At-a-Glance GradPlan Student Guide

I. Introduction

GradPlan was developed for PhD students to lay out their PhD program of study, record faculty approval, and make notes on all degree requirements as they are completed. This document is meant to provide you with a summary of the process and should provide enough information for you to complete your GradPlan. If you would like more detailed step-by-step instructions, they can be found at https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/gradplan/GradPlanStudentGuide.pdf.

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

II. Initiating GradPlan

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

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

C. CLS has prepared a worksheet for you to use when meeting with your committee to develop your program of study. You should use this form to help ensure that you have all necessary information ready when you begin GradPlan. The form is found at https://clstudies.msu.edu/forms/GradPlan%20Worksheet.pdf

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

   a. Your worksheet will include tentative dissertation subject, which you need to report in GradPlan, and the courses your committee approved for you to take;

   b. names or NetIDs of all committee members;

   c. comprehensive exam topic areas;
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d. access to STUINFO for the list of courses taken (or will take); and,

e. applications for independent study forms, if applicable.

III. Timeline

• Complete and submit GradPlan by the end of first year and after first meeting with guidance committee.

• Update GradPlan throughout PhD progress by retracting the submitted form and resubmitting for
  ▪ After successful completion of comprehensive exams.
  ▪ After receiving IRB approval number, if applicable.
  ▪ Complete online graduation application form on or before the end of the first week of the semester you expect to complete your PhD

https://reg.msu.edu/stu forms/gradapp/gradapp.aspx

IV. Steps for Completing GradPlan

If you need more highly detailed step-by-step instructions, they can be found at https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/gradplan/GradPlanStudentGuide.pdf

1. Go to https://gradplan.msu.edu/.

2. Click on “PhD Degree Plan” link.

3. Log in with your MSU NetID and password.

4. Before creating your PhD Degree Plan online, be sure to gather applicable materials from the “Information You Will Need” check list in the sidebar. Most of this information should be on your planning worksheet. We also recommend the following:

   a. names or NetIDs of all committee members

   b. access to STUINFO for the list of courses taken (or will take); and,

   c. applications for independent study forms, if applicable.

5. Creating a PhD plan will involve providing the following tasks:
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a. designating committee chair and members.
b. selecting doctoral program courses.
c. answering questions about your research.
d. filling out other requirements.
e. reviewing the plan and submitting the plan for approval.

6. Select “Create PhD Degree Plan”

7. Search by “Name” or “MSU NetID” for your committee members

8. Add all your committee members. A total of four committee members are required and at least one committee member must be designated as chair/dissertation director.

**Note:** By selecting committee members, you are authorizing them to see your data. Faculty can access data in GradInfo, but do not have access to the GradPlan system. Your chair and dissertation director should be the same person.

**Note:** Non-MSU faculty and non-tenure stream MSU faculty must be approved by the Graduate School so that their names can show up in GradPlan. [https://grad.msu.edu/non-regular-faculty-committees](https://grad.msu.edu/non-regular-faculty-committees) BEFORE you submit your GradPlan.

9. Add current and/or previous courses. Select from courses that you are already enrolled in or have completed at the graduate level. You should not have courses that do not pertain to your PhD (e.g., 100-level). Be sure to remove these courses from your GradPlan.

10. Choose the category for your courses.

    Assign courses to the appropriate course categories to share additional information with your committee by selecting from the pull-down menu. The choices are:
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• Core
• Dual
• Methods Requirements
• Elective
• Cognate
• Concentration
• Minor field

• Required
• Research Requirement
• Specialization
• Specialization 2
• Major field
• Methods

a. CLS 810, CLS 811, CLS 893E, CLS 894, and CLS 896 are Core courses. If you are a dual-major student whose primary unit is NOT CLS, these will be Dual courses.

b. Your non-CLS methods course should be categorized as "Methods Requirements."

c. If you plan to earn a specialization, any courses that count for only the specialization should be categorized as “Specialization.”

d. Courses NOT part of your core, dual, methods requirement or a specialization should be catalogued under “Elective.”

e. For independent studies/directed readings, and substituted or waived courses, please follow this information and substeps:

1. For independent studies, directed readings, and fieldwork courses include the topic/focus/name in the text box for "Add any additional notes here about courses that your approvers will need to know" at the bottom of the GradPlan course list page.

2. For a waived or substituted course, note the course that was waived or substituted and why it was waived or substituted in the text box for "Add any additional notes here about courses that your approvers will need to know" at the bottom of the GradPlan course list page. Make sure to note what class was substituted and what it was substituted with. Your committee chair will need to complete the CLS Course Waiver/Substitution Form.
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NOTE: Your guidance committee must approve this waiver before you claim in GradPlan a course to be waived. The committee chair must complete the CLS Course Waiver/Substitution Form and have it on file with the CLS office.

11. Complete “Research” page: Tentative dissertation subject (255 characters maximum), which should be on your worksheet, and the comprehensive examination areas (please see note below on IRB).

Note on IRB: if you select “yes” for question on “Human Subjects,” you will receive an email that asks for you to provide the IRB number (e.g., IRB Number: x15-1410e) after submission of your GradPlan and approval of it. If you initially did not anticipate having any human subjects in your dissertation project, but end up having human subjects, then be sure you make this change when you retract and resubmit your GradPlan.

12. Complete “Other Requirements” page. The language requirement for CLS is advanced written and oral proficiency in Spanish, Nahuatl or other Amerindian language.

13. Review your information for accuracy. If you are a dual-major student, please make sure that all the information on your MOU agrees with the information you entered in GradPlan.

14. Select “Submit plan for approvals” button in GradPlan at the end of your first year and after your first meeting with your guidance committee.

15. Retract and resubmit your GradPlan as you progress through the PhD.

16. Complete an online graduation application form ON or BEFORE the end of the first week of the semester you expect to complete your PhD: https://reg.msu.edu/stuforms/gradapp/gradapp.aspx

17. To see the status of your plan, select “PhD Degree Plan” tab in the website’s header.

V. Plan in Progress

a. Dissertation research credits requirement

A minimum of 24 and a maximum of 36 dissertation research credits (999) are required. Only those marked "applied" will apply to the PhD plan.
b. Apply for graduation

To apply for graduation, complete an online graduation application form. Application should be submitted on or before the end of the first week of the semester you expect to complete your PhD. 
https://reg.msu.edu/stuforms/gradapp/gradapp.aspx

VI. Submission of GradPlan

A. Final check

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

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

B. Approval

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

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