

COE Policies and Procedures on Graduate Student Progress to Degree

Graduate students in the College of Education are selected for their high levels of competence, interest in the programs available in the College, and desire to work with specific faculty members whose personal expertise has attracted the student to UNT. Every effort is made to guide and help admitted students to complete their graduate program successfully. Life events, scheduling conflicts, or other personal reasons may make it difficult for some students to complete their degrees. Sometimes students' performance in classes or dedication to completing their plans does not match faculty expectations for quality graduate students. The following College policies and procedures are provided to help faculty members guide students in expediently completing an academically rigorous and professionally supportive graduate program; they set expectations and steps to facilitate the achievement of this goal.

Graduate studies are facilitated by regular advancement along the path to completion. Following admission to a graduate degree program in the College of Education (COE), students, whether full- or part-time, are expected to make continuous and satisfactory progress toward completion. The following College procedures supplement those in the Graduate Catalog that apply to all UNT graduate students. Occasionally, COE procedures may be more restrictive than UNT procedures, but never less.

Student Categories

Newly admitted students. Graduate applicants request admission to both the Graduate School and a particular program. Newly admitted students are defined as those admitted to both the Graduate School and the program and approved to register for a particular semester. They must begin coursework in that semester or the Graduate School automatically suspends their admission. To reactivate admission, they must contact the Graduate School. Program approval to reactivate admission is given automatically for the two semesters following the original admission semester. In the case of students who do not register for any coursework within a year of original admission, the Graduate School rescinds their admission, and students must reapply for admission to both the Graduate School and the program.

Continuing students. Continuing students are defined as admitted students who, in each long semester, have enrolled in at least one course potentially applicable to the degree. Continuing students are expected to maintain Graduate School and program criteria for satisfactory academic progress; failure to do so will result in probation, suspension, or dismissal from the program and the Graduate School. Satisfactory progress involves time to degree completion, filing the degree plan, and continuous enrollment.

Satisfactory Progress

Time-to-degree completion. Continuing students are expected to complete their degrees in a timely manner. In the following Table, part-time students are those who, for most semesters, take fewer than 9 hours each long semester; full-time students take 9 or more hours each long semester. (Note that this is not the definition of full-time students used for financial aid qualifications.) Students are not required to take courses in the summer semesters but should still finish in the expected time period for their degree.

COE Policies and Procedures on Graduate Student Progress to Degree

| Hours on degree plan ¹ : | Expected years to completion | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| | Part-time student | Full-time student |
| 36 - 44 | 4 years | 2.5 years |
| 45 - 59 | 5 years | 3 years |
| 60 - 71 | 6 years | 4 years |
| 72+ | 7 years | 5 years |

¹ Total hours; for doctoral students, this total includes tool subject courses if applicable.

All degrees are expected to be completed in the time frames outlined in these procedures. Failure to complete the degree in the designated time limit may result in dismissal from the program.

Occasionally, some students have legitimate reasons for needing more time to complete their degrees. Students who exceed the COE Expected-Time-to-Completion may request an extension of up to one year. The student submits this request in writing to one's major professor or program advisor. The recipient of the request, in consultation with the student's advisory or dissertation committee or, if no committee is designated, with one other faculty member, decides whether or not to endorse the request. If the request is endorsed, the request is forwarded to the Chair of the Department for endorsement and on to the COE Dean for Academic Affairs for approval. Students for whom exigent circumstances arise during their degree programs are expected to take a leave of absence rather than just discontinuing coursework (see below). Both the COE and the Graduate School time-to-degree limits begin with the student's first semester of enrollment; no student may exceed the Graduate School degree limit including time on leaves of absence.

Filing a degree plan. Each student must file a degree plan no later than completion of the 21st semester credit hour for doctoral students and the 15th hour for masters' degree students. All hours taken after admission to the degree count towards this requirement. A continuing student who does not submit a degree plan within the hours required will be blocked from enrollment the following semester. A student who has not filed a degree plan after their one blocked semester will be dismissed from the program.

Continuous enrollment. Continuous enrollment refers to enrollment in at least one semester credit hour of coursework each long (fall and spring) semester.

Doctoral students. A continuing doctoral student must be in continuous enrollment in the long semesters between the semester of the first course applicable to the degree and the completion of the degree. A continuing student who does not maintain continuous enrollment will be warned in writing of the need for continuous enrollment and, if circumstances warrant, recommended they apply for a leave of absence. If the same student continues with this pattern of non-enrollment and has a second long semester in which one is neither on a leave of absence nor taking classes, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Master's students. A continuing master's degree student is encouraged, but not required to maintain continuous enrollment from the point of admission.

COE Policies and Procedures on Graduate Student Progress to Degree

Leave of Absence

A continuing student who is experiencing exigent circumstances that temporarily prevent progress on the degree may request a leave of absence for up to one year. The student must make the request for a leave in writing to the major professor or advisor. If no major professor has been assigned, the student submits the request to the program coordinator.

If a leave is granted, the major professor/advisor notifies the program coordinator who notifies the Graduate School. Doctoral candidates – those who have passed the qualifying exam and who are required to enroll continuously in dissertation during each subsequent long semester – must also request directly from the Graduate School a waiver of continuous enrollment in dissertation. During an approved leave, the COE continuous enrollment requirements are suspended, and the duration of the leave is added to the COE time limit for degree completion.

A student who needs more time may request one or more additional leaves from the College. Approved College leave does not extend the Graduate School's limit for total time to degree completion.

Graduate Advising

At least once a year, the graduate student's advisor / major professor reviews the student's progress towards degree with regard to submitting the degree plan, best course selections for the next semesters, continuous enrollment, time to degree completion, thesis, capstone, dissertation work, etc.

Appeals of Dismissal

During the first semester following dismissal from a program, a student may appeal the dismissal decision. The student must submit the appeal in writing directed to the major professor or advisor or, if one is not designated, to the program coordinator. The recipient of the appeal, in consultation with the student's advisory or dissertation committee or, if no committee is designated, with one other faculty member, decides whether or not to grant the appeal. If the appeal is granted, the student is reinstated to pre-dismissal status. In the case of dismissal for failure to complete the degree within the COE time limit, an appeal may be granted for reinstatement of up to one additional year.

Dismissed students who wish to challenge an appeal outcome may appeal the decision to the appropriate Department Chair. The Chair may make a judgment on the merits of the case and designate a specific action in regard to the student's readmission. Alternately, the Chair may use the appropriate departmental committee to hear and make judgment on the appeal. Upon receiving the appeal, the committee has 30 days to render a judgment and designate a specific action in regard to the student's readmission. The judgment of the Department Chair or the appeal committee is final.

Additional Departmental and Program Procedures

Departments and academic programs may have additional procedures that are more restrictive, but not less restrictive, than the COE procedures on graduate student progress.