



Updated: 10/30/2024

\*Students enrolled prior to fall 2024 may substitute legacy STS Core courses (e.g. 5205 or 5206) with committee approval

**Advisory Committee Members** (at least 4)

Signatures	Print Name	Dept.	Date
<i>Chair</i>			
<i>Co-chair</i>			

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Graduate Studies signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## STS PhD Plan of Study FAQ

### What is a Plan of Study (POS)?

The POS is an individualized description of how a student is meeting the requirements for degree completion. It is created in conjunction with—and approved by—your advisory committee.

### When must my PhD POS be filed?

It must be submitted to the Graduate School by the end of the **third semester** of full-time enrollment in the PhD program.

### What if I began my coursework prior to Fall 2024?

In the Fall 2024 semester, we introduced changes to core courses. Students who completed all STS Core and Field Requirements prior to Fall 2024 should use the legacy POS. Students who completed a combination of Core Requirements prior to and after Fall 2024 will work with the Director of Graduate Studies and their committees to make substitutions.

### What are the degree requirements?

The POS has four sets of credit requirements with a minimum of 90 total credit hours.

*I. STS Core Requirement (15 credits).* Consists of STS 5024 and STS 5514 as well as three of the following: STS 5104, STS 5204, STS 5304, STS 5614, STS 6014. Students who took courses prior to Fall 2024 can substitute our earlier course numbers for the core (e.g. STS 5205: History of Technology for STS 5104). Students also can choose to take additional Core courses and apply them to the STS Field and/or Additional Credits Requirements described below.

*II. STS Field Requirement (12 credits).* The field requirement develops advanced knowledge in an STS domain. Two of the courses must be in the STS department. The other two can be outside the department but should be thematically related.

*III. Research & Dissertation (30 credits).* All Virginia Tech PhD students must complete a *minimum* of STS 7994: Research & Dissertation. Students with a full course load typically enroll in 3 credit hours a semester so that their load (including classes) for a semester is 12 credit hours. Research & Dissertation credit hours beyond the required minimum can count toward Additional Credits with committee approval.

*IV. Additional Credits (33 credits).* This requirement is met through a combination of STS courses, transfer credits, and/or research and dissertation credit hours. This combination of credits must be approved by your committee.

### How many classes do I need to take?

It depends on the student and their committee. Students completing both the non-thesis MS and PhD degrees take a minimum of 10 graded classes. This includes students entering with a bachelor's degree and those in a non-STS or equivalent history of science, philosophy of science, etc.) master's degree. Students entering the program with an STS masters or equivalent, generally require a minimum of 9 graded courses (27 credits). Most students benefit from additional coursework in their specialization. Historically, most students take 10–12 courses, and some more.

### Can I take classes Pass/Fail?

All graded courses on the POS must be taken for a letter grade (A/F) except for those courses offered on a pass/fail (P/F) basis only (for example, Independent Study courses). Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA or better on the POS course work. Once a course on the POS is taken for a grade, it must remain on the POS.

### What classes from my STS MS POS can be used on my STS PhD POS?

In most cases, courses on your MS POS will also count on your PhD POS. The important exceptions are: (1) you cannot “triple count” a course, so if you are completing a graduate certificate in another program (e.g. Bioethics) you may need additional courses; (2) you can only apply an external transfer course to *either* your MS *or* your PhD POS, otherwise it would be a triple count.

### What credits can I transfer?

The Graduate School stipulates that: No more than 50% of the graded credit hours needed to satisfy the requirements for a Virginia Tech graduate degree may be transferred in from a regionally accredited university. All such credits must have earned

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grades of "B" or better, have been earned while in good standing in graduate status, and must have been graduate courses (numbered 5000 or higher) at the institution where the student took the courses. Grades of "S" or "P" are not acceptable for transfer credit. All transfer courses must be acceptable to the student's Advisory Committee and the Graduate Program Director or Department Head. For transfer course work more than five years old, a Justification of 'Old' Course Work form must be filed with the POS (see below).

Credits from other universities are transferred to a Virginia Tech graduate degree at the time the POS that includes those courses is approved by the Graduate School. Transferred courses count only as credit hours and are not included in the calculation of the Virginia Tech GPA. Official transcripts are required before transfer course work can be approved for the POS.

Research, Project and Report, Practicum or Internship credit hours may not be transferred in from another university to meet Virginia Tech graduate degree requirements (i.e., they cannot be included on the POS). Credits taken while in undergraduate status or for an undergraduate degree cannot be used as transfer credit for a graduate degree.

### **How recent must transfer credits be?**

For transfer course work more than five years old, a Justification of 'Old' Course Work form must be filed with the POS.

### **What goes under Additional Credits?**

This part of the POS will be made up of some combination of additional courses, transfer credits, and STS 7994 Research & Dissertation credits. The specific mix will be determined in consultation with your committee. See also: *How many classes do I need to take?*

### **What is the Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Requirement?**

The Graduate School mandates that: "All graduate students are expected to uphold the [Virginia Tech Principles of Community](#) and the Graduate School's [Expectations for Graduate Education](#) as well as the scholarly integrity and research ethics standards of their disciplines. Graduate students must complete degree program requirements for learning about 4 required scholarly ethics and integrity topics plus additional topics relevant to the discipline as follows: Required topics: 1. Plagiarism and other violations of the Graduate Honor Code; 2. Proper use of professional conventions in citation of existing research and scholarship, accurate reporting and ownership of findings, and acknowledgement of contributions to the work; 3. Ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities; 4. Available avenues for reporting alleged misconduct." This requirement is met in STS 5024.

### **What is the Inclusion and Diversity Requirement?**

The Graduate School mandates that: "All degree seeking graduate students . . . participate in inclusion and diversity educational programs as part of their graduate studies." We meet this requirement through a Program Orientation and an I&D Seminar.

### **How do I make changes to my POS?**

If your POS is on file with the Graduate School, you must fill out a Change of POS Form. An important note: Once a course on the POS has been taken for a grade, it must remain on the POS.

### **I didn't read all this, what did I miss?**

In all cases, the student's committee and the Director of Graduate Studies must approve the POS.