

Handbook for Graduate Coordinators

Thank you for serving as a Graduate Coordinator. It is through your hard work and dedication that successful graduate education at UNI is really made possible. This Handbook is intended to help you administer your program by addressing some of the more frequent concerns, questions, and problems in implementing the policies of UNI and the Graduate College. Since there are a lot of rules and regulations strewn across various websites and catalog pages, one of the goals of this Handbook is to help you find all of this information.

However, this Handbook is *not* intended to replace official policies and procedures of the University or Graduate College. The full policies are available in the UNI catalog and on the University and Graduate College websites. Where relevant, links are provided in this Handbook to appropriate policies.

Please note that the Graduate Dean or Associate Dean of Graduate Academic Affairs must approve any and all exceptions to policy ahead of time. Usually, these exceptions can be addressed through the student request system. Most difficulties arise because approval was not sought prior to advising students.

This highlights the importance of communication between the Graduate College and the graduate coordinators. Since graduate education at UNI is administered in a rather decentralized fashion, good communication between programs and the Graduate College is all the more necessary. Before the beginning of each semester, the Graduate College will send information to coordinators, and will perhaps hold a meeting with coordinators, to make them aware of upcoming events, opportunities for graduate students, and any changes or clarifications to Graduate College or university policy.

It is important for graduate coordinators to pass along information from the Graduate College to faculty who are advising graduate students, and/or who are serving as thesis/dissertation chairs. Since Graduate College approval is required for all exceptions to policy, advisors should get in touch with graduate coordinators and the Graduate College early.

The remainder of this handbook is divided into various topics of importance or interest to graduate coordinators and advisors.

Admissions

Although the Graduate College ultimately reviews and approves all admissions decisions, responsibility for determining eligibility for admission rests primarily with the academic departments. After admitting a student, the department should send the student a welcome letter with information about the requirements of the program the student needs to meet (including information about any waivers of requirements).

Recently, the Graduate Council approved the use of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as an acceptable alternative to the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). International students may now choose to submit either IELTS or TOEFL scores. A

TOEFL score of 550 or an IELTS score of 6.5 is required for admission. Some programs may require higher test scores; no programs may require lower scores.

The Graduate Council also recently recommended that individual programs should be allowed to evaluate international applicants with three-year degrees on a case-by-case basis. As a result, individual programs should review these applications and they have the discretion to admit or deny students with such degrees.

Complete information on the graduate admissions process and requirements is available here: <http://www.grad.uni.edu/admission/default.aspx>

Program of Study

Once a student is admitted to a degree program, a Program of Study based on the program's requirements will be created automatically. It will be available for viewing through MyUNiverse by the student, the student's advisor, and the program coordinator (along with other appropriate staff and administrators, such as the Registrar's Office and the Graduate College).

Core requirements of the student's program will be listed, and when the student registers for one of these required courses, it should automatically appear on the student's Program of Study. ***If the program has electives or "choose groups," a student request has to be filed in order for a course to appear on the Program of Study as an elective or as a component of a choose group.*** Please be sure to have students file the necessary requests to have these courses added to the Program of Study in time for the requests to be processed before any deadlines (such as those for Graduate Assistantship payment, or for graduation).

When reading a Program of Study, take care to note special designations. A grade in parentheses indicates the course is not counting toward completion of the program, even though it is on the Program of Study. Typically, these will be grades below that of C-. Also note that the credit hours for a course will be listed twice. The first is the number of credit hours of the course; the second is the number of credit hours that are being applied to the completion of the program. The two may be different, and it is an indication that some of the hours are not being applied to the completion of the program (e.g. if a student registers for 6 hours of internship when 4 are required, only 4 hours will be applied toward completing the program).

As of 2006, the old GF-1 paper forms are no longer used. There is no need to fill them out for incoming students.

Student Requests

The student request system for graduate students is online, available through MyUNiverse. Students *must* file requests via the online system; paper requests are not acceptable and will not be processed by the Graduate College or Registrar's office. **Graduate students** have a link in their MyUNiverse. Under the category "**My Personal Records**" the last link on the list is "**Student Requests.**" Graduate students click on that link, and follow instructions to write, submit, and review the approval status of all student requests.

Once a student files an online request, it goes to the student's advisor for review. If approved, the request then moves to the graduate coordinator for review. If approved at that level, it goes to the Associate Dean of the Graduate College for final approval. Once final action has taken place, the student will receive an email. Students may also view their requests to see where they are in the process. Please note that it may take a few days after the Associate Dean approves the request for the change to appear on the student's Program of Study. **Graduate Coordinators and Advisors:** when a graduate student submits a student request, you will **automatically receive an e-mail with a link** to the student request, so you can read it, and either approve the request or deny approval. Or if you would like to enter the student request system manually, you can enter your MyUNiverse, and under the category "Advising and Instruction" click on "Student Request."

Advisors and graduate coordinators should use the "comments" section of the request to make clarifications or corrections as necessary. However, graduate coordinators and advisors are urged to remind their students to be as clear and thorough as possible when making requests. This will help avoid delays.

If a request sits at the advisor or coordinator level for 7 days, it will automatically be forwarded to the next level, but it will not be automatically approved. Please do not let student requests sit for longer than a week. A proxy may be designated on the "Requests Pending Approval" screen. Please designate a proxy if you will be unable to process student requests for longer than one week to prevent them from "timing out" and moving to the next level. **To assign a proxy approval:** The graduate coordinator and/or advisor can assign a proxy approver by entering their MyUNiverse, under the category "Advising and Instruction" click on "Student Request." On the first page that comes up, at the top left side of the page is a link "Manage my Proxy Approval." You can add, edit, or delete proxy approvers from that page. Required information to enter a proxy is the proxy approver's University ID and a start date. End date is optional, and can be left open. Anyone (faculty, department heads, staff) with a University ID can be listed as a proxy.

The automatic e-mail generated when graduate students submit their requests will go to the students' advisor and graduate coordinator (and any proxy approver listed). If your department does not require an advisor's approval for student requests, the graduate coordinator's approval will override the advisor signature and will keep the request moving along the approval route.

The exception to the use of the online request system is the ability for graduate coordinators to make blanket requests by email. This is useful if a large cohort of students has a uniform situation and request. To make a blanket request, send an email to the Associate Dean of Graduate Academic Affairs and include the following information: a clear statement of the request; a justification or explanation of why the request is necessary; and each involved student's name and student number. If blanket requests are repeatedly made regarding the same issue, graduate coordinators should consider proposing an alteration to their curriculum.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistant Stipends and Graduate College Tuition Scholarships are available to qualified students who are working toward a graduate degree at the University of Northern Iowa. They may only be held by full-time students who are in residence during the time of their appointment.

Policies for Graduate Assistantships can be found on the Graduate College's website:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/assistantships/assistantships.aspx>

Common Issues Regarding Assistantships

Once students have completed their Program of Study credit hours, the graduate assistantship expires, even if students are taking additional classes. ***The assistantship does not support students beyond program completion and it is unethical to artificially extend a student's program simply to retain an assistantship.***

Advisors and Graduate Coordinators should ensure that their students are in compliance with the requirements no later than August 15 for the Fall semester and again by January 11 for the Spring semester. The most common reasons for non-compliance: (1) the student is not registered for at least 9 graduate credit hours from the student's Program of Study; (2) the student has not maintained a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better for program hours; (3) the student has not been unconditionally admitted to a graduate degree program; (4) the student has failed to accept the offer for support from the Graduate College. It is especially important for advisors and graduate coordinators to help new graduate students to ensure they have met the requirements for their assistantships or scholarships by the deadline dates. ***Failure by a student to be in compliance by these dates will result in delayed payment and a pro-rated reduction in their stipend.*** This may require a student request to place current coursework on the student's Program of Study. Please allow several days for a request to be processed. Please use the above link to find the requirements that Graduate Assistants must meet each semester in order to be paid on time.

Policies and Procedures

The Graduate College adheres to the standard policies and procedures of the University. These are available here: <http://www.uni.edu/president/policies/index.shtml>

Some particular policies and procedures of note for graduate education are highlighted here as they are unique to graduate education at UNI.

Academic Discipline

Students who have attempted at least 9 hours on their Program of Study and have a program GPA of less than 3.0 are placed on Academic Probation. Students on Academic Probation lose any Graduate Assistantship or Graduate College Tuition Scholarship they may have. Students on Probation who fail to raise their program GPA to at least 3.0 in the next enrollment period are placed on Academic Suspension.

Students who have attempted at least 18 hours on their Program of Study and have a program GPA of less than 3.0 are immediately suspended. Suspended students may not enroll in any coursework for one full calendar year and lose any Graduate Assistantship or Graduate College Tuition Scholarship they may have.

After one full academic year, a suspended student must apply for readmission to graduate education at UNI in order to begin taking graduate classes again. This application is only available in the Graduate College office (it is not online), and suspended students must demonstrate to their advisor, program coordinator, department head, and the Graduate Dean that there is a reasonable expectation of future academic success. Students returning from suspension who do not raise their GPA to at least 3.0 in the enrollment period of their return are permanently suspended from graduate education at UNI. Note that it might be mathematically impossible for students to raise their program GPA to at least 3.0 in one semester; such students will not be readmitted.

International students who are placed on probation or suspension frequently have problems with remaining in the country, since their visas typically require them to be full time students in good standing or have assistantships/scholarships. Please contact the Office of International Programs for additional information.

Grades and Incompletes

No more than six semester hours of “C” credit (C+, C, C-) may be applied toward a student’s program. If the six semester hour limit is exceeded, the student must repeat at least one of the courses.

Graduate student GPAs are calculated differently from undergraduate GPAs. For graduate students, the original grade for any repeated course will be included in calculating the student’s program GPA as well as in the overall cumulative GPA. *Note that this is different from the way GPA is calculated for undergraduate students.* Course grades of “D” or “F” are not satisfactory and these courses must be repeated.

Grades of “Incomplete” reported in the Fall semester must be completed by June 1 of the next calendar year. Work reported Incomplete in the Spring semester or Summer sessions must be completed by January 1 of the next calendar year. If course work is not completed and a new grade is not reported, the Incomplete is automatically entered as an “F” on the student’s record. Courses that continue beyond the normal ending date of the semester or session should be reported as “RC” (Research Continued) rather than Incomplete. Once the course is complete, the instructor must replace the “RC” with the appropriate grade.

Note that students occasionally find themselves on academic probation or academic suspension as a result of having Incompletes automatically lapse to “Fs”. Program coordinators and advisors should make sure students are aware of the consequences of allowing an Incomplete to lapse to an F, including possible suspension and/or loss of financial support.

Recency Deadlines

Graduate students normally have 7 years from their initial semester of admission to a graduate degree program to complete their degree. This time limit is stated on the Program of Study in the “University Competency Summary” section. Coursework that falls outside the recency limit is considered to be obsolete and will no longer be counted toward program completion for graduation. Such courses must be retaken. Extensions to the 7-year time limit are occasionally granted (via student request) to current students who are making progress toward graduation, but typically only for a short period of time (an extra semester or two) and due to some unforeseeable circumstance (such as illness, family emergencies, etc.). Extensions are typically granted only once. Students who have not been continuously enrolled or who are hoping to return after a long absence will generally not be granted exceptions to the recency deadlines. Note that any exception to recency deadlines must ultimately be approved by the Associate Dean of Graduate Academic Affairs. Since that is the case, please contact the Associate Dean prior to advising the student.

Academic Grievances

Academic grievances for Graduate Students are handled through Section 12.01 of the policies and procedures, which is specific to graduate education. Because the formal grievance process is so time-consuming, every effort should be made by the student, faculty, department head, and Associate Graduate Dean of Graduate Academic Affairs to resolve disputes informally. See <http://www.uni.edu/president/policies/1201.shtml>

Non-Academic Discipline

Departments may establish additional requirements (e.g. ethical/professional standards) for students above and beyond existing university policies and procedures. Violation of these might result in a student being placed on nonacademic probation or may result in the dismissal from a graduate program.

If a department has such requirements, they must be in writing, and every reasonable effort must be made to inform students of their existence. These requirements must be disseminated to students upon their admission to graduate study in the program. These requirements must also be on file in the Graduate College.

Procedures for placing a student on nonacademic probation or dismissal are found in the catalog in the “Graduate Degree Requirements” section.

Other Regulations

1. Maximum academic load. The maximum graduate student load during each semester is 15 hours. The maximum graduate student load during the 8-week summer session is 9 hours (a maximum of 6 hours during one four-week period, and 3 hours during the other four-week period; or 9 hours taken simultaneously in an eight-week period). Overloads must be approved with a student request.

2. Level of courses. Courses in the 100 series (without g) or below count only for undergraduate credit and can not be applied to a Program of Study, but they do count for calculating cumulative grade point average.

3. Transfer credits. Transfer courses *will not* be used to satisfy the 200-level or 300-level course requirements. Transfer courses from the University of Iowa or Iowa State University will not be approved for use on a student's Program of Study until a transcript is submitted to the Registrar's office. Transfer courses from other institutions will not be approved for use on a student's Program of Study until a Graduate Transfer Evaluation Form and a transcript are submitted to the Registrar's Office. Since it is possible that credits will not transfer as a result of information on the Transfer Evaluation Form, *it is a good idea to complete the form prior to taking the class*, if possible. Note that since the Transfer Evaluation Form requires the other institution to supply information, there may be some delay in completing the form. No more than one-third of the number of graded hours required by a master's program may be transfer credits. Doctoral programs have their own individual transfer maximums. Please also note that professional development courses or classes taken through an Area Education Agency *will not* transfer and *will not* count on a graduate student's Program of Study. All transfer courses must also be approved via a student request.

4. Continuous Registration. Graduate students who have completed all of the coursework in their program but not all of the graduation requirements (e.g. comprehensive exams, thesis, recitals, etc.) must be continuously registered until the degree is complete. Students at this stage will be registered in the course xxx:29C, Continuous Graduate Student and assessed a \$50 fee. This guarantees continued access to campus resources, the library, email and MyUNiverse accounts, and other services. Graduate coordinators and advisors should double-check to ensure such students are indeed continually registered.

Questions about policies and procedures for graduate education may be directed to the Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs. Pam MacKay, the Graduate Records Analyst is also very helpful in sorting out issues regarding programs of study and progress toward graduation. She can be contacted at pamela.mackay@uni.edu or 3-2255.

Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines

The Thesis and Dissertation Manual is available from the Graduate College website, in either PDF or Word formats:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/files/forms/thesis/ThesisManual.pdf>

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/files/forms/thesis/ThesisManual.doc>

Please note that the style rules in the Thesis and Dissertation Manual take precedence over any other departmental or professional style manual. In addition, each program has specific thesis and/or dissertation manuals, and these are listed in the Graduate College's manual.

Students should take advantage of the “Timely Tips” compiled by the thesis and dissertation reviewer: <http://www.grad.uni.edu/thesis/tips.aspx>

Sometime during the semester in which the student intends to graduate, *and no later than eight weeks before graduation*, the student must have a preview meeting to review the style and format of their thesis or dissertation. Prior to the start of each semester, the reviewer will request a list of prospective thesis/dissertation writers from each department. Only students expected to graduate within the next semester or two should be included on this list. Information regarding the thesis preview will be sent to the students, and they will be asked to contact the Graduate College when they are ready to schedule their preview. Failure to provide the names and current mailing addresses to the Graduate College may result in students missing the deadline for scheduling their preview.

Each year, the Graduate College posts a list of important dates for graduate students who are completing a thesis or dissertation. This list includes when the preview must be completed, and when the completed *and defended* thesis or dissertation is due in the Graduate College office.

Please note that these deadlines are not flexible and that failure to adhere to them will result in a delayed graduation date.

For this year’s important dates, see:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/files/forms/thesis/2009-10%20IMPORTANT%20DATES%20FOR%20GRADUATE%20STUDENTS.pdf>

Note: Students on a non-thesis program do not schedule a preview meeting, and research papers are not submitted to the Graduate College. These guidelines and deadlines are set by the department.

Graduate Faculty

Per the Graduate Faculty Constitution, “the primary function of the Graduate Faculty is to provide educational experiences and set policy associated with graduate programs at the University.” Membership of, and admission to, the Graduate Faculty is defined in the Graduate Faculty Constitution. See:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/files/forms/graduatefaculty/Graduate%20Faculty%20Constitution%202009.pdf>

It is important for graduate coordinators and department heads to remember that only members of the graduate faculty may teach courses for graduate credit. Visiting professors and adjunct instructors may temporarily join the Graduate Faculty as Associate Members. Associate members of the Graduate Faculty are not allowed to serve as a regular member of a thesis, research paper, or dissertation committee. They can, however, serve as an additional committee member. Programs and Departments must make these nominations and forward them to the Graduate Dean for approval *at least one week prior to the start of the semester*. Regular members (tenured or tenure-track faculty) should be nominated upon their start date.

The nomination form for regular members is here:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/files/forms/graduatefaculty/GFNom.pdf>

The nomination form for associate members is here:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/files/TemporaryGraduateFacultyStatus.pdf>

A full list of all regular members of the Graduate Faculty is available on the Graduate College website: <http://www.grad.uni.edu/graduatefaculty/faculty.aspx>

The Chair of the Graduate Faculty is elected for a one-year term from the membership of the Graduate Faculty. The Chair calls the official meeting(s) of the Graduate Faculty (traditionally, one meeting in the Spring semester) and coordinates other special initiatives, such as the Brown Bag Lecture Series.

The Graduate Council is the decision-making body of the Graduate Faculty. Elections to the Graduate Council are made according to the procedures specified in the Graduate Faculty constitution. Information about the Graduate Council is available from the Graduate College website:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/graduatecouncil/default.aspx>

The Graduate College Curriculum Committee (GCCC) reports to the Graduate Council, and is in charge of reviewing and approving curriculum proposals that influence or change graduate programs. Information on the GCCC is available from the Graduate College website:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/graduatecouncil/gccc.aspx>

Graduate Student Life

The Director of Graduate Student Life has numerous responsibilities, including graduate student orientation, planning professional development activities, and marketing/recruiting. Please encourage new graduate students to attend orientation, even if they earned their undergraduate degree from UNI, as the policies and procedures for graduate studies are significantly different. Students also will learn how to use the student request system and will be able to collect information on a variety of resources and offices on campus.

The director also is the advisor for the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB), which is a representative group of graduate students that provides information and feedback to the Graduate Dean. Before the start of each year, the academic deans will be contacted by the Graduate College requesting suggestions for membership on the GSAB; each college has two members.

The Graduate College publishes the *Graffito*, which is the graduate student newsletter. This is published four times a year. The *Graffito* contains news, information about upcoming events and professional development opportunities, and other information important to graduate students. The latest edition of the *Graffito* is available here:

<http://www.grad.uni.edu/graffito/default.htm>

The Director of Graduate Student Life also serves as the liaison to the Department of Residence on campus. Please note that graduate students who have completed their coursework but not the rest of the degree requirements *must* be “continually registered” (course xxx:29C) if they are to remain in on-campus housing, particularly over the summer. General information on housing is available here: <http://www.grad.uni.edu/admission/housing.aspx>

Finally, the Director of Graduate Student Life coordinates the annual Graduate Student Research Symposium. Information on the Symposium is available at:
<http://www.grad.uni.edu/symposium/default.aspx>

The Graduate College

Information about the Graduate College Dean and staff is available from the website:
<http://www.grad.uni.edu/information/staff.aspx>

Questions about academic policies and academic discipline should be directed to the Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs.

Information on awards for students and faculty is available from the website:
<http://www.grad.uni.edu/awards/internal.aspx>

Please check the Graduate College homepage regularly for news and announcements regarding graduate education at UNI. The news archive is also available:
<http://www.grad.uni.edu/information/news.aspx>