EVALUATION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS AND GRADUATE SCHOOL APPEALS PROCEDURE

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/).

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://faculty council.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/).