VCU School of Business

Master's
and
Graduate
Certificate
Handbook

Last Edited: August 2024

I. Overview

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business offers master's degrees and graduate certificates in numerous majors and formats. While the curriculum requirements of each program are distinct, the policies and procedures that govern graduate study in the School of Business are similar. This handbook is designed to meet the needs of students in the following programs, including all concentration options unless noted:

Master's degrees:

- Master of Accountancy
- Master of Arts in Economics
- Master of Business Administration [1]
    - evening format
- Master of Decision Analytics[2]
- Master of Science in Business [3]
    - concentration in marketing management
    - concentration in finance
    - concentration in real estate
- Master of Science in Information Systems
- Master of Supply Chain Management
- Master of Science in Computer and Information Systems Security

Graduate certificates:
- Decision Analytics
- Real Estate
- Supply Chain Management

Speciality centers and some cohort-based programs may adopt policies unique to their program(s) in accordance with the VCU Bulletin. Such programs may not adhere to each of the policies outlined in this handbook.

Centers:
VCU Brandcenter - Master of Science in Business with a concentration in branding
VCU Center for Sport Leadership - Master of Sport Leadership

Cohort-based programs:
Master of Business Administration, executive format
Master of Business Administration, online cohort format
Master of Decision Analytics, weekend format

Students should contact their academic director/advisor regarding program-specific regulations.

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[1] Cohort-based online and executive formats may adopt unique or additional policies in accordance with the VCU Bulletin.
[2] Cohort-based professional/weekend formats may adopt unique or additional policies in accordance with the VCU Bulletin.
[3] VCU Brandcenter Master of Science in Business concentrations are not guided by this handbook..

A. VCU Bulletin

The VCU Bulletin <http://bulletin.vcu.edu> is the official source for curriculum requirements and academic regulations for the University.

> It is the responsibility of all students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites; however, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the university, as published on this website, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

The VCU Bulletin allows individual departments/programs to adopt more stringent regulations. This handbook outlines multiple areas where program requirements are more stringent than the university standard. The School of Business graduate transfer credit threshold and limited number of acceptable grades of "C" are two such examples.

B. Program Administration

The Graduate Studies in Business (GSIB) Office offers recruiting, academic advising and program management services to prospective and enrolled graduate business students.

Associate Dean
The Associate Dean oversees all graduate-level business programs. They are responsible for all matters relating to curricula, program assessment and faculty relations.

(Executive/Senior) Director(s)
The Director of Graduate Studies reports directly to the Associate Dean and is responsible for the overall administration of programs. They coordinate admission processing, curriculum changes, policy appeals and maintain accurate student records within the university.

Associate/Assistant Director(s) and (Senior) Program Manager(s)/Coordinator(s)
Associate or Assistant Program Directors and Program Managers/Coordinator(s) serve as the primary administrative advisor and overall point of contact for incoming and enrolled students. They assist students with curriculum planning, course registration and help them make connections with other support services throughout the university.

Faculty Director/Advisor
Specialized master's and graduate certificate students may also have a Faculty Advisor assigned from their program's academic department. This faculty member may advise students on elective options and offer other academic support.

School of Business Masters Program Committee
The School of Business Masters Program Committee (MPC) is a subset of the School of Business Faculty Council. The MPC is composed of one faculty representative from each of the seven academic departments within the School of Business and one representative from each of the associated speciality centers.

1. Department of Accounting
2. Department of Economics
3. Department of Finance, Insurance and Real Estate
4. Department of Information Systems
5. Department of Management and Entrepreneurship
6. Department of Marketing
7. Department of Supply Chain Management and Analytics
8. Brandcenter
9. Center for Sport Leadership

Representatives from the Graduate Studies in Business Office and two actively enrolled graduate students also serve as non-voting, ex-officio members. In the case of student appeals, the student members are voting members.

The MPC is responsible for approving all changes to School of Business master's degrees and graduate certificates as well as reviewing student status appeals.

C. Advising and Orientation

Upon accepting their offer of admission, new students will be invited to an initial advising appointment with their assigned Program Manager. During this meeting, students will be offered an overview of their curriculum requirements and university/program regulations. Questions or concerns regarding a student's study plan must be clarified before the start of their first semester.

The Graduate Studies in Business (GSIB) Office holds a new student kick-off orientation event prior to the start of each fall and spring semester. All incoming students are strongly encouraged to attend.

International students may also be required to complete arrival checklists and attend additional orientation events offered by VCU's Global Education Office (GEO). International students should contact GEO as soon as they arrive on campus.

II. Registration

A. eServices

Students must self register for courses via the VCU eServices system. Registration holds that prevent enrollment must be addressed directly with the issuing department (e.g., VCU Student Accounting). Registration error messages (e.g., Prerequisite not met) may be considered and possibly overridden by a student's Program Manager.

B. Registration Period

Graduate student registration opens months in advance of the start of the given semester. Registration dates are listed in the VCU Academic Calendar. Students are encouraged to consult with their Program Manager prior to the start of the registration period.

C. Course Modalities

Graduate business courses are offered in varying modality types (e.g., in-person, online synchronous, online asynchronous, hybrid). VCU's course modality codes are defined by Records and Registration <https://rar.vcu.edu/registration/registration-guide/course-modality/>. Individual course section modalities are listed in eServices when registration opens each semester. Students are responsible for confirming and adhering to the modality of each course in which they are registered. International students may be required to enroll in certain modality types to remain in compliance with immigration regulations. VCU's Global Education Office (GEO) is the authoritative source for immigration-related questions or concerns.

D. Add/Drop or Withdraw

Students must understand the definitions of and deadlines for the most important registration terms. The deadlines for standard semester courses are published in the VCU Academic Calendar.

Add/drop period
For most graduate business courses, the add/drop period begins when registration opens and typically ends with the first week of the fall or spring semester. The add/drop period for short-session and summer graduate business courses typically ends the day after the first day of the course. After the add/drop deadline, additional courses may not be added to a student's schedule and registered courses may not be dropped from a student's schedule. Students will be held financially responsible for all credits for which they are enrolled after this period.

<u>Withdraw period</u>
After the add/drop deadline, the withdrawal period begins, allowing students to withdraw from a course with a final grade of "W". For standard semester courses, the withdrawal deadline is defined in the VCU Academic Calendar. For short-session and summer graduate business courses, the withdrawal deadline is the day when one-half of the course has been completed. Instructors must submit a final grade for all students that remain in a course after the withdrawal deadline.

E. Canvas

Canvas is an optional Learning Management System (LMS) tool for instructors. Instructors are not obligated to use Canvas. Instructors may launch a Canvas page for a given course at any time in the lead up to or during the semester. Students may access active Canvas pages for their enrolled course(s) via their myVCU portal.

III. Program Regulations

A. Curriculum

1. Students must follow the curriculum outlined in the VCU Graduate Bulletin <bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate> for the academic year in which they were admitted and matriculated. Students may request to adopt a more recent curriculum of their program; however, all course requirements of the newer curriculum must be fulfilled. Students cannot follow an older curriculum that predates their entrance into the program.

2. Prerequisite undergraduate and/or foundation graduate coursework may be required of incoming students as determined by the program's admission committee. These requirements shall be completed as early as possible in a student's plan of study and may delay their ability to register for core and/or elective courses. Questions or concerns regarding a student's prerequisite and/or foundation requirements should be clarified before the start of their first semester. All such requirements must be met in order to qualify for graduation.

3. Core curriculum course substitutions may only be considered in extraordinary circumstances by the Director of Graduate Studies and subsequent approval of the VCU Graduate School. Elective courses beyond the pre-approved listing in the VCU Bulletin must also receive advanced approval from a student's Program Manager or Faculty Advisor. Substitutions may not reduce the minimum number of credits required to earn the degree or certificate.

4. There is no scenario in which the minimum graduate credits required for a program as listed in the VCU Bulletin may be lowered.

5. Credit(s) cannot be used to satisfy more than one graduate degree program requirement unless a student has been admitted and matriculated separately into two graduate programs that have a dual-degree curriculum in the current VCU Bulletin. Credit(s) earned toward a graduate certificate may be applied one time to degree requirements for a master's program. Credit(s) earned toward a graduate certificate may only be applied toward one certificate. <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>

6. Certain masters degree curricula allow students to take one research/independent/guided study course toward completion of their electives or other degree requirements. Such courses are titled "guided study" and have a course specific to each academic department (e.g. MGMT 697). In order to earn credit in a guided study course, a student must submit a formal proposal and begin the approval process by following the steps outlined on the Graduate Studies Guided Study Procedures page: < https://connect.business.vcu.edu/portal/gsib-guided-study>. Upon approval of the request, Graduate Studies in Business staff members will assist the student in registering for the approved research course.

B. Program Completion Time Limits

1. In accordance with VCU Bulletin regulations, <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/time-limit/>, the time limit for a master's degree or graduate certificate is six years.

2. In accordance with the VCU Bulletin regulations <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/registration-policies/> graduate students must enroll in a minimum of one course per 12-month period from matriculation until graduation. Only a pre-approved Leave of Absence for up to one year may extend this requirement. Students that do not maintain the enrollment standard will be required to re-apply for admission and if admitted, matriculate into the current program curriculum.

3. Requests for exceptions to these policies may be considered in extenuating circumstances by the School of Business Graduate Studies Office and the VCU Graduate School.

C. Transfer Credit

1. Transfer credits refer to graduate-level courses completed prior to matriculation, excluding accelerated VCU bachelor's to master's programs and VCU graduate certificates. Credits may be from VCU or another similarly accredited institution. The Graduate Studies in Business Office and VCU Graduate School must approve all transfer credit.The guidelines for transferring credit are as follows:

2. Undergraduate-level coursework may never be considered for transfer credit toward graduate degree or certificate requirements.

3. Credits utilized for a conferred graduate degree at VCU or from another institution may not be considered for transfer credit. Credits utilized toward a conferred graduate certificate at another institution may not be considered for transfer credit.

4. A maximum of 30 percent of the didactic minimum hours required for a master's degree or graduate certificate may consist of approved transferred credit.

5. Transfer credit completed prior to matriculation must be approved by Graduate Studies before a student's first semester. Students that wish to complete coursework at another institution prior to graduation must have the transfer credits pre-approved by Graduate Studies and the VCU Graduate School. Transfer credits must have a final course grade of "B" or better. Transfer credits shall be from an AACSB accredited School of Business.

6. Students that wish to transfer from one graduate program to another are not in effect "changing majors" but are formally withdrawing from one degree and matriculating into another. A formal application must be submitted and an offer of acceptance must be made from the new program's admission committee. Transfer credits may only be considered if the prior degree is formally abandoned.

7. Graduate credits may not be applied toward multiple degrees, except in strictly defined VCU dual-degree programs as outlined in the VCU Bulletin. Students must be concurrently active in both programs for at least one semester for the limited number of approved credits to count toward both degrees. Admission must be independently offered by each program and the student must formally matriculate into each program in advance of credit sharing.

8. Graduate credits earned toward a VCU certificate may be applied only once toward an applicable VCU master's degree.

9. Students readmitted into a graduate program after a formal withdrawal, violation of continuous enrollment or academic dismissal will have their prior matriculation credits evaluated to be "transferred in" at the point of readmission. Credits that are applicable to the current Bulletin requirements and earned with a final grade of "B" or better may be considered.

D. Leave of Absence

According to University policy, an admitted student may apply for a leave of absence anytime after having been enrolled for program course work. The request must be submitted in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies in Business and must include reason as well as length of requested time. A leave of absence can be for no more than a 12-month period, and students may request leave for a shorter period of time. If the request is granted and the student does take the approved leave, he/she must still complete all program requirements within the original six-year time frame.

Cohort-based programs may be more restrictive as to when students may be permitted to begin and/or return from a leave of absence. Students should refer to their program manager to discuss pausing their enrollment in the program.

E. Defined Cohort and Partnership Program Considerations

Cohort-based and international partnership programs that require students to complete a defined curriculum in the same sequence over a fixed period may have more stringent requirements for continuous enrollment. Students that are not able to maintain enrollment for personal or academic performance reasons may need to consider delaying their graduation timeline and/or moving to a different format/program. Tuition and fee rates are also subject to change when a cohort or partnership student does not complete their degree program in the manner initially prescribed.

Cohort-based programs may assign students into teams that span multiple classes/semesters. Team compositions are determined by the participating faculty and administration of the cohort-based program. Teams are subject to change at the discretion of the faculty and administration.

IV. Student Assessment

At the conclusion of each semester, the School of Business Graduate Studies Office reviews the academic performance of all actively enrolled graduate business students.

A. Grades

Students will earn a grade for each course they attempt throughout their program. All foundation, core, and elective courses are graded with a letter grade. Graduate students are expected to maintain a 3.0 cumulative grade point average throughout their program. Please use the following grade table to determine the weight of grades in graduate programs:

Letter Grade	Grade Point/Credit Hour
A	4.0
B	3.0
C	2.0
D	1.0
F	0.0

B. Historical Repeat Policy

Starting with courses completed in Fall 2024, the School of Business will allow courses in which a student earns a final grade of "C" or lower to be repeated one time. A maximum of two total courses during their degree program may be repeated. The second course attempt grade will replace the grade of the first attempt in the GPA calculation, but both attempts and grades will remain on the student's transcript. The possibility of repeating a course under this policy does not affect satisfactory academic progress requirements. The repeated courses policy may be found in the VCU Graduate Bulletin <https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/repeated-courses/>.

C. Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students not meeting the outlined satisfactory academic progress requirements may be recommended for dismissal. Please note, the School of Business policy is stricter than the University policy as outlined in the VCU Graduate Bulletin.

Unsatisfactory academic progress includes:
- a cumulative graduate GPA below 3.0
    - inclusive of all graduate coursework attempted since matriculation
- one final graduate course letter grade of "D", "F" or "U"
- multiple final graduate course letter grades of "C" or lower
    - no more than 9 total credits of "C" or lower for 45 credit degrees
    - no more than 6 total credits of "C" or lower for 30 - 44 credit degrees
    - no more than 3 total credits of "C" or lower for 12 credit certificate programs

Satisfactory academic progress calculations apply to all graduate courses attempted since program matriculation. Accelerated pathway bachelor's to master's students are also held to these standards for graduate courses completed during their bachelor's degree study.

All graduate course final grades will be included in a student's graduate GPA and subject to the satisfactory progress requirements, unless/until a repeat attempt of a course is completed with the historical repeat policy.

D. Student Appeals

Students that are dismissed from their academic program due to lack of satisfactory academic progress may submit a formal appeal to the School of Business Masters Program Committee (MPC). A written appeal with any relevant documentation must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies within 10 business days from the date on their dismissal letter. The appeal process is outlined in the VCU Graduate Bulletin <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/dismissal/>.

Students that have their appeal granted will be reinstated to active status, but must still meet all requirements to qualify for graduation. Requirements include a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 and no more than 20% of total graduate courses may have a final grade of "C" or lower.

Students that feel their final grade in a course was not fairly awarded may submit a formal grade review request by following the procedures outlined in the VCU Bulletin Grade Review Procedures <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/university/grade-review/>.

E. VCU Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct

The following pledge applies to every examination, paper, or academic exercise:
"On my honor, I pledge that I am in compliance with the VCU Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct."

All graduate business students are held to VCU's Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct. Expectations, violations and possible consequences are outlined by the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity <https://conduct.students.vcu.edu/>.

F. Readmission

After a student leaves the program, whether voluntarily or because of failure to meet one or more of the program requirements, they may seek readmission. Generally, students that are dismissed due to unsatisfactory academic progress are advised to wait at least one calendar year before applying for readmission.

Readmission must be sought through the standard application process, adhering to all deadline dates and admission criteria. In addition to the standard materials, a letter highlighting the ways in which prior obstacles will no longer impede their academic progress is required. This letter shall also include an outline for strategies that will lead to successful completion of their program. If admission is offered, prior matriculation credits will be considered by the admissions committee at the point of acceptance as outlined in the Transfer Credit section of this handbook.

V. Graduation and Degree Titles

A. Graduation

Students must complete a formal application to graduate, currently called an *eServices graduation checkout*, at the start of the semester in which they anticipate completing all program requirements. No degree or certificate will be conferred unless a student completed a formal application to graduate. Graduate Studies in Business staff members and the VCU Graduation Office will notify students of the deadline for applying for graduation each semester via email. Applications received after the deadline will be processed for graduation, however, we cannot guarantee that applicants' names and degree(s) will be noted in the official Commencement Bulletins for the given semester.

Virginia Commonwealth University officially graduates students in December, May and August of each year. Commencement ceremonies are held in December and May. Students who graduate in the summer are officially recognized in December commencement exercises although they may participate in the May ceremony. Graduates may attend one ceremony only (December or May).

B. Graduation Eligibility Checklist

A graduation eligibility checklist may be found in the Graduate section of the Bulletin under "Graduation information"at: <http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/>. In addition to the Bulletin checklist, note that graduate business program students are held to a more strict standard with regards to final course grades of "C". No more than 20% of total graduate courses attempted may be at a final grade of "C" or lower. Refer to the Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress section of this handbook.

C. Degree Titles

University transcripts include the specific degree or certificate, major and concentration (if applicable) earned by each student. Diplomas identify the degree or certificate name and major only. The following table provides the text that will print on each diploma according to the specific degree program.

Degree Program	Diploma Text
Master of Business Administration (with or without a concentration, any format)	Master of Business Administration
Master of Arts in Economics (with or without a concentration)	Master of Arts Economics
Master of Accountancy (with or without a concentration)	Master of Accountancy
Master of Decision Analytics (with or without a concentration)	Master of Decision Analytics
Master of Science in Information Systems (with or without a concentration)	Master of Science Information Systems
Master of Science in Business (including finance, marketing management and real estate concentrations)	Master of Science Business
Master of Supply Chain Management	Master of Supply Chain Management
Master of Science in Computer and Information Systems Security	Master of Science in Computer and Information Systems Security
Certificate in Decision Analytics	Graduate Certificate in Decision Analytics
Certificate in Real Estate	Graduate Certificate in Real Estate
Certificate in Supply Chain Management	Graduate Certificate in Supply Chain Management

VI. Policy Questions

Students are encouraged to contact the VCU School of Business Graduate Studies office with any policy questions or concerns. Staff members are available by appointment or may be reached during normal business hours by phone (804) 828-4622, email gsib@vcu.edu or in Snead Hall, Suite B3102. Special requests not covered in this handbook are subject to the approval of Graduate Studies, the Masters Program Committee (MPC) and the VCU Graduate School.