New Graduate Student FAQs

What is the contact information for Graduate and Research Affairs (GRA)?
Student Services East, room 1410; 619-594-5213; http://gra.sdsu.edu; gra@mail.sdsu.edu

What's the most important thing a graduate student can do to be successful?
READ! Read materials about being a graduate student. Particularly read Part Two of the *Graduate Bulletin* that details fees, admissions, regulations and requirements for doctoral and master's degrees. Refer to the *Graduate Bulletin* often. Read the emails and signs on campus. They provide important information and deadlines. The *Bulletin* is available in the Aztec Bookstore and on line at http://coursecat.sdsu.edu/bulletin/

What else can be done?
Ask questions! Ask questions of those in the administration, not your fellow students. Students are not as knowledgeable about policy and procedure as is the staff in Graduate and Research Affairs.

What is a Red ID?
The Red ID Number (a 9-digit number, beginning with the number "8," that is received with the letter advising admission to graduate studies) is the reference number used to identify the student and the student's records. If the admitted student does not have this number, or has misplaced it, contact the Registrar's Office (619-594-7800; http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/registrar/).

What is classified admission?
Most students are admitted with classified standing. This means the student has met all university and departmental requirements of the admitting graduate program. The student may enroll in 500-, 600-, 700-, and 900-level courses.

What is conditional admission?
Some students are admitted conditionally by their chosen department, which means there are certain conditions that must be met before obtaining classified graduate standing. The conditions that the student must meet are determined by the admitting department. The student should contact the graduate advisor in the admitting department to determine the specifics of their conditions.

When the conditions of admission have been met, how does the student request classified standing?
From the Graduate Division website (Current Students → Graduate Program Forms), the student downloads the *Change of Status*. The student completes the form, obtains the signature of the graduate advisor—who selects the appropriate recommendation—and returns the form to GRA. An evaluator in GRA reviews the request and, if approved, changes the student's status from conditionally classified to classified standing.

How does the student register for classes?
Registration for classes is completed online through the student's Web Portal account. However, prior to registration, required fees must be paid. Payment may be made either (1) by check made payable to SDSU; (2) online (http://www.sdsu.edu/sfs) using personal checking account information; see Online Services); or with MasterCard, Discover Card or American Express card through CASHNET SmartPay (http://commerce.cashnet.com/sdsu_sp). Once fees are paid, the student may access registration through their Web Portal account.

What is a program of study (POS)?
The program of study, or POS, is the series of courses that must be completed in order to be awarded a master's degree. It is a "contract" between the student and SDSU. Once classified status is obtained, the student should consult with the department graduate advisor to put together the POS. The graduate advisor will then submit the POS electronically on behalf of the student. Depending on the degree sought, the POS may consist of 30 to 60 units. A copy of the POS is mailed to the student when final approval is given by the graduate dean.

How is a program of study changed?
If the student wishes to alter an approved program of study, a *Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements* must be supported by the graduate advisor and approved by the GRA. The *Petition* is available from the GRA office or may be downloaded from the Graduate Affairs website (Current Students → Graduate Program Forms). The student completes the *Petition*, obtains the signature of the graduate advisor, and submits the *Petition* to the GRA. When approved, a copy is mailed to the student.

How many units of transfer, extension, or foreign university credit may be used on a POS?
In most master's programs, the maximum transferable course credit is 9 units, including courses taken through the SDSU College of Extended Studies. (Refer to page 36 of the 2007-2008 Graduate Bulletin for specific exceptions.) In all cases, transfer credit must be approved by the graduate advisor and graduate dean; credit earned by correspondence or by examination is not acceptable as satisfying advanced degree requirements.

What is advancement to candidacy?
Eligibility for advancement to candidacy is reviewed at the time the official program of study is approved. The student must hold classified graduate standing and meet the scholastic, professional, and personal standards of the university. If advancement is approved, the student becomes eligible to file the *Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee* in preparation for enrollment in thesis (Plan A), or to sit for the comprehensive examination (Plan B).

How soon should a student think about thesis?
It is never too early to start thinking about the thesis. Preparing a dissertation or thesis (from the proposal development stage to the final manuscript) requires advance planning. Purchase and read the *SDSU Dissertation & Thesis Manual* (available from the Aztec Bookstore) as soon as possible. Beyond the mere research and writing of the thesis, a student is required to efficiently manage a wide array of resources. As the student progresses through the program of study, a topic of interest will develop. The student should seek out the advice and counsel of a faculty member within their academic department, and determine their willingness to chair the thesis committee. Two additional members (one within the student's department, one from an outside SDSU department) must also be secured in order to complete the thesis committee. If the research involves human or animal subjects, prior approval must be obtained from the appropriate university office, i.e., the Institutional Review Board or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Once the student has been advanced to candidacy, the *Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee* paperwork may be filed, and the final step in the culminating experience (writing and publication of the thesis) can officially begin.

Other important links
For complete information on university and departmental policies, rules, and regulations, consult the Graduate
    Bulletin: http://coursecat.sdsu.edu/bulletin/.
SDSU Web Portal: https://sunspot.sdsu.edu/pls/webapp/web_menu.login.
To access services available through Graduate & Research Affairs: http://gra.sdsu.edu/index.php
For thesis: Dissertation and Thesis Review, http://www.sdsu.edu/thesis;
Institutional Review Board (human subjects, tissues, etc.) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
    (animal subjects), http://gra.sdsu.edu/research/irb/
Financial Aid & Scholarships: http://www.sdsu.edu/financialaid.