

# Graduate Appeal

## *Appeal Advisory Committee of the Graduate Council*

### **I. Committee Charge**

The Appeal Advisory Committee of the Graduate Council (“Committee”) ensures fair and consistent application of published graduate policies after the student has (1) sought resolution within the program and (2) appealed to the Academic Dean and received a written decision. The Committee reviews appeals of student academic standing decisions and determines whether the appellant has established one or more of the permitted grounds in Section V.

### **II. Nature of the Committee**

The Committee is an ad hoc body reporting to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) and is convened at the discretion of the CGS Dean for cases within its jurisdiction.

### **III. Composition**

The Committee consists of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Graduate Council and three additional members, including one graduate student, with none from the appellant’s department. Members are selected by the Council Chair. The Associate Dean of CGS serves ex officio (non-voting). If the appellant is from the same department as the Council Chair, the Vice Chair will serve as Chair and an additional member will be appointed. If both the Chair and Vice Chair are from the appellant’s department, both will be replaced for that case by two other eligible Council members appointed by the Council Chair, so that no member serves on an appeal involving their own department. Members with conflicts of interest must recuse; alternates may be appointed as needed to ensure a quorum.

### **IV. Jurisdiction and Routing**

CGS hears appeals only after the student has:

- 1.Appealed in writing to the Program (Graduate Program Director/Department Chair) and received a written decision; then
- 2.Appealed in writing to the Academic Dean and received a written decision.

Matters routed elsewhere and **not** within this process’s jurisdiction:

- Title IX sexual harassment/sexual misconduct → Office of Civil Rights Compliance.
- Grade appeals → The Office of the University Provost.
- Disability accommodations → Disability & Access Center.
- Residency, fees, refunds, FERPA/records → Registrar/Bursar.
- IRB determinations → IRB committee.
- Automatic GPA-Based Academic Standing Actions: The maintenance of the minimum cumulative GPA is a critical requirement for graduate matriculation. Appeals regarding academic probation, suspension, or termination resulting from a failure to meet these GPA standards follow a distinct administrative route as defined in the Graduate Catalog. That process includes multiple built-in opportunities for resolution,

and as outlined in the Graduate Catalog, the academic department's decision on these GPA-based appeals is final and is not further appealable to the CGS Appeal Advisory Committee.

## **V. Basis for Appeal**

Graduate students may appeal only on the following grounds. The student bears the burden of proof. The Committee does not regrade work nor substitute faculty academic judgment.

**A. Procedural Error:** A material failure to follow published department/college/university procedures that likely affected the outcome.

**B. Policy Misapplication/Interpretation:** Incorrect application or interpretation of a published policy (catalog, handbook, Council policy) that materially affected the decision.

**C. Unprofessional or Unethical Conduct:** Conduct that does not meet expected professional standards and that likely affected the decision. This includes, but is not limited to, unmanaged conflicts of interest as defined in [MTSU Policy 012](#), biased treatment not based on academic performance that violates the university's commitment to non-discrimination under [MTSU Policy 026](#), or a failure to adhere to the honesty and integrity standards mandated by the [MTSU Policy 010](#). For example, an appeal may be based on evidence of an undisclosed consensual relationship (per [MTSU Policy 817](#)) or other unethical conduct that materially influenced the academic standing decision.

This appeal process does not apply when program accreditation requirements mandate that the program retain sole jurisdiction over the appeal process, in which case the program will provide written documentation of the matter.

## **VI. Process and Timelines**

Appeals that advance beyond the program level must include written documentation (letters or memos) of the decisions at every prior level (program, dean, etc.), along with the completed Graduate Council Appeal Form. Appeals submitted without the required documentation may be delayed or returned for completion.

- Appeal to Program: within 10 business days of the decision.
- Program response: within 10 business days of receipt.
- Appeal to Academic Dean: within 10 business days of the program response.
- Dean response: within 15 business days of receipt.
- Appeal to CGS: within 10 business days of the dean's written decision
- Graduate Council recommendation to CGS Dean: within 20 business days of receipt, and while the Graduate Council is in session
- CGS Dean response: within 10 business days of receipt.
- The CGS Dean's decision/response is final; no further appeal is available.