

Tab 1

College of Biological Sciences Graduate Programs

**Academic Dismissal and Appeal
Policy and Process for
Doctoral and Master's Degree Students**

Table of contents

<u>Academic Standing</u>	2
<u>Academic Progress Improvement process</u> (Scholarly Progress Agreement)	2
<u>Next steps options:</u>	
<u>New Scholarly Progress Agreement</u>	4
<u>Leave of Absence</u>	4
<u>Switch to Master's Degree</u>	4
<u>Academic Dismissal</u>	5
<u>Academic Dismissal Appeal Process</u>	6
<u>Returning to the University after a Leave of Absence</u>	9
<u>Misconduct</u>	10
<u>Templates</u>	
<u>Dismissal letter from DGS to student</u>	11
<u>Appeals process letter from DGS and ADGE to student</u>	12
<u>Instructions for appeals committee from program</u>	13

College of Biological Sciences Contacts

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- [Directors of Graduate Study](#)

Academic standing

Each University of Minnesota College of Biological Sciences (CBS) graduate program must maintain the milestones and academic standards that graduate students in that program must meet to remain in good academic standing. These milestones and standards must be detailed in each program's graduate student handbook. Academic standards in CBS graduate programs include, at a minimum, completing required and elective coursework with at least a 3.0 GPA, identifying an advisor according to the program's timeline, passing written and oral preliminary examinations according to the program's timeline, and meeting expectations for research progress and actively conducting research in the lab/field.

Students must meet their graduate program's milestones and academic standards in order to remain in good standing as a student in the program. In addition, students must meet the University of Minnesota expectations for performance standards and progress in a [master's degree](#) or [doctoral degree](#) program.

Students who do not meet the academic requirements of their graduate degree program may be dismissed from the program. Students have the right to appeal such a decision if they wish to do so. Academic dismissals are defined as dismissals made by a graduate program related to overall academic progress of a student and not related to employment.

Academic Progress Improvement

If a student fails to remain in good academic standing:

- The graduate program director of graduate studies (DGS) will notify the student in writing, specifying the issues; reiterating the graduate program, CBS, and University expectations for meeting milestones and for performance standards and progress; and detailing the specific milestones and standards not met.
 - o Programs should be vigilant about maintaining records of all communications with students regarding their progress and any concerns regarding their progress. The student will be notified in writing of serious concerns about their progress and performance in the program, as soon as these become apparent so that the student is made aware of them in a timely manner. Students are given at least one semester to rectify the issues, outlining specific steps they must take, with regular deadlines and meetings with the advisor and DGS during the semester. A longer time period will be considered if circumstances dictate.

- Use the [Scholarly Progress Agreement](#) form to detail the plans for addressing the issues and concerns, including clear benchmarks and deadlines. The scholarly progress agreement must be signed by the student, advisor (and co-advisor, if applicable), advisory committee chair, DGS, and CBS Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs (ADGE), and submitted to the CBS Graduate Programs College Coordinator. The student should be actively involved in developing the Scholarly Progress Agreement.
- Ensure that the Scholarly Progress Agreement clearly informs the student that they must meet the stipulations in the Scholarly Progress Agreement in order to continue in the graduate program or to continue in their current degree objective (i.e., switching to the master's track might be acceptable for some doctoral students).
- During the term of the Scholarly Progress Agreement, the student may not drop any course or withdraw from the university without the approval of their graduate advisor(s) and the graduate program.
- Progress on the requirements stipulated in the scholarly progress agreement must be documented, using the table in the scholarly progress agreement.
- At the due date for corrective action outlined in the Scholarly Progress Agreement, the advisor(s), DGS, and ADGE meet to reassess the milestones stipulated in the Scholarly Progress Agreement.
- If the student has met the terms of the Scholarly Progress Agreement the student continues in the program as per their stage in the degree program.
- If the student has *not* met the terms of the Scholarly Progress Agreement, the DGS will consult with the student's advisor(s), the advisory committee chair, ADGE, and program graduate program coordinator (GPC) and then recommend a next course of action. The DGS will notify the student in writing, copying the student's advisor(s), advisory committee chair, ADGE, and program GPC, of the recommendation. Options are:
 1. Allow one additional semester for the student to return to good academic standing, as warranted, and document a plan by adding new steps to the Scholarly Progress Agreement.
 2. Recommend the student to take a leave of absence.
 3. Advise the student to switch to a master's track within the student's graduate program.
 4. Dismiss the student from the program (at the end of the current semester).

Next steps options

1. New scholarly progress agreement

Use the scholarly progress agreement form to add new detailed steps, milestones, and specific timelines that the student must meet in order to regain good academic standing in the program. Provide specific outcomes for the course of action if the student does and does not meet the expectations of an updated scholarly progress agreement.

2. Leave of absence

To initiate a leave of absence, follow the [CBS leave of absence process](#).

Eligibility

A leave of absence may be appropriate for the following reasons:

- Physical or mental health concerns
- Family obligations (birth or adoption of a child, caretaking responsibilities, etc.)
- Financial concerns
- Military service (see [military leave](#))
- Academic reasons (reconsidering degree objective, academic struggles, etc.)
- Career opportunities

Not eligible

Students are not eligible for a leave of absence if any of the following are true:

- It is their first term at the University. (A leave of absence is not allowed in the first semester of enrollment. Instead the student's enrollment should be deferred to a later term.)
- They are currently on academic suspension.
- They do not intend to return to the University (see instructions on [withdrawal](#)).
- They are admitted or plan to enroll in a degree program at another institution.

3. Switch to the master's degree track

A student may have the option to switch into the graduate program's master's degree track, if they have earned enough credits and meet their graduate program's minimum GPA requirement. If this option is available to the student and the student chooses this option, the GPC will work with the student to switch into the master's degree track.

4. Academic Dismissal

A student may be dismissed if at the end of the scholarly progress agreement term, the conditions of their scholarly progress agreement are not fulfilled or their cumulative GPA is below the graduate program's minimum GPA requirement.

The graduate program DGS and CBS Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs will write a dismissal letter to the student, outlining the grounds for dismissal, and send this to the student, copying their advisor(s), the CBS Graduate Programs College Coordinator, and HR. The graduate program DGS and CBS Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs will also inform the student of their right to appeal a dismissal decision.

Consequences

When a student is dismissed they are no longer in their academic program and cannot register for courses at any University of Minnesota campus. The CBS Graduate Programs College Coordinator will place a registration hold on their student account.

Appealing suspension/discontinuation

A student may appeal dismissal decisions in writing by following the CBS Graduate Programs Dismissal Appeals Process. The deadline to initiate an appeal is 30 days from the date of the dismissal letter.

If no appeal is initiated within 30 days from the date of the dismissal letter, the student is dismissed from their graduate program.

Academic Dismissal Appeal Process

A student who has been dismissed from a University of Minnesota College of Biological Sciences (CBS) graduate program has the right to appeal the decision.

Appeal Process

1. When a student is provided with a dismissal letter, the graduate program director of graduate studies (DGS) and CBS Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs (ADGE) will inform the student of their right to appeal a dismissal decision. (See template letter on page 4.)
2. The student must submit an intent to appeal the dismissal decision in writing and include a letter to the appeals committee for review within 30 days of the date of the dismissal letter.
 - o This letter must be emailed to the CBS Graduate Programs College Coordinator (CC).
 - o This letter should include:
 - o information about academic progress,
 - o actions taken to address the specific requirements in their Scholarly Progress Agreement,
 - o resources used for academic progress support,
 - o plan of concrete steps to ensure their future academic success in the program, and
 - o any additional relevant information.
3. Upon receipt of this letter, the ADGE will assemble an appeals review committee, provide instructions for their role, and set a date for a review meeting. (See template on page 5.)
 - The appeals review committee will include two faculty members from the student's graduate program and two faculty members from another CBS graduate program (or other related graduate programs outside CBS, as appropriate).
 - The student's advisor(s) and the graduate program's DGS may not serve as committee members.
 - The CC will inform the student of the appeals review committee membership.
4. The CC will collect materials for review and provide these to the appeals review committee:
 - Original suspension/discontinuation letter
 - Letter to the committee from the student
 - Letter to the committee from the DGS explaining the dismissal
 - Scholarly Progress Agreement signed by the student, advisor(s) and DGS

- Student's academic and grade history
5. The ADGE will confer with central UMN offices, such as the Graduate School, as appropriate, on the appeal.

Evaluate Appeal

When an appeal is received, the ADGE will assemble an appeals review committee, provide instructions for their role, and set a date for a review meeting, as indicated above. The appeals review committee will meet and review relevant materials. In addition, the ADGE will confer with central UMN offices, such as the Graduate School, as needed, on the appeal. The timeline for the appeal committee will be decided by the program in conjunction with the committee, but should complete the appeal process within the semester the dismissal was appealed, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Resolve Appeal

The appeals review committee will provide one of the two following results following consideration of the provided materials:

- Recommendation to the collegiate Dean (or designee) that the dismissal decision stands, needing no action; or
- Recommendation to the collegiate Dean (or designee) to overturn the decision to dismiss.

The appeals review committee communicates their recommendation to the collegiate Dean in writing. The collegiate Dean (or designee) makes the final decision.

The final decision, as communicated by the collegiate Dean (or designee), is final and not appealable within the University.

The student must be notified of the appeals decision in writing.

The implications of each decision:

1. Recommendation that Dismissal Decision Stands - no action

It may be determined, via the school/college's process for evaluating appeals of academic dismissals, that the circumstances of the student dismissal align with those established in the graduate program's handbook or other published criteria. In this case, and if the

student has already been provided an opportunity for remediation (if applicable), then the dismissal should stand.

Because the decision to dismiss a student has already been made prior to the appeal, there would be no additional action required.

2. Recommendation to Overturn Dismissal Decision - reverse academic dismissal

If during the appeal review process, it is recommended that a dismissal be reversed, the program must work with the student and their academic advisor(s) on any needed remediation, including clear, written requirements and deadlines for program completion.

Reasons for reversing a dismissal may include but are not limited to: 1) found existence of a procedural error so substantial that it resulted in an improper dismissal; 2) evidence of bias during the dismissal process; or 3) new evidence not considered by the program making the decision to dismiss.

If a student's academic dismissal is reversed, the terms of continuation in the program will be laid out in a new Scholarly Progress Agreement with detailed expectations, milestones, and deadlines. The CBS ADGE and graduate program DGS will develop a new Scholarly Progress Agreement in consultation with the student and their original advisor(s), if they are willing to remain the student's advisor(s). If a student must identify a new advisor in order to continue in the program, the new Scholarly Progress Agreement should stipulate the process and timeline for identifying a new advisor. This would be in addition to detailed academic expectations, milestones, and deadlines.

The ADGE and program DGS will consult with the graduate program's home department head and CBS Dean's Office regarding financial support for the student during the time period when the graduate student is identifying a new advisor.

Appeal committee members may also suggest actions for the new Scholarly Progress Agreement and determine if they are binding.

Returning to the University after a Leave of Absence

A student's re-admission to the University and their CBS graduate program after a leave of absence will not be automatic. The student must be able to demonstrate that they can succeed within their academic program or that the circumstances causing their academic hardship have changed.

- Prior to returning from a leave of absence, the student must develop a new Scholarly Progress Agreement in conjunction with their advisor(s) and DGS, detailing specific milestones and deadlines that must be met in order to remain in the program.
- This return from leave of absence Scholarly Progress Agreement must be approved by the CBS associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs and submitted to the CBS Graduate Programs College Coordinator.
- This return from leave of absence Scholarly Progress Agreement must include a final deadline for meeting all Scholarly Progress Agreement requirements.
- If the student has not met the terms of the re-admission Scholarly Progress Agreement by this final deadline, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Misconduct

If a student is found, after an investigation by the University, to be in violation of academic, scholarly, or research integrity or guilty of interpersonal or sexual misconduct, a student will be dismissed from their CBS graduate program and from the University.

The DGS and CBS Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs will write a dismissal letter to the student, outlining the grounds for dismissal, and send this to the student, copying their advisor and the CBS graduate programs college coordinator.

Appeals related to misconduct must be directed to the appropriate office for review:

- [Discrimination](#); [Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking and Relationship Violence](#); [Nepotism and Personal Relationships](#); or [Retaliation](#) under the purview of the Equal Opportunity and Title IX Office;
- Alleged violations of University rules, policies, or established practices under the purview of the [Addressing Academic Complaints policy](#).
- Disciplinary action under [Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code](#).

When a student is filing related complaints under both the academic dismissals policy and with one of the offices above, the school/college may delay the start of the academic dismissal appeal process until the resolution of the related complaint is reached.

College of Biological Sciences Contacts

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- [Directors of Graduate Study](#)

TEMPLATE: Dismissal letter from DGS to student

Personal and Confidential

[date]

[First name] [Last Name]

[home address]

Transmitted via email

Dear [First name],

It is with regret that I write to inform you that your enrollment in the [XYZ] Graduate Program at the University of Minnesota will be terminated on [date]. The reason for this termination is your unsatisfactory academic standing. This includes:

- [A grade point average below the program's required 3.0]
- [Failure to satisfy the terms of your Scholarly Progress Agreement by date (attach SWA)]
- [Failure to join a thesis lab by date]
- OR other points, as relevant

Per University policy, graduate students in poor academic standing are ineligible for a leave of absence.

Since you are an international student, you must contact [International Student and Scholar Services](#) for guidance on your visa status and actions you must take upon discontinuation from the program on [date].

Please note that your Graduate Assistant Health Plan insurance will remain in effect through [date]. Following this period, you will be eligible for COBRA continuation coverage. You may also be eligible for coverage through Minnesota's health insurance marketplace (MNSure) or an employer. Please contact the [Office of Student Health Benefits](#) for guidance. [Boynton Health Center](#) can provide referrals to external medical and mental health resources as necessary. If you need a direct contact at UMN Student Counseling Services, please email CBS Graduate Programs College Coordinator, [First name] [Last Name], [email]. I also recommend that you contact your student housing cooperative administrator as soon as possible to inquire about your eligibility status following [date].

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

[First name] [Last Name]

Director of Graduate Studies

[First name] [Last Name]

Associate Director of Graduate Studies

c: [First name] [Last Name], Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs, College of Biological Sciences

[First name] [Last Name], Associate Dean for Graduate Education, Medical School

[First name] [Last Name], Head [department name]

TEMPLATE: Appeals process letter from DGS and ADGE to student

Dear **STUDENT NAME**:

You have the right to appeal the decision to dismiss you from your graduate program, per University of Minnesota policy. Should you choose to do so, you will need to prepare a letter to th

e appeals committee for review. This letter should include information about your academic progress, how you have addressed the specific requirements in the Scholarly Progress Agreement, what resources you've used for academic progress support, your plan going forward to ensure your academic success in the program, and any additional relevant information.

The CBS Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Postdocs will select members of an appeals committee that will review your case. The members of the appeals review committee will include two faculty members from your graduate program and two faculty members from another CBS graduate program (or other related graduate programs outside CBS, as appropriate).

If you have any concerns about partiality of the committee members, please email **CBS GRADUATE PROGRAMS COLLEGE COORDINATOR (CC)** as soon as possible and before you submit your letter. The letter you prepare for the committee is your sole means of communicating your case. Other forms of communication to committee members (direct emails, etc.) cannot be considered as part of the committee's decision.

You have 30 days **(DUE DATE)** to prepare your appeals letter and deliver it to **CBS CC** via email. **CBS CC** will deliver your letter to the appeals review committee members, along with a letter from myself that explains how we came to the decision to dismiss. The committee will also review relevant documentation, such as the Scholarly Progress Agreement and your academic and grade history. You should expect an outcome letter with the committee's decision within **NUMBER OF DAYS** from **CBS CC** via email. Please let **CBS CC** know if you have any additional questions about the appeals process.

Sincerely,

ADGE and DGS NAMES

TEMPLATE email: Instructions for appeals committee from ADGE

Dear **APPEALS COMMITTEE**:

Thank you for volunteering your time to consider the dismissal appeal request of **STUDENT**. **STUDENT** was sent a letter of dismissal from their graduate program by the program's Director of Graduate Studies, with a termination date of **DATE**.

You have **NUMBER OF DAYS** to review the attached documents, and you may ask clarifying questions about the information in the provided documents. Your voting choices are:

- Recommendation that Dismissal Decision Stands - no action
- Recommendation to Overturn Dismissal Decision - reverse academic dismissal

The committee's decision should be delivered by email to **CBS COLLEGE COORDINATOR** by **DATE**. The committee's final decision will then be sent to **STUDENT** and the **DGS**.

Attachments include:

- Letter to the committee from the DGS explaining the dismissal
- Letter to the committee from the student
- Original suspension/discontinuation letter
- Scholarly Progress Agreement signed by the student, Advisor and DGS
- Student's academic and grade history

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

ADGE NAME