduct. Violations of this Code of Conduct may result in termination of employment.

## **How to Register for Terms**

### **How to Register for Your Doctoral Courses**

Once you have been admitted into the program and have committed to attending, you will be automatically enrolled for the first term of courses and for subsequent terms thereafter.

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### **Continuous Registration Requirement**

Doctoral students are required to maintain continuous registration by completing coursework with their cohort, based on the doctoral program of study, and registering each term during the dissertation phase until graduation. You may not withdraw from courses without requesting a Program Hiatus. If you are unable to maintain continuous registration, you must complete the Program Hiatus Request Form and receive approval in advance through your Department Chair and Graduate Studies.

### **How to Get Your Prior Loans Deferred**

Deferment is a period during which the repayment of the loan principal is suspended as a result of the borrower meeting one or more requirements established by law. In-school deferment allows students to defer payments while attending a degree program at least half-time per semester in an academic year.

Students in the doctoral program(s) are aligned with a cohort and assigned their academic year start. Depending on your start and program progression, the academic year will align and advance accordingly.

Keep in mind, interest continues to accrue during the deferment period of an unsubsidized loan and PLUS loan. Interest does not generally accrue during the deferment period of a subsidized loan. Students have the option to continue making payments on their interest and/or principal while their loan is in the deferment status.

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## Submitting Enrollment Information to National Student Clearinghouse

- APUS submits your current enrollment data directly to the National Student Clearinghouse on the 16th of each month that you are enrolled in classes. There is no need to take action to get your in-school deferment, as long as you are enrolled in eligible, credit-hour courses.
- The National Student Clearinghouse will electronically notify each of your participating lenders of your enrollment status. The National Student Loan Database System (NSLDS) is also updated, however is typically a month behind in updating.
- If you have received a paper loan deferment form from your lender, please scan and email the form to [Deferments@apus.edu](mailto:Deferments@apus.edu) or fax to 304-724-3802 for processing.
- If you need to communicate your enrollment status to your lender before the monthly clearinghouse reporting process is complete, please follow the process described below:
- Request a deferment form from your lender and submit the form using one of the following methods:
  - Email to: [Deferments@apus.edu](mailto:Deferments@apus.edu) (preferred)
  - Fax to: 304-724-3802
  - Mail the form to the following address:

### APUS

ATTN: Office of the Registrar  
111 W. Congress Street  
Charles Town, WV 25414

If you need assistance, email [Deferments@apus.edu](mailto:Deferments@apus.edu) and include your student ID number in your email.

If you need to check on the status of your loan deferment, please contact the [National Student Clearinghouse](#) or your lender.

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## How to Get Your Enrollment Verified (for Insurance/Scholarships)

The university processes all requests for enrollment verification through the National Student Clearinghouse. APUS submits your current enrollment data directly to the National Student Clearinghouse on the 16th of each month that you are enrolled in classes.

Your enrollment verification or In-School deferment cannot be processed until the start of week 2 of your first courses in your term, as you must have attended a course beyond the first week before any loan deferments or enrollment verifications may be processed.

To obtain enrollment verification:

1. Access the National Student Clearinghouse website using the following link: [National Student Clearinghouse](#).
2. Select "Verify Now"
3. Enter the required information (your school's name, your name, and your date of birth).
4. You will be presented with an official Enrollment Verification Certificate that can be printed out and provided to organizations requiring proof of your enrollment status.

If you need assistance, email [Enrollments@apus.edu](mailto:Enrollments@apus.edu) and include your student ID number in your email.

## **Veteran's Benefits**

### **Applying for Veteran Benefits**

Students interested in applying for VA Educational Benefits should complete an application for benefits on the VA website, [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov). Please note, the VA Certifying Official (VACO) at APUS cannot determine if you are eligible for VA Educational Benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs may approve or deny benefits, based on the information provided on the application.

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### **If you have never applied for VA Benefits**

Students who have never completed an application for VA benefits should complete the online application, VA Form 22-1990, using the VA's [online application](#) program. When using applying online, your application will be electronically submitted to the VA Processing Center.

Please print your application and confirmation page for your records, prior to completing the online application. Once the VA has completed review of your application, the VA will mail you a Certificate of Eligibility (COE), outlining the chapter benefit you are entitled to and the number of months of benefit you can use. A copy of the COE is not submitted to the school. APUS requires students to fax, 877-480-4236, or email, [VAQuestions@apus.edu](mailto:VAQuestions@apus.edu), a copy of your COE to the school.

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### **If you are transferring or receiving transferred benefits**

Students who are receiving benefits transferred to you by a service member (Chapter 35) will need to complete a [22-5490](#), Application for Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance. The completed form will need to be sent to the St. Louis RPO for processing.

If you have been transferred Chapter 33 benefits, the VA will send you a Certificate of Eligibility, which will need to be submitted to APUS. Please see the Chapter 33 process for more information.

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### **Applications for VA Benefits**

- For prompt form processing, please complete your application for VA benefits.
- If you have never used VA benefits, please complete the 22-1990.
- If you are transferring Montgomery GI Bill® (Chapter 35) to a spouse or dependent, please complete the 22-5490.
- If you are transferring Post 9/11 GI Bill® (Chapter 33) to a spouse or dependent, please complete the 22-1990e.

\*GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

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### **VA Enrollment Information**

Enrollment verification cannot be submitted until the APUS Military Assistance Office receives a copy of your completed VA paperwork and you have successfully enrolled in a class. Once your paperwork is processed and you have started classes, the VA Certifying Official will electronically submit to the VA your Certification of Enrollment (22-1999). All VA enrollment verifications will be submitted after the session drop period, beginning the second week of your course. Once your enrollment has been submitted, you will receive an email from the VA as verification.

### **WAVE Enrollment Verification**

The VA requires that students using GI Bill ® benefits (excluding Ch. 33) verify their enrollment monthly. Verification begins the last day of the month of the courses you are enrolled in. Students will not receive VA benefits if they do not verify through WAVE. Please note, it may take up to 6 weeks for your enrollment information to be available in WAVE. To verify attendance through WAVE, please [click here](#) or call the VA at 1-877-823-2378.

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### **VA Payments**

Students using Chapters 30, 32, 35, 1606, and 1607 will receive monthly payments from the VA based on their enrollment status each month enrolled in courses. The VA makes payments based on your monthly attendance and not semester attendance. Payments are sent from the VA by direct deposit or check after you have verified your monthly

attendance through WAVE. APUS requires students using Chapters 30, 32, 35, 1606, and 1607 to make payment arrangements with the University prior to the start of courses. A 22-1999 Enrollment Verification will not be submitted until payment arrangements have been finalized.

Tuition and Fees for Chapter 33 is paid directly to APUS. If students are not receiving the 100% benefit rate, payment arrangements will need to be made with the University prior to course access. [Current VA payment rates may be viewed online.](#)

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### **Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)**

Beginning for courses starting on or after 1 October 2011, students (other than those on Active Duty) will receive a housing allowance for courses solely in distance learning with the Chapter 33 benefit. The housing allowance payable is equal to ½ the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents. A student *must* be enrolled at a rate of pursuit greater than half time (.51%) to receive this benefit. Please remember, the housing allowance is pro-rated based off your enrollment status, percentage of eligibility, and dates of course enrollments.

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### **Using VA Benefits at Multiple Institutions**

The VA requires students to declare an institution in which they will receive a degree or certification. VA benefits cannot be used at multiple institutions without declaration of a primary school and subsequent secondary school. For more information regarding using benefits at APUS and another institution, please contact [VAQuestions@apus.edu](mailto:VAQuestions@apus.edu).

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### **VA Consent to Enrollments Submitted**

When a student selects a VA payment option (Ex. Ch. 33 payment) at the time of registration, you are consenting that you wish to have your enrollment for that particular course(s) submitted to the VA on your behalf. Students who register selecting a payment other than VA will be prompted for consent at the time of registration to have the course(s) submitted to the VA on your behalf. Students who register prior to submitting VA documents to APUS may be required to complete a VA Consent Form to identify courses or terms students would like to have submitted to the VA.

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### **Submitting Enrollments to the VA (VA 22-1999)**

APUS will submit all enrollments to the VA electronically, beginning after the course drop period (second week of courses). Once your enrollment has been submitted to the VA, you will receive an automated email from the VA notifying you that the enrollment has been received.

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## **Yellow Ribbon Program**

The Yellow Ribbon Program is an agreement between the VA and participating institutions to cover all or a portion of tuition and fees charged after a student has exceeded the maximum benefit rate. APUS is a Yellow Ribbon participating institution. Please [learn more information about Yellow Ribbon online](#) or contact us for questions about this program at [VAQuestions@apus.edu](mailto:VAQuestions@apus.edu).

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## **Term (Course) Drops/Withdrawals**

A 22-1999 enrollment verification will be sent to the VA by the school VACO within 30 days of a change of enrollment, which may include a course drop or withdrawal. VA enrollments will be adjusted or terminated as of the date of student drop/withdrawal. A drop or withdrawal after the first date of the term, may result in a VA request for repayment of BAH, Books/Supplies, or tuition from the student as of the date of the enrollment change.

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## **Mitigating Circumstances**

Mitigating circumstances are circumstances beyond the student's control that prevent the student from continuing in school or that cause the student to reduce credits. The VA requires schools to document potential mitigating circumstances. Any withdrawal with a mitigating circumstance selected will require additional documentation of the mitigating circumstance to be submitted to APUS prior to the mitigating circumstance being reported. [Learn more about information on mitigating circumstances](#). If mitigating circumstances cannot be validated, the VA may request repayment of BAH, Books/Supplies, or tuition from the student, as of the first date of the term.

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## **Graduations**

When a VA student has successfully completed the requirements for the program of study and has officially conferred the program of study, APUS will report the student's graduation to the VA via electronic certification. All Chapter 33 students will have the graduation fee accessed by APUS added to the last VA enrollment submitted for the program being conferred.

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## **Course Extensions**

Please note that if you are granted a course extension from your professor, you will *not* receive VA benefits during the extension period. The VA will automatically discontinue benefits on the day after your original term ending date. Benefits will not

start until a new course has been enrolled and the verification has been sent to the VA. Submission of a course extension for VA benefits will likely result in an overpayment to the student and will require future repayment.

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### **Academic Probation /Unsatisfactory Academic Progress**

VA requires institutions to report students who are not meeting an institution's academic standards. When APUS is made aware of a VA student no longer meeting academic standards, notification will be electronically submitted to the VA on the student's VA record.

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### **Excessive Credits**

Students who are using VA benefits for courses may not register for courses that are not applicable to the current program of study. Any courses that are deemed not applicable to the current degree program will be considered excessive credits and an enrollment for the courses will not be submitted.

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### **Prior Credits**

The VA requires that all prior credit must be evaluated by APUS prior to a student's initial enrollment. Students must identify any prior credit that has been earned. Additionally, a Joint Services Transcript or Community College of the Air Force transcript must be received by APUS for all students who will be using VA benefits for any courses with APUS. Students who are currently having prior credits evaluated are strongly encouraged to register only for courses in which they know they will not receive prior credit. If prior credit is later given for a course a student is currently taking, APUS must terminate the enrollment, as this would constitute excessive credits. Terminations of enrollment will likely result in a reduction in BAH and/or books and supplies payment for the course/term a prior credit was awarded.

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### **Student VA Tuition & Fees Debts**

A debt is established on the student for tuition/fees/Yellow Ribbon when:

- The student withdrew after the first day of the term.
- The student reduced hours whether the reduction occurred before or during the term.
- If the student attended more than one day of any of the classes certified and a payment has been issued, any debt created by the withdrawal should be charged to the student.

- The school submitted a change in enrollment (1999b) and reported a reduction in tuition, fees, and/or Yellow Ribbon due to student action reducing or terminating training.
- If a student drops a course and adds a course so that there is no net change in training time, any change to tuition, fees, and/or Yellow Ribbon is a student debt.

Learn more about additional information and [helpful websites for GI Bill® information & Veteran success.](#)

\*GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

## **Your Academic Success**

### **Academic Policies**

The following information is covered in this section of the APUS Student Handbook:

- [Expectations of a Doctoral Student](#)
- [Degree Requirements and Progression](#)
- [Doctoral Program Milestones](#)
- [Support Roles within Doctoral Studies](#)
- [Maintaining Your Contact Information](#)
- [Changing your Major/Program](#)
- [Transfer Credit](#)
- [Academic Status](#)
- [Academic Probation Policies](#)
- [Program Deadline and Program Hiatus](#)
- [Course Attempts Limits for Graduation Eligibility](#)

### **Expectations of Doctoral Students**

To succeed in a doctoral program at APUS, you must be actively engaged in the community of scholarship by seeking innovative applications of theory to professional practice issues. You should be able to evaluate and synthesize scholarly literature and develop application strategies for your own workplaces. Likewise, you advance knowledge and practice in the field by critiquing theory and extending theory to real-world situations. To accomplish these tasks, you need to approach your study as an advanced practitioner and contribute new ideas to the scholarly dialogue through in-depth interactions with peers and faculty. In this cohort model of doctoral study,



engaging in conversation and debate throughout the program enables you to hone your ideas and develop an evidence-based dissertation project. To further this, you are continuously enrolled in the professional practice course.

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## Academic Integrity and Professionalism

You are expected to maintain scholarly integrity, adhere to the University's Student Code of Conduct, demonstrate professionalism in your interpersonal interactions, and practice responsible conduct of research. In your coursework, you will receive research ethics training to help navigate the research process, including human subjects research. Note that violations of academic integrity or professionalism, whether through plagiarism, human subjects research, or inappropriate behavior, will result in penalties up to and including expulsion. Please refer to the Student Code of Conduct for more information on academic integrity, professional conduct, and the conduct process.

## Degree Requirements and Progression

### Doctoral Degree Requirements

Doctoral programs at APUS can be divided into several phases based on coursework, residencies, and dissertation in a cohort model. The general program structure includes 8 terms of coursework, 3 residencies, and dissertation research. The cohort structure is designed to create a learning community that provides mutual support and accountability to keep you on track and promote student success. Because of this model, course progression is laid out with certain options for electives.

The following program components and milestones create a degree path for completing the doctoral degree. Note that all doctoral courses and program milestones (portfolio defense, dissertation proposal defense, dissertation defense) must be completed successfully in order to continue progressing toward the degree. You have a period of seven years from your start date to complete all program requirements, including the dissertation.

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### Cohort Model

Students in a cohort will progress through the coursework together with options for three elective courses. In addition to coursework, you will complete three residencies, an e-portfolio with oral defense of the portfolio, a dissertation proposal with an oral defense, and a dissertation with oral defense.

Residencies: Doctoral programs contain three residencies at crucial program points.

1. The first residency, Doctoral Program Foundations (year 1), establishes expectations for the program, develops rapport within the cohort, and introduces you to doctoral faculty. During this residency, you learn in greater depth about program milestones, spend time with program faculty, and participate in a seminar class.
2. The second residency (year 2) depends on the specific degree program and may include presentations at professional conferences or international experiences.
3. The third residency (year 3) focuses on practicum and dissertation requirements. At this stage, you are preparing for your dissertation proposal and planning your research.

Coursework: See your academic plan in your ecampus for your course progression

Following the suggested model, most doctoral coursework can be completed in 8 terms. Doctoral coursework includes several components: core coursework, major requirements, electives, professional practice, practicum, and dissertation credits. Most core coursework is interdisciplinary and focuses on fundamental skills for conducting research, such as research methods and statistics. Core coursework also includes foundational concepts for the field of study. Major coursework focuses on content knowledge in greater depth. Electives provide opportunities to specialize and explore different sub-areas to prepare for dissertation research or career advancement. Professional practice courses include topics such as developing a portfolio, research ethics, and residency preparation. The practicum course accompanies the practicum experience in which you implement an approved project that promotes your professional growth. Finally, dissertation credits include preparing the dissertation proposal and maintaining enrollment while completing the dissertation.

Degree Timeline:

Year 1- residency 1, coursework

Year 2- residency 2, coursework

Year 3- residency 3, complete coursework, defend portfolio, complete practicum, defend dissertation proposal

Year 3+- complete and defend dissertation. The maximum time allowed for the doctoral degree is seven years.

## **Doctoral Program Milestones**

All doctoral program milestones must be completed successfully in order to continue progressing toward the degree. Failure to complete a program milestone will result in academic dismissal.

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### **Portfolio**

The electronic portfolio provides a means for you to demonstrate that you have achieved the learning objectives of the program. This portfolio is developed throughout the doctoral courses by contributing artifacts from your courses and projects. You will be prompted to add polished artifacts (e.g., paper, project, multimedia presentation) as you complete your coursework. Before you may advance to the dissertation, you will complete an oral defense to demonstrate how you have met programmatic learning objectives. Your portfolios, written assessment, and oral defense are evaluated by a committee of doctoral faculty.

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### **Practicum**

The practicum requirement provides you with the opportunity to propose and implement a workplace project that stretches your skillset to connect research and practice. You may choose to conduct the practicum in your current workplace if your supervisor allows, or you may make arrangements to spend time in a different sector of the workplace. The practicum project represents a new or aspirational area for you rather than an existing job duty. The project aims to apply knowledge from the doctoral program to address a workplace challenge, explore a new area of expertise, or focus on a problem of practice in the field. Practicum supervisors need to sign an agreement for the project, and the accompanying practicum course provides a venue to report on the progress and lessons learned. Projects are a collaborative agreement between the student, the program director and the site supervisor.

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### **Dissertation**

In order to receive approval for your dissertation project, you will write a dissertation proposal and complete an oral defense with your dissertation committee. This proposal occurs in year three of the doctoral program.

**Dissertation Proposal:** The dissertation proposal establishes the background and need for the study, the literature review, the research questions or hypotheses, the theoretical framework, the methods, the data analysis procedures, and the significance of the study for the field. For more detailed information on the proposal, please see instructions from your program.

You must pass an oral defense of your proposal by your dissertation committee in order to proceed with the dissertation research. Outcomes of the oral defense may be “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Fail.”

- Pass- committee approves dissertation proposal and you may proceed with dissertation research.
- Pass with Revisions-committee members designate specific revisions to the proposal and stipulate that you may proceed upon satisfactorily completing the revisions.
- Fail-you are requested to substantially rewrite the proposal and then conduct another oral defense. You must pass the dissertation proposal defense within 3 attempts or you will receive a Fail.

**Human Subjects Research:** When the dissertation project involves human subjects research, you are required to seek approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before conducting the study. Before seeking IRB approval, you must first have the dissertation proposal approved by your dissertation committee via your Dissertation Proposal Defense. The Dissertation Chair should assist you in developing and submitting an IRB protocol and are responsible for overseeing the research project.

**Dissertation Completion and Defense:** Please see the Dissertation Manual for more detailed explanations of the dissertation process.

**Dissertation Chair:** You and your dissertation chair establish dissertation timelines, including a schedule for submitting work and providing feedback, in order to ensure timely progress on the dissertation project. You and your dissertation chair also agree on when to share dissertation drafts with committee members and what role each committee member plays in providing feedback on the project (e.g., methodological support, statistical advice).

**Dissertation Committee:** The dissertation committee is composed of your dissertation chair and at least one other faculty member from APUS. In addition, you are required to have one external member who must be approved by the Program Director and whose curriculum vitae must be submitted as part of committee formation. Students are responsible for forming their dissertation committees, gaining approval for their committees, and submitting appropriate committee forms. Dissertation committees must be formed and approved before you can defend your dissertation proposal. Each doctoral program at APUS provides guidance on the appropriate timeline for forming a dissertation committee and a specific deadline for committee approval. Please seek assistance from your Program Director if you are having difficulty creating a dissertation committee. Each member of the committee must approve your dissertation proposal and the final dissertation through the oral defense and review process.

**Change in Committees:** To request a change in committee chair or member a doctoral student must fill out the Change in Committee form and write a letter of justification to submit to the Program Director. A change can only be made with the approval of the Program Director.

In the event of a dispute between the student and members of the committee or between members of the committee, the committee chair will call a meeting to resolve the problem. If no solution is reached, the disagreeing party or the Program Director may request that the school doctoral leadership review the problem and recommend a solution. If no resolution is reached, the dispute can be appealed to the school dean. This will be the final level of appeal.

**Defense Timeline:** When the dissertation is determined by the chair to be complete, you submit a full copy of the dissertation to committee members at least four weeks in advance of the scheduled defense. If committee members have substantial reservations about the defensibility of the dissertation, they must inform the dissertation chair and you at least two weeks before the scheduled defense date.

**Defense Format:** At the defense, you will give an oral presentation, open to the public, which summarizes your project and the contribution of the dissertation to professional practice in the field. Following this public defense, including question and answer from audience members, the dissertation committee will hold a closed-door session with you, to address remaining questions with the study.

**Defense Outcomes:** Possible outcomes for the dissertation defense are “Pass with Distinction,” “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Fail.” Committee members award a “Pass with Distinction” if they believe you have produced a study worthy of publication in a top-tier venue (either academic or trade publication).

- Pass with Distinction- indicates that the dissertation is of superior quality and would meet standards for publication in a peer reviewed journal.
- Pass-indicates that you have successfully completed the dissertation and are ready to submit it for graduation.
- Pass with Revisions- indicates that you need to complete specific revisions and receive approval from the committee before submitting the dissertation for graduation.
- Fail- indicates that the dissertation needs substantial revisions. You must schedule another oral defense within 6 months of the original defense, in coordination with the faculty advisor and committee.

**Submitting the Dissertation:** After the committee has approved the final draft of the dissertation, you are required to submit it to the APUS Repository and to the ProQuest Theses and Dissertations database in order to graduate.

## Support Roles within Doctoral Studies

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### Doctoral Advising

Each cohort of students is assigned a faculty advisor through the first professional practice course to provide counsel about the academic and research demands of the program. This faculty advisor remains with the cohort throughout program coursework until the dissertation stage. Throughout the program residencies and interactions during coursework, you will develop relationships with faculty members in order to select a dissertation chair and committee members (see the Dissertation Requirements section). From the beginning of the doctoral program, you are provided avenues to interact with doctoral faculty through courses, social media, residencies, and informal discussions. These opportunities enable you to foster intellectual and personal connections that lead to advising relationships. You will participate in an annual review of your academic progress to ensure that you are meeting program milestones and to discuss ideas for the dissertation project.

**Faculty Advisor:** Each cohort of students will have a designated faculty advisor who works with the students throughout their coursework.

**Staff Advisor:** The academic advising team will have a dedicated doctoral advisor to assist you with policy questions throughout the program.

**Admissions Coach:** This coach works with you from initial interest in the program through the application process. The coach will guide you through the process and ensure that your application package is ready for the Doctoral Admissions Committee.

**Doctoral faculty:** The doctoral faculty members teach courses in the doctoral programs. Doctoral faculty may also serve as faculty advisors, dissertation chairs, and dissertation committee members.

**Dissertation Chair:** The dissertation chair is the leader of the dissertation committee and your primary contact in writing the dissertation. The dissertation chair is a coach and advocate through the dissertation process.

**Dissertation Committee:** The dissertation committee, in collaboration with its chair, advises you on the dissertation and evaluates the dissertation oral defense. The dissertation committee consists of the chair, one additional APUS faculty member, and one external member who is an expert in the professional practice area.

**Director of Doctoral Programs:** The Director of Doctoral Programs collaborates with the doctoral programs for curricular planning, student success, and admissions. This director serves on the Doctoral Admissions Committee and consults with program faculty for your annual reviews and program milestones.

**Dean of Graduate Studies and Research:** The Dean leads graduate studies at the University by ensuring that the programs exceed accreditation standards and employ innovative teaching and research methods to support both faculty and staff.

### Maintaining Your Contact Information

The doctoral programs utilize your MyCampus email address as the primary mode of communication and expect doctoral students to access this address. APUS also requires

you to maintain all contact information on your student record as long as you are an active student. This is to ensure that our offices can notify you of any pending adverse academic actions, any missing document requirements, and the outcome of your student requests. Please make sure that you have access to your mycampus email and the email address you entered, as you are responsible for receiving any notifications that are time sensitive. You may update your current email address via the Edit Profile link in the dropdown next to your name at the top of your ecampus.

You will receive emailed invitations to share your feedback with us through various surveys about your experiences with us, your needs as a student, etc. We value and encourage your participation in our surveys, as your feedback plays a significant role in our continuous improvement processes.

Participation in a survey is voluntary unless otherwise stated in the email. Although you are required to receive the emailed student survey invitations, you may choose to skip certain surveys and submit your feedback for others, based on the topic of the survey. If you have any questions about the survey process, please contact [feedback@apus.edu](mailto:feedback@apus.edu). If you are disenrolled or have graduated, and do not wish to have APUS contact you again, you may submit a Do Not Contact request by emailing us at [enrollments@apus.edu](mailto:enrollments@apus.edu). Doing so will remove your email addresses from our student record system so that you no longer receive any emails from the University.

### **Changing your Major/Program**

If you wish to transfer within doctoral programs at APUS, you are only permitted to do so during the first term of the program, upon review and approval of the Doctoral Admission's Committee. You must submit a revised professional goal essay and assume tuition costs for any courses that must be taken in the new program. If you are on probation and/or carry incompletes, you may not transfer programs.

### **Transfer Credit**

The doctoral program is based on the model of students entering with a master's degree equivalent to 30 graduate credits. The doctoral program requires 58 credits beyond the master's degree for completion. For this reason, the doctoral program does not accept any transfer credit to fulfill requirements of the doctoral degree.

## Academic Status

### Doctoral - Academic Status

Changes in academic status occur when:

- you are placed on academic probation, or
- you are dismissed from the program.

You will have an annual review of your progress through program milestones, including a first year evaluation and checkpoints throughout the curriculum. These reviews will ensure that you are on track for program milestones and meeting program expectations.

- Academic Probation: You must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average to remain in good academic standing. If your GPA falls below 3.0, the academic probation policy will be in effect.
- Doctoral students are expected to abide by the academic and professional conduct standards established in the Student Code of Conduct. Through the conduct process, students who commit conduct violations will receive consequences up to and including suspension and expulsion.

Appeal procedures in all instances of grievance are handled according to [APUS Appeal Policy](#).

## Academic Probation Policies

### Doctoral - Academic Probation Policies

For doctoral students, Academic Probation begins after you have attempted at least 6 semester hours and has a cumulative GPA below 3.0. You may also be placed on probation if, during the dissertation phase of the program, you received a “U” (unsatisfactory performance) during an academic term.

If your cumulative program GPA falls below the minimum required by APUS, you will be notified by the Registrar's Office that you have been placed on Academic Probation. The intent of Academic Probation is to provide you with the opportunity to raise your cumulative GPA to minimum levels so that you may continue to pursue your academic goals. Once placed on Academic Probation, your GPA will be reviewed after completion of one term per requirements detailed below.

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#### Academic Probation

Event	Cause	Result	Outcomes
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<p>Student's GPA falls below 3.0</p>	<p>Failed a course with a grade of F</p>	<p>The student will be:</p> <p>placed on probation and must repeat the failed course in the next term, limited to repeating the failed course(s)</p>	<p>Upon successful completion of the repeated course, the new grade, which must be at least a B will replace F</p> <p>Alternative Scenarios</p> <p>IF:</p> <p>the student fails to achieve at least a B in the repeated course, the student will be removed from the program. the replacement grade lifts GPA to 3.0 (or above), student is removed from probation. the replacement grade is at least a B,</p>
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			<p>but does NOT lift GPA to 3.0 (or above), the student will be allowed a second probation term to raise the GPA;</p> <p>Failure to raise the GPA during the second probation term will result in the student being dismissed from the program.</p>
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<p>Students who fall below 3.0</p>	<p>Due to one or more grades of B- in the program</p>	<p>The student will be placed on probation and will be allowed to continue taking courses as a probationary term.</p>	<p>Students who are able to raise their GPA to 3.0 following the first probationary term will be removed from probation.  Students who fail to raise their GPA to at least 3.0 during the first probationary term will be allowed a second probation term to raise the GPA.  Failure to raise the GPA during the second probationary term will result in the student being dismissed from the program.</p>
<p>Student who does not make satisfactory dissertation progress</p>	<p>Student receives a U (Unsatisfactory) grade in the dissertation course</p>	<p>The student will be placed on probation and will be required to complete an improvement plan to meet dissertation</p>	<p>If the student receives an S (satisfactory) grade in the probationary term, the student will be removed from probation.  If the student receives a U</p>

		milestones during the next term.	(unsatisfactory) in the first probationary term, the student will be given a second probationary term to demonstrate satisfactory progress. Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress during the second probationary term will result in the student being dismissed from the program.
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Academic Level	Number of Probation Periods	Probation Rules
Doctoral students	2 total probation periods, one probation period during the course phase of the program and one probation period during the dissertation phase of the program.	Minimum period GPA of 3.0

You will need to discuss your options with your academic advisor and your funding source as your eligibility for funding may be affected. If you raise your cumulative GPA above the minimum level at the end of the review period, you will be placed on academic good standing.

## Appeals

You will have 30- calendar days to appeal your pending academic dismissal in writing before it is processed. Refer to the [Appeals and Special Requests](#) for more information.

## Program Deadline and Program Hiatus

### Program Deadline Requirements for Graduation Eligibility

Once you start your program at APUS, you will have a set deadline for completing your program requirements. Your program deadline begins with the start date of the first course in your program that you attend past the first week of the course. This date is called your initial enrollment date. If you do not have your program conferred before the

program deadline, we can issue you a letter of program completion; however, you will not actually earn the degree or certificate.

Each program has an established program length:

- Doctorate Degree: 7 years

If you are less than 6 months away from your program deadline, you will be blocked from registration until you have met with your Department Chair to discuss your program completion plan.

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## Program Deadline Extensions

In some very special circumstances, you may request an extension of your program deadline. While the University takes every extension request under consideration, whether to grant or deny an extension is solely at the University's discretion. Be sure to submit the request prior to reaching your program deadline.

- You may only be granted an extension of up to 25% of your initial program length.

*If you have any questions pertaining to program deadline extensions, please contact the Office of the Registrar at [registrar@apus.edu](mailto:registrar@apus.edu).*

Students who need to stop out from their doctoral program may request a Program Hiatus by communicating with the Doctoral Advisor and completing the Program Hiatus Request form. Students may request one or more Program Hiatus(es) during the program, but the Program Hiatus(es) may exist for no greater than a total of 6 terms. You must still complete the program within the approved timeframe of 7 years. You may return from a Program Hiatus and enter a new cohort by contacting the Doctoral Advisor to initiate the return process.

Your program deadline is not extended if you are on an approved Program Hiatus; you will have the same program deadline when you return from a Program Hiatus and may need to work with the Doctoral Advisor based on if your program deadline is nearing or expired upon your return.

## Course Attempts Limits for Graduation Eligibility

To be eligible for graduation at the end of your program, you must have completed all course requirements within a certain percentage of course attempts. This percentage is 150% of courses attempted vs. courses successfully completed. This includes any courses you completed prior to changing your major, even if those courses did not apply to your current major.

Course attempts include:

- Courses that you withdraw from (grade is W).
- Any courses which you complete (grade is A-F).

- Any current course or courses for which you are on extension.

The following do NOT count as course attempts:

- Courses that you have dropped (grade is DP)
- Course credit that you transferred in to the program as transfer credit, Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), or residential credit.

Maximum number of semester hours per academic level:

- Doctorate degree – maximum number of semester hours attempted is 86 semester hours or 28 courses.

## **How to Get an Extension on Your Course**

### **Doctoral - Your Academic Success: Get An Extension**

If you do not complete course requirements on time because of illness or other extenuating circumstances, you may be given a grade of Incomplete (I) if you have successfully completed at least 50% of the course work already due (grade of B- or better) in the specified course and if you are approved for an extension before final grades in the course are issued. Before requesting an extension, please attempt to complete requirements within the time allotted for the course in order to maintain progress in the program. Please reach out to your course faculty if you believe you will need an extension and create a concrete plan for completing the course requirements. Extensions are 30 days from the final day of the regularly-scheduled course. All work to rectify incomplete grades must be completed within the extension period. You may only have one Incomplete grade and one Extension at a given time. Students with special circumstances who need to complete more than one course should work with their Department Chair to determine the best course of action for completing courses with the least disruption to program progression. All incompletes must be resolved before you are permitted to defend the dissertation proposal. Incomplete grades do not count toward graduation.

A special case for a longer extension may occur in the context of your portfolio defense. If you do not pass your first attempt at the portfolio defense, your Department Chair may allow a 60-day extension of the corresponding course in order to provide additional study time before attempting the portfolio defense a second time.

## **How to Drop or Withdraw from Your Course and Term Doctoral**

### **- Your Academic Success: Drop or Withdraw**

You are required to maintain continuous registration by completing coursework with your cohort, based on the doctoral program of study, and registering each term during the dissertation phase until graduation. If you are experiencing an academic or personal

challenge that impacts your ability to continue in a term, please reach out to your Department Chair. Once you have spoken with your Department Chair, you may choose to request a drop or withdrawal by completing and returning a form provided by your Department Chair and the Doctoral Academic Advisor. If you choose to drop or withdraw from courses, you will be removed from all the courses in your current term. At that point, you must also decide if you would like to “stop out” of your program through a Program Hiatus or disenroll from the program completely. With a Program Hiatus, you may re-enter the program in a term based on the last course you completed; however, re-entering will mean joining a new cohort based on the term you are entering.

Disenrolling means that you would need to apply for admission again.

Students who need to stop out from their doctoral program may request a Program Hiatus by communicating with the Doctoral Advisor and completing the Program Hiatus Request form. Students may request one or more Program Hiatus(es) during the program, but the Program Hiatus(es) may exist for no greater than a total of 6 terms. You must still complete the program within the approved timeframe of 7 years. You may return from a Program Hiatus and enter a new cohort by contacting the Doctoral Advisor to initiate the return process.

Your program deadline is not extended if you are on an approved Program Hiatus; you will have the same program deadline when you return from a Program Hiatus and may need to work with the Doctoral Advisor based on if your program deadline is nearing or expired upon your return.

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## Deciding Whether or not to drop or Withdraw from Your Course and Term

### **Important Definitions**

- **Course Drop:** The removal of a course from your schedule prior to the end of the first week of class which will also result in being placed on a Program Hiatus.
- **Course Withdrawal:** The removal of a course from your schedule after the end of week one which will also result in being placed on a Program Hiatus.
- **End of Week One:** 11:59:59 pm Eastern Time of the first Sunday of the course.
- **Drop or Withdrawal Date:** This is the date you submitted the online “Course Drop/Withdraw” Form, the date you contacted the Office of the Registrar with your official request by email, phone call or voicemail.
- **SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress):** One measure used to determine eligibility for both federal student aid and for graduation. Withdrawals impact SAP, as they count against your maximum cap of 150% of courses attempted vs. courses successfully passed.

### Consequences of a Course Drop

- Grades: You will see a "DP" for the course when viewing grades inside the Records Menu area of the e-campus under My Academic Plan or My Academic Records under Grade Reports.
- GPA (Grade Point Average): Your GPA is not impacted.
- Transcript: If you have a transcript sent out, it will NOT show any record of the dropped course.
- SAP: Classes you drop do not count as "attempted" in calculations used to determine eligibility for Federal Student Aid or for graduation eligibility.
- Federal Student Aid: If you do not complete a term you were scheduled to attend, your aid may be subject to a Return of Title IV (R2T4) calculation
- Course Access: You will no longer have access to a course once you drop it as you will be placed on a Program Hiatus.

#### Consequences of a Course Withdrawal

- Grades: You will see a "W" for the course when viewing grades inside the Records Menu area of the e-campus under My Academic Plan or My Academic Records under Grade Reports.
- GPA: Your GPA is not impacted.
- Transcript: If you have a transcript sent out, it will show this course with a "W" grade.
- SAP: Withdrawn courses do count as "attempted" in calculations used to determine eligibility for Federal Student Aid or for graduation eligibility.
- Federal Student Aid: If you do not complete a term you were scheduled to attend, your aid may be subject to a Return of Title IV (R2T4) calculation
- Course Access: You will no longer have access to a course once you withdraw from it as you will be placed on a Program Hiatus.

#### Returning Your Books/Course Materials

Please refer to [Course Materials](#) for more information on returning books/course materials.

#### **Your Course Grades and APUS Transcripts**

The following information is covered in this section of the APUS Student Handbook:

- Final Grades
- Incomplete Grades (Extensions)
- Appealing a Final grade
- Failing Grades – Repeating Courses
- Dissertation Defense
- APUS Grading System (Chart)
- Ordering and the Release of APUS Transcripts

## **Final Grades**

Professors have until 8-calendar days after the end date of the course or the end date of the course extension to post final grades. For each assignment during the course, your professor has 5 days for grading.

If you are on an extension but turn in coursework early, your professor is still not required to post the final grade until 8 days after the extension end date. However, you may email your instructor to let them know that you have completed your work and see if your instructor is available to grade your work and post a final grade prior to your course extension ending.

If you need a grade report quickly, you can print an official Grade Report from your ecampus under the MY ACADEMIC RECORDS menu.

If you start an extension in a course and then do not submit all of the outstanding course work by the end of the extension, you will receive a final grade based on the coursework you submitted, including 0% scores earned for any work that was not completed.

## **Incomplete Grades (Extensions)**

An Incomplete grade of "I" is posted to your course as soon as your extension is approved. An "I" is not a final grade, and no "I" grade may stay on a student record permanently. Your professor will change the "I" to a final grade when your extension ends.

Your professor is not obligated to grade the course as soon as you submit your work but has until 8 days after the official course extension end date.

*Please note:*

- If you do not complete work on extension, a final grade of "F" will be posted by your professor.
- If your course still shows an "I" grade 30 days after the course end date, the Registrar's Office will convert the "I" to a final grade of "F."
- If you have 2 or more current "I" grades on record, you will be prohibited from registering for any additional courses until you have completed the courses on extension.
- Your Federal Student Aid eligibility may be impacted if you have courses with "I" grades.



## Appealing a Final Grade

### Doctoral - Your Academic Success: Appealing Your Final Grade

If you believe that a final grade does not accurately reflect your performance in a course, you must first contact your course instructor for possible resolution.

Only your final grade in a course or project may be appealed; appeals for individual assignments during an active course are not permitted. A grade appeal should be limited to specific charges of unfair action towards you and may not involve a challenge of your instructor's grading standard. You have the right to expect thoughtful and clearly defined approaches to course grading, but you must recognize that varied standards and individual approaches to grading are valid. A grade appeal considers whether a grade was determined in a fair and appropriate manner; it does not attempt to grade or re-grade your individual assignments or projects. In your appeal, you will need to substantiate your claim that your final grade represents unfair treatment compared to the standard applied to other students. In the absence of compelling reasons, such as clerical error, prejudice, or capriciousness, the grade assigned by your instructor is to be considered final. In a grade appeal, only arbitrariness, prejudice, and/or error will be considered as legitimate grounds for an appeal.

If you still wish to appeal your final grade, you may appeal your instructor's decision by initiating a request with your Department Chair and should include the written correspondence between you and your instructor regarding your initial request for a review of your grade. An Academic Affairs Specialist will notify you of all decisions delivered regarding your grade appeal.

- No grade appeals will be considered for individual assignments
- No grade appeals will be considered for courses whose final grade was posted more than 90 days ago
- No grade appeals will be considered that are not submitted in writing, either by email or letter
- No grade appeals will be considered for students whose degrees have been conferred

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#### Grade Appeal Process Walkthrough:

- Review your final grade with your instructor
- Send a written grade appeal to your Department Chair
- The appropriate Chair(s) in your school will review the appeal and send a decision within 30 days. Be aware that continuation in a subsequent doctoral term may be impacted by the outcome of the appeal. Financial ramifications of withdrawing from a term are the student's responsibility
- If your appeal is denied:
- Second Level of Appeal: You must ask that your appeal be reviewed by your school dean's office

- Your school dean will review the appeal and send a decision within 30 days
- At the doctoral level, the school dean's office is the final level of review, and the decision is considered final

## **Failing Grades – Repeating Courses**

### **Doctoral - Your Academic Success: Failing Grades**

If you do not receive a passing grade in a doctoral course, you must retake the failed course before progressing with your academic plan. When retaking a course, you will be removed from your cohort and enrolled in the specified course in order to focus your time and attention on completing the course successfully during your second attempt. When you complete the course with a passing grade, you will be placed officially into the next cohort and resume your academic plan. Course retakes will be charged at the per-credit rate for the doctoral program.

You can only retake a course if you received a failing grade "F" and if the exact course is still offered at APUS.

You are not able to retake a course in which you received an A- B- grade in order to raise your GPA or if APUS no longer offers that same course.

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#### Retaking a Failed Course:

APUS now allows you one opportunity to retake a failed course and have your original failed grade forgiven from your GPA. The original failing grade will show as "R" on your transcript, and the previous failing grade will be removed from your GPA as long as you complete the course retake. However, you will still see your original failing grade on your personal online academic plan and on your individual online grade reports.

If you fail any other course required in your program twice, you will be dismissed from the program and no longer eligible to continue at APUS.

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#### Important Information:

- The course retake policy only applies if the exact course that you previously failed is still offered.
- Original failing grades of retaken courses will still be used to calculate SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress) for financial aid and for the 150% rule of course credit attempted vs course credit earned for graduation eligibility.
- The retake policy does not apply to courses that you took in programs that you have already completed. For example, if you failed a course in your Associates program, and have already had that degree conferred, you cannot have the original failing grade forgiven in your GPA by retaking it now in your Bachelor's program.

## Dissertation Defense

To complete the doctoral program, you must write and defend your dissertation. The dissertation must be approved by the dissertation committee via the oral defense.

Oral Defense of Dissertation: Possible outcomes for the dissertation defense are “Pass with Distinction,” “Pass,” “Pass with Revisions,” or “Fail.” Committee members award a “Pass with Distinction” if they believe you have produced a study worthy of publication in a top-tier venue (either academic or trade publication).

- The “Pass with Distinction” indicates that the dissertation is of superior quality and would meet application standards for peer reviewed journal. This will only be awarded to the top ten percent of dissertations.
- A “Pass” indicates that you have successfully completed the dissertation and are ready to submit it for graduation.
- A “Pass with Revisions” indicates that you need to complete specific revisions and receive approval from the committee before submitting the dissertation for graduation.
- A “Fail” indicates that the dissertation needs substantial revisions. You must schedule another oral defense within 6 months of the original defense, in coordination with the faculty advisor and committee.

Submitting the Dissertation: After the committee has approved the final draft of the dissertation, you are required to submit it to the APUS Repository and Proquest Theses and Dissertations database in order to graduate. Your dissertation chair will provide you with guidance about this process.

Dissertation Committee: The dissertation committee is made up of your dissertation chair and one other faculty member from APUS. You are required to have one approved external member. Qualifications for this person are spelled out in the Dissertation Manual. Each member of the committee must approve that dissertation proposal and the final product.

## APUS Grading System (Chart)

Your cumulative GPA at APUS is determined solely by the courses you have taken at APUS towards your current degree. If you change your major, your previous APUS courses will roll over into your GPA for your new major. However, if you graduate from a program, you would start over with a new GPA when you start on your next program. For example, your grades towards your conferred Master's degree at APUS do not impact your subsequent GPA in your Doctoral program.

Doctoral Courses:

WP/WF grade designators are no longer used as of October 5, 2007.

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Grade	Quality Points/ Grading Description Percent
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A	4.0/ 100 - 94	Very high quality, clearly above average work
A-	3.67/ 93 - 90	Accepted performance level
B+	3.33/ 89 - 87	Accepted performance level
B	3.0/ 86 - 84	Accepted performance level
B-	2.67/ 83 - 80	Below Average
F	0.0/ 79 - 0	Failing
P	NONE	Pass
I	NONE	All: Incomplete
S	NONE	Satisfactory progress during dissertation course
U	NONE	Unsatisfactory progress during dissertation course
DP	NONE	Dropped
W	NONE	Withdrawn
WP	NONE	Withdrawn Passing
WF	NONE	Withdrawn Failing

### **Ordering and the Release of APUS Transcripts**

You must wait 24 hours after your grade posts to your Academic Record before ordering your transcript to ensure that your grade will be reflected on your transcript. This will give adequate time for all information to post to your transcript.

You may order APUS transcripts from us through the online student portal, and we offer the option of either electronic or paper transcripts. Once you are logged in to your student ecampus, you will hover your mouse over Academic Plan and Forms, then

select Order APUS Transcripts from the University Forms Menu. If you have forgotten your student ID or password, please call our Student Support Services at 877-7552787. We offer the options of electronic transcripts, paper transcripts, or a free download of your academic Student Agreement. Fees for our transcript orders may be found in our fee schedule.

The electronic transcript is the cheapest and fastest way to get a transcript to a third party quickly. For military students, the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) now accepts our electronic transcripts!

If you are utilizing a government or military computer that has blocked access to this website, you must utilize a personal computer to place your order.

You must have attended an APUS course to be eligible for a release of a transcript.

This means you have either completed a course for a final grade, passed an APUS offered competency exam, or withdrawn from an APUS course after the first week. You will not be able to order an unofficial or official APUS transcript if:

- You have not submitted all of your required admission documents yet. Your record status will still show in your portal as INCOMPLETE.
- You have never attended an APUS course or passed an APUS competency exam.
- You have not completed a course with APUS.

Students on Incomplete Admission status who have completed a course must email [APUSTranscripts@apus.edu](mailto:APUSTranscripts@apus.edu) to obtain a complementary unofficial transcript for their own personal use.

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## Degree Conferrals

Degree conferrals will appear on your transcript AFTER the actual conferral date of your degree. We cannot post conferrals prior to the official conferral date. It is recommended that students wait 24 hours after their conferral date to order a transcript to ensure your conferral date has been posted to the transcript.

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## Transcript Display

APUS transcripts do NOT include any of the following information:

- Dropped courses (DP grades)
- Academic Probation
- Academic Suspension
- Notation of any Disciplinary Action
- Failed grades for courses retaken after August 2008\*

\*These course grades will appear as “R” on your transcript but will continue to show as “F” on your personal academic plan and individual grade reports in your student portal.

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## Exceptions to APUS Transcript Release Policy

### **Graduation**

When ordering a transcript after graduating, please be sure your conferral has been posted in your student record first or your awarded degree will not show up on your transcript. It is recommended that students wait 24 hours after their conferral date to order a transcript to ensure your conferral date has been posted to the transcript.

### **Graduation Process**

The following information is covered in this section of the APUS Student Handbook:

- General Graduation Information
- Applying for Graduation
- Fees
- Program Review Process
- Shipping of Diplomas

### **General Graduation Information**

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#### Graduation and Conferral of Degree

Unlike most universities that only confer degrees twice a year, APUS confers degrees quarterly.

"Conferral date" is defined as the date on which your degree is officially awarded. Due to outstanding financial obligations, outstanding grade appeals, or established conferral schedules, you may actually complete your degree many months before your degree is officially conferred.

To be eligible for conferral of your degree, you must:

- have fulfilled all course requirements in your program.
- have a minimum GPA of 3.0.
- have your dissertation accepted by your dissertation committee and submitted to the library.
- have fulfilled all program requirements for your degree.
- have applied for graduation and passed an academic review of your courses.
- have no outstanding balances.

Graduation applications are due six weeks before the conferral date. It is critical that you maintain an accurate shipping address in your student record. You will incur additional charges if we need to reship misdirected diplomas or transcripts due to a shipping address that was no longer valid. Your conferral could also be delayed if you are not receiving notifications of outstanding graduation process requirements.

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## Transcripts

Your graduation date will not be reflected on any transcript you order until the day of conferral regardless of when you were academically cleared for your program. For more information on GPA requirements, program deadline requirements, or Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements (150% rules), please see the What You Need to Know Before Your Course Begins section of the Student Handbook.

## Applying for Graduation

**When to submit:** Students are encouraged to apply for graduation when they are six (6) months away from program completion. Please see the Application Deadlines section, below, for specific deadline information. The link for the Graduation Application is located within the ecampus under the Forms Menu. The link will direct students through the application process, as well as payment of the application fee.

### Applicant Information:

Name on Diploma - The student's name on their diploma or certificate must match the legal last name APUS has on file. Students may spell out their middle name, as well as add generational suffixes (Sr, Jr, etc.). No prefixes, ranks, or titles will be placed on the diploma.

In order to allow a different legal name on their diploma, students must contact the Record Updates Department at [recordupdates@apus.edu](mailto:recordupdates@apus.edu) for assistance with updating their name on file. Once updated, the student may then proceed with applying for graduation, or contact the Graduations Office ([graduations@apus.edu](mailto:graduations@apus.edu)) to update their name if an application has already been submitted. All changes must be made before the student's conferral or certificate award date.

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## Application Deadlines for Degree Conferral

Your Graduation Application must be received prior to your projected conferral date. If you are currently on any course extensions, it doesn't matter if you turn your coursework in prior to the extension end date. The extensions must be officially scheduled to end prior to the anticipated conferral date you select on your graduation application.

Please follow the due dates below for graduation application deadlines:

For conferral on:	Application due no later than:
February 1	December 2
April 1	February 2
June 1	April 2
August 1	June 2
October 1	August 2
December 1	October 2

### **Graduation Fees**

There is a one-time, nonrefundable fee of \$100 per degree. The fee covers administrative costs associated with completing the graduation review, as well as printing and shipping your diploma.

### **Program Review Process**

The program review process begins when you submit the online Graduation Application. Once you submit your Graduation Application, the following processes are triggered:

- Academic Audit – An Associate Registrar must review the student record and confirm that all program requirements for completion have been met.
- Finance Audit – The APUS Finance Office must confirm that the Student Account has no outstanding balance or monies owed.
- Library Audit – The APUS Librarian must confirm all books or materials reserved from the library have been returned to APUS and there are no outstanding fees.
- Direct Loan Exit Counseling - If you have used Federal Student Aid to cover any portion of your college costs, you may be required to complete Direct Loan Exit Counseling. Our Financial Aid Office will contact you by email to provide the link for exit counseling. Exit counseling provides important information you will need as you prepare to repay your federal student loan(s).



If the Associate Registrar confirms that academic requirements have not been met by the intended conferral date, you will be notified by email that your conferral has been moved to the next available date.

If you are academically cleared for graduation but do not meet all requirements prior to your conferral date, you will remain assigned to the declared conferral. However your final diploma will not be mailed until you complete all of the program audit requirements.

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## My Graduation Information Online

You may track your graduation process in your online campus under “My Graduation Info.” The information in this section is updated once you apply for graduation. The information below will explain each of the fields listed under the graduation audit section.

- Auditor: An Associate Registrar will be with the student throughout the graduation process.
  - Projected Conferral Date: This is the date selected by the student during the application process, identifying when they anticipate graduation from the American Public University System.
  - Declared Conferral Date: This is the date that the Associate Registrar confirms as the conferral date the student is eligible for graduation once the academic audit has begun.
  - Graduation Application: Once the Graduation Application has been submitted electronically, the status will state, “Submitted”, and a date will post.
  - Academic Audit: This field will remain blank until the initial academic review has been completed. Once the initial academic review is completed, one of the following statuses below will be listed:
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## Status Definitions

- Clear: You have successfully completed all academic requirements for your current degree.
- Grades not posted: You have registered for all courses needed to complete the current degree; however, not all course grades have been posted.
- Incomplete Grade: You are currently on a course extension or have additional courses to complete your program.
- Ineligible: You failed the final course requirement, or do not meet the minimum GPA requirement for your degree.

Finance Audit and Library Audit: These will be completed once you have been cleared academically for graduation. A status of “Not Clear” will show if you have an outstanding issue with any of these reviews. You will not be able to receive any transcripts or have your diploma shipped if you have any outstanding balance or monies owed.

End of Program Survey: If you are required to complete the End-of-Program (EOP) survey, you will be emailed the survey on a weekly basis after submitting your Graduation Application until it has been successfully submitted. Questions about this EOP survey can be sent to [feedback@apus.edu](mailto:feedback@apus.edu). Please be sure that your current email is listed in your Online Campus to ensure a timely delivery of this survey. Once all graduation requirements have been successfully completed, you will be notified by email with your final clearance date. *Questions regarding your academic audit status should be directed to [studentservices@apus.edu](mailto:studentservices@apus.edu).*

## Shipping of Diplomas

### Doctoral - Your Academic Success

Once you receive final clearance for your program, you will be scheduled to have your degree conferred during the next conferral or award date listed in the Application Deadlines section.

In order to receive final clearance, it is necessary to have cleared all audits on your graduation checklist. This includes:

- Financial Audit
- Library Materials Audit
- Any Required Financial Aid Exit Counseling

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## Diplomas

Within two weeks of your degree conferral, your digital diploma will be emailed to the primary email address on your student record. Within six weeks after your degree conferral, your diploma will be mailed to your mailing address on your student record. Please allow an additional 30 days for international shipments.

You may check the status of your diploma shipment by using the “track delivery” link located on your Parchment Award learner account. If you have not received your diploma within 6 weeks of your conferral date, please send an email to [Diploma@APUS.EDU](mailto:Diploma@APUS.EDU) for additional information.

Diplomas contain the following information

- Your Student Name as you listed on the graduation application - Please Note: Only your legal name may appear on the diploma. No titles or ranks will be included. If your legal name has changed since applying to the school, you must update your student record by providing legal documentation of the name change to [RecordUpdates@APUS.EDU](mailto:RecordUpdates@APUS.EDU).

- The APUS institution you attended (American Military University or American Public University).
  - Your degree program level and program name (Concentrations are not listed on the diploma).
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## Copies of the Diploma

You may place orders for additional copies of your final diploma prior to or after your conferral date. The cost of each additional diploma is \$35. To place an order for an additional diploma, use the Additional Diploma Request Form located in the FORMS menu in your ecampus portal. Additional diploma orders will not be sent out until after your degree has been conferred.

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## Diploma Reshipments

You will be notified by email at the time of academic clearance and final clearance reminding you to confirm or update your email and mailing address on your student record.

If we need to reship your diploma because your mailing address in your record was not current, please submit the Additional Diploma Request Form for reshipment of your diploma. You will be responsible for paying the \$35 fee, which will be used towards the cost of materials and reshipment.

Note: Please allow up to 6 weeks for processing AFTER we receive your payment confirmation. If your payment confirmation is received after the 4<sup>th</sup> of the month, please allow an additional 2 weeks for processing. A digital diploma is also provided with each additional diploma request order.

*Questions regarding the shipment of your diploma should be directed to [studentservices@apus.edu](mailto:studentservices@apus.edu).*

## **Student Resources**

### **Doctoral Student Resources**

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#### Richard G. Trefry Library

The Trefry Library offers extensive access to online databases, books, open access resources, and research guides. Librarians are available to provide personalized research assistance.

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## Communities and Writing Groups

Within your cohort, you are strongly encouraged to form interest communities and writing groups to motivate each other and provide accountability during the dissertation process. Faculty advisors contribute to these groups and facilitate writing groups as requested.

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## Professional Development

You are encouraged to attend professional events, such as conferences organized by the Policy Studies Organization, which has an affiliation with APUS, American Council on Education (ACE), and other discipline-specific conferences.

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## Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board assists researchers in conducting research ethically and protecting human subjects during a research project. If you plan to complete a research project with human subjects, you should become familiar with the IRB website and process before submitting a proposal.