Plan of Study

All M.S. and Ph.D. degree-seeking students are required to file a Plan (or Program) of Study with the SBES Graduate Office located in Blacksburg. The document serves as an outline of the anticipated academic details making up the student’s course of study. Students work with their advisors in developing the plan which is then approved by the advisory committee and the Graduate Program Chair. A draft of the plan is submitted on paper to the Graduate Coordinator who checks it over for accuracy before the student gathers committee signatures. The final signed copy is then submitted to be added to the student’s file.

For the WFU campus students the final plan simply goes into the student file after being approved by the Graduate Program Chair on the VT campus. Currently there is no mechanism for WFU student plans to be processed electronically by the VT Graduate School.

On the VT campus the plan must be electronically entered into the university database and sent to the Graduate School for final approval. The Plan of Study (POS) is the first major benchmark assessed by the Graduate School as it monitors student progress through all steps of the degree-seeking process, and it is the first thing checked when students are being cleared for graduation. Plans of study should be submitted to SBES and to the VT Graduate School according to the following schedule:

- M.S. Plans: By the end of the second semester of study
- Ph.D. Plans: By the end of the third semester of study

Instructions and Notes for the Student:

Students are to submit a rough draft of the plan to the Graduate Coordinator before any signatures are obtained so that it can be checked for problems, errors etc.

All courses on the plan (including supporting courses) must be taken for a letter grade except for those approved to be taken on a pass-fail (P/F) basis. Do not include audited classes. Transfer credits cannot exceed 50% of the graded course credits needed to satisfy the minimum requirements for an SBES degree. The Graduate School must have a copy of official transcripts for courses being transferred before the Plan can be approved.

Check the SBES website for minimum degree requirements, sample plans of study, and the fillable Plan of Study form.

Making Changes to the Plan:

Keep in mind that the plan is a “projection” into the future and as such, it is subject to change when circumstances dictate. Before the Graduate Coordinator sends your plan electronically to the graduate school, it can be altered and edited at will (with advisory committee approval). However, once the Graduate School has approved it, it can only be changed by means of the procedure given below.

To make a change you must go to the Graduate School website and fill out the proper paperwork. There are two (2) separate forms for this purpose at http://www.grads.vt.edu/forms/index.html: one for plan changes, and one for advisory committee changes. Follow the form instructions and gather signatures (except for Department Head or Graduate Program Chair). Bring/send the form to the Graduate Coordinator for final processing. WFU students can send the completed form by scan/email, marked “ATTN: Tess”.

Additional Important Information:

- Once the plan is entered into Banner, you can view it on Hokie Spa to track its approval status. (VT students only)
Be aware that if you have any courses on your plan which you took over five years ago, measured from the semester you submit the plan, the Graduate School will require a Course Justification Form completed by your committee. This form is also found at the website mentioned above. The completed form should be sent to the Graduate Coordinator at the Tech campus so that it can be submitted when the Plan of Study (POS) is filed.

If a member of your committee is someone other than a full-time, tenure track faculty member at Virginia Tech or a WFU faculty member already approved by the VT Graduate School, that person must go through an approval process by submitting a curriculum vita to the SBES Graduate Coordinator in Blacksburg. The coordinator subsequently completes a Graduate Program Faculty & Additional Committee Member Registration form and will submit both documents to the VT Graduate School for approval. This must be done before the Plan of Study can be filed.

Remember: All forms must go through the Graduate Coordinator's office.