

# Policies

## Admission Policies

*The following policies and procedures apply to the graduate admissions processes only. While the information stated in this document is complete and accurate to the best of our abilities, the policies detailed in this document in no way serve as a contract. Requirements vary by graduate program. The policies outlined in this document will undergo periodic review.*

### **Application and Enrollment Requirements**

Applications are accepted only online. Once fully completed, they are reviewed by the Graduate Admission Committee of the Office of Graduate Studies. Specific programs may require additional application components than those listed below and/or have stricter admissions requirements.

Applicants are required to create an account by registering a username and password in order to start an application, save it, and log back in at any time to complete it before submission. Once the application is submitted, applicants receive an email containing their Merrimack admission ID and instructions regarding how to check their application status.

A complete application to a graduate program must include:

Online application – The online application may be completed and submitted at any time, as admissions review occurs on a rolling basis. It is not necessary to submit all materials simultaneously. There is no application fee.

Official college transcript(s) - Official transcripts are required and must reflect all courses taken and grades and credentials received from all institutions attended. Transcript(s) need to be issued by the appropriate records office of the institution and must be stamped and authenticated. Transcript(s) must show courses and grades from all years of study, not just the final year(s). If credits were transferred between one or more institutions, separate transcripts must be submitted for each institution attended unless course title, level, grades and credits earned at each previous institution appear on the transcript(s) submitted to Merrimack.

supervisor or college professor who can address the applicant's interest and potential for success in a graduate education program.

The School Counseling program requires that the two letters of recommendation speak to the applicant's capacity for leadership and professionalism, and their ability to succeed in the graduate program. Letters should be signed by the recommender, and in PDF format.

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program requires three letters of recommendation, at least one of which addresses the applicant's readiness to work in the therapeutic setting.

MTEL or copy of current license, as appropriate.

#### Additional Requirements for International Students

Proof of English Proficiency - All applicants whose first language is not English and who have not earned an academic degree in the U.S. must submit proof of English proficiency. This graduate entry requirement to Merrimack College can be demonstrated in any of the following ways:

A minimum TOEFL score of 84 on the internet-based test (with a minimum of 21 on the writing subset)



Students in the GRAD Advantage Program wanting to gain graduate credit for a cross-listed course must register for it as a graduate course to gain graduate credit.

Undergraduate students with a 3.0 GPA who meet all the prerequisites can apply to the GRAD Advantage program. To prepare to apply to the program, Merrimack undergraduate students should start working with their academic advisor to plan courses around the program as early as freshman year. To apply, students should return their completed Intent to Pursue Form to the Office of Graduate Studies and complete the online application. All additional application requirements will be waived. Then, a student can take up to two graduate courses (eight credits) during their senior year, if their schedule allows. They can continue in the program as long as they earn a B or better in each of their graduate courses and maintain a 3.0 GPA during their senior undergraduate year.

Even if a student chooses not to take courses through GRAD Advantage as an undergraduate, they are still eligible to take graduate courses covered by the GRAD Advantage scholarship up to one calendar year after they graduate. After one year, however, they must apply through the standard application process, which may not include a scholarship or which may be subject to a different scholarship amount.

*Please note: All Merrimack “fellowship programs” are different and separate from the GRAD Advantage program and have a separate application process and different admission requirements. Fellowships do not qualify for the GRAD Advantage program.*

The Merrimack GRAD Advantage scholarship program covers the cost of two graduate courses (up to eight credits) taken during a student’s senior undergraduate year or in the one-year period following graduation from their undergraduate program. The value of this scholarship varies based on the number of credits each course provides. If it is fully applied to the student’s senior year courses, the scholarship will no longer apply after graduation; if not, it will be prorated and applied to student’s graduate studies based on the student’s credit load. Students will need to inform the Office of Graduate Studies if their credit load changes at any point during the academic year, as this directly impacts their scholarship amount.

Provisionally-admitted students should take the following steps to register for classes:

Contact the program director as indicated in your decision letter in order to determine an appropriate course of action.

Depending on the program, a provisionally-admitted student may be able to take up to two graduate courses (eight credits) as a non-matriculated graduate student while working towards completing additional requirements.

Students may take additional required classes at another accredited institution of their choice, but must get prior written permission from the program director prior to registering, as some courses may not be accepted as satisfactory transfer credits. Additionally, only courses with a grade of B (3.0) or better will be accepted.

Please note that non-matriculated students must check with the Office of Financial Aid to determine their eligibility for financial aid under the provisionally-admitted status.

Once a student has completed the required classes, they should update the Office of Graduate Studies at



for completion of general course requirements, but is restricted to the completion of a limited requirement, such as a final examination or paper. (See “N” grade above)

### **Repeat Policy**

Graduate students may be permitted to repeat only two courses that were taken at Merrimack College for graduate credit (i.e., applied towards a graduate degree) and may only repeat each course once. Before registering to retake a course, students must get the written approval of their program director. Both grades will appear on the transcript, but only the most recent grade, whether it is higher or lower than the original grade, will be used to calculate the student’s graduate GPA. All repeated courses must be taken at Merrimack College.

### **Change of Grade**

If the student thinks that the grading criteria were not properly applied or the grade is inaccurate, the student must first appeal directly to the course instructor as soon as possible, but within seven days at the latest of receiving the disputed grade either in person or through computer mediated means (e.g. email, and uploading the grade to the course management system). If the instructor agrees to a change in grade, the instructor must submit a “Grade Change” form to the Registrar’s Office. The form must be dated and signed by the instructor as well as the dean of the school through which the student’s program of study is offered.

If, after that consultation, the instructor does not agree to change the grade and the student still wishes to appeal further, they must follow the grade appeal process described in Appendix K of the Faculty Handbook (AAUP Policy on The Assignment of Course Grades and Student Appeals).

### **Grade Appeal**

(from Appendix K in the Faculty Handbook)

1. A student who wishes to complain about a grade would be expected to discuss the matter first with the course instructor, doing so as soon as possible after receiving the grade.
2. The instructor should be willing to listen, to provide explanation, and to be receptive to changing the grade if the student provides convincing argument for doing so. (In most cases the discussion between the student and the instructor should suffice and the matter should not need to be carried further.)
3. If, after the discussion with the instructor, the student’s concerns remain unresolved, the student might then approach the instructor’s department chair or another member of the faculty who is the instructor’s immediate administrative superior. That person, if he or she believes that the complaint may have merit, would be expected to discuss it with the instructor. If the matter still remains unresolved, it should be referred to an ad hoc faculty committee.
4. The ad hoc committee would ordinarily be composed of faculty members in the instructor’s department or in closely allied fields. The committee would examine available written information on the dispute, would be available for meetings with the student and with the instructor, and would meet with others as it sees fit.
5. If the faculty committee, through its inquiries and deliberations, determines that compelling reasons exist to change the grade, it

## **Academic Standards**

### **Full-time Status**

A graduate student is considered a full-time student when enrolled in eight or more credits in a single term.

### **Part-time Status**

A graduate student is considered a part-time student when enrolled in fewer than eight credits in a single term.

### **Good Standing**

The necessary grade point average (GPA) for a student to be considered in good standing for all graduate programs is a 3.0. In addition, all students must have all bills paid and immunizations up to date in order to continue in good standing. Graduate students must meet this minimum GPA in order to have the degree conferred and to graduate. The director of each graduate program monitors minimum program cumulative GPA, and failure to meet this requirement in any term will result in the student being placed on probation. (See Probation below.)

### **Probation**

Students who fall below a cumulative GPA of 3.0 at the end of any given term will be notified in writing that they have been placed on probation. A copy of the notification will also be sent to their dean, to the Office of Graduate Studies, the Office of Financial Aid, and the Registrar's Office. Students who have been placed on academic probation must meet with their program director to develop a written "Academic Improvement Plan" which specifies how the student will address whatever issues have led to the decline in GPA; the plan must be signed by both the student and the program director. Students who are not in a one-year program must bring their GPA up to 3.0 by the end of the second term after the term in which their GPA has fallen below 3.0 and they have been placed on probation. At the end of the first term after being placed on probation, the student must achieve at least a 2.5 GPA; at the end of the second term after being placed on probation, the student must achieve the 3.0. Thus, if at the end of the first term following probation a student has not yet achieved a 3.0 cumulative GPA but has obtained minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5, the student may remain on probation for one additional term. If the student does not achieve a 2.5 GPA by the end of the first term following probation, the student will be dismissed (see below). If at the end of the second term following probation the student does not achieve a 3.0 GPA, the student will be dismissed. Being on probation may affect the status of a student's fellowship, internship, or assistantship. It may also affect a student's financial aid eligibility. Students in one year programs who fall below a 3.0 are allowed only one term on probation to bring their GPA up to 3.0 given the accelerated nature of their program. Students on probation can take up to 16 credits during the semester they are on probation.

### **Low Grade in Required Courses**

If a graduate student receives lower than a C (2.0 GPA) in a course that is required by their program, they must retake the course. If the student receives a C (2.0 GPA) or lower for a second time in that course, they will be required to meet with their academic advisor and will be placed on academic probation.

### **Academic Dismissal**

If a student's cumulative GPA is below a 2.5 in the term following the assignment of academic probation, the student will automatically be dismissed. A student who has continued on probation for two consecutive terms during which the student is enrolled in classes, but who does not attain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 at the end of the second term of enrollment after the institution of the probationary period, will be automatically dismissed. Students may also be dismissed under the academic integrity policy (see below).

### **Readmission after Academic Dismissal**

A student who is dismissed for failing to remain in academic good standing may apply for readmission at the earliest after the lapse of one term and at the latest after four consecutive terms. To be readmitted, the student must present a petition to the program director explaining in detail how the causes of low achievement have been corrected and what plans are in place to ensure future academic success. The program director will convene an academic board of representatives including at least two additional members from the school in which the program is housed to review the appeal; interdisciplinary program appeals will be reviewed by an interdisciplinary committee. A student may be dismissed and readmitted only one time. A second dismissal may not be appealed.



**Time Limits/Statute of Limitations**

Degree candidates must fulfill all the requirements for the graduate degree within six consecutive years of the date of matriculation, unless their program specifies a more restrictive time limit. This time limit ensures that the degree conferred represents a well-sequenced, cohesive body of current knowledge. All the program requirements, including coursework, transfer credits, independent studies, and internships must be completed within the six-year time limit. Exceptions may be requested for cases in which the progress to degree is interrupted by circumstances that are beyond control of the student by written appeal to the program director explaining and documenting the circumstances. Final approval of any exception rests with the dean of the school through which the program is offered.

**Withdrawal from the Program**

Withdrawal is initiated by the student (except as noted below), usually in consultation with their academic advisor. Students may not withdraw simply because of low grades. Withdrawal from the program implies withdrawal from all courses, and the graduate regulations concerning grades are applicable. Mere non-attendance does not constitute official withdrawal from the program. It is necessary to complete an official withdrawal form and file it with the Registrar. These forms are available from the program director.

**Non-Attendance**



Students may, with the written permission of both the course instructor and the program coordinator, make a change in registration from audit to credit or credit to audit during the drop/add period. Please check Merrimack College's website to see the current fee for auditing a course.

### **Requesting Transcripts**

Students may visit <https://iwantmytranscript.com/merrimack> to request an official transcript.

There is a fee for requesting a transcript. Please contact the Office of the Registrar with any questions or concerns.

### **Credit Hour Policy and Course Type Definitions**

Merrimack College's policy on credit hours relies on federal regulation, which defines a credit hour as an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than:

One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or 10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or

At least an equivalent amount of work as required in the above paragraph for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

### ***Standard 15-Week Term Courses***

One credit hour is constituted by a minimum of one hour of classroom or direct instruction plus a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for a term (or its equivalent). Utilizing the Carnegie Unit, "one hour" of instruction or class work equals 50 minutes; a term is defined as not less than 15 weeks. An equivalent amount of student work (minimum three hours per week for a term of combined direct instruction and out-of-class student work) must be represented for a credit hour in other academic activities such as laboratories, internships, practicums, studio work and other academic work.

### **Courses Meeting Fewer than 15 Weeks and Blended Delivery Courses**

The credit hours awarded for a course must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of three hours of combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week term. The hours of direct instruction and out-of-class student work may consist of course activities including, but not limited to:

Face-to-face course meetings

Time to read assigned texts or other assigned materials

Virtual course meetings, student-instructor, or student-student interactions

Experiential learning activities consistent with the learning objectives of the course, such as service learning projects, research with faculty, or practicum placements

Synthesis/processing/reflection time and activities (may be used for writing or production of creative work which may take many forms, including but not limited to journals, formal papers, blogs, art, music, etc.)

Assigned activities should reflect a reasonable expectation by the instructor of the time it would take to meet the learning objectives of the course or assignment.

### ***Blended Course Definition***

24-74% of course work is done via distance education in which instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.

### ***Distance Learning Courses***

The credit hours awarded for a course must be reasonably equivalent to the standard of three hours of combined direct instruction and student work per credit hour for a 15-week term.



3. *Educating members of the Merrimack College community about the ethical and legal obligations associated with human subject projects.*
4. *Conducting reviews of generalizable research projects to ensure that such research will be carried out in a manner which safeguards the rights and well-being of the subjects.*
5. *Promoting professional development in research ethics for Merrimack College employees in support of their instructional, research and administrative work.*

**Professional Standards**

Graduate students participating in field-based experiences through Merrimack College are required not only to











appeal: (1) there was a material procedural error in the panel's review of the case; (2) new evidence not





*F for the course*

Submission of purchased term papers or papers written by others:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Submission of the same term papers to more than one instructor, where no previous approval has been given:

*F for the course and further disciplinary action*

Unauthorized collaboration on an assignment:

*F for the course for both students*