

## **Policy on the Dismissal or Change in Status of Graduate Students**

This policy describes the conditions and procedures, including appeals procedures, for the dismissal or change in admission status of a degree-seeking graduate student. A sanction of dismissal or expulsion, among other possible sanctions, may also result from academic discipline, non-academic discipline, or research misconduct proceedings. The policy below applies to students who are not meeting academic expectations and/or professional expectations within the degree program.

**Good Standing, Probation, And Dismissal Or Change In Status Based Upon Failure To Meet Academic Performance Expectations On Degree Course Work:** A graduate student must have a 3.0 gpa on all course work that is presented toward completion of a degree. A student is in good standing with respect to registration for an upcoming semester if he or she makes a 3.0 gpa on course work for the preceding Fall or Spring regular semester. A student whose grade point average is less than 3.0 for any regular semester will be placed on probation, and a dean's registration hold will be applied to the student's record. Such a student will not be allowed to register unless the academic department/program makes an affirmative recommendation to the Graduate Dean, who will then temporarily lift the hold. Without a written, favorable recommendation from the chair or graduate program coordinator of a department/program, a student on probation will be converted to an inactive status and must re-apply and be re-admitted to the graduate program in order to continue in the same or other program.

In addition, a student may be dismissed from a graduate program or have his or her admission status changed (e.g., from full-standing to conditional or non-degree seeking) if the student fails to meet specific course requirements of the department/program. These course requirements may have been specified for an individual student or may involve required grades in "core" courses. Ordinarily, these course expectations should be made known to the student before enrollment. In some circumstances, however, an appropriate faculty group, which may be the student's advisory committee or the graduate education committee of a department/program, may require additional course work based upon the student's performance in the program or failure to timely progress towards a degree.

If in the judgment of the appropriate faculty group a student fails to satisfy specific course or program requirements in a timely manner, the faculty group may recommend dismissal from a graduate program or change of status. This recommendation shall be forwarded by the graduate program coordinator or department chair to the Graduate Dean and to the affected student with an indication whether the chair or program coordinator concurs with the faculty recommendation. The Graduate Dean will act on the faculty recommendation and inform the student and the graduate program coordinator or department chair of the action taken. The decision of the Graduate Dean with respect to the faculty recommendation is not subject to appeal. Ordinarily, dismissal or change of status for failure to meet specific course requirements would take effect between

semesters or enrollment periods. If a student is dismissed from a graduate program, he or she will be considered a non-degree II student and may re-apply to a graduate program.

**Dismissal Or Change In Status Based Upon Failure To Meet Non-Course Work Academic Performance Expectations:** In addition to graded courses, a graduate student is expected to pass examinations and perform research or other creative activities. A student may be dismissed from a graduate program if he or she fails to meet such expectations of the program. Departments/programs may establish non-course related academic performance expectations, such as whether or not a comprehensive examination may be repeated or timelines for research accomplishment or the successful completion of examinations. The advisor, graduate program coordinator, or department chair must provide reasonable warning to the student, in writing, about academic performance deficiencies. Typically, these warnings would occur as part of a periodic review process for students in the program. An appropriate faculty group, which may be the student's advisory committee or the graduate education committee of a department/program, may recommend dismissal or change in the admission status of a student. This recommendation shall be forwarded by the graduate program coordinator or department chair to the Graduate Dean and to the affected student with an indication whether the chair or program coordinator concurs with the faculty recommendation. The Graduate Dean will act on the faculty recommendation and inform the student and the graduate program coordinator or department chair of the action taken. Ordinarily, dismissal or change of status for failure to meet non-course work academic performance expectations would take effect between semesters or enrollment periods. If a student is dismissed from a graduate program, he or she will be considered a non-degree II student and may re-apply to a graduate program.

The Graduate School has also established time limitations for master's, specialist, and doctoral degree programs. Students who do not complete degree requirements within the established time limits will be changed to non-degree seeking II status.

**Dismissal Or Change In Status Based Upon Failure To Meet Professional, Ethical, And Behavioral Expectations:** Graduate students are also expected to behave in a collegial manner and to adhere to the professional and ethical standards of the discipline. Students are expected to develop collaborative and collegial relationships with and to work with graduate faculty, students, and other professionals in research, academic, or professional settings. If in the judgment of the appropriate faculty group a student fails to meet the above expectations, or otherwise fails to act in ways that are consistent with the norms and standards of the profession or discipline, an appropriate faculty group may recommend dismissal or change in the admission status of that graduate student. This recommendation shall be forwarded by the graduate program coordinator or department chair to the Graduate Dean and to the affected student, with an indication whether the chair or program coordinator concurs with the faculty recommendation. The Graduate Dean will act on the faculty recommendation and inform the student and the graduate program coordinator or department chair of the action taken. Ordinarily, if a student is dismissed from a graduate program for the above reasons, he or she will be considered a non-degree II student and may re-apply to a graduate program. The judgment of the Graduate Dean may be to prohibit the individual from re-applying to some programs.

**Related Procedures:** This policy complements the University's policies on Student Academic Conduct and Discipline (ACA.AR.600.001), Grade Appeals (ACA.AR.600.002), the Appeal of a Comprehensive Examination (ACA.GS.400.003), and the Student Judicial (Non-Academic Discipline) process (DSA.SC.300.010).

**Appeals Procedure:** The appeals procedure outlined below applies to dismissal and change in admission status cases involving failure to meet non-course work academic performance expectations and failure to meet professional and ethical expectations. The procedure does not apply to grade-based holds and dismissals, changes in status due to violation of time limitations, grade appeals for individual courses, academic misconduct or charges that are brought through the student judicial process. In the case of comprehensive examinations, the appeals process for the examination outcome initially follows a separate process. (See Appeal of a Comprehensive Examination (ACA.GS.400.003).) If the outcome of the examination appeal results in a dismissal or change in admission status, then the student may appeal as set forth herein.

An appeal must be based on evidence that the recommendation of the appropriate faculty group and/or the decision of the Graduate Dean were based on prejudice, discrimination, arbitrary or capricious action, or other reasons not related to academic or professional performance. There is a presumption that the faculty group and the Graduate Dean have acted with professional competence, and, in the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, have evaluated the student fairly.

The steps for the appeal are as follows:

Step 1. Appeal to a Graduate Student Appeals Committee: Either the student, the graduate program coordinator, department chair, or graduate faculty member from the program may appeal the decision of the Graduate Dean within 15 days of receiving notice of the Graduate Dean's decision by submitting a written request to the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The Graduate Dean and, as applicable, the student or the graduate program coordinator or department chair must be provided a copy of the appeal request. The written request for an appeal must state the factual basis for the appeal of the Dean's decision. This appeal request is the primary document setting forth the contention by either the student or faculty that the decision by the Dean of the Graduate School should be reversed. Upon receiving a request for an appeal at this level, the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will appoint an ad hoc Graduate Student Appeals Committee. This Committee will include: an at-large graduate faculty member who will chair the committee; three graduate faculty members, two of whom must be from the department involved; and three graduate students nominated by the Graduate Student Council leadership. The chair of this committee will first appoint a three-person sub-committee to review all written documents associated with the case to determine if a formal hearing is warranted. If, in the opinion of the subcommittee, a formal hearing is not warranted, the Graduate Student Appeals Committee may make its recommendation based upon written evidence submitted by the student, the faculty, and the Graduate Dean.

If the subcommittee finds that the student's (or faculty member's) request merits a formal hearing before the entire committee, the chair of the committee shall notify all parties (student, department chair, graduate program coordinator, involved faculty, and Graduate Dean) in writing of the time and location of the hearing.

The purpose of the hearing is to elicit information on which the committee may base a recommendation to the Provost/Vice Chancellor for action. It is not to be construed as a trial in a court of law. The rules of evidence shall not apply to the hearing, and the committee may base its recommendation on the sorts of information upon which institutions typically rely in making academic judgments. The hearing shall be closed. Both student and involved faculty may provide any written materials they desire, and the committee may request additional material if it deems such necessary. Both the student and faculty concerned shall be afforded the right to present witnesses or other evidence, question opposing witnesses, and make a concluding statement. No attorneys shall be permitted to represent participants. When the committee has reviewed all documents and heard such testimony as it considers necessary to reach a conclusion, it shall adopt by majority vote its recommendation to the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The chair of the committee shall send copies of the committee's recommendation to the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, student, department chair or graduate program coordinator, involved faculty, and Dean of the Graduate School.

**Step 2. Final Decision by Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs:** The Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs shall make the final decision, utilizing any resources to assist in deciding the appeal. The Provost/Vice Chancellor shall have the right to allow the dismissal or change in admissions status to stand or to change the decision of the Graduate Dean. He/she shall inform all parties involved, including the Appeals Committee members, of his/her final decision on the matter.

If a student appeals a dismissal decision, the student may petition the Dean for permission to enroll in a course pending appeal. The Graduate Dean may, in his/her sole discretion, determine if a student may enroll pending appeal. However, if the appeal is denied, then the student will be dropped from all courses that relate to the case, and relevant refund policies will apply.

**Inactive Students or Admission-Denied Applicants:** Individuals who were UM students at one time and have been converted to an inactive status and applicants who were denied admission have no guaranteed right to the above appeals procedure. Students who are inactive for one regular semester must submit an application for re-admission. Unless expelled from the University, an individual who has been formally dismissed from a graduate program may apply to another graduate program within the University.