

Academic Policies

Courses offered for graduate credit are those listed in the graduate catalog or other official publications of the University. The determination of whether or not a particular graduate course fulfills degree requirements, however, is the responsibility of the individual graduate program. Courses numbered 500 through 599 are intended for graduate students and are also available to undergraduate students who have received permission of the instructor and their advisor. Courses numbered 600 through 699 are restricted to graduate students. Courses numbered 700 and above are intended for doctoral students and are also available to master's-level graduate students who have received permission of the instructor and their advisor.

The following policies apply to all graduate programs.

Grading System

Grades at the University are given in terms of letters, with the option of a plus or minus designation (with the exception of no A+), representing levels of achievement. The basis for determining a grade is the relative extent to which the student has achieved the objectives of the course. The student's work in each course is graded as follows: A—honors; B—basic competency; C—below competency; D—unsatisfactory; F—failure.

Other letter grades are as follows:

- P Pass with a grade of B- or better in a pass-fail course.
- LP Low Pass with a grade of C+ or C in a pass-fail course.
- F Fail with a grade lower than C in a pass-fail course.
- I Incomplete: a *temporary* grade given when the student, because of extraordinary circumstances, has failed to complete course requirements. Incomplete grades must be resolved by the end of the subsequent semester; the Registrar shall notify faculty members involved, and their department chair, of students who have carried unresolved incompletes on their transcript for one semester. If the incomplete is not resolved by the instructor, the I grade will be converted to an F.
- INC Permanent Incomplete: When a temporary incomplete (I) grade is not resolved to a normal letter grade, a permanent incomplete may be assigned in extraordinary circumstances as determined by the instructor and the dean. In unusual circumstances wherein the faculty member is no longer available, the dean may exercise this function. The grade of INC has no impact on GPA; no credits awarded.
- L Stopped attending: The grade of L may be assigned to students who stopped attending a course without officially dropping the course. The grade of L will be computed as an F for purposes of the student's grade point average.
- MG Missing Grade: Occasionally, faculty may assign students invalid grades for a course, or may fail to submit a grade for a particular student in a course. In these cases, the Registrar's Office will note this act by designating a missing grade, or MG, instead of a grade for the course. Missing Grades must be resolved by the end of each semester. The Registrar shall notify faculty members involved, and their departmental chairperson, of students who have carried unresolved MGs on their transcript for one semester. If the missing grade is not resolved by the instructor, the MG will be converted to an F.
- W Withdrawal after the add/drop period through 60% of the courses in a given semester. If a student has not officially withdrawn before 60% of the course has been completed, an F will be assigned. The W notation may be obtained after 60% of the course has been completed under unusual circumstances if so determined by the instructor and the dean. A threat of failure is not considered to be an unusual circumstance. The grade of W has no impact on GPA.
- DG Satisfactory progress after one semester of a two-semester course. Grade and credits to be given upon completion of second semester.
- AU Student attended courses on a noncredit, audit basis. (No impact on GPA.)

Academic Integrity Policy

Everyone associated with the University of Southern Maine is expected to adhere to the principles of academic integrity central to the academic function of the University. Any breach of academic integrity represents a serious offense. Each student has a responsibility to know the standards of conduct and expectations of academic integrity that apply to academic tasks. Violations of student academic integrity include any actions that attempt to promote or enhance the academic standing of any student by dishonest means. Cheating on an examination, stealing the words or ideas of another (i.e., plagiarism), making statements known to be false or misleading, falsifying the results of one's research, improperly using library materials or computer files, or altering or forging academic records are examples of violations of this policy which are contrary to the academic purposes for which the University exists. Acts that violate academic integrity disrupt the educational process and are not acceptable.

Evidence of a violation of the academic integrity policy will normally result in disciplinary action. A copy of the complete policy may be obtained from the Office of Community Standards, 125 Upton Hall, Gorham, (207) 780-5242.

Academic Record Changes

Considerable care is taken to ensure that course registration and grades entered on a student's permanent record are accurate. Any student who suspects an error has been made should take the matter up immediately with the Registrar's Office. Records are assumed to be correct if a student does not report to the Registrar's Office within one year of the completion of a course. At that time, the record becomes permanent and cannot be changed.

Permanent Academic Record

The permanent academic record is maintained by the Office of the Registrar for all students. While the grades may be reported unofficially to the student, academic dean, and advisor, the only true and valid documentation of academic work and student status is an *official* transcript of the academic record, stamped with the Registrar's signature and embossed with the seal of the University. The transcript is available only with the signature of the student and will be released to that student or a designee only if there are no outstanding charges against his or her account with the Business Office. Other types of transcripts are: Unofficial—Issued Directly to Student; Placement Transcript provided for the student's placement folder.

Confidentiality Policy

The University complies with the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (the Buckley Amendment). For the complete University Confidentiality Policy, consult the Office of the Registrar on each campus.

Grade Point Average

The academic standing of each student is computed by the Registrar at the end of every semester. The following table represents the rating scale:

A	4.00 grade points per credit hour
A-	3.67 grade points per credit hour
B+	3.33 grade points per credit hour
B	3.00 grade points per credit hour
B-	2.67 grade points per credit hour
C+	2.33 grade points per credit hour
C	2.00 grade points per credit hour
C-	1.67 grade points per credit hour
D+	1.33 grade points per credit hour
D	1.00 grade points per credit hour
D-	0.67 grade points per credit hour
F	0.00 grade points per credit hour

Grades less than C are not acceptable for graduate work in any program; individual programs may set higher standards. Students receiving such grades will be reviewed for retention in the graduate program.

Add/Drop

Students may add courses during the first week of class with the signature of the instructor. Dropping a course does not require instructor signature. Drops processed during the first two weeks do not have financial penalty. A student dropping a course after the add/drop period through 60% of classes will receive the grade notation of W. A student dropping a course after the 60% period will receive an F. The W notation may be assigned after 60% of the course has been completed under unusual cir-

cumstances if so determined by the instructor and the dean. *All students who register for a course and neither complete the course objectives nor officially withdraw according to any one of the procedures described above will be graded F in that course and must assume all financial obligations associated with the course.*

Enrolling and Auditing

Students who register to audit a course receive no credit for the course but will have an audit grade recorded on their transcripts. Audit courses must be declared at registration.

The following policies apply generally to graduate programs. Consult each degree program for specific policies.

Credit for Undergraduate Work

Except for students enrolled in continuous undergraduate/graduate programs with defined articulation agreements, a graduate student may be able to apply up to six credit hours of undergraduate work to his or her graduate program according to the determination of the particular program of study. In all cases, the following conditions must be met to apply undergraduate credit to a graduate program:

- A. Coursework must be earned after the student has been granted matriculation status in a graduate program.
- B. Coursework must add breadth or depth to the student's program of study.
- C. Coursework is not of a remedial nature to correct a deficiency.
- D. No equivalent or comparable graduate course exists at the University of Southern Maine.
- E. Coursework receives prior approval of the student's advisor, course instructor, and graduate program director.
- F. Coursework is earned in upper-level undergraduate courses.
- G. Grade of B or better is earned for the coursework.
- H. Coursework meets all existing graduate course requirements except the course number requirement.

Students enrolled in 3+2 or 4+1 programs that have overlapping graduate and undergraduate components should consult their programs for specific policies.

Credit Previously Received for Graduate Coursework

Graduate courses used toward an undergraduate degree cannot be used toward graduate degree requirements unless there is a pre-existing articulation agreement, in which case a maximum of six 500-level credits can be applied toward both undergraduate and graduate degree requirements.

Extramural Course Credit

Courses taken at other institutions and the accompanying grades may be accepted as part of the graduate program provided they are taken after the student has matriculated and that prior approval is granted by the student's advisor and program director. Extramural credit is not approved for: 1) courses which would not have received graduate credit if taken at the University of Southern Maine; 2) courses which are inappropriate for inclusion in the student's program of study; 3) courses which exceed time limits prescribed for a particular degree program; 4) courses in which a grade lower than B was received.

In certain circumstances a degree student may request a substitution or waiver of program requirements. The program director should be contacted if a substitution or waiver of a requirement is requested.

Requirements of Graduate Study

Thesis Requirements

The requirement of a thesis is determined by each particular graduate program.

Oral and Written Comprehensive Examination

The requirement of an oral and/or written comprehensive examination is determined by each graduate program.

Directed Study

A master's degree student may earn up to nine hours of independent study or directed study. Students in a Ph.D. program may earn up to 15 hours of independent study or directed study. All independent study or directed study must be approved by the appropriate graduate program. Students are encouraged to consult with their faculty advisor regarding regulations governing independent study for particular

programs. Non-matriculated students are not eligible for independent study or directed study.

Continuous Enrollment and Residency

Continuous enrollment requires that every graduate student must either be enrolled in coursework in his/her program (six credits per calendar year required), enrolled in GRS 601, 602, 701, or 702, or be on a formal leave of absence, approved by the student's program chair and on file with the Office of Graduate Studies. The following courses aid students in maintaining continuous enrollment status. Enrollment in any of these courses requires authorization as noted on the approval form and by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Please Note: Enrollment in these courses will not be reported on official USM student transcripts.

GRS 601 is a noncredit course that allows the student continued access to University services, including USM computers, library, and recreational facilities. Registration for this course incurs applicable University fees for which the student is financially responsible. It is designed for students who are working on a capstone, thesis, or dissertation. GRS 601 does not grant a student part-time or full-time status for financial aid eligibility, University-funded fellowships, scholarships, graduate assistantships, loan deferment, or visa compliance. Enrollment in GRS 601 requires approval from the student's faculty advisor or the program chair and is typically limited to two semesters.

GRS 602 is a 1-credit course that permits master's degree candidates registered for less than 6 credits to retain eligibility for financial aid, University-funded fellowships, scholarships, graduate assistantships, student health insurance, loan deferment, visa compliance, and access to University services, including USM computers, library, and recreational facilities. This course option is primarily intended for students who have completed coursework for the master's degree, but have not completed their thesis or capstone. Enrollment in GRS 602 requires that students have certification of adequate academic progress by their program faculty advisor or program chair and approval from the Office of Graduate Studies.

GRS 701 is a 1-credit course that permits doctoral degree candidates registered for less than 6 credits to retain eligibility for financial aid, University-funded fellowships, scholarships, graduate assistantships, student health insurance, loan deferment, visa compliance, and access to University services, including USM computers, library, and recreational facilities. Requirements include passing qualifying exams, receiving certification of adequate academic progress from the program chair and dissertation/capstone chair, and obtaining approval from the Office of Graduate Studies.

GRS 702 is a 1-credit course for doctoral students who have passed their qualifying exams. GRS 702 allows the student continued access to USM computers, library, and recreational facilities. This course does not qualify the student for financial aid, University-funded fellowships, scholarships, graduate assistantships, loan deferment, visa compliance, or eligibility for USM student health insurance. Approval by the program chair is required for registration.

Leave of Absence

In extenuating circumstances a student may petition for exception to the continuous enrollment policy; the petition must bear approval of the student's advisor and director of the graduate program. A signed Leave of Absence form must be sent to the Office of Graduate Admissions. Forms are available on the Office of Graduate Studies Web site at www.usm.maine.edu/grad.

Time Limit

The time limit for completion of a master's degree is dated from the date of first matriculation and is either five or six years, depending on the requirements of the particular graduate program. The time limit for completion of a doctoral program is no more than ten years from the date of first matriculation. In extenuating circumstances a student may petition the director of the graduate program for an extension of the time limit.

Registration Policies

For detailed information regarding registration fees and billing, visit the USM Registrar's Web site at www.usm.maine.edu/reg or contact program offices.

Advance Registration

Matriculated graduate students may register for courses during an advance registration period. Advance registration for the spring semester is conducted in November, and for the fall semester is conducted in April. Matriculated students are encouraged to register during the advance periods to increase the probability that they will obtain desired courses. No payment of tuition or fees is due during advance registration. For information regarding payment of bills, see the Financial Information section.

Registration Status

Full-time registration is for 9 or more degree credits; part-time registration is less than 9 degree credits.

Note: For the purpose of eligibility for graduate assistantships, financial aid, or veterans benefits, credits required for full-time status may differ. Please consult the Office of Graduate Studies, the Student Financial Aid Office, or the Veterans Services Office for current requirements.

Student Advisement

Each degree student will be assigned a faculty advisor upon admission to a program. Students are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their faculty advisor throughout their program of study.

Degree Progress

The definition of satisfactory progress towards completion of a degree is determined by the particular graduate program. However, at the end of any semester in which the cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 (B average) the student will be placed on probation by the Office of Graduate Studies and must bring the cumulative GPA to 3.0 level within the time set by the graduate program (up to two semesters) or the student will be withdrawn from the program.

Plagiarism

The development of original thinking and intellectual honesty are regarded as central to a graduate education. Although in the pursuit of these goals, students will continually consult existing works, it is expected that they will acknowledge the debt owed to others by citing all sources.

Plagiarism, the use without attribution of language, ideas, or the organization of ideas not one's own, is a fundamental breach of basic academic principles and is prohibited in all courses. Unless group work is assigned, coursework is normally completed independently. If books, journals, magazines, or any other sources are reviewed and the ideas or language therein used, they must be cited. Where specific guidelines are not given, students should consult a reference source on proper notation.

Evidence of plagiarism will result in a grade of F for the assignment and may, at the discretion of the instructor, lead to an F in the course. In addition, further sanctions (i.e. censure, probation, suspension, or dismissal) may be imposed through the Student Conduct Code.

The case of any student who admits to or is found guilty of a violation of academic integrity will be reviewed by the Student Conduct Code Review Board. The student will be subject to appropriate sanctions, including expulsion from the University. A copy of the USM Student Guide to Academic Integrity and/or a copy of the Student Academic Integrity Policy is available from the Office of Community Standards, 125 Upton Hall, Gorham, (207) 780-5242.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal from the University of Southern Maine may be for personal reasons on the part of the student, academic reasons as determined by the program requirements, or by administrative decision.

A. Student Withdrawal To withdraw from the University the student must submit an official Withdrawal Form to the Registrar's Office and complete an exit interview with his or her advisor.

B. Academic Withdrawal If a student has not made satisfactory academic progress toward fulfilling degree requirements (see above), he or she may be withdrawn from the University.

C. Administrative Withdrawal A student may be withdrawn from a particular graduate program for reasons of a professional nature as determined by the program director or department chair.

Student Appeals and Complaints

Non-Academic Complaints

To provide graduate students with assistance in resolving disagreements or complaints of a non-academic nature, the University has designated the Office of the Dean of Student Life (ODSL) to respond to student inquiries. The mission of ODSL is to provide impartial guidance to students in identifying the nature of their disagreement or complaint. ODSL staff will guide students to the appropriate University policy or procedure to utilize in seeking resolution. The academic policies described below are not applicable to student complaints about unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment; however, an ODSL representative can advise the student about the University policies and procedures to follow when student complaints of this nature arise.

Academic Grade Appeal Policy

The purpose of the academic grade appeal policy is to provide a fair and speedy review of all student appeals of academic grades in graduate/professional programs at the University of Southern Maine; this policy will permit such appeals to be determined in a manner that reflects the interests of both the student and the instructor. The only matters reviewable under this policy are claims of prejudice on the part of an instructor in an academic exercise or activity for which a grade leading to academic credit is awarded, and/or evident and prejudicial error in the administration or grading method used for any paper, examination, performance, or other exercise or activity for which a grade leading to academic credit is awarded, provided that the academic judgment used in determining the merits of the grade to be awarded to such exercise or activity shall not be reviewable.

An appeal under this policy shall be carried out according to the following procedures:

1. The student should present his or her claim, in writing, to the instructor involved and shall seek to have the matter resolved by the instructor. In no event shall there be a right of appeal hereunder for a claim presented to the instructor more than 30 days after a final grade is posted to the student's record. The instructor must respond within 14 days of receiving the appeal.
2. If the student remains aggrieved by the decision of the instructor under step (1), he or she may, within 14 days after formal receipt of the instructor's final decision, appeal, in writing, to the chairperson of the department or program director of the college in which the course or other exercise or activity is offered. The chairperson/program director must respond within 14 days of receiving the appeal.
3. If the student remains aggrieved by the decision of the chairperson or program director of the department under step (2), he or she may, within 14 days after formal receipt of the chairperson's or program director's final decision, appeal, in writing, to the dean of the college in which the course or other exercise or activity is offered.
4. The dean, after discussion with the student and instructor, may resolve the grievance by agreement or render a decision within 21 days of receipt of the written appeal. The decision may be (a) that the appeal be dismissed or (b) that a grade be changed or the student be allowed an opportunity to retake an examination or other exercise or (c) that another appropriate remedy be administered.
5. The student or the instructor may, within 14 days of the receipt of the decision of the dean, appeal to the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies in writing, stating the reason for the appeal and delivering a copy of the writing to the opposing party and the dean. The opposing party may, within 10 days of receipt of the reasons for appeal, reply in writing to the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies. The associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies shall review the original claim, the written decision of the chairperson or program director and dean, and the written reasons for the appeal and reply. The associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies shall, within 28 days of receipt of the appeal and after reviewing the matter, prepare a written decision which shall uphold the decision of the chairperson, program director, or dean, or prescribe any other appropriate remedy. The associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies' decision shall be final and not subject to further review. Copies of the decision of the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies

shall be delivered to the student, the instructor, and the chairperson or program director and dean. The total time for resolution from the first appeal to the final decision shall be less than 120 days. If a faculty member/administrator fails to address the appeal within the specified time frame, the student may take the appeal to the next level.

Appeals of Dismissal or Withdrawal

All appeals of dismissal or withdrawal must follow the appeals process defined by the program's school or college. The dean of the school or college must be included in this process. Within 14 days following the student's receipt, in writing, of the decision by the department/dean, the student may appeal in writing to the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies. The decision of the associate provost/dean of Graduate Studies shall be rendered within three weeks and shall be final.

If a student withdraws or is withdrawn from the University during the first two weeks of the semester, there will be no courses or grades recorded. A student withdrawing or being withdrawn after the second week through the eighth week will receive a W grade for each course in which the student was enrolled. A student withdrawing or being withdrawn after the eighth week will receive regular grade designations as determined by the instructor(s). Under unusual circumstances, grades of W can be assigned after the eighth week if approved by the instructor and the director of the program, and with final approval of the associate provost and dean of Graduate Studies.

Graduation

Graduation Requirements To be eligible for graduation from a graduate degree program a student must:

A. Complete satisfactorily the number of graduate credit hours required in the program with a 3.0 grade average. All courses completed for graduate programs must be passed with a minimum grade of C; individual programs may set higher standards.

B. Complete satisfactorily all program degree requirements as defined in the particular graduate program (e.g., thesis, comprehensive examination).

C. Submit a completed application for graduation to the Registrar.

Certification for Graduation Each graduate program is responsible for certifying fulfillment of graduation requirements by a student to the Office of Graduate Studies.

Commencement Ceremony A master's degree candidate may participate in a commencement ceremony only if he or she has applied for graduation and been certified to participate. In certain instances, students may participate in commencement prior to completing all the requirements; please check with your program for specific details. Doctoral students in programs requiring a dissertation may participate in commencement ceremonies and events if a defense has been completed and the dissertation has been approved subject to minor editorial revisions. Doctoral students in programs that do not require a dissertation may participate in commencement ceremonies and events if all requirements for the degree have been completed and approved. Applications for graduation may be obtained through the Registrar's Office.

Students may appeal a decision regarding graduation based on these policies. Contact the Office of Graduate Studies for procedures.