

# Academic Performance

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## Minimum Degree Completion Requirements

To graduate, the student must complete all University and degree program requirements listed in the *Graduate Catalog* under which they began the program. A graduate student cannot graduate under any of the following circumstances. Students *must* refer to their program description for additional degree completion requirements.

- a. A GPA lower than 3.00 for all courses attempted for graduate credit after admission to the degree program or
- b. A grade of D or lower for any courses attempted after admission to the degree program (and a second grade of D or lower will result in dismissal) or
- c. A grade of I (Incomplete) on their transcript.

No graduate courses with pass/fail credit are accepted as part of a graduate program. Grades of pass/fail are not awarded at MSU and cannot be transferred to MSU.

A GPA of 3.00 on the minor coursework is required for students completing a minor.

## Provisional Students

The provisionally admitted student is eligible for a change to regular status after receiving a 3.00 or higher GPA on the first 9 hours of graduate courses at Mississippi State University (with no grade lower than a C unless one-course retake is approved per the Graduate Course Retake Policy). The first 9 hours of graduate courses must be within the student's Program of Study. Courses with an S grade or transfer credits cannot be used to satisfy this requirement. If a 3.00 is not attained, the provisional student **shall** be dismissed from the graduate program. Academic departments may set higher standards for students to fulfill provisional requirements; a student admitted with provisional status should contact the Graduate Coordinator for the program's specific requirements. *While in provisional status, a student may be limited in the type of funding that can be used for a graduate assistantship (eg, positions that are state funded).* Colleges and/or departments make these funding decisions following the rules of the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL).

## Academic Probation

A graduate student should be placed on probation by the department when academic deficiencies occur but the student can potentially meet all degree requirements successfully. Examples of these situations include but are not limited to the following:

- GPA falls below 3.00 required by the University;
- Receives a third course grade lower than a B (one of these courses must be retaken and the student must earn a grade of B or higher); or
- Fails to meet a departmental requirement.

A student may also be placed on academic probation if they fall short of any other standards for satisfactory academic performance established by their academic unit. Specific information relative to retaking of courses or completing remedial work will be established by the appropriate academic advisor, graduate committee, and Graduate Coordinator and shall be documented in written form. This remediation plan must specify a required date of completion. If the student intends to pursue the academic appeal process relating to the reason for being placed on probation, they must do so during the first probationary semester. If, at the end of the probationary period, the student has not met the requirements outlined in the remediation plan, they shall be dismissed.

A student cannot take a comprehensive examination or defend/submit a thesis or dissertation during the probationary period without prior approval from the Academic Dean.

## Academic Dismissal

A graduate student **shall** be dismissed from the University if one or more of the following conditions occur:

- The student receives a second course grade of D or lower;
- The student receives a fourth course grade of C or lower;
- The student is found to be responsible for violating the Student Honor Code for a second time;
- The student was placed on academic probation and failed to meet the requirements for release from probationary status;
- The student failed a comprehensive examination or final thesis/dissertation defense two times in pursuit of an academic degree, unless the academic program has a different requirement; or
- The student falls short of any standards established by his or her academic unit, and the department recommends dismissal with approval of the Department Head (if applicable) and the Academic Dean.

A student shall be dismissed by the Graduate School for failure to meet University requirements as stated above after the academic unit confirms that there are no extenuating circumstances. A student can also be dismissed if the student's academic department recommends dismissal by submitting

a Recommendation for Academic Dismissal form (a letter may be attached) from the Graduate Coordinator, approved by the Department Head (if applicable) and the Academic Dean, clearly stating the departmental requirements the student failed to meet.

Upon review and approval of the reason(s) for dismissal, an official academic dismissal letter from the Dean of the Graduate School is sent to the student via email to the student's MSU account. The letter informs the student that any schedule of classes for the following semester(s) will be dropped, and the Graduate School places an academic dismissal hold on the student's record to prevent further enrollment. The student may refer to the *Graduate Catalog* for information regarding the appeals process (see Academic Dismissal Appeal Procedure). A student who has been dismissed from a graduate program and has not been reinstated via the appeal process cannot apply for readmission into that program, except by meeting the conditions necessary to request Academic Amnesty (see Academic Amnesty).

## Grade Appeal

A graduate student who wishes to appeal a grade should refer to the MSU Grade Appeals Policy, Academic Operating Procedure (AOP) 13.14.

## Graduate Appeal Procedure

The following section outlines the graduate student appeal process and should be followed for any appeal a student wishes to make (e.g., dismissal, probationary status). Students should also note AOP 12.37 Graduate Student Academic Grievance Procedures for issues not related to academic performance or standing within a program. A graduate student wishing to appeal a decision of dismissal must begin the process within 15 business days, excluding University holidays. The entire appeal process consists of up to three stages. Any new information added to the supporting documentation after a denial will be submitted to the denying unit for review with their option to include a letter addressing the new information which will be included in the appeal. This letter will be submitted within 5 business days of receipt of the additional material. If the entire appeal process is used, all levels of appeal should be normally completed within 60 business days of the initial appeal. At each level, decisions will be promptly rendered by the appropriate administrator.

- a. The appeal to the Department Head is submitted by letter along with relevant support documentation within 15 business days. The Department Head informs the Graduate Coordinator and Academic Dean when an appeal is received. In rendering a decision, the Department Head may convene an existing or *ad hoc* departmental committee to review the appeal and offer a recommendation to the Department Head, or the Department Head may choose to render a decision themselves. The Department Head may or may not choose to adhere to the recommendation of the appeals committee. The Department Head will render a decision in writing to the student and copy the notification to the Graduate Coordinator and Academic Dean.
- b. If the appeal is denied at the departmental level, the student may appeal the departmental decision by submitting a written request with all relevant supporting documentation to the Academic Dean within 15 days of the receipt of the Department Head's decision. The Academic Dean informs the Graduate Coordinator and Department Head when an appeal is received. In rendering a decision, the Academic Dean may convene an existing or *ad hoc* college committee to review the appeal and offer a recommendation to the Dean, or the Dean may render a decision themselves or by someone appointed by the Dean to review such matters. The Academic Dean may or may not choose to adhere to the recommendation of the appeals committee. The Academic Dean will render a decision in writing to the student and copy the notification to the Graduate Coordinator, Department Head, and the Dean of the Graduate School.
- c. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Academic Dean, the student may submit a final appeal to the Provost. The appeal to the Office of the Provost is submitted by letter along with relevant supporting documentation within 15 days of receipt of the Academic Dean's decision. The Provost will inform the Dean of the Graduate School when an appeal is received. In rendering a decision, the Provost may request that the Dean of the Graduate School convene a subcommittee consisting of three voting members of the Graduate Council who do not have a conflict of interest with the graduate student or the student's department to review the appeal and offer a recommendation to the Provost. A subcommittee chair will be named by the Dean of the Graduate School. Relevant supporting documents submitted by the student, department, and/or the Graduate School will be assembled by the Graduate School and delivered electronically to the subcommittee for review. The subcommittee may choose to deliberate via email or in a face-to-face meeting. The recommendation of the subcommittee will be conveyed to the Provost in writing and copied to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Provost may or may not choose to adhere to the recommendation of the appeals subcommittee. The Provost will render a decision in writing to the student and copy the notification to the Department Head, Academic Dean, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Recourse to the Provost is the final stage of appeal. All correspondence will remain confidential.

If the appeal is successful, a new application to the degree program is not required.

## Academic Amnesty for Graduate Students (AOP 12.18)

Academic amnesty is designed to provide those graduate students previously enrolled at Mississippi State University the opportunity to have up to 9 hours of previously completed graduate courses eliminated from the computation of their grade point average.

- To be eligible for the program, an individual cannot have been enrolled as a graduate student at MSU for at least three years.
- Students must contact the Graduate Coordinator (or Department Head) to request consideration for academic amnesty
- If the request is approved by the program, the student then applies and will be admitted provisionally.
- Upon successful completion of at least 9 credit hours with a 3.00 or higher GPA, provisional admission is removed.
- The student submits the 'Academic Amnesty' form prior to the end of the semester preceding that in which the student intends to graduate.

With notification from the Dean of the Graduate School, the Registrar's Office will segment the student's academic record showing all courses and grades to be included in academic amnesty and recalculate the graduate GPA accordingly. Academic amnesty will be applied to the student's record only once and the new grade point average will be noted on the transcript at the end of the semester during which the request was approved.

The student is permitted to retake a course that was included as part of the 9 hours of coursework eliminated under the academic amnesty, if permitted by the academic program. All courses and grades attempted at MSU will remain a part of the student's academic record. A notation will appear on the transcript indicating the student was approved from academic amnesty. Those courses approved for academic amnesty and then granted cannot be applied toward the completion of another graduate degree.

Students must be advised that academic amnesty pertains only to and may not be honored by other institutions of higher learning (AOP 12.18).