

Office/Contact: Graduate School

Source: SDBOR Policy 2.9.1; SDBOR Policy 5.5.4

Link: <https://public.powerdms.com/SDRegents/documents/1587739>;

<https://public.powerdms.com/SDRegents/tree/documents/1722934>

Associated Forms: Academic Appeals Reporting Form

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Policy and Procedure Manual

SUBJECT: Graduate Student Admission and Progression

NUMBER: 2:26

1. Purpose

This policy establishes the criteria, timeline requirements, and processes for: 1) admission into the graduate school; 2) progression through a graduate program; and 3) receiving the degree or credential via graduation processes.

2. Definitions

- a. Annual Evaluation: a formal review of the progress of degree completion for thesis (master's option A) and dissertation students including performance in coursework and completion of thesis or dissertation goals. The review should take place annually and be standard in format and timing for all students within a program. The review will include a written evaluation portion, including an opportunity for the student to rebut, followed by a meeting for discussion. The written portion should take place using a program-standard form and include a synopsis of progress made in the previous year as well as guidance for the upcoming year.
- b. Applicant: a person who applies to a graduate program.
- c. Committee: Graduate Student Advisory Committee(s)
- d. Committee Chair: the graduate faculty member responsible for conducting the business of an approved Graduate Student Advisory Committee.
- e. Graduate Credential: referring to a graduate certificate, master's degree, or doctoral degree.
- f. Plan of Study (POS): a document prepared by the student and approved by the advisor and/or Committee and also approved by the Graduate School which identifies the specific coursework the student must complete to receive the degree.
- g. POS GPA: cumulative Plan of Study grade point average
- h. Program Officials: faculty or staff representing graduate programs

- i. Remediation Opportunity: a program afforded to a student who has failed an academic exercise where the student shall: 1) be provided feedback regarding the deficiencies of their performance; 2) be provided resources useful to remediate their deficiencies; and 3) be allowed an appropriate length of time to prepare for the next attempt at an academic exercise.

3. Policy

a. Admissions

- i. The Graduate School will maintain a convenient, accessible process for application to graduate programs.
- ii. Admission into a graduate program requires the applicant to complete each of the following:
 - 1. An application form;
 - 2. Payment of the application fee (SDBOR Policy 5.5.4);
 - 3. A baccalaureate degree granted by a United States institution of higher education accredited by the agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, or equivalent;
 - a. All official academic transcripts from undergraduate and graduate coursework should be submitted;
 - b. For applicants completing baccalaureate degrees in countries other than the United States, equivalency will be established by review of academic credentials by evaluation services accredited through organizations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for conducting such processes. Credential evaluations received directly from the evaluation service may serve as official academic transcripts. International applicants who complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the United States may be required to provide an academic credential evaluation for degrees earned previously outside of the United States; and
 - 4. An earned cumulative baccalaureate grade point average of no less than a 3.0/4.0, or an earned baccalaureate grade point average of no less than 3.0/4.0 for coursework taken during the last two (2) academic years of undergraduate study.
- iii. The Director of the Graduate School or designee, in consultation with the International Affairs Office and Graduate Council, will determine the following regarding admission of international applicants:
 - 1. Criteria indicating which international applicants are required to submit English proficiency exam scores; and

2. Acceptable English proficiency exams or exercises; and
 3. Minimum scores on English proficiency exams or exercises.
- iv. The Graduate Catalog will list published application deadlines for each graduate program.
 - v. All applications received on or before the deadline will be reviewed by Program Officials who will forward a recommendation of admission, conditional admission or denial. The Director of the Graduate School or designee will review the application recommendation and issue the admission decision to the applicants. Applications received after the deadlines will be reviewed upon the discretion of Program Officials.
 - vi. Admission requirements beyond those required in this policy may be recommended by Program Officials. Also, program-level admission requirements may be more stringent, but not less so, than University-level admission requirements. Each modification of admission requirements must be approved through the normal curriculum approval processes.
 - vii. Program Officials may request to delay a review of an application for up to one (1) calendar year. Requests to delay will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and approved by the Director of the Graduate School or designee.
 - viii. Admission into a graduate program is competitive and may be based on factors intrinsic to the University which may include, but not be limited to: availability of seats, instructional personnel, facilities, equipment, consumables, and graduate assistantships.
 - ix. Conditional Admission may be awarded to applicants meeting the following criteria:
 1. The applicant has not completed a baccalaureate degree or submitted a completed application but is judged to likely complete all requirements by the beginning of the first semester.
 2. The applicant lacks sufficient undergraduate coursework required for the graduate program.
 3. The applicant displays a cumulative baccalaureate grade point average that is greater than or equal to 2.75/4.0, but less than 3.0/4.0.
 - x. Conditional Admission will include student-specific conditions which should be met within the first semester of study; however, additional semesters may be approved by Director of the Graduate School or designee. Failure to meet any conditions may result in dismissal from the graduate program.
 - xi. Applicants accepted into a graduate program may request a delay of up to one (1) academic year for initial enrollment. Requests must be approved by a Program Official and Director of the Graduate School or designee.

xii. Any applicant who is denied admission may request a reconsideration of the decision as follows:

1. The applicant shall contact the Director of the Graduate School or designee within thirty calendar (30) days of receipt of the admission decision to seek informal reconsideration.
2. In the request for reconsideration, the denied applicant must cite one or more of the following reasons as the basis for the reconsideration:
 - a. The admission decision resulted from administrative error or from misapprehension of some material fact or circumstance; or
 - b. The admission decision departed substantially from accepted academic standards for the discipline and/or the University; or
 - c. Circumstances suggested that the admission decision reflected the prejudiced or capricious consideration of applicant opinions or conduct unrelated to admission or academic standards, of student status protected under SDBOR policy, state or federal civil rights law, or of other considerations that are inconsistent with the bona fide exercise of academic judgment.

The denied applicant must then explain in detail how one or more of the above bases for reconsideration describe the admissions decision. If none of the above bases for reconsideration are specifically cited in the request, or if the request offers no explanation as to how the admission decision fits one of the above bases for reconsideration, the request for reconsideration shall be dismissed by the Director of the Graduate School or designee. The Director or designee shall otherwise review the applicant's concerns, shall provide explanation, and shall reconsider the admission decision if the student provides convincing argument for doing so. The Director or designee shall document the contact date, decision, and rationale for the decision and submit the same to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee, within fifteen (15) working days after the applicant makes the contact. A copy of the document shall be sent to the applicant and Program Officials.

3. If, after discussion with the Director of the Graduate School or designee, the applicant's concerns remain unresolved, the applicant may appeal the matter in writing to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee. The written request for reconsideration must be submitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee, within ten (10) working days from the date the applicant received the response of the Director of the Graduate School or designee. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will render a decision within fifteen (15) working days of receipt.

xiii. All application materials provided by the Applicant are property of the University.

b. Progression

- i. The student shall remain enrolled for no less than one (1) credit hour each Fall and Spring semester until the program is completed. If a student fails to enroll, the student may be required to re-apply to the program.
- ii. The POS and the Graduate Student Advisory Committee shall be approved by the Director of the Graduate School or designee no later than the semester prior to, and no fewer than 60 calendar days prior to, the Final Oral Exam, Dissertation Defense, or completion of the program.
- iii. Progress of Thesis and Dissertation Coursework
 1. Students pursuing an Option A Master's or Ph.D. should register for at least one (1) credit hour of x798 or x898 for each semester the student is pursuing objectives associated with the thesis or dissertation project.
 2. The instructor, in consultation with the student, will determine the goals of the coursework for that semester. The instructor should consult with the Committee (if approved), as necessary. The student should be notified of the goals in writing sufficiently early in the semester to allow for completion of the goals.
 3. Each x798 or x898 credit hour must be graded with either an "S" or "U", for Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory, respectively. Written explanation of any "U" grade should be delivered to the student no later than the final day of instruction.
 4. Students receiving a U grade for x798 or x898 in two (2) semesters may be dismissed from the program. Recommendation for dismissal will be communicated from the instructor and Department Head to the Director of the Graduate School or designee, who will conduct the review. The review will consider the student's entire academic performance weighed against a) the necessary research, clinical, and/or scholarly abilities to complete the student's chosen graduate degree and (or) b) the rate of progress toward degree completion. The review will seek input from the student, instructor, Department Head, and college dean.
- iv. Thesis students (Option A master's) and doctoral students shall be provided written progress evaluations on an annual basis. The Annual Evaluation should address progress toward completion of formal course work and the thesis or dissertation project.
- v. Graduate programs may evaluate the academic progression of students using assessment exercises conducted outside of formal coursework. Poor performance on an assessment exercise will not result in dismissal from the program. Programs may require students to participate provided the following conditions are met:
 1. The assessment exercise is approved through normal curriculum approval processes;

2. The assessment exercise is supervised by no fewer than two (2) graduate faculty; and
 3. A Remediation Opportunity is offered to each student following each failed attempt.
- vi. Any student with a POS GPA below 3.0 shall be placed on academic probation and must seek advisement from their academic advisor to develop a Program Improvement Plan. The Program Improvement Plan must articulate activities, including a timeline, to attain a POS GPA equal to or above a 3.0, typically within one (1) semester, and be signed by the advisor and student. The Program Improvement Plan should be forwarded to the Director of the Graduate School or designee for review and approval. A student on academic probation who fails to raise the POS GPA to 3.0 or higher within the timeline provided in the Program Improvement Plan may be dismissed from the program.

c. Graduation

- i. Each student is required to apply for graduation to ensure the graduate credential is awarded. Application should be made for each credential sought and completed by dates published by the University.

4. Procedures

- a. All applications for admission to graduate programs will be received by the Graduate School. A completed application is comprised of a completed application form, receipt of all required documents, and payment of the application fee (SDBOR Policy 5.5.4).
- b. After a completed application is received, Program Officials will be notified for review. Program Officials will forward a recommendation for denial, admission, or conditional admission to the Graduate School. The Director of the Graduate School or designee will grant admission, conditional admission, or denial and will notify the applicant in writing.
- c. A request for reconsideration of an admissions decision may be initiated by the applicant and directed to the Director of the Graduate School or designee. Similarly, an applicant whose request for reconsideration is denied may appeal the decision to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- d. Students are responsible for submission of all student academic progression forms (e.g. Plan of Study, Committee Request, Comprehensive Exam Request, Final Oral Exam Request, etc.). Students should ensure all required signatures are obtained and the forms are submitted in accordance with timeline requirements.
- e. Any student placed on academic probation will receive a letter from the Graduate School notifying them of the requirements to continue in the program. The student's advisor will also receive a copy of the letter. A course registration hold will be in effect for any student placed on academic probation until a Program Improvement Plan for that student is submitted and approved by the Director of the Graduate School or designee. Students on academic probation who do not submit a Program Improvement Plan may be dismissed from the program.

- f. An Annual Evaluation of graduate student progress will be scheduled and conducted by a Program Official, which may include, but not limited to, the Student Advisory Committee Chair, Student Advisory Committee or advisor. A meeting with the student to discuss the Annual Evaluation will be conducted in person or via audio/video technology. The student will be provided a written summary of the meeting no fewer than fourteen (14) calendar days following the meeting. Annual Evaluations will be permanently housed in the department office.

5. Responsible Administrator

The Vice President of Academic Affairs, or designee, is responsible for annual and ad hoc review of this policy and annual and ad hoc review of procedures. The University President is responsible for approval of this policy and modifications to this policy.

SOURCE: Approved by President on 01/30/2018. Revised; Approved by President on 04/21/2021.
Revised 01/26/2024 (clerical).