Academic Progress

Graduate Credit

For purposes of academic accounting, credits expressed in “semester hours” are assigned to each course. Lecture course credit is assigned on the basis of one semester hour of credit is awarded for 13-15 contact hours. Laboratory credit is assigned on the basis of one semester hour of credit for approximately 30 hours of work in the laboratory. Students may not earn “credit by examination” at the graduate level.

A student’s semester hours earned are increased by either earning a grade of C or better in a course for which the student was registered on a regular basis or obtaining a P grade in a course taken on a pass/not pass basis. A student’s semester hours attempted are increased by receiving a grade of A, B, C, or F in a course for which the student was registered on a regular basis.

Transfer Credit

Previously earned graduate credit with a grade of B or above while enrolled in another nationally accredited graduate school may be eligible for transfer into the student’s current degree program if it has not been applied toward another degree (either at UAB or elsewhere). All credit transfer requests must be initiated by the student and require the approval of the program director and the Graduate School Dean. Transfer Credit forms are available online at http://www.uab.edu/graduate/online-forms. An application for transfer of credit will not be considered until the student has completed at least 9 semester hours of graduate credit in their current UAB program and is in good academic standing. Completion of an application for transfer of credit does not guarantee that the transfer credit will be granted. No more than 12 semester hours of transfer credit can be applied to a degree program.

Students wishing to request an exception to the transfer credit hour limit must receive the approval of the program director, department chair, and Graduate School Dean. Once transfer credit has been accepted, it will be included in the calculation of the grade point average in the student’s current UAB program.

In programs offered jointly by UAB and other universities, all graduate credits earned in the program at a cooperating university are eligible for transfer to UAB. If a student earns credit in one UAB graduate program and is later admitted to another program, unused credits from the previous program, if applicable, are eligible for consideration for transfer into the current program.

Grading and Grade Point Average (GPA)

The grade of A indicates superior performance, B indicates adequate performance, and C indicates performance only minimally adequate for a graduate student. Any graduate student completing a course at the 500 level or above with a performance below the C level will receive a grade of F; the Graduate School does not use the grade of D. In some graduate programs, a grade of C is a failing grade. It is the student’s responsibility to know and abide by program grading requirements which may be more stringent than that of the Graduate School.

Four (4.0) quality points are awarded for each semester hour in which an A is earned, three (3.0) quality points are awarded for each semester hour in which a B is earned, and two (2) quality points are awarded for each semester hour in which a C is earned. No quality points are awarded for a grade of an F. A student’s grade point average (GPA) is determined by dividing the total quality points awarded by a student’s semester hours attempted. Students can view their cumulative GPA in BlazerNET (https://padlock.idm.uab.edu/cas/login?service=https%3a%2f%2fiddm.uab.edu%2fsso%2fblazernet%3finst%3dprod) and can view their term GPA on their transcript which is also available in BlazerNET (https://padlock.idm.uab.edu/cas/login?service=https%3a%2f%2fiddm.uab.edu%2fsso%2fblazernet%3finst%3dprod).

With the approval of the graduate program director, a course may be designated as a “pass/not pass course.” A grade of P (passing) signifies satisfactory work. A grade of NP (not passing) indicates unsatisfactory work although there is no, penalized with respect to the grade point average (GPA). Research courses with course numbers 698, 699, 798, and 799 are considered pass/not pass courses.

Temporary Grade Notations

If an instructor does not submit a grade at the end of a semester, a temporary grade of “N” (no grade reported) will be recorded. A grade of N does not positively or negatively impact a student’s GPA. If no permanent grade has been reported by the end of the following semester, an F will automatically be entered in the student’s academic record for the course.

The temporary notation of “I” (incomplete) may be reported at the discretion of the instructor to indicate that the student has performed satisfactorily in the course but, due to unforeseen circumstances, has been unable to finish all course requirements. An incomplete is never given to enable a student to raise a deficient grade. This notation should not be used unless there is reasonable certainty that the requirements will be completed during the following semester, because at the end of that semester, the incomplete automatically changes to an F if it has not been replaced with a letter grade. In highly unusual circumstances, the student may request an extension of the time to complete the requirements. This request must be submitted in writing in advance of the time when the grade automatically changes to an F because the approval of the instructor, program director, and Graduate School Dean are all required.

Academic Standing

It is critically important that graduate students at UAB understand both the Graduate School’s and their program’s academic standing policy and that they are aware of their own academic standing at all times. For a student to maintain good academic standing in the Graduate School, they must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 (B average) and an overall satisfactory performance on pass/not pass courses. Satisfactory performance on pass/not pass courses is defined as earning at least as many hours of P as of NP grades.

A degree-seeking or non-degree-seeking graduate student, who, at the end of any semester, fails to meet the criteria to maintain good academic standing will be placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation must re-establish good academic standing within the next two semesters during which they are enrolled at UAB. Failure to reestablish good academic standing at the end of their second term of enrollment while on academic probation will result in academic dismissal from the UAB Graduate School.

The rules stated above govern academic probation and dismissal, administered by the Graduate School. Individual graduate programs may establish and administer program probation and dismissal governed by more stringent requirements. In general, a student’s retention in a specific graduate program is contingent on the faculty’s belief that the student is likely to complete the program successfully. If the faculty ceases to
hold this belief at any point, the student may be dismissed from the program. It is a graduate student’s responsibility to be aware of and abide by program academic standing requirements in addition to the general academic standing policy in the Graduate School. Program probation and dismissal policies preempt the Graduate School policies.

Repeated Courses

Graduate students may repeat a course one (1) time in an effort to improve grades and/or to improve understanding of the course content only with the permission of the graduate program director. All courses taken and all grades earned are permanently recorded on the student’s transcript. Both grades will also be calculated in the student’s GPA unless the Grade Replacement policy is applied. Students wishing to repeat a course more than one time should seek approval of both their program director and the Dean of the Graduate School. **Graduate programs may choose to not allow students to repeat courses.**

Grade Replacement

A graduate student who repeats a course taken at UAB and earns a better grade the second time may request a grade replacement in which the grade for the first course be excluded from their GPA calculation. The grade replacement policy may be used a maximum of two (2) times, only once for any course, which allows a student to use grade replacement for two different courses. **Graduate programs reserve the right to not allow grade replacement or to allow less than the Graduate School’s maximum number of grade replacements. In addition, individual programs may have course repeat and grade replacement policy rules in addition to those of the Graduate School.**

If approved, the student’s transcript will show both the original grade and the course repeat grade; however, the first grade will be excluded from the student’s GPA calculation and, only the grade points and credit hours earned in the repeated courses will be counted toward degree completion. Once a course grade is replaced, the decision is irrevocable. In accordance with the UAB Academic Honor Code, any course grade of F for academic misconduct supersedes any other grade or notation for that class and therefore is not eligible for grade replacement.

It is the student’s responsibility to notify the Graduate School of their request to apply the grade replacement policy to a repeated course as the process is neither automatic nor guaranteed. The grade replacement policy requires approval of the graduate program director and the Graduate School. Grade replacement requests must be made prior to application for degree. The grade replacement policy can only be applied to grades earned at UAB and may not be applied after the student has graduated.

The Grade Replacement Request form is available online at http://www.uab.edu/graduate/graduate-school-quicklinks/online-forms.

Grade Changes

Final grades for an I (Incomplete) should be submitted no later than the grade submission deadline of the semester after the notation was originally awarded; Incomplete not changed by that time will convert to Fs. In general, grades submitted by graduate faculty members are not subject to change by reason of revision of the teacher’s judgment; nor are submitted grades to be revised on the basis of a second trial (e.g., a new examination or additional work undertaken or completed). Grade changes submitted in order to correct an error in computation or transcription must be made within two semesters after the grades were originally submitted. These grade changes must be submitted via BlazerNET (https://padlock.idm.uab.edu/cas/login?service=https%3a%2f%2fidm.uab.edu%2fsso%2fblazernet%3fixinst%3dprod) and require the faculty member’s statement as to the reason for the change, the approval of the department head, and the approval of the dean of the school in which the course is taught.

Time Limitations

Graduate students are generally expected to complete all degree requirements within 5 years of matriculation for masters and 7 years of matriculation for doctoral students. One extension of these time limits can be requested when mitigating circumstances preclude completion of requirements within the time limit. The request for an extension must include a written and signed Completion Plan which outlines the timeline for degree completion. Instructions for preparing a Completion Plan are available on the Graduate School website at http://www.uab.edu/graduate/graduate-school-quicklinks/online-forms. Time limit extension requests require the approval of the student’s dissertation committee as well as graduate program director and must be presented in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School for consideration and approval. Courses taken more than 5 years before graduation for masters students or 7 years before graduation for doctoral students may not be applied toward a degree without the approval of the graduate program director and Graduate Dean.

Academic Ethics & Misconduct

Graduate students at UAB have joined a distinguished academic community that is guided by a conviction in the worth of knowledge and its pursuit. By virtue of their membership in this community, they accrue many benefits—among them, access to the ideas and materials of others. Graduate students not only learn from others but also engage in the pursuit of new knowledge and, in some instances, teach or provide service to others. Being a member of an academic community and functioning in multiple roles in the community carries with it certain responsibilities.

As members of an academic community, students, faculty, and administrators share a responsibility to seek truths and communicate them to others. As we pursue knowledge and encourage learning, we acknowledge the need for a free exchange of ideas and recognize the importance of listening to and maintaining respect for the views of others. We must always aspire to learn, apply, and communicate to others the best scholarly standards of the disciplines in which we are involved. High scholarly standards demand high ethical standards.

We must commit to learning and communicating the best ethical standards and their application to our disciplines. In interactions with others, we must demonstrate respect for them as individuals, give credit for significant academic or scholarly assistance, and respect the confidential nature of some exchanges. We must adhere to the highest standards of academic conduct, avoiding those acts of misconduct and dishonesty that undermine the purposes of the academic community.

All UAB students are expected to be familiar with the UAB Academic Honor Code as well as any honor codes that are specific to their schools or disciplines. The code represents a commitment to integrity in the academic community and a respect for an individual’s educational endeavors:

> I have read and, by choosing to become a member of the UAB academic community, accept the UAB Honor Code. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as expulsion from the university. I promise and confirm that I will not, at any time and under
any circumstances, involve myself with abetting, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The UAB Honor Code

The University of Alabama at Birmingham expects all members of its academic community to function according to the highest ethical and professional standards. Students, faculty, and administration of the institution must be involved to ensure this quality of academic conduct. Academic misconduct undermines the purpose of education. Such behavior is a serious violation of the trust that must exist among faculty and students for a university to nurture intellectual growth and development. Academic misconduct can generally be defined as all acts of dishonesty in an academic or related matter. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following categories of behavior:

ABETTING: helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Allowing others to copy your quiz answers, or use your work as their own are examples of abetting.

CHEATING: use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, study aids, the answers of others, or computer-related information.

PLAGIARISM: claiming as your own the ideas, words, data, computer programs, creative compositions, artwork, etc., done by someone else. Examples include improper citation of referenced works, use of commercially available scholarly papers, failure to cite sources, and copying others’ ideas.

FABRICATION: presenting as genuine falsified data, citations, or quotations.

MISREPRESENTATION: falsification, alteration or misstatement of the contents of documents, academic work, or other materials related to academic matters, including representing work substantially done for one class as work done for another without receiving prior approval from the instructor. Misrepresentation also includes misrepresenting schedules, prerequisites, transcripts, or other academic records.

A student who commits an act of academic misconduct within the context of meeting course requirements will be given the grade of F in the course or on the assignment at the discretion of the department or program in which the misconduct occurred. Academic misconduct can occur in other contexts as well, such as when taking comprehensive examinations, performing research, preparing manuscripts or generally during the performance of other activities related to the process of satisfying degree requirements. Under Graduate School policy the program in which the student is enrolled may choose to expel the student from the university on the first offense. If, as determined by the records of the Graduate School or the department or program, the act of academic misconduct is a second offense, the student will be expelled from the university. The transcript of a student expelled for committing academic misconduct will bear the statement “Expelled for Academic Misconduct.” Withdrawal from a course while a possible violation of the Academic Honor Code is under review will not preclude the assignment of a course grade that appropriately reflects the student’s performance prior to withdrawal if the violation is substantiated.

Procedure for Reporting a Suspected Violation

When a faculty member or another student sees cause to charge a student with academic misconduct, within 7 days of noting the incident that individual will communicate the charge to the department chair or program director of the department or program in which the accused student is enrolled. The department chair or program director to whom the charge is presented will notify the student of the charge and provide the student with an opportunity to respond. If the student can respond in a way that, in the opinion of the program director and the department chair, either dispels the charge or provides the opportunity to resolve the issue informally, an informal resolution can be prescribed. If the student cannot refute the charge effectively, the department chair or program director will expeditiously notify the student of the administrative action to be taken. The notice shall also inform the student of the right to appeal and the steps involved in that process. Copies of any such communication will be provided to the academic dean of the school in which the student is enrolled.

If the school or department in which the student is enrolled has its own honor code, then the procedures of that honor code must be followed, including any prescribed appeals process. For dual degree students whose academic misconduct occurs in one of their two schools, the honor code of the school in which the infraction occurred should prevail. However, if no local honor code exists, the Graduate School’s procedure must be followed.

Right to Appeal and Formation of an Honor Council

If a student is the subject of an administrative action as the result of an academic misconduct violation and wishes to contest that administrative action, they may appeal in writing to the dean of the school in which the student is enrolled. The dean will then convene an Honor Council consisting of five students and three faculty members from various departments within the school. All of the students chosen to serve must be in good academic standing.

The Honor Council shall elect a chairperson from among the eight members. The Chair may be either a student or faculty member. The duties of the Chair include convening the Honor Council, presiding over hearings and communicating with the administration of their school on behalf of the Honor Council. In all matters, the members of the Honor Council are instructed to treat the information put forward to them with the strictest confidence.

Breaches of confidentiality are themselves violations of the Student Honor Code and will be treated as such.

Initial Procedures

After being informed of the charges and the failure to reach an informal resolution, the Academic Dean may also attempt to informally resolve the impasse between the student and the faculty member(s). In the event this attempt is unsuccessful, the Academic Dean shall refer the allegation(s) to the Honor Council. The Academic Dean will provide the Honor Council with a statement of the allegation(s) against the accused student, a description of the evidence and supporting documents (if available).

The Honor Council shall convene to review the charge and all evidence supporting it. After review, the Council may either dismiss the allegation(s) on the grounds that insufficient substantiating evidence exists, or support the charges, also based on the evidence. The Honor Council shall provide notice of the specific charge or of the dismissal of the alleged violation to the accused student by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by hand delivery, and to the Academic Dean. If substantiated, the statement of the charge shall include a brief summary
of the alleged violation and the evidence presented in support of the charge, in enough detail as to allow the accused the opportunity to rebut the charge, and shall provide notification to the accused student of their right to a hearing. The accused student must respond to the charge within five days, unless excused by the Honor Council. In their written response to the Honor Council, the accused student must admit or deny the charge and must formally request or waive their right to a hearing before the Honor Council.

Once notice of the specific charge has been provided to the accused student and to the Academic Dean, the Honor Council shall decide on a time for the hearing and any preliminary deadline(s) for the submission of supporting documents and the names of proposed witnesses. Granting a request from the accused, or from the School, to reschedule the hearing is within the discretion of the Honor Council, but shall not be unreasonably denied. The Honor Council shall provide written notice to the accused student of the time and place for the hearing, and if witnesses are to be called in their defense, ask the student to provide their names along with a statement describing the testimony of each witness. The Honor Council shall review any documentary evidence provided by the student in advance of the hearing.

The Hearing
The process shall generally include the following:

(1) call to order by the Chair;
(2) introduction of those present;
(3) statement of the Charge and possible penalties if the charge is proven;
(4) statement of the evidence and testimony in support of the charge, and questioning of witnesses;
(5) statement of evidence and testimony in opposition to the charge (rebuttal), and questioning of witnesses;
(6) closing statement. All questioning of witnesses shall be by the Honor Council unless the Honor Council decide otherwise.

1. A hearing before the Honor Council shall not be bound by formal rules of evidence or judicial rules of procedure. The Honor Council may hear any testimony or receive any supporting evidence that it deems to be pertinent to the charge. Both the accused and a representative of the School may be present throughout the hearing. The accused student shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard, to question witnesses indirectly through the Honor Council, to rebut adverse evidence, and to make a brief closing statement. Members of the Honor Council may ask any questions at any time during the hearing and may elect to disallow or to curtail testimony that the Honor Council determines to be unnecessarily redundant or not relevant to the issue(s) being heard. Throughout the hearing, all persons present shall conduct themselves in an orderly manner.

The accused may be accompanied at the hearing by an advisor of their choosing, however, the advisor may not participate in the hearing. The Honor Council shall be responsible for the conduct of the hearing at all times and shall keep a record of the proceedings in a format it chooses. Hearings before the Honor Council are confidential proceedings and only those persons determined by the Honor Council to have a need to be present shall be included. Except for the accused (and an advisor if invited by the accused) and the representative of the School, all other witnesses shall be excluded from the hearing room, except when testifying. No more than one witness shall be called to testify at a time. The School or the Honor Council may elect to invite UAB Security to be present at an Honor Council hearing.

As soon as practicable following the conclusion of the hearing, the Honor Council shall meet in private session to consider all of the evidence presented, and shall decide on one of two outcomes. The decision of the Honor Council shall be that the charge is either (1) proven by a preponderance of the evidence or (2) not proven by a preponderance of the evidence. A vote of six of the eight members shall be required for the charge against the accused to be proven. Following the vote, the Honor Council shall record the vote and shall provide a brief narrative statement explaining the rationale for their finding(s). The written decision and rationale of the Honor Council shall be transmitted to the Academic Dean, by internal communication, upon the conclusion of the Honor Council’s deliberations. The Honor Council shall notify the accused of the outcome by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by hand delivery. A decision of the Honor Council in favor of the accused student shall conclude the case.

Penalties for Violation of the Honor Code
Generally, a first violation of the Honor Code shall result in the assignment of a failing grade in the assignment or in the course in which the violation occurred, at the discretion of the instructor. A notation on the student’s permanent academic record may also be made to indicate that a reduced or failing grade was assigned because of an Academic Misconduct violation (e.g., “F, Academic Misconduct violation, June 15, 2008”), on the judgment of the Honor Council. A second violation of the Honor Code shall result in expulsion from the University.

No student may graduate until pending allegations of an Academic misconduct violation have been resolved. No student expelled from the Graduate School because of an academic misconduct violation shall be eligible for readmission.

If at the end of the appeals process performed at the school level, the accused student wishes to appeal to the Graduate School Appeals Board, they must follow the procedure outlined in the Graduate Catalog. Upon receipt of the appeal from the student, the Graduate Dean will request from the Academic Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled all appropriate documentation accumulated to that point. The Graduate Dean will then be responsible for maintaining records of all additional proceedings.

Nonacademic Conduct
The university is a community of scholars and learners; therefore, all participants are expected to maintain conduct that facilitates the institution’s pursuit of its educational objectives, exhibits a regard for the rights of other members of the academic community, and contributes to the maintenance of a healthy learning environment. Through appropriate due process procedures, conduct action will be taken in response to behavior that violates these principles. The Office of Student Advocacy, Rights and Conduct (https://www.uab.edu/students/services/advocacy-rights-and-conduct) supports the mission of the university by protecting the rights of all members of the university community and by promoting civility, integrity, responsibility, openness, mutual respect and justice by enforcing community standards. A more detailed description of nonacademic misconduct can be found by visiting http://www.uab.edu/students/student-life/item/817-non-academic-student-conduct. (http://catalog.uab.edu/graduate/academicprogress%20http://www.uab.edu/students/images/documents/sarc/non-academic-student-code-of-
conduct-policy.pdf) It is the student’s responsibility to be fully aware of all policies and procedures described in the Non-Academic Student Code of Conduct Policy. (http://www.uab.edu/handbook) The Office of Student Life and the Vice Provost for Student and Faculty Success have the responsibility for coordinating policies and procedures regarding students’ nonacademic misconduct.

**Grievance Policy**

Although rare, disagreements can arise that may affect a student’s progress towards the completion of the degree. The parties involved in such a dispute should make a good faith effort to discuss and resolve the disagreement. The following guidelines may be helpful.

1. Identify the problem; clearly define what happened and what you perceive is needed to resolve the issue.
2. Approach the other person or group involved with the dispute one on one. Set up a mutually agreeable time to talk; listen and ask to be listened to; use “I” statements when speaking; avoid assigning blame or leveling accusations.
3. If these steps do not culminate in a resolution, the parties involved with the dispute should agree to approach an impartial third party, a mediator, who will respect confidentiality and with whom the situation can be discussed. The Program Director will suggest such a third party if asked. The mediator may be able to help the parties involved reach a resolution.
4. If no resolution is found then you may submit the disagreement to the Graduate Program for arbitration. Please follow these procedures:
   a. Each party in the dispute should submit a written description of the disagreement to the Program Director and the department Chair. Please include a description of the actions taken to resolve the dispute to date and the name of the mediator who was involved.
   b. The Graduate Program Director will review the written documents. The Program Director, in consultation with the Program Advisory Committee, will make a determination as to whether or not the disagreement is Program related and thus appropriate for arbitration at the Program level.
   c. If the dispute is found to be Program related, the Graduate Program Director, together with the Graduate Program Committee, will act as an arbitrator. If the dispute involves the Program Director, Associate Director or any member of the Program Committee, then that individual will be excused from the deliberations. The Committee may request additional information from the parties involved. The Program Director and the Admissions and Advisory Committee will meet to discuss the problem within 14 calendar days following receipt of the written document or following the receipt of any additional materials. In the event that a quorum of the Committee is not available within this time period, the Committee will meet as soon thereafter as a quorum can be gathered. The Committee may also ask the parties in the dispute to appear before the committee to provide additional information.
   d. The result of the Committee’s deliberations will be communicated in writing to the parties involved in the dispute within seven (7) calendar days after the meeting.
5. To department Chair for final review of arbitration before proceeding to Appeals Board.

If a party involved in the dispute is not satisfied with the outcome of the arbitration process, an appeal may be submitted to the Graduate School Appeals Board. Please see the Graduate Student Handbook, Graduate School Appeals Board for specific information about the appeals process.

**Graduate School Appeals Board (GSAB)**

**A. Purpose:**

The purpose of the GSAB is to review appeals brought by graduate students of decisions made by university representatives concerning:

1. retention in graduate programs,
2. charges of academic misconduct or dishonesty,
3. selected other issues related to graduate education as deemed appropriate to forward to the GSAB by the Graduate Dean, the provost, or other university officials.

**B. Limitations:**

The GSAB will not review:

1. appeals of course grades,
2. appeals of a dismissal based on lack of adequate progress toward meeting degree requirements,
3. appeals for which the student has not previously fully used all other applicable appeal or review processes,
4. appeals filed more than 30 calendar days from the date of a prior review or 30 calendar days from the date of receiving notification of an action or decision,
5. misconduct in research which falls under the Policy Concerning the Maintenance of High Ethical Standards in Research and Scholarly Activities.
6. grievances brought against the faculty of a specific program. Program faculty report to the chairpersons and deans in the schools in which they hold their primary appointments. Accordingly, it is the responsibility of those chairpersons and deans to adjudicate at the school level any appeals brought by graduate students against their faculty. Decisions made at the school level in such cases will not be reviewed by the Graduate School Appeals Board.
7. grievances or appeals brought forth by masters (Plan II) students in professional/practice-based programs. These will be adjudicated exclusively within the school in which the program is housed. Any questions related to whether a program is considered professional/practice-based should be referred to the program’s director.

**C. Composition:**

The GSAB will consist of five members of the graduate faculty and three graduate students in good standing, all broadly representative of the graduate programs in the university. The GSAB will be chaired by a designee of the Graduate Dean. Members of the committee will be appointed on an ad hoc basis as needed by the Graduate Dean. The Graduate School will provide support personnel for the board to record proceedings of hearings.

**D. Meetings:**

The GSAB will meet as soon as possible after assembly by the Graduate Dean to adjudicate a pending appeal. A quorum for a meeting will be at least five persons: three graduate faculty members and at least two
graduate student members. Any member of the GSAB may disqualify himself or herself. After notification of the Board composition, the student bringing the appeal may disqualify one faculty and one student member of the board. If the disqualification of board members results in absence of a quorum, the process will be suspended until the Graduate Dean can appoint additional members.

E. Notification:

The chair of the GSAB will notify the student bringing the appeal and the student's program director of the decision reached by the GSAB in the initial review of the appeal—specifically, whether an appeal will be heard. If a hearing is to be held, the chair will notify the student and student's program director of the date, time, and place for the hearing. The chair of the GSAB is responsible for notifying the Dean of the Graduate School of the findings and recommendations reached by the GSAB after the hearing. The Dean of the Graduate School will notify the student and student’s program director of his or her action.

F. Authority:

The GSAB may recommend affirming or reversing the decision being appealed and making such recommendations for further actions as seem appropriate. In the course of any hearing, the GSAB is authorized to request additional evidence from, or the appearance of, any student, faculty or staff member, or other employee of the university, or other individual as a witness. The GSAB shall have final authority in procedural matters. The GSAB will forward recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School along with a record of the hearing proceedings. The Dean will make a final independent decision, taking into account the findings and recommendations of the GSAB and the records of the hearing. The Dean will inform the relevant parties and the GSAB of the decision in writing within 14 calendar days of receiving the GSAB recommendation.

Procedures

A. Filing an appeal:

Before a request for an appeal is accepted by the GSAB, the normal channels for resolving disputes must have been followed. First, the student should consult with their advisor to resolve the issue at that level. If the issue is not then resolved, the student should seek out the program director or department chair to request a resolution. If the program director and department chair have not been able to resolve the appeal or the action still needs to be pursued, it is then appropriate to pursue the issue with the academic college or school dean. At that point either the Honor Code of the school in which the student is enrolled should be invoked, or if no school based Honor Code exists, the Honor Council procedure described previously should be followed. If the concern has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the student at any one of these levels, an appeal to the GSAB may then be pursued.

All requests for appeals to be considered by the GSAB must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School, in writing, on the approved form (available in the Graduate School office and online) along with supporting documents and any other pertinent evidence. The written appeal must specify the grounds for the appeal. It is the responsibility of the student making the appeal to demonstrate to the GSAB that grounds for the appeal exist.

The Dean of the Graduate School will notify those individuals whose decisions are being appealed and will request relevant information. Information and evidence will be transmitted to The Graduate School Dean and to all members of the GSAB. Any additional evidence brought to the hearing is subject to acceptance or rejection by the GSAB. All information submitted becomes part of the permanent record of the GSAB hearing record maintained by the Graduate School.

B. Initial review of appeals:

The GSAB will be convened by the chair to conduct an initial review of the appeal to determine whether the appeal is subject to dismissal or if further action by the GSAB is warranted. Appeals that fail to set forth grounds for a full review by the GSAB shall be dismissed. The GSAB will consider appeals when:

1. all other levels of appeal have been exhausted.
2. the student can show grounds that he or she was previously denied a fair hearing.
3. the decision being appealed is not supported by substantial evidence.
4. the sanction being imposed is beyond the authority of the personnel involved.
5. the sanction or action is unduly severe or dis-proportionately harsh in comparison to similar cases.

When the GSAB determines that a graduate student should be afforded a hearing on an appeal, the chair of the GSAB shall give written notice to all parties involved in the appeal, allowing no less than one week of preparation time before the hearing.

C. Hearings:

All hearings by the GSAB shall be subject to the following requirements:

1. Any additional materials requested by the GSAB at the time of the initial review to be considered at the hearing shall be made available to all parties prior to the hearing.
2. Parties to the appeal have the right to be present and hear all arguments and oral statements made to the GSAB committee.
3. Parties to the appeal shall make arguments, present oral statements and written documents, and question witnesses with regard to any issues of fact relevant to the grounds for appeal.
4. Hearings shall not be adversarial in nature and shall be conducted in a manner conducive to ascertaining the facts of the case upon appeal.
5. The GSAB may establish time limitations for presentations before the board.
6. Hearings shall be closed to the public.
7. GSAB members may address questions to any person giving testimony before the board.
8. In hearings involving more than one student, a single hearing may be scheduled for each.
9. It shall be the responsibility of the GSAB chair, together with the recording secretary, to see that the integrity of the record is maintained.
10. The chair shall preside and rule on matters of procedure and evidence.
11. The chair shall have the right to dismiss anyone from the hearing should his or her conduct become disorderly.

D. Findings, decisions and recommendations of the GSAB:

Upon completion of hearings, the GSAB shall meet in closed session for deliberations. A simple majority vote of the GSAB is required to substantiate all findings and recommendations. In determining its findings
and recommendations, the board shall concern itself only with whether reasonable people, acting on the available evidence, could have made the same decision or taken the same action as the one being appealed.

The GSAB shall prepare written findings addressing all issues presented in the appeal and shall make a recommendation that indicates whether the appealed decision or sanction should be affirmed, set aside, or modified. The GSAB may also make recommendations, if appropriate, for further actions by university authorities.

The Dean of the Graduate School has 14 calendar days to act upon the findings and recommendations of the GSAB. If no action is taken within the 14 days, except when extenuating circumstances justifying a delay are involved, the findings and recommendations of the GSAB will be final. Further appeal is not available within the university.

The application for a hearing before the GSAB is available in the Graduate School office, Lister Hill Library, Suite G03, and at the Graduate School’s Web site (http://www.uab.edu/graduate/images/acrobat/forms/acadappeal.pdf).