



Graduate Education at Mount Mary University

Graduate Education

Graduate education at Mount Mary University provides academic and professional advancement opportunities to women and men that are consistent with the institutional mission of the University. The graduate programs offer Master's degrees, professional continuing education, and advanced personal enrichment courses of study. Mount Mary provides graduate education that results in students who are committed to being critical and creative scholars, ethical and just human beings with a global perspective, and leaders who put knowledge into transforming action. The goals of graduate education at Mount Mary University are

- Reflective thinking;
- Development of in-depth knowledge and specialized skills in a area of concentration; and
- Application of theoretical and empirical findings to relevant issues within the discipline.

Graduate education represents mastery of an academic discipline and is different from undergraduate education. It is characterized by specialized training in the discipline's theory, research methodology, and critical analysis. It also offers students the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to generate knowledge and to apply existing knowledge. It also contributes to students acquiring the professional ethics and values of the discipline.

Mount Mary graduate programs subscribe and adhere to the following principles and characteristics of graduate education.

Principles of Graduate Education

- Mastery of subject matter. Provides a solid foundation of knowledge in the discipline.
- Theoretical understanding. Application and performance grounded in theory.
- Critical thinking. Engages the student in understanding the assumptions of the discipline and an understanding of viable alternative assumptions.
- Skills in research, application, and/or creative activities. Develops competencies to advance the knowledge of the discipline. Included are appropriate writing skills and the ability to present original insights and creative expressions.
- Service orientation. Encourages returning the special benefits of graduate training to the larger community.
- Wide range of perspectives. Presents an intellectually and culturally rich set of learning activities that are sensitive to diversity in all its facets.
- Integration of ethics with practice.

Characteristics of Strong Graduate Programs

Regardless of the purpose and goals of a master's degree, all graduate programs share common characteristics. Among them are:

1) **Clear Purpose**

Graduate programs are planned. Departments offer programs that are essential to their specific mission and consistent with the larger mission of the University. Faculty and students have a collective understanding of the program's purposes and goals.

2) **Academic Quality**

Graduate programs have well-established admissions standards and practices. The curriculum is strong and course work is challenging. Theses, projects, and/or creative performances are held to high standards. Graduate programs have well-developed procedures for preparing and conducting comprehensive and oral examinations.

3) **Supportive Learning Environment**

Cooperation and collaboration between learners and faculty are nurtured to enrich the learning experiences within the program. Quality programs require and receive institutional support. Institutional support is critical for establishing and supporting high academic standards, including those necessary for accreditation.

4) **Mentoring**

Mentoring of students contributes to the students acquiring the ethics and conventions of the discipline. It also contributes to the professional identity of the student in the discipline as well as addressing the individual needs of the students in their professional development.

5) **Application**

Students are provided the opportunity to apply the knowledge/skills they have acquired. Opportunities such as internships, practica, theses, papers, fieldwork, laboratories, and conference participation promote and foster effective student learning experiences.

6) **Integrated Culminating Experience**

Students are required to complete a culminating experience which evolves logically from the program's objectives. The final product, in the form of a thesis, project, comprehensive examination or a creative performance, allows students to demonstrate the acquisition of the knowledge and skills they have learned.

7) **Faculty**

Graduate faculty members possess the appropriate degree and relevant professional experience for their discipline. They are active scholars or artist-scholars who regularly contribute to their profession. They are actively involved in scholarly and creative activities in their discipline and participate in local, regional, and/or national conferences. Faculty members contribute to the intellectual climate of the department and the University through service as committee members, and collaboration with colleagues in scholarly, creative, and/or research activities.

Graduate faculty members exemplify the characteristics of graduate level work in their courses. Courses offered for graduate credit contain material at a more advanced level or require greater intellectual or creative performance, than do undergraduate courses in the same subject area. Graduate course syllabi specify text(s) and supplemental materials, assignments, assessment procedures, and learning activities. All pertinent course expectations are described and explained to students on the first day of class. It is the level of course material and expectations, and not the level of the students, that defines whether a course should carry graduate or undergraduate credit.

Graduate faculty members are active members of appropriate professional organization(s), attend and/or present at conferences, and publish and/or disseminate their work through appropriate professional outlets within their field. Active participation in the profession contributes to faculty members staying current in their profession and contributing to the knowledge base of their discipline.