

FAILURE POLICY

Failure Policy in Graduate Studies

Purpose

This policy specifies conditions under which graduate students will be withdrawn from the University due to unsatisfactory standing resulting from failed courses and/or unsatisfactory Graduate Student Research Progress Tracking Reports.

Scope

This policy pertains to courses and Graduate Student Research Progress Tracking Reports. It does not apply to comprehensive examinations, thesis examinations or doctoral oral defences.

For a failed thesis examination or doctoral oral defence, the Thesis Examination Failures Policy applies; for a failed comprehensive examination, the Ph.D. Comprehensives Policy applies.

Definitions

- **“Course”**: a course that counts for credit toward the student's degree program (whether required, complementary, or elective), excluding comprehensive examinations. This includes courses approved to be taken at other institutions that count for credit toward the student's degree program.
- **“Graduate Student Research Progress Tracking Report”**: a written record of a meeting attended by the graduate student, his or her supervisor(s) and a member of the supervisory committee or a representative from the academic unit at which objectives for the upcoming year are established and prior progress recorded and evaluated.
- **“Failure”**: withdrawal from the University due to unsatisfactory standing.
- **“Student”**: a student registered in a graduate degree program (including those registered in a Qualifying Year).

Failure Policy

A student will be withdrawn from the University, if they:

1. fail two courses (i.e., two different courses, one failed course plus a failed repeat of the same course or one failed course and a failed supplemental exam for that course); **or**
2. obtain two unsatisfactory Graduate Student Research Progress Tracking Reports and the academic unit in which the student is registered recommends that they be withdrawn; **or**
3. fail one course, obtain one unsatisfactory Graduate Student Research Progress Tracking Report, and the academic unit in which the student is registered recommends that they be withdrawn.

The student's transcript will thereafter indicate that the student was withdrawn from the University.

Students in a Qualifying Year

Failing a course in a Qualifying Year is equivalent to failing a course in a graduate program, and counts as a first failed course if a student is subsequently admitted to a graduate program in a related field.

Readmission

A student withdrawn according to this policy cannot apply for readmission to the program from which they were withdrawn.

Senate, October 11, 2000.

Revised by GPS Council, February 10, 2003; February 9, 2015.

Procedure to Follow in Cases of Failure

In the event of course failure:

- For a **failed course**, the academic unit (department) must:
 - Ensure that the failing grade is recorded on the student's record (if a course).
 - Complete the web form Recommendation Following a First Failure to indicate whether the student will:
 - write a supplemental examination (if academic unit (departmental) policy permits); **or**
 - retake the failed course; **or**
 - substitute the failed course by completing an equivalent course.

IMPORTANT: The student will receive a copy of their academic unit's (department's) web form submission *as the official notification of their first failure.*

In the event of a second failure (including failure of a supplemental exam:

- The second failing grade must be recorded on the student's record (if a course or supplemental exam).
- 30 days after the academic unit (department) has informed the student of the failure and options for redress, if the student is still in unsatisfactory status, the unit must complete the web form Withdrawal Recommendation Following a Second Failure to recommend to Management of Academic Records Unit, Enrolment Services that the student must be withdrawn from their program.
- Upon receipt of the recommendation for withdrawal, Enrolment Services will send the student an official withdrawal letter and change the status to Withdrawn on the student's academic record.

Requesting an appeal in case of withdrawal due to failure:

A student recommended for withdrawal due to failure has 30 days (from the date of the notification letter) to appeal this decision. It is the student's responsibility to present evidence of their case and provide any supporting documentation, including letters of support from their thesis supervisor and Graduate Program Director, to associatedeans.gps@mcgill.ca. The appeal and any supporting documents will be reviewed by the Associate Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and the student will be notified of the decision. That decision will be **final**. Students should be aware that appeals are rarely awarded, and only under truly exceptional circumstances.

A student who wishes to submit an appeal must:

- Prepare a detailed letter indicating the reasons for the appeal (addressed to the Graduate Associate Dean);
- Obtain any supporting documents (addressed to the Graduate Associate Dean);

- Submit the letter, together with all supporting documents, to associatedeans.gps@mcgill.ca, **before** the end of this 30-day period.

Note: A student in a graduate program who has failed one course while being a Special Student in graduate studies will have this failure count as a first failure in a related graduate program. Any further failure will require withdrawal from the program of study. A student may not claim medical reasons for a course failure after the fact. In the case of an examination, a dated medical certificate or appropriate document recommending a deferral (see “Other Grades” in Grading and Grade Point Averages (GPA) > “L - deferred” and “LE or L* - further deferral”) must be submitted to Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies with a recommendation from the academic unit (department) for a deferral **before or immediately after** the examination. In particular, such recommendation will not be considered if medical reasons are brought forth after a grade is submitted. Medical reasons declared after the fact will not be considered acceptable grounds of appeal of withdrawal under the Failure Policy (p. 1).