

Graduate Policies

GRADUATE POLICIES

The Graduate Policies section contains policies which pertain to all graduate students, such as policies regarding Academic Standing, Graduate Transfer Credits, Thesis, and Graduate Grade Appeals. Questions concerning these policies can be directed to the College of Graduate Studies and Research: graduatestudies@neu.edu.

Active Status

When a student is admitted to Northeastern's College of Graduate Studies and Research for graduate study, they are given an active student status that entitles them to various privileges of active students, such as the ability to register for courses and access to the library. A graduate student is expected to maintain active status from the time he/she begins the graduate program to the time he/she graduates.

Inactivation/Re-admission Policy

A graduate student who does not enroll in at least one course over six consecutive semesters, including the summer semester, will have his/her student status changed from "Active" to "Inactive".

A graduate student must be re-admitted to the same program, admitted to a different program, or admitted as a student-at-large to register for additional classes. Re-admission to a student's original program is not guaranteed.

All re-admitted students are subject to the catalog year requirements based on their semester of re-admission and enrollment.

Leave of Absence

Circumstances sometimes require that students interrupt their studies for longer than three semesters. Such students can apply for a Leave of Absence to avoid inactivation.

1. Only an active graduate student is eligible to apply for a leave of absence.
2. A graduate student may request a maximum of six consecutive academic terms of absence, including summer.
3. A graduate student is not expected to make any academic progress towards his/her degree while on a leave of absence.
4. A graduate student may not use any University resources while on a leave of absence.
5. A graduate student's academic status will not change during a leave of absence.
6. Students applying for a leave of absence must submit to their graduate program the Graduate Leave of Absence Request Form, located on the Registrar Services' forms page.
7. An international student must also gain approval via a signed memo from his/her International Programs advisor. The approval memo must be included with the form submitted to the graduate program.
8. Programs submitting a Leave of Absence Request form to the College of Graduate Studies and Research Dean's office must include a memo of support explaining how the student will complete his/her requirements within six years of his/her initial enrollment.

A graduate student finishing a leave of absence must register for coursework the semester of return as specified on the form. Failure to register for coursework the semester the student is scheduled to return will result in being moved to inactive status that semester. An inactive graduate student must reapply to the University for readmission to his/her graduate program. Readmission is not guaranteed. A readmitted student is subject to the catalog year requirements based on the semester of readmission (see Catalog Year policy).

Graduate Academic Standing Policies

To remain in good academic standing, a student in a graduate program (degree-seeking, licensure, endorsement, or certificate) must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. In addition, a graduate student in a degree or certificate program must make satisfactory progress toward his/her degree or certificate. A student must be in good academic standing to graduate.

Grade Point Average

A graduate student's Grade Point Average (GPA) is determined based on the grades received in all graduate-level courses taken, beginning from the term of initial enrollment in graduate status at Northeastern. All grades received, including those of courses that were taken multiple times (see Repeating Courses policy), will count toward a student's GPA and will appear on a student's transcript. A graduate student must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 to be awarded his/her degree or certificate.

DISMISSAL FOR ACADEMIC REASONS

A student in a graduate program (degree-seeking, licensure, endorsement, or certificate) may be dismissed from his/her program for the following academic reasons: sub-standard GPA (see Academic Probation policy); failure to make satisfactory progress toward completion of his/her program;

or receiving more than six credit hours of unsatisfactory grades (C, D, or F). A student may also be dismissed as a consequence of acts of academic misconduct (see the University Code of Conduct).

To avoid dismissal, a student who has experienced extenuating circumstances may meet with his/her program advisor to request development of a plan outlining the course of action the student must follow to return to good academic standing. This plan must be approved by both the program and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research or the Dean's designee. Failure to meet the terms of this plan may not be appealed and will result in dismissal.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

A student in a graduate program (degree-seeking, licensure, endorsement, or certificate) whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. If in subsequent terms, the student earns grades that restore his/her cumulative GPA to 3.0 or above, he/she will be returned to good academic standing. If a student needs to be placed on academic probation for a third time after he/she returned to good academic standing in two previous probation instances, he/she will be dismissed. A student whose cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 will be dismissed without academic probation.

A student who is on academic probation and who does not restore his/her cumulative GPA to 3.0 in subsequent terms will be permitted to remain on academic probation as long as he/she earns at least a 3.0 GPA for the term. If in any subsequent term, the student on academic probation fails to earn a 3.0 GPA for the term, he/she will be dismissed.

Graduate Student-at-Large: Dismissal and Reinstatement/Readmission

A graduate student-at-large will be dismissed if, upon the completion of four courses, they have earned a cumulative grade point average that is less than 2.0 (on a 4.0 scale; equivalent to a "C" average). A graduate student-at-large who has been dismissed may apply to be reinstated/readmitted no earlier than the second semester following the dismissal. The reinstatement/readmission application must include an appeal letter addressed to the Academic Standards Committee explaining the new circumstances that will allow the applicant to improve their academic performance. Deadlines for reinstatement/readmission following dismissal are July 15 for the Fall semester, November 15 for the Spring semester, and March 15 for the Summer semester. If reinstatement/readmission is granted, the student will be reinstated/readmitted on academic probation (see Graduate Academic Probation section).

Fulfilling Graduate Academic Requirements

The academic requirements of any degree or certificate program that a student is admitted to are determined by a student's "catalog year".

CATALOG YEAR

A graduate student's catalog year is the academic year when the student is first enrolled after being admitted to a graduate program. A student's catalog year is not affected while the student is on an approved leave of absence. A readmitted student is subject to the catalog year requirements based on the semester of his/her re-admission (see Inactivation/Re-admission Policy).

Change of Catalog Year

An active student may change his/her catalog year to a succeeding catalog if it is to the student's benefit. A completed Change of Catalog Year form should be submitted to Enrollment Management Services to update the student's record.

Continuing enrollment

Students availing themselves of the services of the academic staff or faculty or the facilities of the university in any way that directly or indirectly relates to fulfilling degree requirements or receiving course credit must be enrolled. For example, a student must be enrolled in the term in which a comprehensive examination is taken. Students who are actively engaged in fulfilling degree requirements but who are not enrolled in other course credit hours are required to enroll in a 1 credit hour continuing enrollment course. Such enrollment allows students access to university resources, such as library, advisement, and email privileges, while also meeting the continuing enrollment requirement. A student is not required to be registered in the term of graduation simply in order to graduate. However, students who complete degree requirements by availing themselves of university services without being enrolled will be assessed relevant tuition and fees prior to the release of the diploma and transcript. This policy does not apply to students who are only finishing the work required to resolve an incomplete grade.

Graduate Degree Credits

All graduate credits are at the 400 level or above, except for a limited number of 300 level courses that have been approved for graduate degree credits in a specific master's degree program (referred to as "300-starred" (300*) courses). Programs may permit students to apply up to three 300* courses, to a maximum of ten credit hours, to fulfill program requirements. Students should consult with their program advisors for details concerning graduate degree credits for 300*-level courses. A student who has taken a 300* course for credit at the undergraduate level may not repeat the course for credit at the graduate level.

A maximum of two courses with grades of "C" may be counted toward satisfying program requirements. Courses with grades below "C" do not count toward satisfying program requirements.

Repeating Courses

A student can take a specific course a maximum of two times (excluding course withdrawals), unless the course is formally approved as “repeatable.”

6-Year Completion

A graduate student has six years to complete his/her program. Courses that are more than six years old do not count toward fulfilling the requirements of a graduate program.

Waiver of Course Requirements

Students considering applying for a waiver of specific course requirements based on demonstrated competence may petition the appropriate graduate program advisor(s). If a waiver is approved, the student must complete alternate credits equal in number to those waived.

Graduate Transfer Credit Policy

Graduate transfer credits are any credits used to fulfill Northeastern Illinois University graduate degree requirements which are:

1. earned at Northeastern prior to the term of admission to a graduate program; OR
2. earned at a regionally accredited college or university or recognized international college or university. These transfer credits may be earned either prior to or after admission to a Northeastern graduate program.

All graduate transfer credits that are used to fulfill degree requirements need to be approved by the program.

Students should submit their transfer credit request form before the completion of 9 credit hours after admission to the program. Any delay in the completion of the transfer credit request may impact the student's graduation date. Credits transferred in the final semester before graduation will delay graduation until the credits are posted.

Credits earned for thesis hours are not transferable. Coursework credits are eligible for transfer credit only if they meet the following criteria:

1. Credits must be for graduate-level work;
2. The course grade must be a “B-” or higher;
3. Credits must have been completed within 6 years of expected graduation.

See the Graduate Certificate Programs policy (see below) for information explaining the relationship between related certificates and degree programs.

Coursework taken at Northeastern prior to admission to a graduate program: Credit for coursework taken at Northeastern prior to admission to a graduate program, which the student wishes to count towards that graduate program, is limited to no more than 50% of the program requirements, except in the case of credits from an earned graduate certificate. The entirety of credits from an earned graduate certificate can be counted towards a graduate degree program (see the Graduate Certificate Programs policy below). No additional transfer credit is allowed if credits from an earned certificate represent 50% or more of the total program requirement credits.

Coursework taken outside of Northeastern: Graduate transfer credits can be earned either before admission to the student's program or after admission to the program, provided that the total number of transfer credits (regardless of when they were earned) does not exceed 9 hours, unless approved specially as part of a formal university agreement. Formal university agreements allowing external transfer credits that would exceed 50% of the course credit requirements for any graduate program must be reviewed and approved via normal governance process. All transfer credits earned after the student has been admitted to his/her program must be approved by the advisor, program advisor, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research prior to enrollment at the other institution.

Thesis Policy

In some graduate programs, the completion of a master's thesis represents the culminating experience in the discipline, or one of the possible culminating experiences. Engagement in thesis research requires a productive mentor-mentee relationship that reflects a cooperative agreement between the program and the thesis student. Registration and engagement in thesis work requires the consent of the thesis mentor and program approval.

Completion of the thesis requirement includes successfully fulfilling: 1) generally, at least six credit hours of thesis with a grade of P or HP; 2) a thesis defense; and 3) the approved submission of the finalized thesis to the College of Graduate Studies and Research. Students fulfilling the requirements of a thesis option must register for at least one graduate-level credit hour in all semesters in which they are actively working on their thesis, until the completion of the thesis requirements. The successful completion of six credits of thesis hours does not guarantee the satisfactory completion of the thesis requirement.

Thesis credit is graded each term a student is engaged in thesis work using grades of High Pass (HP), Pass (P), or No Pass (NP). Only HP and P grades are satisfactory and count for credit toward the degree. At most, six credits of thesis hours may be counted toward fulfilling degree requirements that include a thesis option.

If a student receives a grade of NP for thesis hours, a program may require the student to switch to one of the other possible culminating experiences in the discipline. Students receiving grades of NP in their thesis hours for two consecutive semesters will not be allowed to continue with the thesis.

Substitution of up to six credits of P/HP (Pass/High Pass) thesis hours for non-thesis research credit hours is allowable, with the approval of the program.

For more information about the thesis process and for program-specific guidance on the graduate thesis, please consult the College of Graduate Studies and Research *Manual of Thesis Procedures* and the program's graduate handbook.

Grading Scale for Graduate Thesis work:

High Pass: Outstanding academic progress on the thesis, an outstanding defense of the thesis, or an outstanding thesis.

Pass: Satisfactory academic progress on the thesis, a satisfactory defense of the thesis, or a satisfactory thesis.

No Pass: Student has not made satisfactory academic progress on their thesis or their thesis does not meet the academic standards of the program.

Degree Verification

If a graduate student has completed all academic requirements with a current application for graduation on file and he/she is waiting for the formal awarding of the degree, the University Registrar, upon the student's written request, will issue a letter certifying the student's status. Such letters are normally accepted by boards of education for salary increment purposes and by other universities as verification that the degree has been earned.

Graduate Grade Appeal Policy

Every student has the right to appeal if they consider their final grade in a graduate-level course to be unreasonable, unjust, or capricious. A grade appeal can be initiated no later than two semesters (including summer) after the grade was assigned. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research makes the final decision on graduate grade appeals.

Process for appealing a grade in a graduate course:

1. The student must first consult the faculty member who issued the grade for reconsideration of the grade. The Chair or Coordinator and other members of the department are encouraged to be available for consultation with the faculty member and the student at this stage. Note: This is the only stage at which an appealed grade can be changed to an A, B, C, D, or F. At every subsequent stage of the grade appeal process, the Chair, Associate Dean of the graduate program's college or Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research can change the grade to a P only.
2. If the faculty member is unavailable or the student contests the faculty member's decision and wishes to continue the appeal, the student should (next) approach the Chair of the department in which the course was taught. The Chair may designate the relevant program's Coordinator to serve this role for this stage, if the department has a Coordinator. The student must present a written statement to the Chair explaining the reasons he/she believes the grade is unreasonable, unjust, or capricious. The Chair is responsible for investigating the student's claims by gathering relevant information, and preparing a written statement of the findings of the investigation. At the conclusion of this investigation, the Chair must recommend that the student's grade appeal be supported or denied. The Chair shall communicate this recommendation and its rationale in writing to the student and the faculty member.
3. If the faculty member who issued the grade is also the Chair, the student should appeal directly to the Associate Dean of the college in which the course was taught, submitting a written statement explaining the reasons he or she believes the grade is unreasonable, unjust, or capricious. The Associate Dean is responsible for investigating the student's claims by gathering relevant information, and preparing a written statement of the findings of the investigation. At the conclusion of this investigation, the Associate Dean must recommend that the student's grade appeal be supported or denied. The Associate Dean shall communicate this recommendation and its rationale in writing to the student and the faculty member (Chair).
4. If the student believes that the process was flawed or that there was evidence that was not considered, he/she can bring the appeal to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research. In addition to the appeal materials already provided to the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean in Step 2 above, the student must justify in the appeal why he or she believes the decision should be reconsidered, including any new pertinent information. Disagreement with the outcome of the deliberations of the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean is not sufficient on its own to pursue an appeal with the Dean. If the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research agrees that the process was possibly flawed or that there is substantive new evidence that was not considered, he/she will convene the Graduate Grade Appeal Committee to hear the grade appeal. The Graduate Grade Appeal Committee, selected each year, will consist of five members, as follows:
 - a. Two faculty members from the Graduate College Advisory Committee,
 - b. Two master's degree program students in good standing selected by the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research, and
 - c. The representative of the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

5. Before hearing any appeals, any student serving on the Graduate Grade Appeal Committee must fill out and sign a FERPA Privacy and Confidentiality Understanding/Agreement, available from the representative of the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research or the University Registrar.
6. The Graduate Grade Appeal Committee will investigate the case and will hold a hearing. The student, the faculty member, and the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean involved with Step 2 shall be invited to participate. If the student fails to attend the agreed-upon, scheduled hearing, then the hearing will be cancelled and the grade appeal dismissed without further review.
7. The Graduate Grade Appeal hearing generally takes about one hour and has the following format:
 - a. The student has 10 minutes to present the appeal, after which the committee members may ask questions of the student.
 - b. The faculty member of the course has 10 minutes to respond, after which the committee members may ask questions of the instructor.
 - c. The Chair (if he/she is not the faculty member), Coordinator, or Associate Dean may add comments and answer any questions the committee members may have.
 - d. The student does not ask questions of the faculty member, Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean, and the faculty member, Chair, Coordinator, and Associate Dean do not ask questions of the student.
 - e. The student may have 2 or 3 minutes for final rebuttal and the committee may ask final questions of the student, faculty member, Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean.
 - f. Everyone except for the Graduate Grade Appeal Committee leaves the hearing room.
 - g. The committee members discuss the appeal. The Dean's representative will lead the discussion. When the discussion is complete, the committee members will take a vote on the appeal.
8. The committee will communicate to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research its written recommendation, which will be one of the following:
 - a. If the Committee decides that the challenged grade is unreasonable, unjust, or capricious, it shall so communicate to the Dean its recommendation that the grade be changed to a P.
 - b. If the Committee decides there is insufficient evidence to support the student's claim, it shall recommend to the Dean that the original grade should stand.
 - c. If the committee cannot agree on the appeal, the lack of agreement will be communicated to the Dean.
9. After receiving the recommendation of the committee and reviewing the materials submitted by the student, the faculty member, and the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean, the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research may decide that the grade should remain as recorded, or that it should be changed to a P (Pass). If the grade is changed to a P, the credits for the course will count toward the student's degree requirements, but the grade will not contribute to the GPA.
10. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research will share his or her decision in writing with the student, the faculty member, and the Chair, Coordinator, and/or Associate Dean, and a copy of the decision will be placed in the student's records. The decision of the Dean is final.

Graduate Admissions Policy

Please see this policy in the Admissions section of the Catalog. (<http://catalog.neiu.edu/admissions/graduate-students/>)

Graduate Certificate Programs

A Graduate Certificate Program is composed of a focused collection of courses that offers a skill set in and/or distinctive approach to a subject that cannot be otherwise gained through an existing Northeastern degree program or academic minor.

Graduate certificate programs must conform to Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) guidelines and to the following IBHE Program Inventory Definitions:

1. A post-baccalaureate certificate "requiring completion of an organized program of study requiring at least 18 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's and...designed for persons who have completed a baccalaureate degree but do not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the master's level."
2. A post-master's certificate "requiring completion of an organized program of academic study of at least 24 semester credit hours beyond the master's degree but does not meet the requirements of academic degrees at the doctoral level."

Students may be concurrently enrolled in a degree program and a certificate program. Such students will complete a separate application to each program.

Courses composing a Northeastern graduate certificate will, upon their completion, be included on a student's transcript and in the computation of a student's grade point average.

Credit hours earned through a post-baccalaureate certificate from a program or combination of programs in which there is/are (an) approved graduate degree(s) may, upon approval of the program and the College of Graduate Studies and Research, count toward a master's degree. At its discretion, a Northeastern graduate program may count all credits earned in certificate courses offered by that program. At its discretion, a Northeastern program may count up to 9 hours of credits in certificate courses offered by another program that offers courses in the shared certificate program.

A student enrolled in a graduate degree program in which there is a fully- or partially-embedded graduate certificate program is eligible to receive the certificate only if the student has made a separate application and has been admitted to the certificate program.

A minimum grade point average of 3.0 must be achieved in graduate course work for the certificate to be awarded.

Acceptance of transfer credits toward a graduate certificate is at the discretion of the graduate program. Graduate programs may accept up to 9 hours of graduate transfer credits. Programs may set more stringent transfer credit limits.

Exceptions and Changes to Graduate Policies

Individual exceptions to the published policies of the College of Graduate Studies and Research may be made only after approval of the Dean or the Dean's designate following the submission of a written petition. Northeastern Illinois University and the College of Graduate Studies and Research reserve the right to make policy changes from time to time when necessary.