

Information Sheet for Requesting a Letter of Certification

The Graduate School is the only qualified official institutional entity authorized to provide verification and certification prior to degree conferral that degree requirements have been met by graduate students; subsequent to degree conferral, the University Registrar is the appropriate, authorized entity. Letters signed by a representative of the Registrar's Office, faculty members, or college deans attesting that degree requirements have been met for graduate students are not official or appropriate for verification purposes.

The Graduate School can provide three different types of letters of certification in cases where the degree has not yet been conferred:

1. Degree Requirements Completion Letter (Master's and Doctoral Students)

Candidates for graduation during a particular semester who have completed all degree requirements may request an official letter that verifies their status and their expected graduation date.

Degree Requirements Completion Letters provide official verification from The Pennsylvania State University that all degree requirements have been met and specify the date that the student's degree is expected to be conferred. A Degree Requirements Completion Letter includes the student's name, degree, major, the date requirements were completed, the projected degree conferral date, the University's official seal, and the signature of the Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School.

Because a Degree Requirements Completion Letter can only be issued if ALL degree requirements have been officially met, if a required course is in progress The Graduate School will not issue letter to certify that all degree requirements have been met until final grades have been officially reported and noted on the student's transcript.

Note that Degree Requirements Completion Letters will be dated with the date of completion of the final requirement. For example, if a thesis or dissertation is a requirement of the degree program and is the final requirement completed by the student, the Degree Requirements Completion Letter will note that all degree requirements were met on the date that the thesis/dissertation was approved and reported by the Thesis Office, and not the date of the final oral examination nor the date the committee members approved and signed the final document.

For a Degree Requirements Completion Letter request to be processed, the following steps **must** be completed:

- The student must have activated Intent to Graduate in the semester the degree will be conferred.
- The student must have completed *all* requirements and all courses must have grades assigned.
- The graduate program head (or Director of Graduate Studies) must verify in the student's LionPATH record that all requirements have been completed.

Note that a Degree Requirements Completion Letter **cannot** be provided if:

1. the degree requirements include a thesis or dissertation, and the final, signed thesis or dissertation has not been submitted to and approved by the Graduate School Thesis Office;
2. completion of the culminating experience (for degree programs that do not require a thesis or dissertation) has not yet been reported to the Graduate School by the graduate program;
3. there are missing or deferred grades;
4. a hold has been placed on the student record;
5. the student is currently enrolled in a course (other than 601) and the grade had not yet been posted to LionPATH. Grade rosters do not become available until the day following the official end date of classes.

- NOTE: The deadline to request a letter of certification is the last day of classes. Therefore, students currently enrolled in classes other than 601 with an official end date of the last day of the semester are ineligible for a letter of certification;
6. the student has not activated their intent to graduate (i.e., the student is not on the graduation list) for the semester in which the letter is requested
 - NOTE: Students cannot activate their intent until the activation period opens (the beginning of every semester). Students who have satisfied all requirements but who are not graduating until the following semester are unable to receive a letter of certification until the all steps (including activation of Intent to Graduate) have been completed *in the semester in which the degree will be conferred*.
 7. the student has not been approved in LionPATH Graduation Tracking by either the graduate program head (or Director of Graduate Studies).
 8. the student has not been approved in LionPATH Graduation Tracking by Graduate Enrollment Services.

At a student's request, a Degree Requirements Completion Letter may be provided to potential employers, licensure boards, embassies and other agencies.

A Degree Requirements Completion Letter is the appropriate letter to request when petitioning the USCIS for an H-1B visa. For H-1B visa purposes, all required credit and course requirements need to be officially met (i.e., noted on the student's transcript) no later than the end of the fall semester preceding any request for a letter of certification that all degree requirements have been met in the subsequent spring semester.

Requests for Degree Requirements Completion Letter from the Graduate School will be fulfilled in approximately 1-2 weeks.

For doctoral students, diplomas are distributed at the commencement ceremony therefore, the deadline to request a letter is the last day of classes.

After degrees have been conferred, completion letters are no longer issued by the Graduate School because an official transcript can be requested from the University Registrar that provides evidence of degree completion.

2. Final Oral Examination Passed Verification Letter (Doctoral Students Only)

Final oral examination letters are official verification from The Pennsylvania State University that a doctoral student has successfully passed the final oral examination in the degree program in which the student is currently enrolled. At a student's request, a final oral examination letter may be provided to potential employers, immigration, or other agencies. Final oral examination letters are certified statements that include the student's name, degree, major, date of examination and the signature of the Graduate School director of Graduate Enrollment Services.

3. Comprehensive Examination Passed Verification Letter (Doctoral Students Only)

Comprehensive examination letters are official verification from The Pennsylvania State University that a doctoral student has successfully passed the comprehensive examination in the degree program which the student is currently enrolled. At a student's request, a comprehensive examination letter may be provided to potential employers, immigration or other agencies. Comprehensive examination letters are certified statements that include the student's name, degree, major, date of examination and the signature of the Graduate School director of Graduate Enrollment Services.

Request for Letter of Certification

Office of Graduate Enrollment Services, The Pennsylvania State University, 114 Kern Building, University Park, PA 16802-3396; (814) 865-1795; (814) 863-4627(fax)

Please allow two weeks to process all letters.

- Completion of all requirements* Final oral exam passed Comprehensive exam passed

*For completion of all requirements letter, your thesis/dissertation (if applicable) must be approved by the Graduate School Thesis Office: you cannot have any missing or deferred grades; there can be no holds on your record.

Semester for which you have activated your intent to graduate: _____

Are you an international student? Yes or No

Have you applied for OPT? Yes or No

Are you an applicant for a H1-B visa? Yes or No

(Students applying for H1-B visas are typically asked to provide proof of having earned a degree. For this reason it is desirable for students to complete their degrees and graduate by the end of December. However, some students may be in the position of applying for H1-B in April and graduating in May. Students, who will have completed all degree requirements no later than March 1st of each year, may request a letter certifying that all requirements have been met.)

Last Name First Name Middle Initial Penn State 9-Digit ID

Degree Major

Phone Number (with area code) PSU Email address

If receiving master's degree, are you submitting a thesis paper capstone course capstone project

Letter should be addressed to a particular person and mailed as follows:

Letter should be addressed TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN and mailed as follows:

I do not want the letter to be mailed. Please email me when it is ready to be picked up.

Signature of the student Date

Signature of graduate program head or Director of Graduate Studies** Date

Signature of dual-title graduate program head or Director of Graduate Studies (if applicable)** Date

**This signature indicates completion of all departmental requirements, including completion of the paper if required.

For Graduate Enrollment Services Office use only

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Checksheet | <input type="checkbox"/> No DF's or NG's | <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis or Dissertation approved, or paper report received |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3.0 GPA | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduation tracking | <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive/final report form |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No holds/prov | <input type="checkbox"/> Emailed DISSA Date of Completion | <input type="checkbox"/> Need grades or memo if currently registered |

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