GUIDELINES FOR PROBATION AND TERMINATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln ("UNL") may modify these guidelines from time to time within its discretion, without prior notice, and shall be the sole determiner as to how these guidelines are interpreted.

Basis for Taking Academic Action

Graduate students at UNL are expected to maintain a high level of achievement in their graduate studies and to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct and all relevant policies. Accordingly, UNL reserves the right to act with respect to any graduate student who fails to maintain satisfactory progress or who violates any provision of the Student Code of Conduct or relevant policy. Such action may include, without limitation, placing the student on academic probation, suspending or terminating the student from a degree or certificate program, or precluding the student from pursuing any further graduate studies at UNL.

Academic action may be taken against a graduate student based on any of the following:

1. Violation of the Student Code of Conduct (https://studentconduct.unl.edu/student-code-conduct/) or any other UNL, college or departmental policy. A violation of the Student Code of Conduct may be used as a basis for terminating a student from a program only after the violation has been reported and properly confirmed;
2. Unsatisfactory academic performance, including failing to satisfy UNL's Scholastic Grade Requirements (https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/registration/grades/); failing to pass qualifying examinations, preliminary examinations, comprehensive examinations or final degree examinations; failing to master the methodology and content of one's field in a manner that is sufficient to successfully complete a thesis or dissertation; or
3. Failing to satisfy the requirements for the removal of probationary status or conditional admission.

Graduate Committees may adopt and impose additional conditions under which a graduate student may be subject to academic action, provided that such conditions are approved in advance by the Dean for Graduate Studies and are communicated in writing to all students who are subjected to those conditions. Graduate programs shall include any additional conditions in the program's governance documents.

A graduate student who is terminated from one degree or certificate program may apply to a different degree or certificate program, except when the termination is based on a violation of the Student Code of Conduct or when the student is precluded from pursuing any further graduate studies at UNL.

Procedure for Academic Action

Academic action taken against a graduate student is initiated by the department, school or interdepartmental Graduate Committee, whether acting alone or upon the recommendation of the student's advisor or supervisory committee.

A recommendation to place a student on probation will be shared with the student and forwarded to the Dean for Graduate Studies, who will be responsible for making the final decision on the recommendation. Conditions of the probation will be communicated to the student in writing by the Dean for Graduate Studies.

A recommendation to terminate a student's degree or certificate program or preclude the student from pursuing any further graduate studies at UNL will be addressed in the following manner:

1. The Graduate Committee Chair will promptly inform the student in writing of the recommendation, the reason(s) given for the recommendation, and the name of the individual(s) making the recommendation.
2. The Graduate Committee Chair will provide the student with the opportunity to confer directly with the individual(s) making the recommendation through an in-person meeting or a telephone or video conference. The student will be given at least one-week advance notice of this meeting or conference.
3. The student will be granted the opportunity to respond to the recommendation verbally or in writing, or both, which will be documented and taken into consideration by the Graduate Committee Chair. The Graduate Committee Chair will consider any extenuating circumstances communicated by the student and will seek to determine whether the matter can be resolved.
4. After considering the student’s response, if the decision is made to proceed with the recommendation to terminate the student’s program or preclude the student from pursuing any further graduate studies, the Graduate Committee Chair will inform both the student and the Dean for Graduate Studies of that decision in writing.
5. The Dean for Graduate Studies will investigate the matter and decide whether to proceed with terminating the student from a program or precluding that student from pursuing any further graduate studies at UNL.
6. If the Dean for Graduate Studies decides to proceed with terminating the student from a program or precluding that student from pursuing any further graduate studies at UNL, the Dean will inform the student of that decision in writing and advise the student of the right to appeal the decision.

Appeal of Academic Action

A graduate student who is terminated from a program or is precluded from pursuing further graduate studies as a result of a decision rendered by the Dean for Graduate Studies may appeal that decision to the UNL Graduate Council, which will serve as the appeals board.

1. To initiate an appeal, the student must submit a written request for an appeal to the Dean for Graduate Studies, who will act as the chair of the UNL Graduate Council, within thirty (30) calendar days after receiving the Dean's decision. Although the Dean for Graduate Studies serves as the chair of the UNL Graduate Council, the Dean will not participate in deliberations leading to, nor vote on, the appeal decision of the UNL Graduate Council.
2. The affected student is responsible for submitting all information that the student wants the UNL Graduate Council to consider as part of the appeal. The written appeal must include the following:
   a. A full description of the basis on which the student is bringing the appeal;
   b. A full description of the remedy being sought by the student; and
   c. Copies of all documentation supporting the student’s appeal.
3. After taking into consideration all information and documentation submitted by the student in conjunction with the appeal, and
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taking into consideration the letter(s) recommending probation or termination, the UNL Graduate Council will render its decision. That decision will be communicated in writing to the student, the individual(s) who made the initial recommendation, and the Graduate Committee overseeing the student’s graduate program. In most cases, this decision will serve as the final decision.

Appeals to the Executive Graduate Council

In most cases, the decision of the UNL Graduate Council will be final. Only under special circumstances will the Executive Graduate Council hear an appeal from the decision of the UNL Graduate Council.

1. 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 shall first find that one or more of the following grounds for accepting the appeal exist:
   a. That the UNL Graduate Council has violated some element of fair procedure (example: has failed to allow the parties concerned to present their cases fully to the UNL Graduate Council);
   b. That the UNL Graduate Council has failed to examine or give adequate weight to important evidence relevant to one party’s position;
   c. That the UNL Graduate Council has given undue weight to evidence not pertinent to the case; or
   d. That some gross miscarriage of justice would be perpetrated if the decision of the UNL Graduate Council is allowed to stand.

A decision by the Executive Graduate Council not to accept jurisdiction of an appeal shall be final and is not subject to further appeal.

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 twenty (20) working days of the day the decision of the campus Graduate Council is received (working days shall not include those days the University is not in session).

2. The Executive Graduate Council must make a decision to hear the appeal or not to hear the appeal within thirty (30) working days after receipt of the appeal. Acceptance or denial of jurisdiction over the appeal will be made in writing.

3. The decision of the Executive Graduate Council on the merits of the case will be made and transmitted to the concerned parties within forty (40) working days after the decision to hear the appeal.

4. No person who was a member of the department or UNL Graduate Council 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.

SOURCE: General appeal procedures established by the Executive Graduate Council (December 11, 1980; amended March 18, 1982)
SOURCE: Grounds for probation and termination established by the UNL Graduate Council (February 12, 1992; amended March 11, 2004)
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