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# ENSURING YOUR SUCCESSFUL GRADUATION

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New Student Manual | 2020-21

This manual is written to support the goal of helping students new to Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) continue their stay at the University Institute, and graduate on time.



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## Scope

This manual intends to guide freshmen, transfer students, and international students new to RIT in succeeding at the Institute. By utilizing this manual, new students will learn about how RIT has improved over the years, which will help them gain more confidence in maintaining good academic standing, and graduating on time.

## Introduction

### **RIT's Mission Statement:**

*"To shape the future and improve the world through creativity and innovation...we leverage the power of technology, the arts, and design for greater good."*

– Dr. Munson, RIT President

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) has been credited for its outstanding academic programs and its education options, which include online degree programs and cooperative education (co-op), respectively. Recently, such fields of study as Management Information Systems, Information Technology, Business, and New Media Design have captured the interest of many students, which led to an increased enrollment in these programs. Importantly, most of these fields offer students a chance to learn at school, and on the job. Both forms of education help students enhance problem-solving skills and soft skills needed in the workplace.

Despite RIT's rising popularity, additional effort is needed to resolve student retention and delayed graduation, since they indicate whether students at RIT are satisfied with their stay at the Institute. Students' academic achievements and student fees are some factors to consider for assessing students' statuses at RIT. This manual will provide new students to RIT insight into various considerations for them to complete their studies at RIT successfully. New students to RIT will be provided with statistics on the total cost of attendance, and the population of both students who remain at RIT and the students

who graduate from RIT. They will also be introduced to the Institute's academic policies that restrict students' decisions.

## Definitions

*The following is a list of confusing terminologies in this manual:*

1. **Cooperative education (Co-Op):** A full-time, paid work experience in which students get to combine their classroom experience with their practical experience in a professional setting in order to increase their chances of full-time employment once they graduate.
2. **private:** a private college or university that's focused deeply on both education and research (Note. a private university costs more than a public one).
3. **short-term:** in the context of education, a short-term student typically attends college for about two years, and doesn't follow the traditional four-to-five-year path.
4. **pre-college:** the term that's usually used to describe college-level courses that students take before they formally attend college.
5. **domestic:** living in the same land a person was born, or not foreign. For example, "an RIT Student who is born in the U.S. and studies at Rochester's campus is a *domestic* student". The opposite of domestic is **international**.
6. **abide:** to obey or follow the rules.
7. **Grade Point Average (GPA):** a student's final calculated grade of all the credit hours taken per semester.

Grade	4.00 Scale GPA	Description
A	4.00	Excellent
A-	3.67	
B+	3.33	

B	3.00	Above Average
B-	2.67	
C+	2.33	
C, or S	2.00	Average, or Satisfactory
C-	1.67	
D	1.00	Minimum Passing Grade
F	0.00	Failure
W		Withdrew
I		Incomplete

*Note. Satisfactory is equivalent to a “C” grade, but also indicates that a student completes a wellness course, or a co-op block successfully.*

8. **Cumulative GPA:** a student’s total GPA calculated by combining the GPAs for all semesters.

9. **cumulate:** to add on to what’s counted, or considered.

10. **obligation:** a commitment to a person’s action, or a person’s responsibility for performing his or her action.

11. **utilize:** to make use of.

12. **subject matter expert:** a person with deep knowledge about a specific topic or role.

13. **proactive:** described as taking the lead, or initiative.

## Body

RIT is a **private**, and now a national university that offers not just exciting academic fields, but also multiple degree programs: Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctorate; and certificates for students who decide to have **short-term** education. Some students may

finish college sooner, either by satisfying their academic requirements with transferable, **pre-college** credits or by simply dropping out of college. Of course, there are other reasons some students attend college for a shorter time. Regardless of an individual student's academic plan, every student has their own priorities, and is responsible for defining his or her own success, academically and professionally.

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (USDENCES) revealed that nearly 3/5 of students have graduated in four years of study. This showed that over 50% of the student population graduated on time, but didn't clearly explain why the remaining student population didn't graduate. Before getting into further detail, let's first explore the population at RIT. Over the years, RIT have had more male students, but have also recruited more female students by attracting them to certain academic fields (please refer to the [Introduction](#)). The table below shows a recent student and faculty population at RIT:

**Table 1** Student Body

Undergraduate	15,946
Graduate	3,101
(Fall 2018) Total:	19,047

**Table 2** Faculty & Staff

Full-time Faculty	1,109
Part-time Faculty	22
Adjunct Faculty	368
Staff	2,515
(Fall 2018) Total:	4,014

In the 2018-19 Academic Year, RIT has mostly undergraduate students, full-time faculty, and staffs. Although it isn't clear why they're more undergraduate students, new students should know that the college campus serves both **domestic** (mostly undergraduates) and **international** students (mostly graduates). Both types of students

face similar challenges in terms of how much they're able to afford their education and how long they complete their graduation requirements.

**Figure 1** Total Expense for Full-Time Students

<b>Undergraduate Students</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>Change in expense 2017-19 (%)</b>
Tuition & Fees	\$38,568	\$40,068	\$42,345	5.7%
On-Campus Housing	\$52,792	\$54,714	\$57,401	4.9%
Off-Campus Housing	\$52,792	\$54,714	\$57,401	4.9%
Off-Campus Housing (At Home)	\$42,094	\$42,294	\$44,611	5.5%
<b>Graduate Students</b>				
Tuition & Fees	-	-	\$45,808	-
Tuition	-	-	\$45,520	-
Fees	-	-	\$288	-

<b>Undergraduate students who entered prior to Fall 2018</b>					
	Tuition	Student Activities Fee	Student Health Services Fee	Other fees	Total
On-Campus RIT Student	\$42,646	\$296	\$350	\$7,902+\$5,638+\$2,088	\$58,920
Commuter RIT Student	\$42,646	\$296	\$350	\$2,670+\$2,350	\$48,312

(living at home)					
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Undergraduate students who entered Fall 2018 and Fall 2019					
	Tuition	Student Activities Fee	Student Health Services Fee	Other fees	Total
On-Campus RIT Student	\$45,244	\$296	\$350	\$7,902+\$5,638+\$2,088	\$58,920
Commuter RIT Student (living at home)	\$45,244	\$296	\$350	\$2,670+\$2,350	\$48,312

The first table above displays the total cost of attendance for undergraduates and graduates at RIT from three recent academic years. Besides the costs for housing, notice that the total cost for full-time undergraduate students slowly increases every year, and the total cost for graduate students is even greater. The other two tables, which show the total costs for undergraduates who joined RIT before 2018, and those who joined starting 2018, are similar to the first table. The tuition has increased after a year, and led to an overall increase in tuitions & fees combined. This is likely another cause of *short-term* education. Both undergraduates and graduates may lack funds for their education, pushing them to either withdraw from the University or take on federal work study, and several part-time jobs in order to cover their tuition & fees. Even though RIT is a *private* university, it cooperates with the federal government in assisting students in need.

Here are some valuable resources for your receiving financial aid:



- **FAFSA**

- Every student should fill out the federal student aid form in order to receive various forms of financial aid, including Pell Grants, grants from your school, and federal loans (if you choose to borrow).

- **Student Financial Services**

- RIT's Financial Office is dedicated to help students to find services they need and allocate students' financial aid awards based on their academic plans, and current situation. For more information, visit <https://www.rit.edu/fa/sfs/about-us>.

- **About RIT**

- All student resources and RIT statistics are stored [here](#).

In addition to financial assistance, RIT campuses also offer students services to aid their learning and perform to the best of their ability:

- **RIT Office of Career Services & Cooperative Education**

- The Career Services office hires various Career Consultants and Advisors for different degree programs who are trained at offering students suggestions and feedback for a better co-op search, and tips to achieve work-life balance.
- Because different programs may differ in the services offered, find out more about your program at <https://www.rit.edu/study>.

RIT also requires students to **abide** by the Institute's common set of academic policies for all programs:

## University Policy

### **1. Undergraduate certificates & diplomas:**

- a. Students must meet all program requirements, and have no grades of Incomplete (I).
- b. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0.

### **2. Associate and Baccalaureate degrees:**

- a. Students must meet complete all required courses and co-ops, if applicable, and have no grades of Incomplete (I).
- b. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0.
- c. Students must **cumulate** at least 60 credit hours for the Associate degree, and at least 120 credit hours for the Baccalaureate degree.
- d. Students must complete their wellness requirements.
- e. Students must pay their full or adjusted amounts due to financial **obligations**.
- f. Students are expected to attend commencement ceremonies in order to officially graduate.

### **3. Advanced Graduate certificate:**

- a. Students must satisfy their program's requirements, and have no grades of Incomplete (I).
- b. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0.

- c. Students must follow a seven-year graduation requirement.

#### **4. Master's Degree**

- a. Students must complete all required courses, and have no grades of Incomplete (I).
- b. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- c. Students must *cumulate* at least 30 credit hours. At least 2/3 of semester credit hours of graduate level course work and research (XXXX-[600|900]) are required to be earned while living at RIT.

*Note. exceptions may be considered and must be approved by the Graduate Council.*

- d. Thesis is required when appropriate.

*Note. the thesis requirement may be waived and replaced by other appropriate research or comparable professional achievement as an integral part of the graduate program.*

- e. Students must pay their full or adjusted amounts due to financial obligations.
- f. Students must follow a seven-year graduation requirement.

#### **5. Doctoral Degree (Ph.D)**

- a. Students must complete all courses, research, exams, defense of dissertation, and submission of a final accepted dissertation, and have no grades of Incomplete (I).
- b. Students must take at least 3 years of full-time study.

#### **6. Seven-year graduation requirement**

a. PURPOSE:

In Graduate programs,

1. To ensure content currency of a degree at the time of graduation.
2. To provide a mechanism for dealing with extenuating circumstances that may have prevented timely completion of a degree.

b. Applies to:

1. Advanced Certificate
- 2. Master's Degree**
3. Dual Baccalaureate-Master's Degree

## Attendance Policy

### 1. STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- All students are responsible for attending their scheduled classes regularly and punctually in order to promote their progress and to maintain conditions conducive to effective learning.
- Absences, for whatever reason, do not relieve students of their responsibility for fulfilling normal requirements in any course.
- Non-attendance does not constitute an official withdrawal and may result in a failing grade.
- A student is not required to file excuses for absences unless expected to do so by the instructor.
- In sponsored programs that require class attendance, it's the student's responsibility to request weekly verification of attendance.

## 2. INSTRUCTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Instructions ARE NOT required to maintain formal attendance records of students in their classes.
  - As cases of serious absences become known, the student's advisor or department should be notified.
- Each instructor is required to review their class lists every term and report non-attending students to the Office of the Registrar.
- In sponsored programs that require class attendance, it's the student's responsibility to request weekly verification of attendance.

In the [University Policy](#) above, all graduate students must commit to seven years in order to graduate with either a Master's degree or an Advanced Graduate's certificate. In this case, students might think this policy applies to them (if they plan on attending graduate school after completing their Bachelor's requirements). If so, they have to focus on not just maintaining good grades, but also making sure they're taking enough credit hours per semester.

According to the [Attendance Policy](#), students and instructors have their own responsibilities, which shape each other's performances. Whether it is the students' intentions to miss class and/or school, students will not only submit proof of evidence with an acceptable reason for their absence, but also need to be warned that missing three consecutive semesters, including summer, will result in an automatic withdrawal of the student. If this is the cause of a student's withdrawal, that student's record is removed from RIT, and that student will need to restart the admissions process.

Often, undergraduates and graduates – this applies to both full-time and part-time students – experience difficulty balancing their load of courses for a couple of reasons, but may not be limited to:

- Doing poorly in some semesters, which means retaking courses in the next semester.
- Considering opportunities such as **work study**, **independent study**, and multiple on-or-off campus jobs, or assisting school instructors with research.
- Failing to plan ahead of time the criteria (courses and co-op) you must fulfill in each succeeding semester.

Despite what the reason is, students shouldn't be discouraged easily because feeling so will immediately lead them to make careless decisions, such as aiming for a graduate degree when falling behind with the Bachelor's requirements. If students struggle to complete their program's requirement on time, seek help as early as possible and **utilize** every resource that's available. Remember no student is ever alone and it's never too late to graduate from college, since every student has their own priorities (see p.5).

However, students will delay their graduation further if they continue to dwell on their common mistakes without resolving them. Also, try not to think about unrealistic, unattainable goals in the moment. What's more important is reminding themselves of their purpose in school: Why are they taking your selected courses? What made them choose your field of study? Understanding their purpose will allow students to stay present, and focus on what they want to achieve now in order to move onto the next phase. However, if they choose to take at least one semester off due to personal reasons, refer to the Institute's **Leave of Absence and University Withdrawal Policy**.

There are also resources that many RIT students have recommended that are worth trying:

- **Academic Success Center (ASC)**
  - RIT's central resource for tutoring on fundamental subjects, such as Math, Science, Reading, and Writing.

- This resource is highly preferred for all students. Even though the ASC may not formally provide help for all courses, it has various **subject matter experts** and experienced tutors to walk students through problems in groups or one-on-one.
- **Student Clubs & Organization**
  - There are several clubs and organizations at RIT that students can join freely.
  - Students can even run their own club by establishing their own roles and rules, and seeking approval by a trusted faculty member at RIT.
- **Wallace Library > Services**
  - RIT's main library is the go-to place for retrieving textbooks and reference sources.
  - Students can also receive additional help with writing by booking an appointment with student editors at **The Writing Commons**.

## Conclusion

RIT has significantly improved not only because it has various academic-intensive programs, but also because it continues to add more services for assisting students at the University. Students who choose the services they need early on hardly regret this decision because they know what they want in the moment, and are **proactive** in solving their issues. After reading this manual, students will hopefully learn to be realistic about their attending RIT. Students should also remind themselves what their future career is, and how their coursework at RIT helps leverage your personal brand.

After all, college is about exploring your interests and learning more about them, so it's normal that students are unsure about their future career. Many students who have

graduated from RIT in a field they're passionate about eventually ended up in similar or different professions. By maintaining good personal finance and academic plans, students will be closer to graduating in no time.

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