

Residency for Doctoral Candidates

Policy Memorandum No. 200

Approved by the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies: March 1, 2000

Approved by University Council: April 17, 2000

Approved by the President: April 17, 2000

Effective: August 21, 2000

The University Council, on recommendation of the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, unanimously approved a resolution concerning the residency for doctoral candidates.

Following is the text of the resolution as adopted by University Council.

WHEREAS, the existing residency requirements for doctoral degrees are appropriate for the majority of cases and should remain in place; and,

WHEREAS, and there are numerous purposes of residency that are particularly important for emerging doctoral programs serving nontraditional students and/or at facilities in northern Virginia and other locations; and,

WHEREAS, the potential growth of new programs at non-Blacksburg locations may require some flexibility in allowing residency to be completed at extended-campus locations, provided its legitimate purposes are adequately satisfied; and,

WHEREAS, there may be individual students for whom an exception to the 20-hour external work limitation is appropriate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the policy regarding residency, which is currently described in the Graduate Policies and Procedures and Course Catalogue in the paragraph: "Residence Requirements for Ph.D. and Ed.D. At least 24 graduate-level semester credit hours, including no less than 15 hours of course work (not research 7994), must be completed while in residence at the Virginia Tech Blacksburg campus or, with prior approval from the Graduate School, for designated extended-campus programs. Students may receive residence credits during summer sessions, but not during any academic year semester(s) in which they are enrolled for fewer than 6 credits or if they are employed more than one-half time (defined here to mean a maximum obligation external to their academic program of 20 hours a week). Exceptions to the minimum number of credits/semester and/or employment status can be made for employees of Virginia Tech, subject to approval by the Graduate School."

be replaced by the following:

"Residence Requirements for Ph.D. and Ed.D.

At least 24 graduate-level credit hours, including no less than 15 hours of course work (not research 7994), must be completed while in residence at the Virginia Tech Blacksburg campus. Students may receive residence credits during the summer sessions, but not during any academic year semester(s) in which they are enrolled for fewer than 6 credits or if they are employed more than one-half time (that

is, a maximum obligation external to their academic program of 20 hours a week). The Graduate School may grant policy exceptions to individual degree programs and students.

The Graduate School may permit individual degree programs to allow their students to satisfy the residency requirement at non-Blacksburg locations. Requests for such alternative location residency must be made in writing to the Graduate Dean (by letter for existing programs or as part of the program proposal for new programs). Such requests must provide a discussion of how the particular program at the alternate location will achieve the residency purposes (as outlined in the attached document). Where the proposed alternate residency location is a commercial entity or government laboratory, the request must include an agreement between the University and the commercial entity or government laboratory. Such agreement will specifically define the research environment that will be maintained to meet the residency requirement. The Graduate School will report annually to the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies on the success level of the alternative residency. The Graduate School retains the right to withdraw the permission for such alternate forms of residency, if deemed necessary.

The Graduate School may grant exceptions to the 20-hour external work limitation to individual students enrolled in programs with alternative location residency. Requests for changing the 20-hour work schedule must include an agreement between the University, the student's employer, and the student. The requests should define the research environment that must be maintained at the alternative location for the duration of the Ph.D. student's residency. An endorsement letter from the student's academic advisor must accompany the request.

and that the attached document be adopted as a summary statement of the purposes of residency.

Purposes of the Residency Requirement for Doctoral Degrees

The basic goals for doctoral students include the ability to understand and critically evaluate the literature of their field, to understand the issues and problems at the frontiers of knowledge in their field, and to cultivate and exercise their ability to make original contributions to knowledge in their field. These goals are not exclusive to particular career paths, but are fundamental to the level of achievement and mature scholarship that the doctorate certifies. Specific purposes of residency are based on recent recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine (Reshaping Graduate Education, National Academy Press, 1995) and the residency requirement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (the accrediting agency for Virginia Tech).

1. To ensure access to a wide spectrum of courses in the student's own discipline as well as related disciplines.
2. To ensure regular and substantial interaction with an adequately large pool of qualified faculty. This is important not only to support dissertation work and studies, but as a source of advice, perspective and guidance in formulating career objectives.
3. To ensure a similar level of interaction with fellow graduate students.
4. To guard students against a parochial view of their discipline, in which narrow focus in their specialty excludes experience with other disciplines.
5. To guard against over-specialization, and provide a broad range of professional development.

6. To ensure access to full-scale library and laboratory resources.
7. To provide access and exposure to a wide spectrum of seminars, professional presentations, and contact with leaders in their own discipline as well as others.
8. To ensure quality and rigor of the program through involvement with and scrutiny by peers in other disciplines.
9. To require that students transferring several course credit hours from other institutions complete a minimal amount of course work at Virginia Tech.

The traditional residency requirement addresses these objectives by bringing the student into the rich academic environment of the multidimensional University campus. The purpose of the 20-hour external work limitation in particular is to ensure that the student's involvement with the campus' culture of study and discourse is substantial. The level of fluency and accomplishment at the frontiers of one's discipline that the doctorate represents cannot be achieved if students are never involved with more than 50% of their effort and intellectual energy.

CWS/jcd

President's Policy Memorandum

URL: <http://purl.vt.edu/vtdocs/policies/ppm200>