

# Graduation Requirements

Students planning to graduate at the end of the current semester/session are responsible for indicating an intent to graduate. A student must initiate an intent to graduate via [go.alcorn.edu](http://go.alcorn.edu) during the designated period for that semester. A preliminary graduation list is prepared and published by the Office of Graduate Studies soon after the deadline for each semester or summer session. The lists are shared with the academic department chair and program advisor to review for degree audit validation. The final list of approved candidates appears in the fall and spring commencement program. Students who have been removed from the graduation list will need to initiate their intent to graduate again for the semester in which they plan to graduate.

Degrees and diplomas at Alcorn State University are awarded two times a year, December and May. There is no formal ceremony for students completing degree requirements during the summer but they may elect to participate in the formal commencement ceremony in December.

Students must apply for graduation by published deadlines; it is not automatic. If a student does not graduate for the term in which application is made, the student must reapply for the intended graduation cycle. The Office of Graduate Studies processes all applications for graduation and informs students of their eligibility to graduate. Students must satisfy all progression to graduation requirements before allowed to participate in the May or December Commencement.

## **Application for Degree**

Students anticipating graduation in the fall, spring, or degree completion in the summer should file an application for degree in [go.alcorn.edu](http://go.alcorn.edu). Only students who meet the Application for Degree deadlines can be assured of candidacy status for the term applied. Students who fail to submit the application for degree and required documents on time will be deferred until the next graduation cycle. An application fee is affixed following submission according to the posted deadlines. Students applying after the deadline are charged a late application fee. Applications submitted after the late deadline are processed for the next application cycle. In order to qualify for a degree, the student must complete all academic program requirements and all Graduate School requirements. of intent. Students not graduating for a specific graduation cycle must reapply for the next cycle

## **Application for Degree Deadlines**

There are established calendars in which students can apply to graduate. The following are the months the timeframes to submit an application of each calendar year.

September (for Fall Commencement)

January (for Spring Commencement)

Summer (June for Summer I Degree Completion; July for Summer II Degree Completion)

## **Candidacy Advisement**

Students should maintain frequent contact with their academic advisor throughout the progression of their curriculum to discuss degree progression. If there are missing courses, discuss enrollment availability or possible substitution. If there are required exit tests, make sure you are informed of administration dates in advance. If there are other requirements such as writing, time to degree completion issues to address, thesis and non-thesis degree requirements, plan in advance to meet standards and timelines to avoid delays in your degree completion date.

## **Candidacy Checklist**

A graduation checklist is part of the [go.alcorn.edu](http://go.alcorn.edu) module to assist students in monitoring their progress towards degree completion. Students and their advisors should monitor the candidacy checklist often to address graduation requirements in a timely manner. The checklist also houses the link to the graduation application. Students must maintain at least a 3.0 to graduate and must meet all requirements as an Unconditional student.

## Cap and Gown Order

All students anticipating graduating and participating in the commencement ceremony must complete a Cap and Gown Order Form. This form is located online on the Academic Affairs website at [www.alcorn.edu/academics](http://www.alcorn.edu/academics).

## Commencement

Students desirous of participating in the official commencement ceremony must order a cap and gown. If you do not graduate the intended term, you will need to order a cap and gown for the appropriate term. No additional fees are assessed. Students who graduate in absentia can expect mailing of their diploma following the ceremony. It is the responsibility to stay informed of all commencement required regalia, rehearsals, decorum, and the commencement day schedule. If a student needs special accommodations for the ceremony, this information should be acknowledged in advance to allow ample time for these special arrangements.

## Degree Audit

The Graduate go.alcorn.edu serves as the official degree audit module to monitor students' progress towards degree completion. Students must successfully complete their graduate curriculum according to the degree plan. Advisors and students should monitor the Degree Plan and Checklist for curriculum and other requirements to graduate. Course substitutions and transfers are requested through this platform for approval. The core requirements must be met following the degree audit for degree completion.

### Requirements

- must earn a cumulative/overall grade point average of at least 3.0 for all graduate level credit hours
- curriculum must be for the approved program of admission in which to graduate
- completion of required credit hours on Degree Plan for the approved program
- must meet all degree progression requirements set forth by the Graduate School
- final grades for courses must comply with earned grade requirements. Ds and Fs are automatic degree stops, as well as more than two Cs
- must fulfill all other requirements by published deadlines by the academic unit and the Graduate school

## Degrees with Honors

Students graduating with honors will be issued an honor cord which is provided by Academic Affairs. In order for the honor designation to appear in the commencement program, the cumulative grade point average is calculated a semester before graduation.

Honors are conferred as follows:

*With Highest Distinction*-Candidates who attain a cumulative average of 3.91 - 4.00

*With High Distinction* - Candidates who attain a cumulative average of 3.81 - 3.90

*With Distinction* - Candidates who attain a cumulative average of 3.71 - 3.80

## Exit Requirements

### EXIT EXAMINATIONS

#### Core Comprehensive Examination

The student will take a written examination on the core courses in the program of study. The student must successfully complete these courses or their equivalent before taking the examinations. In the case of a failure in any part of the

core examinations, only one reexamination is normally allowed. Should a student fail only one part of the three parts of the core examinations, then the reexamination would be on that part only and given at a time convenient to the student and the committees involved. Passed sections on the Core are banked. Should a student fail two or three parts of the core examinations, then the reexamination would be on all three parts and will be given only at a regularly scheduled time for the core examinations. Failure on any part of the reexamination constitutes failure on the core examinations.

The Graduate Coordinating Unit Committee will give the core examinations. Regularly scheduled times for the core examinations are posted each semester, and a second term administration only in the case if they are needed for graduation. Pass or fail will be determined by the criteria set forth by the academic unit and the result of the final score based on these criteria.

The core examinations are as follows:

### **School of Education and Psychology**

All students enrolled in the Office of Education graduate programs must pass the Core Examination as a requirement for graduation. All students who have successfully completed at least two of the Core courses and who are officially enrolled in the third are eligible to take the Core Examination. An application to take the Comprehensive Examinations must be filed in the School of Education and Psychology office and approved by the Chair of the School of Education and Psychology before the examination date.

a. CORE courses:

1. **Foundations of American Education** (ED 512)
2. **Methods of Educational Research** (ED 514)
3. **Advanced Educational Psychology** (PH 513)
4. **Curriculum (Methods) Development** (ED 533)

### **Area Examination**

All Master of Science/Specialist degree students are required to pass the Area Examination. The time of the Area Examination is determined by the student's advisory committee or the department chairperson. Students eligible to take the Area Examination should contact their advisor or department chairperson.

**Go.alcorn.edu** is the approved platform for

### **Participation in Commencement Ceremony**

In order for graduate students to participate in the commencement ceremony, students must meet the following requirements:

1. Students must be cleared for graduation by the Office of Graduate Studies to be eligible to participate in the commencement ceremony. Submission of the Application for Degree initiates the clearance process. The students' Progress to Graduation file is reviewed to verify students have met all requirements.
2. To graduate, a student must fulfill requirements specified on the Degree Plan and Graduation Checklist.
3. Students who do not wish to participate must notify the Office of Graduate Studies in writing.

## Graduation Fees

All prospective graduates submitting an application for degree are charged an application processing fee. Students applying by the priority date each term are affixed \$50.00. Students applying after the priority date are charged a \$100.00 fee. Unpaid fees hinder degree completion. If an application fee has been paid and a student does not complete during this cycle, the student's account is credited and no additional application fees are required.

## Issuance of Diplomas

Diplomas are issued immediately following the Commencement Ceremony in a designated location at the venue. Students not participating in the Commencement Ceremony will receive their degrees by U.S. Postal Services. Diplomas will be mailed at least one week following commencement during the Fall and Spring.

## Thesis and Non-Thesis Options

Degree programs which require a thesis or research project must offer research-based courses to prepare students for producing a well-written and researched study. Students are required to identify a topic in collaboration with their committee chair. A committee is selected based on the student's discipline and topic interest. All students must have a thesis committee chair to guide their compliance of Graduate School requirements. The chair should be available for every stage of the research.

**Thesis Track** – Students have an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of a particular topic of interest when they choose the thesis track. The student is required to complete a five chapter thoroughly researched topic. The five-chapter study includes Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations. A reputable printing company should be used to bind the thesis manuscript. The standard cover should be a black hardcover and contents printed on letter size 8 ½ x 11" white 25% cotton bond paper, 20 lb. weight.

**Non-Thesis Track** – Students pursuing a non-thesis curriculum must conduct an advanced quality research project which consists of three chapters, Introduction, Literature Review, and Methodology. The binding requirements differ significantly from the thesis. An approved non-thesis research project binding requirement can be black spiral or spine with a clear transparent cover. The contents should be printed on letter size 8 ½ x 11" white 25% cotton bond paper, 20 lb. weight.

In addition to the required chapters for the thesis and non-thesis, students should refer to the Thesis Manual for requirements for supplementary pages and other specifications. The approval/signature page for a thesis or non-thesis cannot be copied; it must have original signatures in black ink. Four (4) original signature pages must be submitted to Office of Graduate Studies for the approval signature of the Graduate Studies Administrator. Students are required to use two main resources in drafting their manuscript. Currently in place are the APA Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> edition and the Alcorn Thesis Manual. The submission process for review of the thesis for approval by the Office of Graduate Studies is a very rigorous process. The Gold Standard for reviews during the submission process is a maximum of three reviews. If a document is not approved after the third review, the student must work closely with his/her committee chair to correct the manuscript during the next graduation cycle.

Students and committee chairs are encouraged to devise clear timelines in mentoring advisees to meet deadlines of the Graduate School. Students should take personal responsibility to make sure their formatting and content adhere to scholarly requirements for the end product. It is the discretion of the reviewer/administrator during the review process to determine compliance of the reviewed paper and subsequent corrections needed to improve the quality and rigor. Students should expect constructive feedback at each stage of the review process and be receptive and responsive to suggestions from the reviewer. Work with your committee chair or committee members to address any comments from the reader that may seem reasonable or unreasonable. Students should recognize in respecting submission timelines, that the reviewer/reader needs sufficient but reasonable time to answer questions and review drafts related to suggested edits related to formatting or content. Allow sufficient time to make corrections or re-direct research

efforts in response to feedback of the reviewer. The quality of the paper when submitted during each iteration will greatly influence the nature of the feedback.

**Capstone Project** – Some degree programs such as Master of Liberal Arts and Nurse Educator require completion of a capstone project versus a research project. Students complete a culminating written paper in which they research a topic based on knowledge and theory they have learned and apply in a real-world setting. The project is reviewed and approved by the professor serving as the committee chair and submitted to the Graduate Studies Administrator for review and approval. Each program has a different set of capstone projects that students can complete for graduation. Nonetheless, most capstones usually contain a introduction, theories, hypothesis, scholarly literature review, research methods, proposal alternatives and any other issues relevant to the project proposal. These projects adhere to APA Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> edition and style of the Thesis Manual.