PROBATION OR DISMISSAL BASED ON ACADEMIC PROGRESS

The policies and procedures detailed in this document are applicable to all graduate students at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). UNMC may modify this document from time to time within its discretion, without prior notice, and shall be the sole determiner as to how it is interpreted.

Disciplinary Actions (covered by the NU Student Code of Conduct)

The University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct (https://catalog.unmc.edu/general-information/student-policies-procedures/code-of-conduct/) (the Code) establishes Standards of Academic Integrity and Responsible Conduct (the Standards) with which all students must comply. Conduct considered to represent a violation of the Standards includes but is not limited to engaging in sexual misconduct, academic dishonesty (cheating, etc.), plagiarism, falsification, behavior that may cause harm to individuals or property, and failing to comply with any University or Campus policy, rule, or regulation. Potential consequences of a violation of the Standards include disciplinary probation, temporary suspension, dismissal from a degree program, and permanent expulsion from the University. Conduct which may constitute a violation of the Standards will be addressed under the Code and not under the following policies and procedures.

Definitions

Advisor = chair of the student's Advisory Committee,[1] (p.) or a 1st-year student's temporary advisor (typically, the Graduate Program Director)

Graduate courses = courses listed in the UNMC Catalog as 800- or 900-level, or their equivalent at other NU campuses

Graduate Program Committee = the committee responsible for general supervision of a graduate degree program. For the IGPBS, this is the doctoral program graduate committee; for MSIA this is the sub-plan advisory committee; for Nursing this is the CON Ph.D. Affairs Council.

Graduate Program Director = chair of the Graduate Program Committee. For non-degree-seeking students, the Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Success serves the role of Graduate Program Director for processes described in this document.

Graduate student = a student at any stage of graduate certificate program, master's program, or doctoral program administered by UNMC Graduate Studies (including all M.S. and Ph.D. students). Non-degree-seeking (Unclassified) students enrolled in graduate courses at UNMC are also considered to be graduate students subject to certain aspects of this document – primarily, situations covered by the NU Student Code of Conduct and those related to payment of tuition/fees.

UNMC Graduate Council = the governing body acting on behalf of UNMC Graduate Faculty and advisory to the UNMC Dean for Graduate Studies. Graduate Council actions can affect changes in policy and/or regulations that apply to all UNMC graduate programs.

University Day = a weekday on which campus offices are open, excluding those days University classes are not in session (*e.g.*, student breaks, designated holidays, etc.; refer to the Graduate Studies Academic Calendar (https://www.unmc.edu/gradstudies/current-students/academic-calendar.html)).

Academic Evaluation

Graduate students must maintain a high level of scholarly achievement, including meeting minimum academic standards and maintaining satisfactory progress toward degree completion. Failure to do so may result in the student being placed on probation, being dismissed from a degree program, or being denied permission to continue graduate studies in the University. Following are actions that may occur administratively or in response to recommendations from the appropriate entity.

I. Administrative Probation

1. Any graduate student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 may not continue their program of study without special permission from the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies after considering the recommendation of the Graduate Program Committee. Students permitted to continue in the program will be placed on academic probation and must remove the probationary status (return to a cumulative GPA ≥ 3.0 and meet any other conditions established by the program) within the ensuing twelve (12) months to avoid potential dismissal from the program.
2. Ph.D. students must complete the Final Oral Exam within 4 years after they are advanced to Candidacy. Students granted an extension of the term of Candidacy will be placed on probation until completion of degree requirements.
3. Graduate students must complete degree requirements within the designated time frame established by UNMC (5 consecutive calendar years after matriculation for Master's students; 7 years for Ph.D. students). Students granted an extension will be placed on probation until completion of degree requirements.

Procedures:

- For situations triggered by cumulative GPA < 3.0 (Item I.1.): At the start of each semester, Graduate Studies will notify each Graduate Program Director of students whose cumulative GPA is below 3.0. Within 2 weeks after notification of a student's poor academic standing, the Graduate Program Committee must submit to the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies a letter that includes 1) a review of the student's academic status (including any other information relevant to the student's performance), and 2) their recommendation for continuation or dismissal. If continuation is recommended, the letter must also include 3) a remediation plan for returning to good academic standing, and 4) any additional conditions established by the Committee for remaining in the program. The remediation plan must not simply state a goal (e.g., retake course X and get a higher grade; or get higher grades in other courses); rather, it must present a plan to foster the student's success in achieving that goal. Students permitted by the Executive Associate Dean to continue in their degree or certificate program will be notified of this decision and will be placed on academic probation. Additional conditions for remaining in the program will also be communicated to the student in the notification letter. The student must return to a good academic standing (cumulative GPA of at least 3.0) within twelve (12) months; failure to do so, and/or to meet any other conditions established for remaining in the program, represents grounds for dismissal (see Item III.2.).
- In extraordinary and unforeseen circumstances, the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies may grant permission to extend

the term of Candidacy (Item I.2.) or the general degree completion deadline (Item I.3.). Requests for an extension must be submitted at least 1 month in advance of the deadline. Students granted an extension will be placed on probation until completion of degree requirements. The Executive Associate Dean, in consultation with the student's Advisor and/or Advisory Committee, may establish additional conditions or interim deadlines to ensure completion of degree requirements in a timely manner. Failure to satisfy the conditions established for removal of probation status, including completion of degree requirements by the extended deadline, represents grounds for dismissal (see item III.3.).

- Without the Executive Associate Dean's prior permission to extend the term of Candidacy, the Candidacy expires at the end of the 4-year period. To continue toward degree completion, and only upon approval of the Supervisory Committee, the Graduate Program Committee, and the Executive Associate Dean, the Candidate must retake and pass another Comprehensive Exam in order to extend the term of Candidacy and continue toward degree completion.

II. Administrative Dismissal

Except in extraordinary extenuating circumstances (as determined by the Dean for Graduate Studies or their designee), any of the following conditions will trigger dismissal from the graduate degree or certificate program:

1. Failure to pay tuition and/or fees, or to enroll in courses for a 12-month period (unless on Leave of Absence).
2. Missing the deadlines for both the initial attempt and the second attempt at the Comprehensive Exam (Ph.D. students only).
3. Failure on the second attempt at either the Comprehensive Exam or the Final Oral Exam.
4. Early termination of Ph.D. Candidacy, which may result from either of the following:
   a. Failure of the Ph.D. Candidate to maintain continuous enrollment in the Graduate College (a minimum of 1 cr. each fall and spring semester, unless on Leave of Absence) until receipt of the degree; or
   b. Lack of a permanent Advisor under whose direction the Ph.D. Candidate's dissertation project is being pursued, despite having completed the process for changing research advisors (https://catalog.unmc.edu/graduate-studies/process-for-changing-research-advisors/).

Procedures:

- Procedures applicable to students who fail to pay tuition/fees, or who do not register for courses for a 12-month period (item II.1.), can be found in the **General Information > Student Policies and Procedures** section of this Catalog (Delinquent Tuition Fee Policy (https://catalog.unmc.edu/general-information/student-policies-procedures/delinquent-tuition-fee-policy/); Non-Enrolled Student Policy (https://catalog.unmc.edu/general-information/student-policies-procedures/non-enrolled-student-policy/); Administrative Withdrawal Policy (https://catalog.unmc.edu/general-information/student-policies-procedures/administrative-withdrawal/)). Ph.D. students who have advanced to Candidacy should refer to Item II.4.a. for the applicable policy regarding continuous registration.
- For situations related to the Comprehensive Exam or Final Oral Exam (Items II.2. & II.3.), the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies will notify the student and the Graduate Program Director of the student's pending dismissal from the program and UNMC Graduate Studies. A 2-week grace period (10 University Days) will be allowed between date of exam failure and dismissal, giving the student the opportunity to arrange other academic options and/or to appeal the exam outcome through the grade appeal process (https://catalog.unmc.edu/graduate-studies/academic-grade-appeals/). (In the case of a grade appeal for the Comprehensive Exam or the Final Oral Exam, the Chair of the Examining Committee will be considered to be the course instructor and the Graduate Program Director will be considered to be chair of the department in which the course was taken.). If a written grade appeal or request for transfer is not received by the end of the 2-week grace period, or if the grade appeal process does not resolve the situation, the Registrar will be notified of the student's dismissal and dis-enrollment from all courses.
- When the Graduate Studies Office becomes aware of situations that would trigger early termination of Ph.D. Candidacy (item II.4.), the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies will notify the student and the Graduate Program Director of the student's pending dismissal from the program and UNMC Graduate Studies. A 2-week grace period (10 University Days) will be allowed between the date of the dismissal notification and the effective date of dismissal. This period allows the student an opportunity to either a) respond with a written description of the extraordinary circumstances underlying the situation, or b) voluntarily withdraw from the program. If neither ensues within the grace period, or if the Executive Associate Dean does not consider the underlying circumstances to be sufficient to justify reinstatement of Ph.D. Candidacy, the Registrar will be notified of the student's dismissal and dis-enrollment from all courses.
  - If the Executive Associate Dean elects to reinstate Ph.D. Candidacy, the student will be placed on probation with specific benchmarks that must be met for removal of probationary status. Failure to satisfy the conditions established for removal of probation represents grounds for dismissal (see items III.3 & III.6.).

III. Probation or Dismissal based on Graduate Program Committee Recommendation

The situations listed below may result in academic action (either probation or dismissal) initiated by the program's Graduate Program Committee, whether acting alone or upon the recommendation of the student's Advisor or Advisory Committee.

1. Unsatisfactory grades in graduate courses:
   a. A grade of "Fail" (F) in any graded graduate course or doctoral dissertation, regardless of cumulative GPA.
   b. Grades of "C" or below, or "F" when Pass/Fail (other than doctoral dissertation) in any **two** (2) graduate courses, regardless of cumulative GPA. The unsatisfactory grades need not be earned in the same semester.
2. Failure to return to good academic standing (GPA $\geq$ 3.0) within 12 months after the cumulative GPA falls below 3.0.
3. Failure to satisfy conditions (other than cumulative GPA $\geq$ 3.0) established for removal of probation status or provisional admission.
4. Failure to complete degree requirements within the standard timeframe established by UNMC Graduate Studies (unless an extension is granted, per Items I.2. & I.3):
   a. Master's students – within 5 years after matriculation
   b. Ph.D. students – within 7 years after matriculation and no more than 4 years after advancing to Ph.D. Candidacy.
5. Inability of a Ph.D. student or thesis-option Master's student to identify a permanent Advisor within the timeframe established

by UNMC Graduate Studies, the student's degree program, or the Guidelines & Procedures for Graduate Students Changing their Research Advisors. This situation requires either a transfer to another program or track, student withdrawal from their degree program and UNMC Graduate Studies, or a dismissal recommendation from the Graduate Program Committee. (Note: Ph.D. students who have advanced to Candidacy are referred to Item II.4.B. and the procedure associated with early termination of Candidacy.)

6. Other conditions leading to probation or dismissal, as established by one or more Graduate Program(s), provided that such conditions are approved in advance by the Dean for Graduate Studies or designee, and specified in writing to all students subjected to these conditions. This may include failure to meet standards or deadlines for qualifying exams, preliminary exams, or other benchmarks established by specific programs.

Procedures:

- The Graduate Studies Office monitors student enrollment at the beginning of each semester to confirm that each active student has registered for courses, and generates grade reports after the end of each semester to identify students awarded unsatisfactory grades or whose GPA has fallen below 3.0. The Executive Associate Dean is notified of students who do not meet established standards.
- For situations involving unsatisfactory course grade(s) (Item III.1.), the student may not continue their Program of Studies without special permission from the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. The procedure is as follows: After the Graduate Program Director receives notification from Graduate Studies of the student's unsatisfactory grade(s), the Graduate Program Committee can either a) request permission for the student to continue their studies (with or without probation) or b) recommend dismissal. A probation recommendation by the Graduate Program Committee must be sent to the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, who is responsible for making the final decision and for communicating that decision and any conditions of the probation to the student. If the Graduate Program Committee feels that the unacceptable grade is sufficient grounds for dismissal, the matter should be addressed through the process described below.
- For all other situations listed above (Items III.2-III.6.) that could lead to a dismissal recommendation by the Graduate Program Committee, the detailed procedure is as follows:
  a. Where possible and as early as possible, the Graduate Program Director will warn the student, in writing, of the situation and deficiency. A detailed explanation of the reason for the warning must be provided. If neither the Graduate Program nor UNMC Graduate Studies has established a timeframe for resolving the situation or removing the deficiency, the Graduate Program Director will confer with the student and the Graduate Program Committee to determine a reasonable timeframe.
  b. If the situation is not resolved within the appropriate timeframe, the Graduate Program Committee must meet to discuss possible dismissal. The Graduate Program Director will notify the student at least 1 week in advance of this meeting.
     i. The student may select a faculty member (with a primary appointment outside of the student's department) to attend the Graduate Program Committee meeting as a non-voting observer. The student-selected faculty observer is responsible for ensuring adequate review and explanation of the reasons behind consideration of dismissal.
     ii. The student may submit a written statement detailing the circumstances leading to possible dismissal; this document must be sent to the Graduate Program Director at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The student will also be granted the opportunity to attend the meeting and respond verbally to the deficiencies or circumstances leading to possible dismissal. The student's written statement (if submitted) and their verbal response (should the student choose to attend the meeting) will be documented and taken into consideration at each stage of the process.
     iii. The student may choose any trusted individual (*e.g.*, another student, a faculty member, or an attorney) to accompany them when meeting with Graduate Program Committee; however, the student is responsible for any fees that this individual may charge. This individual may provide guidance to the student but may not otherwise directly participate or speak in the meeting. The process shall not be unduly delayed based on the availability of this individual. This individual is distinct from the faculty member identified in 2A.
     iv. The Graduate Program Committee may seek additional information from any individuals deemed likely to provide insight relevant to the potential dismissal of the student.
  c. The question of dismissal (or probation) will be decided by majority vote of the Graduate Program Committee with at least 3 faculty members (not including the student's Advisor) participating in the Committee's deliberation. A written report of the proceedings will be created by the Graduate Program Committee, and their recommendation—including any supporting documentation—will be provided to both the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and the student involved within 1 week after the Graduate Program Committee decides on their recommendation. Any concerns that the student-selected faculty observer has with the process should be transmitted to the Executive Associate Dean as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours after the report is submitted.
  d. The Executive Associate Dean will investigate the circumstances (based on the recommendation and supporting documentation provided by the Graduate Program Committee, as well as the student's written statement and any extenuating circumstances communicated by the student) and make the final decision on whether the student should be dismissed from their program and UNMC Graduate Studies or placed on probation (including the conditions of the probation). Within 1 week after the Executive Associate Dean's decision, the final decision will be communicated in writing to the student, student's Advisor, the Graduate Program Director (cc: Graduate Program Committee members), and the chair of the program's host department (if applicable) for inclusion in the student's program file. A written summary of Advisory Committee discussions (if applicable), Graduate Program Committee discussions, votes, and decisions will also be recorded in the student's Graduate Studies file.

IV. Rights of students dismissed from their program and UNMC Graduate Studies

Communication of a dismissal decision to a student by the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies must inform the student of their ability to examine their program files and Graduate Studies files, at their request, as well as appeal procedures following the dismissal decision (Item V, below). Students who file an appeal will be placed on probation until conclusion of the appeal process. Failure to comply with any

conditions linked to this probation status, or removal thereof, represents further grounds for dismissal (Items III.3 & III.6.).

At the time of dismissal from a graduate degree program and/or from Graduate Studies, students may only reapply for admission to another UNMC graduate degree program or admission as a non-degree-seeking student with the approval of the UNMC Dean for Graduate Studies, following review and investigation of the circumstances as needed.

V. Appeal of Academic Action

Appeal to the UNMC Graduate Council:

A graduate student who is dismissed from a program or is precluded from pursuing further graduate studies because of a decision rendered by the Executive Associate Dean for Graduate Studies may appeal that decision to the UNMC Graduate Council, which will serve as the appeals board. The appeal must be based on evidence that the decision was prejudiced, or is capricious, or was made without following the prescribed process or without giving sufficient attention to relevant information.

1. To initiate an appeal, the student must submit a written request for appeal within thirty (30) calendar days after receiving the Executive Associate Dean's decision.
   a. The request for appeal must be submitted to the Dean for Graduate Studies, who will act as or designate a chair of the Graduate Council during the appeal process.
   b. The student is responsible for submitting all information they would like the Graduate Council to consider as part of the appeal. The written request for appeal must include the following:
      i. A full description of the basis on which the student is bringing the appeal, to include a description and evidence of the prejudicial or capricious action;
      ii. A full description of the remedy being sought by the student; and
      iii. Copies of all documentation supporting the student's appeal.
2. The appeal will be considered at the first regularly scheduled meeting of the Graduate Council that occurs at least 10 University Days after the written appeal is submitted. After taking into consideration all information and documentation submitted by the student in conjunction with the appeal, as well as the letter(s) and supporting documentation recommending dismissal, the Graduate Council will render a decision which may involve any of the following actions:
   a. Determine that there is no basis for the appeal;
   b. Determine that sufficient information is available and render a decision on the appeal;
   c. Within 1 week after the initial meeting, send the student (and/or other involved individuals) a list of questions intended to provide additional insight relevant to the appeal. Written responses to the Graduate Council's questions must be submitted within 2 weeks, thereby allowing the Graduate Council to render its decision on the appeal at the next regularly scheduled meeting;
   d. If the Graduate Council determines written responses will not be sufficient to obtain information needed to render a decision, the student and/or other involved parties will be requested to attend the next regularly scheduled meeting to respond verbally to the deficiencies or circumstances leading to dismissal. At this meeting, the student may be accompanied and advised by legal counsel; however, legal counsel may not participate in the proceedings and the student is responsible for any fees charged by legal counsel. The Graduate Council may also wish to have legal counsel present.
3. Based on the information obtained through these processes, the Graduate Council will make its decision by majority vote and communicate that decision in writing to the student, the individual(s) who made the initial recommendation, and the Graduate Program Committee overseeing the student's graduate program. In most cases, this decision will serve as the final decision.

Appeal to the Executive Graduate Council:

There is no absolute right of appeal to the Executive Graduate Council. The Executive Graduate Council will accept appeals only in those cases where in the exercise of its sole discretion it first finds that one or more of the following grounds for accepting the appeal exist:

- The UNMC Graduate Council has violated some element of fair procedure (example: the concerned parties were not allowed to present their cases fully to the Graduate Council);
- The UNMC Graduate Council has failed to examine or give adequate weight to important evidence relevant to one party's position;
- The UNMC Graduate Council has given undue weight to evidence not pertinent to the case; or
- Some gross miscarriage of justice would be perpetrated if the decision of the UNMC Graduate Council is allowed to stand.

No person who was a member of the UNMC Graduate Council or the department/program involved in the case will be eligible to participate in the decisions of the Executive Graduate Council either to decide whether the case should be heard or to decide the merits of the case.

1. Appeals to the Executive Graduate Council must be made in writing and must specifically outline the grounds for the appeal. Such appeal must be made within 20 University Days of the day the decision of the UNMC Graduate Council is received by the student.
2. The Executive Graduate Council must decide to hear the appeal or not to hear the appeal within 30 University Days after receipt of the appeal. Acceptance or denial of jurisdiction over the appeal must be made in writing. A decision by the Executive Graduate Council not to accept jurisdiction of an appeal shall be final and is not subject to further appeal.
3. The decision of the Executive Graduate Council on the merits of the case will be made and transmitted to the concerned parties within 40 University Days after the decision to hear the appeal.

Process for Academic and Grade Appeals approved by UNMC Graduate Council (2/22/1979; amended 5/20/1982 and 2/25/1999)

General appeal procedures established by the Executive Graduate Council (12/11/1980; amended 3/18/1982)

Guidelines for Termination of Graduate Students approved by UNMC Graduate Council (11/06/2014; amended 03/05/2015); Revised to Policies and Procedures for Probation or Dismissal Based on Evaluation of Academic Progress. *Edits reviewed by the Office of General Counsel (09/15/2022); Edits approved by UNMC Graduate Council (10/06/2022)*

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[1] (p.) The Graduate College Handbook refers to Supervisory Committees and Supervisory Committee Chairpersons. This document substitutes the terms Advisory Committee and Advisors, which are deemed to be applicable for both master's and doctoral programs.