



Graduate College Policy Updates for AY 25-26

Revision to the Grading Policies for Thesis Research Credit and Recording of Deposit Information on the Transcript

Approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee on November 13, 2024

Related Student Code Revision approved by Senate on December 2, 2024

This revision will require grades to be entered for research (599) courses at the end of each semester that a student enrolls to communicate the academic assessment of the student's progress as well as provide student with the earned credit at the end of each semester rather than at the end of a program. The revision also establishes a practices of recording deposit activity on the academic transcript as well as a transcript notation if a student switches from a thesis option to non-thesis option.

Revision to the Graduate College Policy on Time Limits (Two Separate Revisions)

Approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee on February 12, 2025

- 1) This proposal revises time limits for doctoral students who enroll at Illinois as a master's student and continue in a doctoral program a total of 8 years from their first enrollment in the Graduate College to complete their degrees. The existing policy only provides this cohort of students 7 total years to complete their doctoral degree. The revision will put students who begin their studies at Illinois in a master's program on an equivalent time limit as those who enter a doctoral program with a master's degree from another institution.

Approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee on November 8, 2023

- 2) This proposal was inadvertently left off the report to Senate EPC at the end of last year. This revision changed the timing of when a student who had exceeded their expected graduation date would be placed on academic warning (probation). The previous policy had an option for students to be placed on academic warning in the first year beyond their expected graduation date "based on program recommendation". After that initial year, all students would be placed on academic warning. The change in language granted all students one year of a time extension without being placed on academic warning.

Revise the Criteria for Graduate Faculty Status to Include all Tenure-Line Faculty

Approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee on March 26, 2025

Current policy language does not include tenure-line faculty in the Carle Illinois College of Medicine or University Library. This revision will extend graduate faculty status to all tenure-line faculty.

Revision to the Definition of Full-Time Enrollment for Graduate Students

Endorsed by the Graduate College Executive Committee on March 12, 2025

EP.25.087 approved on March 31, 2025 by Senate EPC

Current policy defines full time enrollment (in FA/SP) for graduate students as 12 hours or 8 hours with a 25-67% assistantship. This revision considers graduate students full time when enrolled for eight credit hours in a fall or spring semester and four hours in the summer irrespective of employment status.

Proposal to the Graduate College Executive Committee for New/Revised Graduate College Policy

PROPOSAL TITLE: Revision to the Grading Policies for Thesis Research Credit and Recording of Deposit Information on the Transcript.

SPONSOR: Allison McKinney, Assistant Dean Academic Affairs

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: This proposal seeks to revise our long standing practices around grading policies for thesis research credit as well as how we record non-course based milestones on the academic record.

BACKGROUND: This proposal seeks to change the policy and practice of automatic assignment of “DFR” grades in Thesis Research 599 courses, with final grades of “S” being assigned at the time of deposit. Our long-standing practice has been to automatically assign DFR grades to thesis research courses rather than providing faculty with an opportunity to enter a semester grade based on academic assessment of the student’s progress has presented some challenges that we are seeking to alleviate with these changes.

Additionally, we seek to establish a new practice of recording deposit activity and dates on the transcript. Currently, we record preliminary and final exam activity and dates on the transcript. This proposal would establish a practice of recording the following additional academic milestones on the student’s transcript:

1. Dissertation Deposit/Date
2. Master’s Thesis Deposit/Date
3. Non-Thesis Option

JUSTIFICATION: There are several student benefits that this policy change is seeking to establish:

1. Giving credit for research credit each semester along the way. Under current policy, if a student registers in 599 credit and later decides to change to a non-thesis option for their Masters program, the practice is for those students to petition for those credits to remain as “DFR” permanently on their student record. Without final grades assigned, these hours do not contribute toward degree requirements or completed hours. This has presented challenges for previous students in communicating academic experiences with employers.
2. Prompting academic progress feedback at the end of each semester. Along with the annual review process, faculty would assign grades to students to indicate satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress on research activity. At this time, those conversations may be verbal, but there is no academic record update to provide students with that academic assessment throughout their program. Through the assignment of S/U grades each semester, the student’s academic record more accurately describes their academic progress in the degree program.

3. Providing faculty awareness of their students enrolled each semester in their 599 sections. With current practice, faculty are not prompted to enter grades for these sections and so are not always aware of the students who enroll in their sections. We have had history of students enrolling in 599 credit for many semesters without discussion with their advisors. Additionally, without that end of semester grade entry, we are finding registration issues at the time of graduation for a student that must be corrected (for example, registered in the wrong section of 599). It would be best to catch those issues close to the time of enrollment, rather than creating additional tasks for the student at the time of graduation.
4. Recording deposit information provides a more complete picture of the student's academic record by inclusion of deposit actions or if the student chose the non-thesis option for their masters degree.

BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS: This change will impact Office of the Registrar staff, initially requiring some system updates, but eventually decreasing work on the part of their team. This will require faculty to assign grades each semester in 599 courses.

COMMUNICATION PLAN: We will communicate this policy revision to all faculty/staff/students as soon as the policy has been approved and grading system updates are in place.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2025. We will not require any retroactive grade changes. This process will apply to 599 registrations beginning Fall 2025 and going forward.

Transcript notations for deposit activity could begin as early as Fall 2024.

NEW/REVISED POLICY STATEMENT:

Graduate College Handbook

3.1 Grading System

DFR: Grade deferred. To be used only in courses that extend over more than one semester excluding 599 research credit. ~~those thesis, research, and special problems courses extending over more than one semester that are taken by graduate students as preparation for the thesis, and in other approved courses that extend over more than one semester. The symbol DFR in courses other than thesis (499 / 599) The grade~~ must be converted to a permanent grade no later than 5:00 p.m. on Reading Day of the next semester in which the student is registered. If no grade change is submitted within that period, the DFR will be converted as follows: for graded courses to an F, for S / U courses to a U, and for CR NC courses to a NC. ~~The DFR symbol for thesis courses (499 / 599) stands indefinitely until a grade is submitted by the adviser at the completion (successful or unsuccessful) of the thesis.~~

4.1 Graduate Degree Requirements

Research Credit and 599

A student cannot deposit a thesis without record of registration in thesis research credit (599). ~~Likewise, students with a record of registration in research credit will be required to deposit a thesis to complete their degree.~~ Graduate students should register for research credit during semesters when they are working on the thesis.

Departments may set criteria that determine at what point in the program students may begin registering for 599 credits. Registration in 599 must always be done with the approval of the student's adviser.

~~Faculty will assign a "S" or "U" grade at the end of each semester to indicate satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress. S/U grades do not impact GPA, but if there is a history of unsatisfactory progress on thesis research, the student may be placed on academic warning status through the department recommended academic warning process. The grade of DFR (deferred) is reported for research credit until the thesis has been completed, successfully defended if required, and deposited in the Graduate College. When a thesis is successfully defended and deposited, the DFR grades will be changed to S (satisfactory). If the student fails the final defense, the grade becomes of U (unsatisfactory) will be assigned for that semester, and the thesis cannot be deposited.~~

~~Students who have registered for thesis research credit and who later decide to complete the non-thesis option of the degree may graduate with graded 599 credit. It may be appropriate to convert some of the thesis research credit into project hours. It will be up to the department to determine if any of the thesis research credit may apply towards non-thesis degree requirements.~~

~~If research credit is taken but thesis work is not completed is not deposited, the 599 registration cannot be removed from the record. If the work will not be completed, the student must successfully petition for grades to permanently remain as DFR in order to receive a degree. Students will not be certified for a degree with any grades of DFR in their academic record unless a petition has been approved.~~

Student Code Revision

<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3/part1/3-104>

DFR Grade temporarily deferred. To be used only **in those research, special problems or capstone courses that are taken by graduate students, excluding 599 thesis research hours in those thesis, research, and special problems courses extending over more than one semester that are taken by graduate students as preparation for the thesis** and by undergraduate students in satisfaction of the requirements for graduation with honors, and in other approved courses that extend over more than one semester.

Requests for approval to use the DFR grade in courses that extend over more than one semester, which therefore require postponement of the final grade report, must be submitted in writing by the executive officer of the department offering the courses to the dean of the college for concurrence. A copy of the approval will be sent to the Office of the Registrar, which maintains a list of all courses approved for the DFR grade.

Graduate students: The symbol DFR ~~in courses other than thesis (499/599)~~ must be converted to a permanent grade no later than the end of the next semester in which the student is registered. If no grade change is submitted within that period, the DFR will be converted as follows: for letter graded courses to an F, for courses graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory to a U, and for courses taken on Credit/No Credit basis to an NC. ~~The DFR symbol for thesis courses (499/599) stands indefinitely until a Supplemental Grade Report Form is submitted by the adviser at the completion (successful or unsuccessful) of the thesis.~~

CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Graduate College Unit Representative:

Date:

Graduate College Dean:

Date:

ADDITIONAL APPROVALS: *(If necessary. Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Provost Representative:

Date:

Additional Representative:

Date:

Proposal to the Graduate College Executive Committee for New/Revised Graduate College Policy

PROPOSAL TITLE: Revise the Time Limit to Degree for Doctoral Students who Began in Master's Program

SPONSOR: Alexis Thompson, Associate Dean, Graduate College

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: We are proposing a policy revision to permit doctoral students who start as a master's student at Illinois a total of 8 years from their first enrollment in the Graduate College to complete their degrees.

BACKGROUND: Dating back at least 40 years, the time limit for a doctoral degree has been seven years from the first registration in the Graduate College, including time to receive a master's degree. Individuals who enter with a master's degree from another university are allowed six years to complete the doctoral degree.

We have received feedback from some programs that this policy has put students who began their graduate studies with a master's program at Illinois before moving into a doctoral program at a disadvantage. We are seeking to update the policy to provide greater equity for students.

JUSTIFICATION: For graduate students who begin their studies in a master's program, this revision would allow them to take two years to complete the master's degree and then enter the doctoral program on similar footing as students who are entering the doctoral program with a master's degree from another institution. This will allow graduate programs to advise their entering Stage II doctoral cohorts similarly about timeline expectations.

Graduate students on approved Leaves of Absence receive time extensions for their deadlines for each semester of leave.

When students are transferring into a doctoral program from another doctoral program or from a master's program where Stage I is not considered to have been completed, an expected graduation date and timeline for completion of degree stages will be determined in consultation with the new program at the time of admission.

Students who are admitted to a doctoral program and receive a master's degree after completing Stage I will not have any changes to their expected graduation date calculations.

BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS: Extending the expected graduation date for the group of students who begin in master's programs could result in a slightly longer time to degree for these students and additional assistantship costs. However, departments monitor students' progress through annual academic reviews and set expectations for progress based on their program's requirements. Many students graduate before their expected graduation date timeline is reached.

The impacts of implementing this change on staff processing time or capacity is expected to be minimal.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2025

COMMUNICATION PLAN: Graduate programs will be notified of the change by email and the Graduate College handbook will be updated to reflect the change with the start of the new academic year. As students are admitted to doctoral programs effective Fall 2025, they will be notified of their expected graduation date.

NEW/REVISED POLICY STATEMENT:

(Changes in red)

6.2 Time Limits

A doctoral student **entering in Stage I** is required to graduate within seven years of first registering as a degree-seeking student in a graduate program. A student who enters the graduate program with an approved previous master's degree that would satisfy Stage I of the doctoral program is considered entering at Stage II and is required to graduate within six years of first registering as a degree-seeking student in a graduate program. **Students who begin in a master's program and then enter a doctoral program would be required to graduate within eight years of first registration in the Graduate College.** Stages of a doctoral program are described below. Time extensions can be made under extenuating circumstance, as described below.

Expected Graduation Date Calculation

- Admitted to doctoral program as Stage I (no approved master's): seven years
- Admitted to doctoral program as Stage II (with approved master's): six years
- Admitted to University of Illinois master's program and continuation into doctoral program **(where master's program fulfills Stage I of doctoral program): ~~seven-eight~~** years from admission to master's program

Doctoral Stages and Time Limits

Stage I (~~should be completed within two years of first registration in the graduate program~~). A student is considered to be in Stage I from initial enrollment in the graduate program to completion of a master's degree or its equivalent. Each department should have a procedure for evaluating a student's progress at this first stage of doctoral work. Elements of this evaluation will include GPA, along with other factors related to good academic standing and satisfactory progress. In some departments, this evaluation may take the form of a qualifying examination or other examination or series of examinations, which a student must pass before entering Stage II of the doctoral degree program. Evaluation of progress in Stage I, whether by examination or other formal review, should take place no later than the end of the second year after a student enters the doctoral program. The evaluation results should be communicated in writing to the student. Students who apply to a doctoral program having already completed a master's degree equivalent to that awarded by the

University of Illinois are generally considered to have completed Stage I of the program unless the department deems otherwise, in which case the department must notify the student of the stage in which they are entering the program.

Stage II (~~must be completed by end of year four or five depending on admission stage~~).

A doctoral student is considered to be in Stage II from completion of the master's degree or equivalent to completion of all departmental requirements (except the defense and deposit of the dissertation), including passing the preliminary examination. In some programs, doctoral students entering with a master's degree will take a qualifying examination early in Stage II. Stage II usually consists of one or more years devoted to course work and research in preparation for the preliminary examination. Stage II ~~must be completed no later than year five for a student entering in Stage I and year four for a student entering in Stage II, and~~ ends with the successful passing of the preliminary examination. Students who have not successfully passed their preliminary examination ~~at the end of year four or five by the deadline~~ (as determined by their admission stage) of their graduate program will be not in good academic standing. ~~See table below for deadlines based on admission stage. The deadline to complete Stage II is two years less than the expected graduation date/deadline to complete Stage III.~~

Stage III (~~must be completed by end of year six or seven depending on admission stage~~).

Stage III is the time from the completion of Stage II to graduation. Stage III consists of the student conducting research and writing their dissertation, successful passing of their final examination (defense), and deposit of their dissertation. Students in Stage III must have a director of research (who is often the student's adviser) who oversees the dissertation research (See Chapter 6.4). Stage III must be completed by the ~~deadlines in the table below based on admission stage. end of year seven of a doctoral program if the student entered as Stage I or by the end of year six if the student entered at Stage II.~~ Students who have not completed Stage III by this time ~~can receive one time extension before being placed on academic warning. will be not in good academic standing.~~

Deadlines to Complete Degree Stages based on Admission Stage

	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III
Admitted to doctoral program as Stage I (no approved master's)	Approximately 2 years (not monitored by the Graduate College)	End of year 5	End of year 7
Admitted to doctoral program as Stage II (with approved master's)	Not applicable (completed prior to enrolling)	End of year 4	End of year 6
Admitted to University of Illinois master's program and continue into doctoral program	Completion of Illinois master's program (typically 2 years)	End of year 6 (since first enrollment in master's program)	End of year 8 (since first enrollment in master's program)

CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Graduate College Unit Representative:

Date:

Graduate College Dean:

Date:

ADDITIONAL APPROVALS: *(If necessary. Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Provost Representative:

Date:

Additional Representative:

Date:

Proposal to the Graduate College Executive Committee

Academic Probation and Time to Degree

10/13/2023

PROPOSAL: Revise policy on when students who have exceeded their time to degree are placed on academic probation

CONTACT: Assistant Dean Allison McKinney, 217-244-3140, agrindly@illinois.edu

BACKGROUND: The current policy has an option for students to be placed on academic probation in the first year of a time extension “based on program recommendation”. After that initial year, all students will be placed on probation. We propose changing the language to state that students are permitted one year of a time extension without being placed on academic probation.

JUSTIFICATION: As we prepare to implement placing students on probation for exceeding the time to degree, we believe it will be clearer for students and departments to have a clear indication of when probation status would occur and to allow students one initial year of a time extension to complete their program without being placed on academic probation. This will allow for more consistent implementation across graduate programs. Additionally, there already exists an option for departments to request a student be placed on academic probation for not making academic progress. If a department had concerns about academic progress for a student in any year of their program, including the first year of a time extension, they could follow this process.

COMMUNICATION PLAN: Graduate programs will be notified by email and the Graduate College handbook will be updated to reflect the change with the start of next academic year.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: August 2024

REVISED POLICY STATEMENT:

Within the section 3.2 Academic Standing, modify the section to read:

Probation due to exceeded time limit. Students who have exceeded the time limit to complete their master’s degree or doctoral degree must successfully petition the Graduate College to continue in their academic program. **A student will be placed on academic probation after one calendar year has passed from their initial time-to-degree limit.** ~~They will be placed on academic probation and will have up to three consecutive semesters to improve their standing to good standing or they will be dropped from the Graduate College. Students who are petitioning for their initial time extension in a program may be exempted from academic probation due to justifiable reasons at their department’s request.~~

Students who have been placed on probation due to having exceeded the time limit to complete Stage II of their doctoral degree will have a fall or spring semester to improve their standing to good standing or will be dropped from the Graduate College.

Once a student has been placed on probation due to an exceeded time limit, the student must complete that degree stage by the end of the probationary period or face dismissal from the Graduate College.

Proposal to the Graduate College Executive Committee for New/Revised Graduate College Policy

PROPOSAL TITLE: Revise the Criteria for Graduate Faculty Status to Include all Tenure-Line Faculty

SPONSOR: Alexis Thompson, Associate Dean, Graduate College

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: We are proposing a policy revision to extend graduate faculty status to tenure and tenure-track faculty in all units (not just those that award graduate degrees)

BACKGROUND: The current graduate faculty member criteria dates from an earlier period in our institution. As interdisciplinary research expands, students are often mentored by faculty across campus, not just in their primary academic college. Extending Graduate Faculty status to all tenure-line faculty will recognize the work they are already doing and permit them to engage more fully in graduate education, including teaching graduate courses, advising graduate students and serving on doctoral committees.

JUSTIFICATION: Under the current policy, only tenure-line faculty in colleges and schools that offer graduate degrees are granted membership in the Graduate Faculty. Faculty in the University Library and the Carle-Illinois College of Medicine do not receive this status even when they have roles in advising and teaching graduate students. Through this policy revision, all tenure-line faculty will be considered equally under this policy.

We have shared these suggested revisions with the Council of Deans and received positive feedback about the proposal.

BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS: The impacts of implementing this change on the budget is expected to be minimal.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2025

COMMUNICATION PLAN: Graduate programs will be notified of the change by email and the Graduate College handbook will be updated to reflect the change with the start of the new academic year. Newly added members of the Graduate Faculty will receive an email informing them of their membership.

NEW/REVISED POLICY STATEMENT:

CHAPTER 1: GRADUATE FACULTY MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Policy and Responsibilities

The Graduate College has jurisdiction over all programs leading to graduate degrees.

As defined in the university *Statutes* (Article V, Section 1c), “The faculty of the Graduate College consists of the President, the Chancellor/Vice President, the Provost or equivalent officer, the Dean, and all those who on the recommendation of the department or of other teaching or research divisions have been approved by the Executive Committee and the Dean of the Graduate College to assume appropriate academic responsibilities in programs leading to graduate degrees. Other administrative staff members are members of the faculty of the Graduate College only if they also hold faculty appointments and have been recommended and approved as provided above.”

These academic responsibilities include:

- establishing and maintaining high quality graduate education and research programs within the academic units of the university;
- developing and teaching of graduate level courses and curricula;
- advising graduate students;
- serving on doctoral examination committees as a member, director of research, or chair;
- electing members of the Graduate College Executive Committee;
- serving on Graduate College committees; and
- providing advice to the Graduate College Dean and the Executive Committee.

The Graduate College recognizes that the standards of academic excellence must remain at the highest level consistent with individual unit standards. Standards shall be maintained without discriminating against a faculty member on unlawful grounds and without limiting the University of Illinois’ guarantee of academic freedom and equal opportunity.

1.2 General Criteria for Membership in the Graduate College Faculty Criteria and Procedures

To carry out the statutory charge to the Graduate College “to develop and safeguard standards of graduate work and to promote and assist in the advancement of research in all fields” (*Statutes*, Article V, Section 1a), the Dean, with the advice of the Executive Committee, establishes standards for membership in the Graduate College, monitors their implementation, and retains responsibility for appointments to the Graduate Faculty. These standards assume that:

- faculty members appointed to units offering programs leading to graduate degrees meet the highest standards of the discipline for graduate teaching and research or for creative activity;
- those faculty members are given freedom, opportunity, and guidance to become involved in graduate education, and to participate to the fullest extent of their interests and capabilities in the affairs of the Graduate College; and
- the executive officer of the unit is committed to consistent high quality achievements of the faculty, accomplished through their active participation in the unit’s graduate programs.

Appointment Criteria and Procedures

- Each faculty member ~~of a graduate degree-granting college or school~~ shall be recommended automatically for membership in the Graduate Faculty and shall be appointed by the Dean at the time of appointment or promotion to a tenure-track or tenured position.
- Others may be nominated by the unit executive officer for term membership on the Graduate Faculty if the qualifications of the nominee as judged by the Executive Committee and the Dean are comparable to those required for appointment to a tenure-track position ~~in a graduate degree-granting unit~~. The initial term may be at most five years.

Extending Membership

- Members of the Graduate Faculty who have retired or resigned may be retained on the Graduate Faculty for up to five years, upon request by the unit executive officer or other authorized individual. The Graduate College recommends, but does not require, that these faculty members have adjunct or emeriti/ae appointments.
- Members of the Graduate Faculty who retired or resigned with tenure may retain Graduate Faculty membership and tenure status only for the purpose of serving on doctoral committees for a period of up to five years following their resignation or retirement upon the request of the unit executive officer or other authorized individual. That period may be extended at the request of the unit executive officer, so long as the faculty member remains actively involved in the graduate program.

- Members of the Graduate Faculty whose terms have ended may be renewed for up to five years upon request by the unit executive officer or other authorized individual.

Termination Policies Ending Membership

- A Graduate Faculty member may resign from the Graduate Faculty voluntarily by submitting a letter of resignation to the dean of the Graduate College.
- A Graduate Faculty member who resigns or retires from the university is automatically ~~terminated~~removed from membership in the Graduate Faculty unless the unit asks that the Faculty member continue for a specified period of time.
- A unit may submit a request to the Graduate College to have a member removed from the Graduate Faculty if the member has been grossly neglectful of or grossly inefficient in the performance of responsibilities as a Graduate Faculty member (as listed in the introduction to this policy). The written request for removal must be made by the unit executive officer to the Dean of the Graduate College and must state reasons ~~for the requested termination~~. The Faculty member under consideration for removal may provide a written statement requesting continued membership.
- The unit’s request and the Faculty statement, if submitted, will be considered by the Graduate College Executive Committee, which shall make a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate College. The Dean shall make the decision on removal, which may be appealed to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Graduate College Unit Representative:

Date:

Graduate College Dean:

Date:

ADDITIONAL APPROVALS: *(If necessary. Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*

Provost Representative:

Date:

Additional Representative:

Date: