

Appeal of a Graduate Comprehensive Examination

The University of Mississippi awards graduate degrees only to those students who demonstrate to the graduate faculty a high level of academic competence achieved through intelligence, scholarship, and industry. The determination of fitness for a particular degree rests solely upon the judgment of the graduate faculty. The comprehensive examination, required of every doctoral student and many Master's students, is an important measure of academic competence.

Every department offering a graduate degree has the authority to establish a limit on the number of times a student may sit for comprehensive examinations and on the time that must elapse before a failed examination can be retaken.

If a graduate student believes that the results of his or her comprehensive examinations were based on prejudice, discrimination, arbitrary or capricious action, or other reasons not related to academic and professional evaluation, the following appeal procedure may be pursued. In all cases of complaint, the student will have the burden of proof with respect to all allegations in the complaint. If the student fails to pursue any step in the procedure within the time allowed, the disposition of the case made in the last previous step shall be final. Retention of all correspondence and records related to the appeal is the responsibility of The Graduate School. A complete statement of the procedure can be found in the **M-Book**. The summary of the process that follows is provided as introductory information. Students considering an appeal should carefully review the official policy of the University as printed in the **M-Book**.

- ☐ **Step One:** Within 5 days of receiving notification of failure, the student may appeal, in writing, to the chair of the department. Consulting with the exam coordinator, the chair will attempt to resolve the appeal within 10 class days dating from the receipt of the written appeal. The chair must then inform the student, in writing, of the results.
- ☐ **Step Two:** If the appeal is not resolved, a student may submit a written appeal to the Dean of The Graduate School within 5 class days of the chair's denial. If clear and convincing evidence suggests that the committee was biased in its initial decision, the Dean may assign a newly constituted committee to administer a second examination. The Dean will deliver his decision, in writing, to the student, the department chair, and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.
- ☐ **Step Three:** Either the student, the department chair, or a majority of the original examining committee may appeal the Dean's decision. The appeal must be made, in writing, to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs within 5 class days of the Dean's decision. All previous decisions will be stayed pending the outcome of this final appeal. Using all available resources, the Vice Chancellor will make a final determination which will be communicated, in writing, to the student, the department chair, and the Dean of The Graduate School.

