



ABILENE CHRISTIAN
Office of Graduate Programs

Graduate Student Handbook

2021- 2022

Welcome to Abilene Christian University!

We are excited that you have chosen to continue your education with us in Graduate Programs at Abilene Christian University. Each of our programs is designed for excellence in their field and to fulfill the university's mission of educating students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world. In each program, you will find leaders in their disciplines who embrace using their knowledge and gifts in paths of service who hope to become mentors and friends during your time here.

Each year within your department and across the university there are abundant offerings designed to help you grow personally and professionally. I encourage you to engage in these opportunities as much as you can. Connecting with the Graduate Students' Association is an excellent first step in finding avenues for community, resources available to graduate students, and hearing news about opportunities outside of your program. We are proud of the way that faith and learning are woven together in our community, and I would encourage you to seek out small-group chapels or Bible studies that nourish your spirit during your time here.

This handbook contains a summary of information regarding the Office of Graduate Programs' procedures and a link to the Graduate Programs' section of the ACU Catalog concerning policies. The handbook will assist you as you progress through your graduate academic career at ACU. It is meant to answer many of your questions and provide an overview of pertinent information. Please contact our office at any time for further assistance.

As you pursue your academic goals, I hope that you find the process itself to be rewarding. I am glad that you are here.

Grace and peace,

Dr. Bill Carroll

Assistant Provost for Residential Graduate Programs

Contact Information

The Office of Graduate Programs is here to assist you through your graduate education. Our office is located in the Hardin Administration Building, Room 203.

You may contact us at:

Office of Graduate Programs

Email: gradinfo@acu.edu

Web: www.acu.edu/grad

ACU Box 29140

Abilene, TX 79699-9140

Office: 325-674-2223

Monday - Friday, 8:00am - 5:00pm

Who's Who in the Office of Graduate Programs

Dr. Bill Carroll	Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs
Michelle McMillan	Graduate Records Specialist
Jamie Bearden	Director of Admissions & Student Services
Taylor Parrish	Graduate Thesis Coordinator
	Graduate Programs Marketing Coordinator

Who's Who in the University

President	Dr. Phil Shubert
Vice President for Advancement	Jim Orr
Provost (Chief Academic Officer)	Dr. Robert Rhodes
Vice Provost	Dr. Susan Lewis
Dean of Library & Information Resources	James Wisser
Director of International & Intercultural Education	Stephen Shewmaker

Registrar	Dr. Eric Gumm
College of Arts & Sciences	Dr. Greg Straughn, Dean
Communication	Dr. Lynette Sharp Penya, Chair
	Dr. Lauren Lemley, Graduate Program Director
English	Mikee Delony, Chair
	Dr. Todd Womble, Graduate Program Director
Psychology	Dr. Richard Beck, Chair
	Dr. Cherisse Flanagan, Graduate Program Director
	Dr. Rachel Team, SSP Graduate Program Director
College of Biblical Studies	Dr. Ken Cukrowski, Dean
Graduate School of Theology	Dr. Tim Sensing, Associate Dean
	Dr. Kelli Gibson, MDiv Advisor
	Dr. Carson Reed, D.Min. Advisor
	Dr. Mark Hamilton, OT Advisor
	Dr. Wes Crawford, MMAC Advisor
	Dr. Richard Wright, NT Advisor
	Dr. Chris Flanders, MAGS Advisor
	Dr. Mindi Thompson, MACM Advisor
	Dr. Fred Aquino, Theology Advisor
	Dr. Jeff Childers, MAOC Advisor
Marriage & Family Therapy	Dr. Lisa Merchant, Chair & Graduate Program Director
College of Business Administration	Dr. Brad Crisp, Dean
Accounting	Dr. John Neill, Graduate Program Director
College of Education & Human Services	Dr. Jennifer Shewmaker, Dean
Communication Sciences & Disorders	Dr. Lynette Austin, Co-Chair; Dr. Terry Baggs, Co-Chair

	Dr. Denise Barnett, Graduate Program Director
Department of Teacher Education	Dr. Dana Pemberton, Chair
	Dr. Andrew Huddleston, Graduate Program Director
School of Social Work	Dr. Tom Winter, Director of the School of Social Work
	Dr. Malcolm Scott, Graduate Program Director
	Kari White, Advisor
Liberal Arts	Dr. Joe Cardot, Graduate Program Director
Occupational Therapy	Dr. Kari Williams, Department Chair and MSOT Program Director Dr. Catherine Candler, OTD Program Director
Nutrition and Dietetic Internship	Dr. Sheila Jones, Chair, Nutrition Program Director
	Kay Williams, Dietetic Internship Coordinator
Master of Athletic Training	Dr. Melissa Long, Graduate Program Director

myACU Portal

myACU (www.my.acu.edu) is the online portal to student information such as e-mail, registration, transcripts, billing, announcements, Canvas (LMS) course information, and much more. Every enrolled student is provided an email account. These accounts are created automatically when a student is admitted.

To access myACU follow these easy steps to find your username and password (PIN) and log in to myACU.

1. Get your username and password
2. Go to my.acu.edu/email and enter your ACU ID/Banner Number and Date of Birth
3. Click on Get Email Username. View your Username, password and email address
4. Go to my.acu.edu. Log in using your username and password. You should see the following at the top of your screen:

Mail tab – All official University emails will be sent to your ACU email address

Calendar tab – ACU Google Calendar

Drive tab – ACU's Google Drive

Banner tab – Access student registration, online degree evaluation, transcript, grades and much more

Canvas tab – ACU's learning management platform. Professors often use Canvas for uploading their syllabus and adding assignments.

Degree Works tab – An advisor view to check progress on degree completion.

Wildcat Central button – Student information and transcript requests

Problems or Questions? If you have technology problems, contact Team 55 at team55@acu.edu, 325-674-5555 or toll free at 1-888-588-4093. For more information, visit team55.acu.edu.

Check In

Each semester, all students will be required to check in to verify their attendance at ACU for that semester. This process occurs electronically through the myACU student portal during the first week of classes.

Students who fail to check in will be treated as non-attendees and administratively withdrawn for the semester to avoid incurring financial charges*. A student who is administratively withdrawn is dropped from all classes, removed from housing and financial aid, and dropped from meal plans.

Students who successfully complete the check in process are agreeing to the schedule for which they are registered. Thus, students who check in but never attend a particular class on their schedule will not be eligible for a refund for that course because of non-attendance.

*Please note: students enrolled in thesis hours or continuation hours will remain in those hours regardless of whether they check in through the myACU portal due to the unique nature of those courses.

Graduate Students' Association

The purpose of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) is to provide a forum to voice the academic and non-academic needs of graduate students at ACU and to represent those needs to the appropriate parties. The GSA will provide programming, travel funding to present work at professional meetings, networking, and interdepartmental social opportunities for ACU graduate students. The GSA will also contribute to the formation of relevant graduate student university policies.

The GSA sponsors graduate student social activities throughout the fall and spring semesters.

To support graduate students in professional development, the GSA provides travel stipends to professional conferences. For complete information and deadlines about the travel reimbursement program, visit the [GSA website](#).

The GSA needs students with a vision for community, a commitment to service, and a desire for professional development. If you have ideas or suggestions that would benefit fellow graduate students, consider serving as an officer or representative in the GSA.

Student Services

Community Page

Get access to various tools to assist your graduate journey on the Community Page. It includes resources like the student handbook, faculty & staff contact information, and links to campus offices. For more information, visit [this page](#).

Academic Calendar

The official university Academic Calendar is published by the [Registrar's Office](#). Consult the calendar for important dates, such as fee payment, registration dates, exam schedules, university holidays, and special events.

ACU ID Card

The ACU ID card is used for numerous campus services. To obtain your ID card, visit Wildcat Central in the McGlothlin Campus Center. Student ID cards are used to access meal plans, Campus Cash, Bean Bucks, the Student Rec and Wellness Center, athletic event admission, check cashing authorizations, checkout privileges at all Abilene libraries, and other purposes. The card is valid from the first enrollment through graduation. [Click here](#) for complete ID card information.

Campus Store

The ACU Campus Store is located in the McGlothlin Campus Center, the heart of the ACU campus. All course textbooks are available in-store or [online](#). Textbooks and academic materials may be charged to your ACU student account. The Campus Store is also your source for official ACU gear, music, trade books, and gift items. Student check cashing services are also available at the Campus Store.

Career and Academic Development

The Office of Career and Academic Development provides a variety of career development services that help students make educational/career decisions. They also provide academic advising and counseling services that facilitate connections between students and faculty, staff and campus resources. Click [here](#) or visit the Brown Library, room 261 for more information.

Chapel

Graduate education at ACU is distinctive in its attention to individual spiritual development and the Christian perspective as it relates to specific disciplines. Opportunities to worship in community with academic colleagues are part of this experience. Graduate students are not required to attend but are encouraged to participate in Graduate Chapel. Times and locations will be announced in the monthly Graduate Connection emails.

Computer Labs

ACU provides public access computer services for students across campus. The library provides a lab and wireless network laptops for use in the library. Each academic building and residence hall has computer labs. Check each lab for hours of availability.

Medical and Counseling Care Center (MACCC)

The medical clinic and mental health counseling services are available to students. Located near the Student Rec and Wellness Center, the Counseling Center is staffed by professional psychologists and mental health counselors to provide confidential services for students. The center and clinic are open Monday through Friday and operate on an appointment basis. Visit the web sites at www.acu.edu/counseling or www.acu.edu/medical or call 325-674-2625 for more information.

Wildcat Central

[Wildcat Central](#) provides student services to residential undergraduate and graduate students. Online and in the office, you will find information about registration, meal plans, ID cards, parking permits and other campus services in one convenient location. Located in the Campus Center, Wildcat Central is open 8:30-5:00 daily to assist with your needs, provide information, and distribute forms. There is also a "Wildcat Central" tab on myACU.

Dining Services

The World-Famous Bean, located in the McGlothlin Campus Center, provides a comfortable community atmosphere with a variety of food choices every day. The food court plus Market (Admin Building and Biblical Studies Building), and COBA Connections (Business Building) provide convenient food services as well. A variety of meals plans are available for residential and commuter students. More information is available [here](#).

Email

Every enrolled student is provided an acu.edu Gmail account. These accounts are created automatically when a student is admitted. Account information (username, password, email address) is available [here](#). Students can access email through myACU. Please contact Team 55 for more information or assistance. All official communication will be sent to the student's ACU email account.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, known generally as FERPA or the Buckley Amendment, is the federal law that protects students' records, privacy review, and disclosure rights. The law guarantees these rights for current and former ACU students.

Educational records are considered confidential. Under most circumstances, records will not be released without a student's written consent. However, directory information may be released to third parties without the student's consent, unless the student files a written request to restrict directory information access. Contact the Registrar's Office regarding FERPA restrictions and disclosure options. To add someone to your FERPA release record, please complete [this form](#).

International Student Services

[The Center for International and Intercultural Education](#) (CIIE) serves foreign students to provide information and support services. The CIIE is located on the first floor of the Hardin Administration Building.

[The Office of Multicultural Affairs](#) (OMA) serves all students in making cross-cultural connections and adjustment to campus life at ACU. The OMA office is located in the basement of the McGlothlin Campus Center.

Library Services

The [Brown Library](#) features the Learning Commons with group study areas and easy access to Starbucks, Team 55, CopyCat, and research librarians. Graduate students enjoy these benefits:

- 35-day loan period for books from the ACU Library
- Free Inter-Library Loan (ILL) privileges for materials in libraries all over the US. Fill out an ILL form at the circulation desk or request online from the FirstSearch database (see list on [library home page](#)).
- Courier service brings books from other Abilene libraries and Howard Payne University by online request in ALCON
- Team 55 – Check out wireless network laptop computers for use within the library

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) provides support for faculty and student research and grants. To ensure ethical research, the University has an Institutional Review Board (IRB) policy. The IRB has oversight of research where human participants are involved. It approves or disapproves research proposals, and it may require modifications of protocols to protect the rights, dignity and well-being of human research participants.

Students who use human subjects during the course of their study (surveys, interviews, etc.) must gain IRB approval prior to beginning the study. For questions concerning human subjects protocols, contact the Executive Director of Research, Dr. Megan Roth, in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 325-674-2885. To determine the level of approval needed for human research, visit the [ORSP website](#).

Parking and Alerts

Everyone who parks on the ACU campus must display a valid parking permit. Parking forms are available in Wildcat Central or the ACU Police Department. Campus traffic information may be obtained from the Police Department located at 1634 Campus Court. Click [here](#) for parking regulation details.

ACU ALERT is an emergency notification system that gives Abilene Christian University the ability to send urgent and emergency information quickly-by email and text message. By enrolling in ACU ALERT, subscribers will be able to receive urgent information from university officials.

ACU ALERT is a free service to all ACU students, faculty and staff. To enroll, log in to the ACU ALERT [user registration page](#) with your email username and password. Complete the subsequent form. You can provide up to 2 cell phone numbers and 1 email address to receive the alerts.

Student Recreation and Wellness Center (SRWC)

All current ACU students who are enrolled in at least 6 hours of academic classes are eligible for a free SRWC membership. However, all students must complete a SRWC Membership & Waiver Form before they are given access to the SRWC. Contact the SRWC Front Desk at 325-674-6600 or click [here](#) for more information. Information regarding intramural sports is available [here](#).

Registrar's Office

The [Registrar's Office](#) maintains the integrity of academic records, including the enforcement of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and coordinates and enforces university policies and procedures campus wide. The Registrar's Office is responsible for the management and publication of course offerings, the ACU [Catalog](#), course schedules, graduation, and production

of student transcripts. The Registrar's Office is located on the second floor of the Hardin Administration Building.

The ACU Writing Center

The [ACU Writing Center](#) (WC) provides free writing support to all ACU students. Trained consultants work one-on-one with students. The WC also offers monthly seminars specifically targeted to graduate students and has tutors who work exclusively with graduate students, by appointment. The WC is located next to Starbucks in the library.

ACU Speaking Center

The [ACU Speaking Center](#) is equipped with experienced tutors who will help you become a more confident and effective speaker. From topic selection to writing to delivery, they can assist you in any part of the speech creation process. This free service is located on the top floor of the library.

Graduate Academic Policies

Policies and Procedures

[ACU Catalog](#) is the official source regarding all graduate policies, procedures, and degree and certificate program requirements for the published academic year. It is the student's responsibility to know and comply with the regulations and requirements contained in the catalog.

Graduate program directors are helpful in preparing degree plans and assisting students in their degree progress. This assistance, however, does not alter the primary responsibility of the student to adhere to policies published in the catalog.

Course Load for Federal Aid Eligibility

The following course load policy applies to residential programs. For graduate students, a full-time load is defined as 6 or more credit hours in a long semester, a half-time load as 3 hours during a long semester. For students who are enrolled in their last semester of coursework, a full-time load is defined as 3 or more credit hours. Students in the Specialist in School Psychology program will be considered to be enrolled full-time for the purposes of federal student aid in the last year (fall and spring) of their program while they are enrolled in PSYC 695, which is listed as a three-hour course.

Course Numbering

ACU uses a three-digit course numbering system. Courses numbered 500-700 are graduate-level courses. At the master's level, at least half of all graduate credit must be in 600-700 level courses.

Courses numbered 700 or above in the Graduate School of Theology may be taken by doctoral students only.

Registration

The student is responsible for class registration each semester. The student should consult with his or her program director before registration. In some cases, the program director may complete the registration on behalf of the student. *Please note that students will not register themselves for thesis courses but will instead be registered by the Thesis Coordinator.* Registration is completed online through the “Banner” tab on the myACU homepage. Whether registering via Banner or the department, students are responsible for accurate registration.

How to register through myACU:

- § Meet with your Program Director or Advisor to receive your advising release code (6-digit number)
- § Log in to my.acu.edu
- § Select the Banner tab (top left side)
- § Select Student and Financial Aid
- § Select Registration
- § Select Term
- § Select Add or Drop Classes
- § Enter your Advising Release Code (6-digit code from Graduate Program Director)
- § Enter Course Reference Number (CRN) or conduct Class Search
- § Submit Changes

For registration assistance, contact your program director or advisor.

Degree Plan

The number of credit hours required for various degrees ranges from 30 to 72. All ACU master’s degrees require a minimum of 30 semester hours. The doctorate requires a minimum of 30 hours beyond the master’s degree.

Degree audits are conducted utilizing DegreeWorks according to the catalog in effect at the time of enrollment. If problems arise, students are urged to confer with their program director.

Request for Academic Exception

A student must make a written request for an exception to any graduate policy. Exceptions might include: taking additional hours in a given semester or summer term, transferring more than the maximum number of hours from another institution or extending the maximum time to complete a graduate degree.

Petition forms are available in the Registrar's Office. The student should state the request and provide any necessary supporting material. The form must first be submitted for approval to the graduate program director, and then will be forwarded to the Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs for evaluation and consideration.

Grade Appeals

The University has a procedure for dispute resolution. The order of resolution is to begin at the initial level of the dispute, with the professor in question or with the program director. If the issue is not resolved, the student may then dispute the issue with the department chair. The student, however, may appeal the department chair's decision to the college dean, then to the Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs, and finally to the Provost whose decision is final.

Graduate Student Life Policies

The general university policies and the code of conduct governing student behavior apply to all university students unless specified otherwise. The detailed policies may be found in the ACU Student Handbook using the links below:

[General University Policies](#)

[Conduct page link](#)

Student Complaints

The university has established formal policies and processes to handle written student complaints and appeals. Generally the policies encourage students to resolve concerns at the initial level of concern when possible, e.g., working with the faculty member or department chair to resolve an academic issue. The policy for handling complaints may be found in the ACU Student Handbook, which is linked below:

[Student Complaint Policy](#)

Preparing for Graduation

Graduation

A degree candidate must submit an Intent to Graduate to the Registrar's Office prior to the beginning of final semester. Click [here](#) for submission instructions.

Any student who does not complete graduation requirements during the semester for which he or she has filed must reapply for a later graduation date. Degrees are posted on the student's transcript for the term in which all requirements have been completed. Diplomas are mailed to students after the degree is posted (approximately two months after commencement).

Comprehensive Exam Requirements

In addition to regular course examinations, some programs require students to pass a comprehensive examination. The comprehensive exam should be arranged through the department at least six weeks before graduation. The exact deadlines for each semester are published [here](#). Students are responsible for making sure they complete all of their departmental examination requirements and schedule the exam on or before the published deadline to prevent delays in his or her degree being awarded.

Thesis Requirements

Graduate students who write a thesis must defend the thesis in an oral examination. The thesis defense should be arranged with the thesis committee at least six weeks before graduation. The graduate student should consult his or her graduate program director for specific departmental defense requirements and schedules, noting that summer schedules can be difficult scheduling times. Check [here](#) for important dates.

Prior to the defense, the student should obtain a [Thesis Defense Report form](#) to be signed at the defense. It should then be submitted to the Office of Graduate Programs as quickly as possible after the defense, but no later than five weeks before graduation.

For additional information on the thesis process and requirements, please see the [ACU Thesis Guide](#) or visit acu.edu/thesis. Contact the Graduate Thesis Coordinator with questions.

Clear Student Account

Check with Student Financial Services to clear or make arrangements for any outstanding balance before graduation.

Degree Posting, Transcript, and Diploma

When all requirements for the degree have been met, including the final copy of the thesis uploaded to the Digital Commons, etc., the degree will be posted and a transcript showing the degree may be requested. Diplomas are printed as soon as degrees are posted following each graduation date and should be mailed within two months. It is imperative that students leave a correct forwarding address.

At the time of degree posting, if any requirement has not been met, the student's degree conferral will automatically be deferred to the next cycle (May, August, or December). The student will need to notify the Registrar's Office when requirements have been completed.