

# GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

## Vol. II. Ph.D. Program

- ✓ Civil & Environmental Graduate Program: <https://www.odu.edu/cee/students/graduate>
- ✓ Graduate Admissions: <https://www.odu.edu/content/odu/admission/graduate.html>
- ✓ Graduate School: <https://www.odu.edu/graduateschool>
- ✓ Graduate Assistantships: <https://www.odu.edu/facultystaff/graduate-assistantships>
- ✓ University Registrar: <https://www.odu.edu/registrar>
- ✓ Degree Works: <https://www.odu.edu/academics/academic-records/degree-evaluation>
- ✓ University Forms: <https://www.odu.edu/graduateschool/forms>
- ✓ Civil & Environmental Faculty: <https://www.odu.edu/cee/directory>

**Department of**  
**Civil and Environmental Engineering**  
Frank Batten College of Engineering and Technology



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(Source: 2022-2023 ODU Graduate Catalog)

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Welcome**

Welcome to the graduate program of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) at the Frank Batten College of Engineering and Technology (BCET). As a graduate student here, you are a vital part of our department and college. Thus, it is important for you to well understand the program. There are many sources of information designated to guide you throughout your study. Primary among these are your Graduate Program Director and Faculty Advisor. This guide and the University Graduate Catalog are sources with which you should become very familiar. This guide is meant to supplement the University Graduate Catalog, never to supersede it. The catalog should be considered the authoritative source of university policy.

### **1.2 Degree Programs Offered**

CEE offers the following graduate degrees:

- Master of Science (M.S.) in Civil Engineering
- Master of Science (M.S.) in Environmental Engineering
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Civil and Environmental Engineering

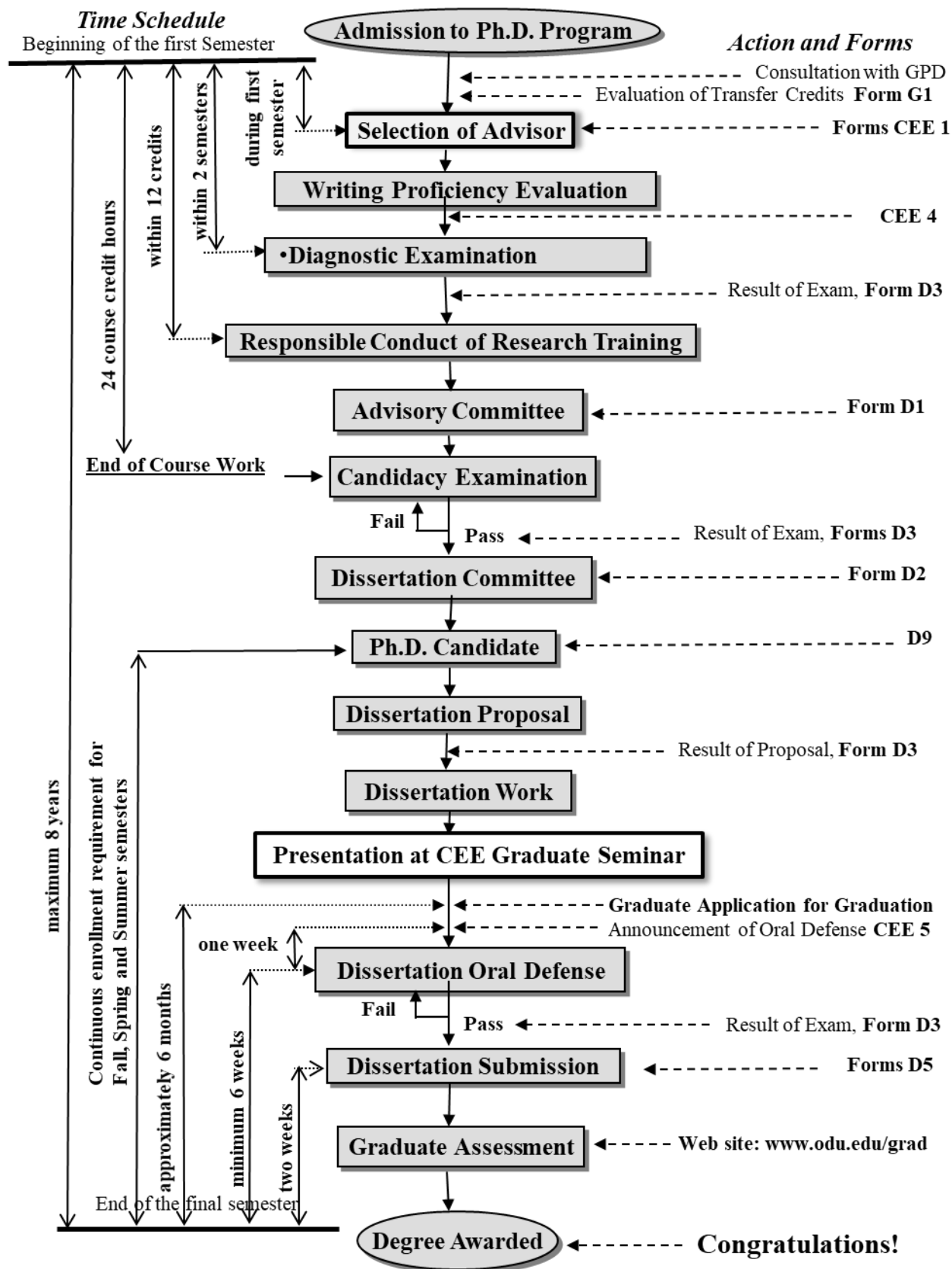
### **1.3 Program Guideline Chart**

A simple flow chart diagramming Ph.D. graduate study is shown on Page 2. Upon the admission into the program, follow the chart carefully, and check your progress in the chart until successful completion of your study. Necessary forms (Departmental-CEE and University-G and D) to be processed are listed alongside with key time schedules. These forms are included in the Appendix and can be downloaded from the websites listed on the cover page.

### **1.4 Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training**

RCR training is required for all graduate students in the University. All graduate students must complete the RCR training prior to completion of 12 semester hours in their graduate program through the website <http://citiprogram.org>. The instruction is available at ODU/Graduate School web site <https://www.odu.edu/graduateschool>.

## Ph.D. Program Study Guideline



## **2. STUDENT STATUS**

### **2.1 Admission Status**

As a graduate student in CEE, you will be placed in one of three categories:

- Regular
- Provisional
- Non-degree

### **2.2 Regular Admission**

Before you can obtain a degree, you must be in this category. To be placed in this category, you must meet all admission requirements and receive a letter stating that you have been accepted into the degree program as a regular student. The admission requirements are detailed in the ODU Graduate Catalog.

### **2.3 Provisional Admission**

After submitting your application, you may receive a letter stating that you have been admitted provisionally. This places you in the provisional category. The letter you receive describing the conditions of your acceptance into the program should describe the level of performance you must achieve or required prerequisite courses. When you have met the conditions stated in the letter, you should meet with your Advisor or the Graduate Program Director to be adjusted to from the provisional to regular category. Upon the approval of the Graduate Program Director believes, s/he will initiate the request to make the adjustment by preparing and submitting the Notice of Change of Status (Graduate Form G2).

### **2.4 Non-degree Status**

If you are taking graduate courses in the College but have never been admitted into a degree program, you are placed in this category. If you intend to apply for a degree program at some time, you can transfer no more than 12 hours of credit taken in a non-degree status to a degree. All non-degree graduate students who have completed or will exceed 12 credit hours will be blocked from registering or attempting to register for additional graduate courses.

## **3. Ph.D. PROGRAM**

### **3.1 Curriculum Requirement**

A minimum of 24 credit hours of graduate-level courses beyond the master's degree or equivalence and at least 24 credit hours of dissertation work must be included in your doctoral program. At least three fifths of the course work (15 credit hours or more) must be 800-level.

### **3.2 Transfer Credits**

A maximum of 12 credit hours may be transferred into a graduate degree program from another accredited institution, except in the case of an approved inter-institutional program. Transfer

credits will be given only for those courses that are certified as being applicable toward a comparable degree or certificate at the institution that offered the courses, and that were completed with a grade of B or better. In addition, up to 12 credits from non-degree status at Old Dominion University may be applied upon the approval of Graduate Program Director. A student may earn a maximum of six credit hours through experiential learning mechanisms. Such credits are included in the maximum number of transfer credits.

A student who wishes to transfer credits earned prior to admission into an ODU degree program must submit a special request for evaluation of transfer courses through the Graduate Program Director to the Office of Admissions (use Graduate Form G1). Following the admission, the student should obtain a written permission from the Graduate Program Director before registering for a course at another institution with the intent of transferring the credits for that course into a graduate degree program at ODU. In no case is a transfer of credits final without the signature of the Graduate Program Director and the academic dean on the Evaluation of Transfer Credits form (Graduate Form G1). See the details of transfer credits in the ODU Graduate Catalog.

### **3.3 Course Load**

The minimum load for a full-time graduate student is 9 credit hours per semester. No more than 12 hours per semester may be carried without the permission of the Graduate Program Director. In a summer session, 6 credit hours constitute a full load. Graduate students with a teaching or research assistantship of 20 hours per week from university fund shall register at least 9 hours (three hours for summer). In case of research assistantship from ODU Research Foundation with 20 hours per week could register at least 6 hours (three hours for summer). All doctoral students who have successfully advanced to the candidacy and only need to complete the dissertation must register for at least one graduate credit hour each semester (fall, spring, and summer) until the degree is completed.

### **3.4 Time Limit**

All requirements for a Ph.D. student must be completed within eight calendar years from the date of beginning the initial course following admission to the doctoral program. If any of your credits granted toward your degree will be older than the time limit (8 years) at the time of graduation, those old credits must be validated by an examination (Graduate Form G3), as stipulated in “Policy on Validation of Out-of-Date-Graduate Credit” in the ODU Graduate Catalog.

### **3.5 Appointment of Academic Advisor**

You must select your academic advisor during the first semester by submitting a CEE-1 Form to Graduate Program Director. Your advisor will be the mentor throughout your study period and assist you in selection of courses, registration, dissertation work, and early writing proficiency evaluation, etc.

### **3.6 Advisory Committee**

Before you have completed nine semester hours of graduate course work, you must, in consultation with your advisor, form your advisory committee. This is accomplished with the Ph.D. Advisory Committee Form (Graduate Form D1). In general, the committee consists of at least three faculty members who are certified for graduate instruction. The nomination of your committee members will be forwarded to the Graduate Program Director for approval and record. The advisory committee will continue to serve until the student has completed the candidacy examination successfully and the dissertation committee has been formed. Changes in committee members may be requested using Graduate Form D1, subject to approvals of the Chair and Dean.

### **3.7 Diagnostic Examination**

After being admitted into the Ph.D. program, your academic advisor will administrate a diagnostic examination. It will be given after the completion of 9 credit hours of coursework. The purpose is to assess your basic ability to pursue a doctorate in Civil or in Environmental Engineering and to facilitate counseling in the development of your program of study. The results will be reported using Graduate Form D3.

### **3.8 Writing Proficiency Evaluation**

The CEE Department Policy on Writing Proficiency (adopted in February 2019) is “Writing skills will be evaluated by the faculty advisors during their second semester of study as the latest. If deemed deficient, the student will be required to work with the advisor or attend training sessions provided by the University’s Graduate Writing Assistance Program (<https://www.odu.edu/al/centers/writing-center>) or other programs to improve their writing skills.”

### **3.9 Candidacy Examination**

During the last semester of course work, you must arrange through your advisory committee and the Graduate Program Director to have candidacy examination. To be eligible, you must achieve a GPA of at least 3.00 on all course work completed.

The candidacy examination consists of a written part and an oral part, and you must pass both parts. The written examination will be given first. More than one negative vote from the examination committee on either part constitutes a failure for that part of the candidacy examination.

Doctoral written candidacy examination must be taken on the last Thursday of January or May immediately following the completion of 24 credit hours of coursework.

Once you pass the written part, oral candidacy examination must be taken on the last Thursday of March if the written candidacy examination was taken in January, or on the third Thursday of August if the written candidacy examination was taken in May.

You have two opportunities to pass the written part. A failed written examination must be retaken within one year. You have two opportunities to pass the oral part as well, but a failed oral part should be retaken prior to the end of the next semester. If you pass the written examination

on the first try, you need not retake the written examination in the event of failing the oral part. No part of the candidacy examination can be passed conditionally. The successful completion or the failure of each candidacy examination must be reported on Graduate Form D3. A detailed description of the examination is given in the ODU Graduate Catalog.

### **3.10 Dissertation Committee**

After passing candidacy examination, the dissertation committee is formed to supervise your dissertation research. You can consult the Graduate Program Director to form a Dissertation Committee (see the ODU Graduate Catalog). In general, this committee consists of three or more faculty members: at least two must be from the home department but one can be from outside department. Its composition should reflect the topic of your dissertation, and the committee chairman will be your dissertation advisor. The dissertation committee is created by submitting a Graduate Form D2.

### **3.11 Admission to Candidacy**

Advancement to candidacy is a formal step that occurs after the student has:

- Passed the Ph.D. written and oral candidacy examinations,
- Submitted a topic that is approved by the dissertation committee chair, and
- Completed formal course work.

Once these requirements have been met, the Graduate Program Director must file the “Advancement to Candidacy” Form (D9) with the Office of the University Registrar.

### **3.12 Dissertation Proposal**

You should present your dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee members through the committee chairman. The dissertation committee will evaluate and approve (or disapprove) your dissertation prospectus. The committee shall report the result of the evaluation to the Graduate Program Director by using Graduate Form D3.

### **3.13 Registration after becoming Candidate**

After successfully advanced to candidacy, you are required to register for at least one graduate credit hour each semester (**fall**, **spring**, and **summer**) until you complete your degree. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in charges to your account for one graduate credit, plus a required fee for each semester after advancement to the candidacy. If you may be away from the university for a certain period, to avoid the above charge, you may formally apply for a petition of a leave of absence for a semester (up to one year) to the Dissertation Committee and the Graduate Program Director before the beginning of the semester (Graduate Form D7). During the absence, you will not be entitled to assistance from the committee and use of University facilities.

### **3.14 Dissertation Work**

You will perform your research and prepare your dissertation under the guidance of your



Dissertation Committee. For details see the "Guide for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations," available at [https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/graduate-studies/thesis-dissertation/docs/thesis\\_dissertation\\_guide.pdf](https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/graduate-studies/thesis-dissertation/docs/thesis_dissertation_guide.pdf).

### 3.15 Presentation at CEE Graduate Seminar

All Ph.D. students are required to present their doctoral research work at CEE departmental Graduate Seminar at least once before the graduation (adopted on 5/11/2017). Schedule your presentation with the Graduate Program Director.

### 3.16 Application for Graduation

A formal application for the expected diploma must be made in the Office of the Registrar five to six months prior to the expected date of graduation, and the exact schedule is given below.

Anticipated Graduation Month	December	May	August
Application Deadline	June 30th	November 30th	February 28th

Graduate Application for Graduation Form may be obtained from the Office of the Registrar at <https://www.odu.edu/academics/graduation-commencement/graduation/graduation-candidates#tab203=2>. If you fail to graduate in the planned semester, this application form, in general, can be rolled over and will be effective for the subsequent two semesters. Thus, you do not need to file this form again if you can graduate within the next two semesters. Beyond the third semester, you must reapply.

### 3.17 Final Semester Registration

A one-credit hour registration (CEE 899 or CEE 999) is required for all graduate students to maintain active status during the final semester prior to graduation if not formally enrolled in course work.

### 3.18 Dissertation Defense

You should plan to orally defend your dissertation no later than six weeks prior to the date you expect to graduate. You should submit a digital copy of your complete dissertation (PDF format) to your dissertation advisor and to each member of your committee at least two weeks prior to your scheduled oral defense. It is required of you to have obtained informal approval from your advisor on the written dissertation prior to this submission. Submit your defense schedule including the abstract to the Graduate Program Director at least two weeks prior to the defense using CEE-5 Form. Graduate Program Director will publicize your dissertation defense schedule and invite interested students and faculty to attend.

The defense of your dissertation will be chaired, as described in ODU Graduate Catalog, by your dissertation advisor. Your success or failure in your defense will be determined by a majority vote of the dissertation committee in a closed session immediately following your defense. Your dissertation committee chairman (your advisor) will inform you of the results immediately and

submit Graduate Form D3 through the Graduate Program Director. In case of failure, the dissertation committee may recommend that the candidate be dropped or allowed to do a second defense at least three months after the first defense.

### **3.19 Dissertation Submission**

Upon successful defense of your dissertation, you should carefully address any comments from the dissertation committee. You shall submit a revised version of your dissertation to Dean's Office. The revised dissertation (Word format) must be delivered to the Dean's Office accompanied by the Dissertation Acceptance and Processing form (Graduate Form D5) signed by all the dissertation committee members and the Graduate Program Director no later than three weeks prior to the last day of classes prior to graduation. The Dean's Office will review your dissertation for grammatic errors, typos, and formats. You should make any requested corrections and resubmit a final version as soon as possible. When the dissertation is deemed acceptable, the Dissertation Acceptance and Processing form (Graduate Form D5) will be signed by the Dean, and you should submit the final version according to the instructions in the "Guide for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations" to the Office of the Registrar by the last day of classes of the semester in which you plan to graduate. If you cannot meet the submission deadline, your graduation will be delayed at least another semester.

### **3.20 Graduate Assessment**

ODU has developed an institution-wide plan to assess the quality of its graduate academic degree programs. In the final semester, you need to use <http://www.odu.edu/academics/graduation-commencement/exit/graduate-assessment> to complete a survey on your satisfaction with your academic program, support services, and other aspects of the University. You must complete this survey before official graduation. Your responses will be used to improve teaching and learning in our graduate programs.

## **4. FINANCIAL AID**

Various types of financial aids are available on a competitive basis for graduate students in Civil and Environmental Engineering.

### **4.1 Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA)**

There are two categories in graduate teaching assistantship: GTA Instructors and GTA Assistants. GTA Instructors are expected to participate directly in teaching activities as class instructors, laboratory supervisors, recitation leaders and tutors. GTA Assistants do not directly instruct students, rather assist instructors with grading, laboratory preparation, etc. The workload for a full-time appointment is normally 20 hours per week on average. The minimum stipend for full-time appointment is \$22,000 per academic year (**excluding summer**). Part-time Teaching Assistantships may also be available, requiring teaching responsibilities of less than 20 hours per week.

To qualify as GTA Instructors, students must pass the Graduate Teaching Assistant Institute prior to their first semester of appointment. Without passing GTAI, students are not allowed to be a GTA Instructor. Prior to attending GTA Institute, new international assistants

must take and pass the SPEAK test administered by the Old Dominion University English Language Center or pass the Institute's re-test. This test measures the oral proficiency in English.

#### **4.2 Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA)**

Graduate Research Assistantships may be funded through sponsored research projects. The appointee is expected to participate directly in research conducted by faculty members. The workload for a full-time appointment is normally 20 hours per week on average. The minimum stipend for full-time appointment is \$22,000 per academic year (**excluding summer**). In addition, Part-time Research Assistantships may be available.

#### **4.3 Maximum Period of Departmental TA/RA Support**

The department has established a policy that all full-time doctoral students are expected to complete their doctoral degree program within 4 years and thus the department will not provide financial support beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> year as a TA/RA (adopted on 04/20/2015).

#### **4.4 Enrollment and Registration Requirements**

There are two categories of enrollment requirements:

- 1) Assistantship recipients who are supported by University/Commonwealth funds are required to be enrolled each fall and spring semesters of their appointment and must register for and complete a minimum of **nine** hours of graduate course work per semester and **six** hours in the summer.
- 2) Assistantship recipients who are supported by other funding sources are required to be enrolled each fall and spring semesters of their appointment and must register for and complete a minimum of **six** hours of graduate course work per semester and **three** hours in the summer.

All doctoral students (regardless of their funding source) who have successfully advanced to candidacy and only need to complete the dissertation must register for at least **one** hour of graduate credit every semester until graduation (see Continuous Enrollment Policy in Graduate Catalog). Students who have advanced to candidacy and are enrolled for one credit are eligible for full tuition exemption. The graduate form, Doctoral Candidates 1- Hour Full-Time Notification (Form D4), must be completed and forwarded to Student Employment in the Office of Finance each semester of employment.

Undergraduate prerequisite courses and courses taken as audits are not counted toward the enrollment requirement. Graduate assistants normally may not enroll for more than nine credit hours per semester. Enrollment for 10 to 12 credit hours requires the approval of the Graduate Program Director. No graduate assistant is permitted to enroll for more than 12 credit hours in any semester the appointment is held.

#### **4.5 Unfunded Tuition Scholarships**

Unfunded tuition scholarships may be offered to Civil & Environmental Engineering graduate students receiving full-time assistantships from other departments. Students must hold the appointment for the entire semester.

Doctoral graduate assistants may be granted a full unfunded tuition scholarship and do not pay any tuition regardless of their domicile. Unfunded tuition scholarships cannot be used for undergraduate courses, nor for courses taken as audits.

Graduate assistants seeking unfunded tuition scholarships must consult with the Graduate Program Director and Department Chair two weeks before the beginning of each semester to prepare the necessary paperwork.

#### **4.6 Outside Employment**

Full-time (20 hours per week) graduate assistants are not permitted to accept additional on-campus employment, except under unusual circumstances and only by the approval of Dean. Any off-campus employment should be undertaken with caution and in consultation with the Graduate Program Director. It should in no way adversely affect the academic performance or assistantship duties and responsibilities. International students shall consult the Office of Visa & Immigration Service Advising for international student employment guidelines.

#### **4.7 CEE Graduate Seminar Attendance**

All CEE graduate students (GTA and GRA) who are financially supported by the Department or ODU Research Foundation are required to attend all CEE Graduate Seminars during Fall and Spring semesters. Absences are allowed only for exceptional cases with written request to and approval by the Graduate Program Director (CEE 6 Form) (adopted on 5/11/2017).

### **5. INTERNSHIP PARTICIPATION**

For international full-time students, paid internship may be allowed upon the recommendation of the Graduate Program Director and the approval of ODU's Career Management Center and/or International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). However, since none of the department's graduate degree programs requires practical training or internship as a part of the curriculum, the department will not recommend any curricular practical training (CPT) application. In addition, internships often interrupt students' work on their thesis, dissertation, or project, and thus result in a lengthy delay of their graduation. Therefore, the department, in general, does not recommend participation in optional practical training (OPT) before their degree completion. Rather, the department recommends that students participate in OPT after obtaining their degrees. Only if the following conditions are met, the GPD may recommend OPT participation while they are pursuing their graduate degrees:

- 1) An internship offer letter must clearly state the job description for the student and show the merit for the student to gain real world experience beyond the classroom situation in the student's study field.
- 2) The student must submit in written a detailed time schedule of planned thesis, dissertation, or project work until the completion of the degree and obtain the approval from the academic advisor. If the student fails to meet the scheduled plan, the renewal of internship during the subsequent semester will not be rendered.

- 3) The academic advisor must submit his/her written evaluation and recommendation to the Graduate Program Director after reviewing the above two items and consultation with the student. The academic advisor must support the application for the student to receive the recommendation of the Graduate Program Director.

These three conditions will apply also to domestic students who would like to participate in internship programs while they are pursuing their graduate degrees (adapted on 02/16/2006).

## **6. STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE**

As an international student, you are required to always have a university-provided health insurance with very limited circumstances for waiver from this policy. For domestic students, this policy is not applicable.

Students, who are hired as a TA/RA with \$5,000 or more per semester, may be eligible for university subsidy that is stipulated at [www.odu.edu/graduateschool/graduate-student-health-insurance](http://www.odu.edu/graduateschool/graduate-student-health-insurance).

## APPENDIX

### DEPARTMENT, COLLEGE, AND UNIVERSITY GRADUTE FORMS

#### Department Forms (CEE)

- CEE-1 Graduate Program Advisor/Change of Advisor
- CEE-5 Announcement of Ph.D. Dissertation/M.S. Thesis Oral Defense
- CEE-6 Request of Absence from CEE Graduate Seminar

#### University Graduate Forms

The following university graduate forms can be  
printed from

<https://www.odu.edu/graduateschool/forms>

#### **General Forms – G**

- G1 - Evaluation of Transfer Credits
  - G2 - Notice of Change of Status
    - G3 - Re-Validation of Out-of-Date Graduate Credit by Examination
    - G4 - GPD's Recommendation For Reinstatement from Suspension

#### **Doctoral Level Forms – D**

- D1 - Appointment of Doctoral Advisory Committee
- D2 - Appointment of Doctoral Dissertation Committee
- D3 - Result of Doctoral Examination or Requirement
- D4 - Doctoral Candidates 1-Hour Full-Time Notification
- D5 - Doctoral Dissertation Acceptance and Processing
- D7 - Leave of Absence from Doctoral Program
- D8 - Exception to Time Limits Allowed to Complete Doctoral Degree
- D9 - Advancement to Candidacy



CEE 1 Form (Rev. 3/2019)

## Graduate Program Advisor

☐ This is initial advisor assignment

☐ This is change of advisor, Previous advisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Student name) (UID) (Student signature) (Date)

Who enrolled in the \_\_\_\_\_ Program  
 (Title of degree program)

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Advising faculty) (Advisor's signature) (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Co-advising faculty if any) (Co-advisor's signature) (Date)

Graduate Program Director's approval \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
 (GPD's signature) (Date)  
 (Date)



CEE Form 5  
(4/2019)

### **Announcement of Ph.D. Dissertation/M.S. Thesis Oral Defense**

This form should be completed and submitted to GPD **at least two week prior to the time of the oral defense**, so that GPD can promptly publish an announcement in an appropriate University news media.

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Building:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Room:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dissertation/Thesis Title:**

**Abstract:**





CEE 6  
(5/2017)

### **Request of Absence from CEE Graduate Seminar**

All CEE graduate students (GTA and GRA) who are **financially supported** either by the Department or ODU Research Foundation are **required to attend all CEE Graduate Seminars** during Fall and Spring semesters. Absences are allowed only for exceptions in exceptional cases with written request to and approval by the Graduate Program Director (adopted on 5/11/2017).

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Seminar Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason of Absence from CEE Graduate Seminar:**

**Student signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approval by Graduate Program Director:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Original: Student file  
Copy: Student advisor