

# How to Determine the Top 10 Percent of Graduate Students

## Excerpt from Article X of Alpha Chi's Constitution

*Section 1.* A person may be elected to membership in Alpha Chi either as an undergraduate student, a graduate student, or as an honorary member. Good character as well as high scholarship shall be essential qualifications for election.

*Section 2.* Undergraduate Student Membership. [guidelines for juniors and seniors]

*Section 3.* Graduate Student Membership.

- a. Membership shall be restricted to students enrolled in master or doctoral programs who have completed not fewer than fifteen semester hours of graduate credit.
- b. The faculty, or appropriate committee thereof, of any institution shall have the sole power of selection for graduate members of Alpha Chi. It shall set its own standard of scholarship for induction, except that not more than the top-ranking 10 percent of students classified as graduate students, including those previously elected to membership, may be elected to membership.

*(See Alpha Chi's Constitution for Article X in its entirety.)*

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## Guidelines

1. Note that prospective Alpha Chi members must have completed at least 15 semester hours of graduate credit. However, for purposes of determining the number of available spaces within the top 10 percent, all graduate students should be counted, including those with fewer than 15 hours earned. (Example: 200 total graduate students = potential AX membership of 20; but only those with 15 or more hours earned are eligible for the 20 places.) The rationale for the 15-hour rule is to defer membership until students are approximately halfway through the course work in a typical master's program. ***Note that 15 hours is the minimum; you have the right to require more hours. See also note 8 below.***
2. The National Council's interpretation of the intent of the amendment is that only grades in graduate courses should be considered. ***See also note 6 below.***
3. Undergraduate Alpha Chi members who move on into graduate programs in Alpha Chi schools are already full members and should not be invited again, though of course they are encouraged to participate in chapter activities. Remember to count them against the 10 percent eligible. (Using the example above, if five graduate students are already Alpha Chi members, then there are 15 remaining spaces for new graduate student members.)
4. Although the process should be similar to that used in identifying the top 10 percent of juniors and top 10 percent of seniors, grades in graduate programs tend to be higher. If you use a GPA cutoff for inviting undergraduate members, you will not want to use the same GPA cutoff for graduate students.
5. In many institutions and programs, it will not be unusual to find more than 10 percent of graduate students with a 4.0 average. In such a case, the philosophy used by other honor societies is to invite all with a 4.0, because *statistically* each one of them truly is in the top 10 percent based on grades. This means that you might indeed invite and induct *literally* more than 10 percent of your graduate students if you have statistical ties.
6. If your institution wishes to invite only 10 percent and needs to distinguish among those with 4.0 averages, probably the fairest tiebreaker is the *undergraduate* GPA. In any case, try to use the most objective criteria possible.
7. Because graduate programs differ in rigor, you are advised to consider the programs separately, inviting the top 10 percent of each program or college rather than of the collective graduate enrollment. This will insure the top students in each program can be invited, thus protecting the interests of students in programs with more rigorous grading standards. The National Council has already approved such an interpretation of the Constitution with regard to the undergraduate selection process, and this approach is used by some of our chapters, especially at those schools with extension campuses or complete online programs.
8. Because graduate programs also differ in length, treating the programs separately will also allow you, if you wish, to require more than 15 hours of credit in longer programs; a suggested level is approximately halfway through the program.

## What Kind of Graduate Student Is Eligible?

9. Although we use the term *graduate student*, this category includes those in seminaries or in what are often called professional programs rather than graduate programs, such as those in the health sciences.
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