

GUIDELINES AND POLICIES FOR GRADUATE AND POSTBACCALAUREATE STUDENT PETITIONS/ APPEALS

OVERVIEW

The following document lays out the principles, policies, and procedures, and clarifies the jurisdictional accommodation of graduate and postbaccalaureate appeals and petitions.

Petitions to waive campus regulations or procedures regarding acceptable standards of performance, such as requirements for timelines, curricula, program coursework, grading, or progress toward degree, may be made by graduate or postbaccalaureate students for justifiable and appropriate reasons. Similarly, students may wish to challenge decisions made by campus authorities, including decisions on matters of student conduct or interpretation of university-wide established policies and regulations. Individual cases shall be adjudicated according to the appropriate jurisdiction and sequence, in accordance with the following policy and procedural guidelines.

I. GOVERNING STANDARDS AND JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

In offering postbaccalaureate and graduate programs, California State University, Fresno is subject to the policies and regulations of the CSU Board of Trustees, the statutes of the California State Education Code appearing in Title 5, as well as the regulations and policies established through the University Graduate Committee. Supplemental policies and standards at the departmental or program level complete the governing requirements. Jurisdictional authority and standards governing graduate student petitions and appeals may be summarized as:

A. University Level

Policies and regulations that apply to all university students and any appeals or decisions based on those policies are handled through established university-wide procedures.

Petitions and student appeals of university-wide policies and regulations will be subject to established campus guidelines for review levels and procedures, including review by university-wide committees with graduate representation as appropriate (e.g., the Student Academic Petitions Committee, or as provided through the procedures administered by the vice-president and dean of academic affairs; see Division of Student Affairs procedural guidelines).

B. Division of Graduate Studies Level

Policies and regulations that apply to acceptable standards of performance for postbaccalaureate and graduate students are handled through established Division of Graduate Studies procedures. The dean of the Division of Graduate Studies is responsible for the interpretation, implementation, and review of such policies.

Petitions and student appeals related to waivers of requirements or deviations from established university graduate policies or procedures are subject to review levels and procedures as established by the University Graduate Committee of the Academic Senate (refer to attached document, Policies and Procedures for Graduate Student Petitions Committee).

C. Graduate Program/Department Level

In addition, the graduate faculty group for each program is responsible for establishing program-specific scholastic, academic, ethical, and professional standards and/or requirements. Most programs will adopt and adhere to the ethical principles and professional practice guidelines of appropriate professional organizations. These standards are to be used to determine an individual student's graduate standing with regard to program admission and continuation. The standards also serve as the basis for faculty recommendations regarding both academic probation and program dismissal.

Each department or program shall compile in writing a list of the academic, ethical, and professional standards to be met and the procedures governing both the evaluation of student compliance with these standards and the process for appealing and reviewing appeals of decisions rendered based on these standards. The procedures shall afford a fair and expeditious review, and are to be approved by the college or school dean and the graduate dean. The resulting documents shall be on file in the form of departmental or graduate program guidelines in each departmental office, the office of the graduate program coordinator, and the Division of Graduate Studies office. Copies are to be made available to students, and the department shall make reasonable efforts to inform all students about these program regulations.

Petitions and student appeals arising from program or departmental policies and regulations are subject to procedures and review levels within the department or graduate program established as outlined in the preceding paragraphs and Section II, following.

II. GRADUATE STUDENTS' RIGHT TO APPEAL OR FILE A COMPLAINT -PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

The university encourages informal resolution of problems, and students are urged to discuss their concerns with the involved faculty member, the graduate program coordinator, department chair, dean of the college, or graduate dean. Informal resolution of problems by mutual consent of all parties is highly desired and is appropriate at any time. In cases where a formal resolution of problems is needed, separate administrative procedures and timelines have been established that govern a formal appeals process (see Division of Student Affairs documentation).

Whether informal or formal, all participants shall take reasonable steps to protect the rights and, to the extent appropriate, the confidentiality of all parties involved in any proceedings to resolve problems. Additional details on appeals of academic decisions can be obtained from the Division of Graduate Studies office.

A. Appealing Academic Decisions

1. Graduate students have the right to appeal academic decisions that may have been made at different levels: instructor, program committee, department, college or school, or the university. Students should first go to the individual or unit responsible for the decision (e.g., disputed grades should first be taken to the faculty member who assigned the grade; graduate program requirements should be taken to the department; college or school requirements to the college or school; and university requirements to the Division of Graduate Studies).
2. An unfavorable ruling at one level may be appealed to the next successive level(s). A faculty decision can be appealed to the department's graduate program coordinator or the department chair; a department decision can be appealed to the college or school dean in which the graduate program is located; a college-level ruling can be appealed to the Division of Graduate Studies; a Division of Graduate Studies decision can be appealed to the provost and then to the President of the university.

B. Appeal of Other University Decisions

If an appeal of an action or complaint arises from issues not identified above (e.g., sponsored research misconduct, employment issues, or patent and intellectual property claims), the graduate dean, the provost and vice president for academic affairs, and the university administrator involved shall determine the appropriate procedure(s) for processing a complaint or an appeal.

C. Appeal of Decisions Regarding Graduate Student Probation, Suspension, and Dismissal Process

University students in the Division of Graduate Studies are considered to be members of an academic scholarly community committed to shared ethical and professional principles. Integrity, justice, honesty, respect and responsibility represent the basis for establishing the rights accorded to each member of this community. On rare occasions students may fail to meet these expectations. When the student's behavior does not conform to prevailing standards of conduct, the university may impose appropriate sanctions.

Student misconduct that includes instances of academic dishonesty and violations of the California State University Code Governing Student Conduct (Title 5) and university-wide policies established in accordance with state and federal statutes and requirements for compliance may lead to expulsion, suspension, or probation. Examples of failure to meet such expected codes include cheating or plagiarism, misrepresentation of one's self or work, inappropriate collaboration, abusive behavior or hazing, and forgery (for complete listing, see Title 5, Sections 41301 to 41204).

Further, a student who violates the academic, professional and ethical standards in the discipline for which the student is preparing may be subject to academic sanctions, including but not limited to grade reduction, failing grade, suspension, or dismissal from the graduate program, as well as additional sanctions as determined by university procedures. The following program and departmental regulations apply:

1. If a student is failing to meet departmental standards, the department shall first warn the student of this fact in writing. The notification shall specify in what way(s) the student is failing to meet the standards. When conditions such as probation or suspension are imposed, the department shall give at the time of its imposition a written explanation of this status, what is needed to correct deficiencies, and time limits for readmission or regaining graduate standing.
2. Program suspension or dismissal may follow failure to meet conditions of admission or probation; established written grade point or program requirements or other academic and professional program standards; or failure to meet a regularly scheduled examination or formal evaluation. The student has the right to appeal such decisions and to seek further departmental review, according to established departmental and/or program standards (see above, Section I C).
3. Appeals of probation, suspension, or dismissal decisions by faculty that involve judgment of performance normally will not be reviewed beyond the college or school level. If, however, the student feels there has been discrimination, unfairness, or procedural irregularity, the student may appeal to the college or school dean and then to the graduate dean. The student may pursue a grievance according to the Dispute Resolution Procedures established by the university (see Division of Student Affairs documentation).

4. Students who are suspended or dismissed from a graduate program may be eligible to retain their postbaccalaureate standing in the university. However, these students are not permitted to enroll in graduate coursework unless they are admitted to a new graduate degree program.

References: Title 5 *California Code of Regulations*
Graduate Student Academic Petitions Committee Policies and Procedures (APM)

Recommended by the Academic Senate
Approved by the President

April 2003
May 9, 2003