

# EVALUATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS AND GRADUATE SCHOOL APPEALS PROCEDURE

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## Evaluation of Graduate Students

Graduate students are students, apprentices to the professions, and, when they hold an assistantship or other paid position, student employees. Each of these roles has its own rights and responsibilities. Graduate students are responsible for knowing any special expectations and requirements of their department and program. They are expected to remain in good academic standing by making satisfactory progress toward the degree (see Scholastic Standards (<http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/graduate-bulletin/graduate-study/procedures-requirements-all-degrees/#scholastic-standards>)) and must at all times have an advisor. In the event that an advisor resigns from that position, it is the student's responsibility to obtain a replacement.

Department codes shall designate a system for periodic evaluation of progress toward completion of the degree. The student and the advisor share responsibility for scheduling evaluations. Results of such evaluations will be sent to the department head and to the graduate student being evaluated.

When a student's graduate advisory committee or an appropriate departmental graduate committee finds that a student is not making satisfactory progress toward the degree due to factors other than grade point average, and that satisfactory progress cannot be anticipated, a plan should be created, and the following steps should be taken.

1. Schedule a meeting with the student, advisor, and the department head that provides reasonable notice of the issues to be covered. If the student is a graduate assistant (GA), the supervisor is to be included in the meeting as well. The student has the right to include an advocate or mentor in the meeting.
2. During the meeting, inform the student of the concerns, create a progress plan with the student, and develop a timeline and inform the student of the potential consequences (e.g., recommendation for dismissal) if progress is not satisfactory. If the student has a disability, inform the student of their right to request reasonable accommodations from the Student Disability Center or OEO (if the student is a GA).
3. A written summary of the meeting will be shared with all parties and copied to the Dean of the Graduate School so that the Dean is informed. A copy of the summary shall be maintained in a departmental file.
4. The committee should keep in contact with the student to provide support and give feedback during the progress plan timeline and document such contacts and their outcomes.
5. At the end of the timeline, if progress is not adequate, the committee may recommend dismissal from the program and/or termination of an assistantship if applicable (See Termination of Graduate

Assistants). The recommendation must include documentation of the steps taken with justification for the action. The recommendation is forwarded to the Department Head for approval and the Dean of the Graduate School for final action.

Graduate students have the right to appeal certain academic decisions, before any action is taken, as described under Graduate School Appeals Procedure. Appeals of grades and academic integrity decisions must utilize appropriate procedures described in the General Catalog. Students alleging termination of assistantships or dismissal from the graduate program on grounds of unlawful discrimination are advised to consult with the Office of Equal Opportunity. (For information on the "at will" employment status of graduate assistants, see Assistantships (<http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/graduate-bulletin/graduate-assistantships/>)).

Dismissals for misconduct and violations of the Student Code are addressed by Student Conduct Services (<https://resolutioncenter.colostate.edu/student-conduct-code/>).

## Informal and Formal Complaints

This section explains CSU's policy on student complaints for matters not covered by other policies. If a student has a complaint related to sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sex discrimination, or other discrimination, the student should contact the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) and consult CSU policies on Discrimination and Harassment, Title IX Sexual Harassment, Bullying in the Workplace, and Violence in the Workplace. In addition, students should use the CSU System's Compliance Reporting Hotline when the subject matter of the complaint concerns alleged fraud, abuse, waste of University resources, or violation of any law or regulation by the University in connection with its official business functions. Complaints related to research misconduct can be reported by contacting the Research Integrity and Compliance Review Office.

Otherwise, addressing conflict in a direct and professional manner is an important part of graduate student professional development. Occasions will arise when a student has a conflict with or complaint about a fellow student, a faculty member or staff, or their advisor. When this happens, the student should first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the person involved by making an appointment with the person and communicating their concern in a calm and professional manner.

Students are encouraged to seek help from Conflict Resolution Services of the Student Resolution Center to learn how to communicate their concerns with the involved person. Students should also consult with their network of mentors, including graduate committee members or others who support the student in areas of academics, career development, and well-being, for guidance on how to resolve the conflict.

If speaking directly to the person involved does not resolve the issue, the student should seek informal resolution through the department chair or through Conflict Resolution Services. Conflict Resolution Services staff are available to facilitate conversations and help mediate conflict so that issues can be resolved informally. With the permission of the student, Conflict Resolution Services may involve the department chair, dean of the Graduate School, or others as appropriate in seeking a resolution.

If the conflict or complaint is related to employment as a graduate student assistant or student hourly position, the student should seek guidance from the Office of Equal Opportunity or the Office of the Ombuds.

## Procedures for Filing a Written Complaint

If the issue or problem still exists after informal attempts at resolution, a student may initiate the formal complaint procedure as described in the CSU Student Complaint Reporting Policy and the accompanying online Student Complaint Form. All formal complaints must be submitted in writing and must be signed by the student (including electronic or digital facsimile signatures clearly attributable to the student, for example the student's name in an email message received from the student's CSU email account). The online Student Complaint Form is provided as a tool for presenting a written complaint but is not required.

Written complaints other than those submitted through the online Student Complaint Form must be sent to the following physical or email address:

Graduate School  
Attn: Dean of the Graduate School  
108 Student Services Building  
1005 Campus Delivery  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1005  
Email: [gradschool@colostate.edu](mailto:gradschool@colostate.edu)

The Graduate School will notify the student with an acknowledgement that the complaint was received.

## Complaint Review and Resolution Process

The Graduate School is not an advocate for any party to a dispute but is an advocate for a fair process. Acting as a neutral third party, the Dean of the Graduate School or their designee will engage with the student and appropriate CSU officials to resolve the complaint and assure a fair process. Depending on the complaint, the Dean of the Graduate School or designee may involve the department chair, college dean, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, OEO, and/or Office of Legal Counsel.

If the resolution involves terminating the advisor-student relationship, the Dean of the Graduate School and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs will determine the distribution of responsibility of finding a new advisor, and graduate assistantship support if the student is a graduate assistant, between the student and the advisor's department.

A record of the complaint and its disposition will be maintained in the Graduate School. Information in the complaint will be made available to regulatory agencies and accrediting bodies, including the Higher Learning Commission and the Colorado Department of Higher Education, as required in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

## Protection from Retaliation

Colorado State University prohibits retaliation as set forth by the CSU Retaliation and Whistleblower Protection Policy. No student shall be retaliated against for bringing forward an informal complaint or for submitting a formal written complaint. This includes any forms of retaliation that threatens or takes materially adverse actions or omissions against a student that interferes with the student's education, training, and future career opportunities.

## Graduate School Appeals Procedure

Graduate students may appeal decisions concerning unsatisfactory performance on graduate preliminary or final examinations (see this section), academic probation for reasons of unsatisfactory progress toward the degree other than insufficient grade point average, termination

of or election to void an assistantship for reasons set forth in the terms and conditions applicable to graduate assistant appointments, or dismissal from the graduate program for academic reasons to the Dean of the Graduate School. Grading decisions in courses are subject to appeal according to the University's policy on Appeals of Grading Decisions, as set forth in the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Staff Manual (<http://facultycouncil.colostate.edu/faculty-manual/>).

A student has a total of 35 working days to make a formal appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School from the date when an appealable decision has been made that is of concern to the student. Prior to submitting an appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School, the student should discuss the decision with the academic officer(s) whose actions are challenged in an informal attempt to resolve concerns. (Academic officers may include the student's advisor, graduate committee, department head, supervisor, etc.) If the matter is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, the student may initiate a formal appeal by submitting the matter in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School. In the written appeal:

1. the student must clearly identify the actions being challenged,
2. the rationale for the challenge
3. the person(s) against whom the complaint is made, and
4. the redress sought.

If an appeal is not filed within 35 working days following the adverse recommendation or decision, then this recommendation or decision will become final. If an appeal is filed within 35 working days, then the decision regarding the appeal is final. The original adverse recommendation or decision being appealed by the student remains in effect until the appeal is final.

The Dean of the Graduate School shall implement the appeal procedures below, keeping records of the case. A review panel, composed of two faculty members with degrees at the level being pursued by the student appellant or higher and one graduate student pursuing a degree at that level or above, will be appointed. One faculty member will be appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School and another faculty member will be appointed by the dean of the college in which the student appellant's program is located. These appointees will be from departments other than that of the student appellant, but they should be from related disciplines so they are reasonably familiar with the standard procedures in that department. In the event that either the Dean of the Graduate School or the dean is a principal in the case, the Provost will appoint appropriate faculty members. The Graduate Student Council will provide a list of graduate students pursuing graduate degrees who are willing to serve on review panels from which the Dean of the Graduate School will appoint a student who is from a different department than the student appellant, but who should be from a related discipline. In the event that the Dean of the Graduate School is a principal in the case, the Provost will appoint the student member.

The Review Panel will consider the case in detail. It must review any written record of the case. It must afford the student appellant an opportunity to appear in person before it and consider any relevant written materials the student may wish to bring to its attention. The panel will hear from the academic officer(s) whose action is being appealed and may confer with other involved parties. It shall evaluate any other information it deems important to its deliberations. Written summaries of the deliberations will be kept. To overcome the presumption of good faith in the performance judgment by the advisor, supervisor, and/or graduate committee, an appeal must demonstrate that the evaluation was based upon matters that are inappropriate or irrelevant to

academic performance and applicable professional standards and that consideration of those matters was the deciding factor in the evaluation. If the panel finds in favor of the student by a majority vote, it will make appropriate recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School, such as reassignment to another advisor and/or graduate committee, administration of another examination, or alternative assistantship assignment. The Dean of the Graduate School and the dean of the college involved shall jointly review the case, giving due consideration to the panel's report and recommendations. Following consultation with the Provost, as appropriate, the Dean of the Graduate School shall make the final decision of CSU. In the event where the Dean of the Graduate School is a principal in the case, the duties of the Dean of the Graduate School, with respect to this case, shall be transferred to the Provost. In the event that the decision recommends termination of an assistantship due to unavailability of funds or other conditions beyond CSU's control or due to a lack of performance of assigned duties and functions as set forth in the terms and conditions applicable to graduate assistant appointments, the termination must be approved by the Board of Governors, or the President, as its delegated representative.

Other appeal or reporting processes available to students are included below.

1. Students may appeal disciplinary issues, subject to the University Discipline Process, through the Student Resolution Center. (<https://resolutioncenter.colostate.edu/>)
2. Students may file a complaint regarding what a person may believe to be an act of discrimination or harassment, based on race/ethnicity, eg, color, religion, national origin, or ancestry, sex gender, disability, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression to the Office of Equal Opportunity (<http://oeo.colostate.edu/>).
3. Procedures to report observed, suspected, or apparent Research Misconduct can be accessed through Research Integrity and Compliance Review Office (<https://www.research.colostate.edu/research-misconduct/>).