

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
AGENDA FOR THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING

February 25, 2026

3:00-4:15 p.m.

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/92253970165?pwd=TLpRNTfgObxyJOgGdTXavqL65vb580.1>*

- I. Call to order
- II. Approval of the Minutes: January 28, 2026
- III. Opening Remarks & Announcements from the President of the Senate
- IV. Special Guests & Discussion
 - A. Artificial Intelligence at Mason: Charmaine Madison (Vice President and Chief Information Officer)
- V. Senate Standing Committee Reports
 - A. [Faculty Handbook \(First reads\)](#)
 - B. [Academic Policies \(Action items\)](#)
 - C. Organization and Operations
 - D. Budget and Resources
 - E. Faculty Matters
 - F. Nominations
- VI. University Standing Committees
 - A. External Relations
 - B. [Policy Management Group Charter](#)
- VII. New Business
- VIII. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty
- IX. Adjournment

* Note: For security purposes, all attendees must login using any valid Zoom account to join the meeting. Having trouble joining the meeting with the link above?

- 1. If using GMU Zoom Account (required for all Faculty Senators)
 - a. Go to <https://gmu.zoom.us>

- b. Click on [Sign into Your Account]
- c. Use GMU login credentials to login. (May require 2FA authentication)
- d. Once logged in – click on “JOIN A MEETING”
- e. Enter the Meeting ID (see highlighted above) and click JOIN

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1.3.1 The General Faculty AND 2.1.4 Part-Time Appointments

Background/Context:

- The Faculty Senate Charter defines the General Faculty and eligibility for election to the Senate, and our Handbook is currently out of alignment with those definitions. Full-time and part-time faculty are eligible to serve in the Senate, but adjunct faculty are not.
- There are some part-time faculty who are tenured and some who are term instructional faculty. We are removing the language that limits this to instructional term faculty to align with current practice. Since the Senate Charter allows part-time faculty to be elected to the Faculty Senate, and because part-time faculty are part of the General Faculty, we recommend that they also be able to vote.
- It is important to note that adjunct faculty are not part-time faculty. Part-time faculty are sometimes full-time faculty who have (often temporarily) moved to a reduced load to accommodate personal situations or because part of their time is being bought out by another agency. Other part-time faculty are hired into part-time faculty roles from the beginning of their contract because they have employment elsewhere (e.g., judges) but are being hired with a portfolio of responsibilities similar to the responsibilities of full-time faculty. There are currently 61 part-time faculty and 1680 full-time faculty at GMU. Adjunct faculty are hired to teach courses on a course-by-course basis.

Redlined language

1.3.1 The General Faculty

The General Faculty consists of all faculty who have full-time instructional, research, or clinical appointments ~~and all faculty who have part-time instructional appointments at any~~ George Mason University ~~campus~~. The General Faculty participates in governance at the university level.

Meetings of the General Faculty are scheduled by the President of the University, who serves as presiding officer. If at least 10% of the voting membership petitions for a called meeting of the General Faculty, the President is obliged to schedule it within thirty days, or within ten days if the purpose of the call is to consider modification of the authority the General Faculty has granted the Faculty Senate; or reversal of specific decisions of the Senate; or amending the Senate charter. All members of the General Faculty have voting rights on matters that pertain to the General Faculty. All members of the University community may attend meetings of the General Faculty and participate in the debate of matters that come before it. The General Faculty may meet electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously, seek recognition, vote, and exercise other rights.

Without relinquishing the generality of its powers, The General Faculty delegates by Charter to the Faculty Senate the responsibility for shared academic governance at the university level. Only those faculty who have instructional appointments – tenured, tenure-track, term, or ~~adjunct part-time~~ – may be elected to the Faculty Senate.

2.1.4 Part-Time Appointment

~~Term-F~~faculty who are appointed to less than full-time positions are called part-time faculty. Their assignments may include research, service, clinical practice, administrative program development, or instructional responsibilities that go beyond the boundaries of specific courses. Part-time ~~term~~ faculty positions are governed by the same appointment, rank, and title requirements as full-time ~~term~~ faculty positions. The Provost is the final approval level for part-time faculty appointments. Part-time faculty are ~~not~~ voting members of the General Faculty.

Related Passages:

Faculty Senate Charter, I.C.

C. Qualifications of Elected Senators Elected Senators shall be members of the constituent Faculties they represent. A faculty member is eligible to serve on the Faculty Senate if the faculty member holds

1. A full-time instructional tenured, tenure-track, or term appointment with at least one year's full-time service at George Mason University; or

2. A part-time instructional appointment with at least one academic year of continuous service, and completion of at least two Full Time Equivalents in appointments at George Mason University.

2.1.5 Adjunct Appointment

Adjunct Faculty are employees appointed to fulfill the teaching and advising responsibilities associated with a specific course (or a set of specified courses) in a specific semester.

Adjunct Faculty are not voting members of the General Faculty and are not covered by the provisions of this Handbook.

2.1.6 Postdoctoral Research Fellows and Research Staff

Postdoctoral Research Fellows are employees governed by the Postdoctoral Research Fellows Policy. Postdoctoral Research Fellows are not covered by the provisions of the Faculty Handbook.

Research Staff are employees governed by the Research Staff Policy. Research Staff are not covered by the provisions of the Faculty Handbook.

Proposed revision to Faculty Handbook § 1.3.2 concerning Faculty Senate participation by non-senators

George Mason University Faculty Handbook - July 1, 2025, § 1.3.2 The Faculty Senate	Proposed revision
The Senate meets at least monthly during the fall and spring semesters. Meetings of the Senate are open to all members of the university community, who may speak to any item of business on the agenda. Only members of the Senate, however, may introduce motions and vote. The Faculty Senate deliberates in a respectful and open manner, consistent with existing principles of university discourse.	The Senate meets at least monthly during the fall and spring semesters. To the extent permitted by the Senate bylaws, meetings of the Senate are open to all members of the university community, who may speak to any item of business on the agenda. Only members of the Senate, however, may introduce motions and vote. The Faculty Senate deliberates in a respectful and open manner, consistent with existing principles of university discourse.

Explanation

The current language of the Faculty Handbook is inconsistent with the current Faculty Senate bylaws, which restrict speaking privileges to “any person recognized by the President” and which provide for the possibility of closed sessions. Changing the language would make the handbook consistent not only with current bylaws but also with any future changes concerning non-member participation.

2.1.3 Term Appointments

Background/Context for new changes

The Term Faculty Committee has unanimously recommended that we replace the title “Master Instructor” with “Principal Instructor” to eliminate historical connotations of the word “master,” especially in southern states. This same shift is also happening in other industries, such as real estate and software development, for similar reasons.

Background/Context for first set of changes (already approved on November 12 by Faculty Senate- final paragraph):

- It has sometimes been unclear whether faculty who began at GMU as term faculty who then were hired into tenure-track positions were able to include their full body of scholarly and teaching accomplishments in their dossier for tenure consideration.
- It has also been unclear whether term faculty who were hired into tenure-track roles needed to wait the full six-year period to go up for tenure.
- Section 2.1.2 grants all faculty with prior service or unusually strong performance the opportunity to be considered for tenure and promotion early, and section 2.7 specifies that RRPT recommendations should be based on an evaluation of performance over the total period of service at Mason as well as consideration of all scholarly achievements. This revision simply clarifies that those policies also apply for faculty who began their careers as term faculty at Mason, just as they do for faculty who began their careers elsewhere, to remove the ambiguity that was at times being read into 2.1.3.

Redlined Language

2.1.3 Term Appointments

Full-time faculty on fixed-term, non-tenure-track appointments are known as Term Faculty. Term faculty whose assignments focus primarily on teaching are appointed as instructional faculty. Term faculty whose assignments focus primarily on research are appointed as research faculty. Term faculty whose assignments focus primarily on clinical practice are appointed as clinical faculty. While term faculty may identify with a primary focus, their assignments may include a blend of teaching, research, service, clinical practice, administrative, or leadership responsibilities that go beyond the boundaries of their primary focus. The faculty member’s specific responsibilities will be stipulated in the appointment contract or assignment letter.

Instructional term faculty with a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Instructional Assistant Professor, Instructional Associate Professor, or Instructional Professor. Research term faculty with a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Research Assistant Professor,

Research Associate Professor, or Research Professor. Clinical term faculty with a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Clinical Assistant Professor, Clinical Associate Professor, or Clinical Professor.

Instructional term faculty without a terminal degree may hold one of the following ranks: Instructor, Senior Instructor, ~~MasterPrincipal~~ Instructor; or Professor of Practice. Clinical term faculty without a terminal degree may hold the rank of Clinical Instructor, Clinical Senior Instructor, or Clinical ~~MasterPrincipal~~ Instructor. Research term faculty without a terminal degree are Research Staff (Section 2.1.6).

Term faculty on single-year appointments whose permanent employment is with another organization hold title with the prefix "Visiting."

Term faculty appointment contracts are issued for a single-year or for multiple years, up to a maximum of 5 years. For initial appointments for faculty with terminal degrees, the maximum contract length for assistant professors is three years and for associate and full professors it is five years. For initial appointments for faculty without terminal degrees, the contract length is one year. If a multi-year appointment is offered to a faculty member whose position relies entirely or partially on non-state appropriated funding, then a multi-year contract may be established subject to the continuing availability of funding throughout the contract period. Exceptions to either contract length or terminal degree requirements must be approved by the Provost.

Contracts automatically expire at the end of the contract period, and although a faculty member may be reappointed (Section 2.7.1), there is no guarantee or right to reappointment from one contract to the next, whether single-year or multi-year.

With the prior approval of the Provost, term faculty with the terminal degree may be considered for a tenure-track or tenured appointment as a result of a search (Section 2.3.2.1) or, rarely, by a direct appointment (Section 2.3.2.2). ~~Service on a term appointment, whether or not externally-funded, may be applied to tenure consideration only if specified in the initial tenure-track letter of appointment. Term faculty who are hired into tenure-track faculty positions will have the same timeline for renewal, promotion, and tenure as all other newly hired tenure-track faculty (Section 2.1.2), but time as a term faculty member does not count as part of the time to renewal and tenure. However, term faculty hired into tenure-track positions have the same opportunity for early tenure consideration, as defined in Section 2.1.2. Scholarly achievements and performance as a term faculty member will be evaluated for tenure consideration consistent with Section 2.7.~~ Term faculty are eligible to be considered for promotion in rank, normally after five years of service.

Commented [LB1]: Faculty Senate has approved this red language

Faculty Profiles for Faculty Handbook: Committee on Faculty Roles & Rewards (CFRR)

Background and Rationale:

The Case for Updating Faculty Profiles (Description of Faculty Ranks, Section 2.2)

In conversations with the George Mason University community across the work of the Task Force and now CFRR, the concern has repeatedly been raised that the Faculty Handbook does not provide contemporary or sufficient descriptions of the profiles of faculty across ranks. Specifically, current Faculty Handbook language refers to general criteria to get to a particular rank, rather than what activities and expectations characterize a particular faculty rank for research, scholarship, and creative activities (RSCA); teaching and student success; and service and leadership. The language below is our proposal for creating and/or modifying an overview of faculty profiles and expected activities for instructional faculty, research faculty, as well as tenure-line assistant, associate, and full professors. This language may supplement existing language for certain faculty ranks.

Current	Proposed
2.2 Description of Faculty Ranks Faculty are either appointed or are promoted to an academic faculty rank. Appointments should be made at the appropriate rank and account for years of professional, teaching, or other experience as judged by the appointing local academic unit and subject to the approval of the Dean and Provost. Faculty are promoted in rank according to the procedures in Section 2.7.	2.2 Description of Faculty Ranks Faculty are either appointed or are promoted to an academic faculty rank. Appointments should be made at the appropriate rank and account for years of professional, teaching, or other experience as judged by the appointing local academic unit and subject to the approval of the Dean and Provost. These descriptions are broad overviews of expectations at each rank; faculty are promoted in rank according to the criteria in Section 2.4 and the procedures in Section 2.7.
2.2.2 Assistant Professor An assistant professor normally holds the terminal degree in the discipline or field and gives promise for making significant contributions to teaching, research, scholarship, creative work, and/or clinical work. 2.2.3 Associate Professor A faculty member must meet the University's established criteria for advancement to the rank of associate professor as specified in Section 2.7.3 Promotion and Tenure and in Section	2.2.1 Tenure-Line Faculty 2.2.1.1 Assistant and Pre-Tenure Associate Professors Assistant and pre-tenure Associate Professors hold a terminal degree in the discipline or field of study and show promise for making significant RSCA contributions to and impact in their fields. These faculty members are learning about effective teaching and mentoring practices in their discipline(s) or field(s) and developing and strengthening their skills to facilitate student success. Assistant and pre-tenure Associate Professors primarily serve their Local Academic Units (LAUs) and establish a track record of service to their profession. They are expected to learn about and uphold high standards of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct. 2.2.1.2 Tenured Associate Professors Tenured Associate Professors have achieved a critical milestone in an academic career. This rank signifies that a faculty member has successfully completed their probationary

2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty. New faculty who are appointed to the rank of associate professor must have demonstrated equivalent qualifications that meet local academic unit and Faculty Handbook criteria for the rank.

2.2.4 Professor

A faculty member must meet the University's established criteria for advancement to the rank of professor as specified in Section 2.7.3 Promotion and Tenure and in Section 2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty. New faculty who are appointed to the rank of professor must have demonstrated equivalent qualifications that meet local academic unit and Faculty Handbook criteria for the rank.

period and established a strong record of independent accomplishment and impact in RSCA. Faculty members at this rank maintain impactful RSCA contributions and contribute to the university's overall teaching mission through effective, impactful teaching, active mentoring and advising, and substantive curricular and programmatic contributions. Tenured Associate Professors take responsibility for service and shared governance within the university (across all levels) and within their profession(s) and demonstrate promise for sustained contributions. They are expected to uphold high standards of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct.

George Mason University recognizes that Associate Professors must be afforded the opportunity to prioritize their RSCA and teaching and student success activities to build a case for promotion to professor while also developing and refining their leadership competencies.

2.2.1.3 Tenured Professors

Tenured Professors are recognized for their established expertise in their discipline(s) or field(s) of study and have achieved national – and often international – stature. Faculty at this rank engage in sustained, impactful RSCA and provide substantive leadership in their profession(s), possibly including new collaborations across disciplines and fields of study. Tenured Professors demonstrate ongoing growth as educators, make sustained contributions to student success and teaching effectiveness, and provide pedagogical leadership within and/or beyond the university. They provide service and leadership to the institution (e.g., playing key roles in university governance, assuming substantial

2.2.5 Distinguished University Professor

From time to time the University will encounter opportunities to recognize current members of the faculty or appoint to its faculty people of great national or international reputation. The rank of Distinguished University Professor is reserved for such eminent individuals. Distinguished University Professors are appointed by the President and the Board of Visitors with the advice and consent of a standing committee appointed by the Provost.

Distinguished University Professor appointments are normally reserved for **full** professors. The criteria for such appointments include substantial research or scholarship or arts credentials, as appropriate to the discipline.

service responsibilities) and in their professional field(s) of study (e.g., leadership positions in professional organizations or scholarly journals). Faculty at this rank serve as mentors to students as well as to faculty and staff colleagues. As experienced faculty, they are expected to contribute regularly to the intellectual life of the university and serve as exemplars of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct.

2.2.1.4 Distinguished University Professor

From time to time the University will encounter opportunities to recognize current members of the faculty or appoint to its faculty people of great national or international reputation. The rank of Distinguished University Professor is reserved for such eminent individuals. Distinguished University Professors are appointed by the President and the Board of Visitors with the advice and consent of a standing committee appointed by the Provost.

Distinguished University Professor appointments are normally reserved for tenured **Professors and are limited to no more than 10% of all tenured Professors**. The criteria for such appointments include substantial research or scholarship or arts credentials, as appropriate to the discipline.

2.2.1 Instructor and Professor of Practice

Term faculty without the terminal degree in the field may be appointed as Instructor. An instructor holds the master's degree or equivalent academic and/or professional qualifications and gives promise for making contributions in the area of their primary assignment focus. An instructor may be appointed or promoted in rank (Section 2.1.3) by meeting local academic unit criteria for the rank.

2.2.2 Term Faculty

2.2.2.1 Instructional Assistant Professors and Instructors

The Instructional Assistant Professor (for those with a terminal degree) and Instructor (for those without a terminal degree) ranks signify that the faculty member shows promise for making significant contributions and has demonstrated the potential for continued growth.

Instructional Assistant Professors and Instructors contribute to the university's overall teaching and student success mission through effective teaching and mentoring practices in their discipline(s) or field(s), as well as by developing and strengthening their skills to facilitate student success. While not the primary focus, some level of professional and scholarly activity may be undertaken, including efforts to stay current in the field, participate in professional development, or engage in similar activities. Faculty at this rank are contributing citizens to service activities within the LAU, subject to workload policies and/or agreements. Those who are granted Graduate Faculty Status may serve on thesis and dissertation committees. All faculty at this rank are expected to learn about and uphold high standards of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct.

2.2.2.2 Research Assistant Professors

Research Assistant Professors show promise for making significant RSCA contributions to and impact in their discipline(s) or field(s). Roles for these faculty may be defined by external funding requirements. Faculty at this rank may

mentor graduate students and postdoctoral researchers as part of their workload. They may contribute service to the profession (e.g., manuscript reviewing, participation in professional societies). Those who are granted Graduate Faculty Status may serve on thesis and dissertation committees. All faculty at this rank are expected to learn about and uphold high standards of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct.

2.2.2.3 Instructional Associate Professors and Senior Instructors

The Instructional Associate Professor (for those with a terminal degree) and Senior Instructor (for those without a terminal degree) ranks signify that a faculty member has established a record of high-quality, impactful work and has demonstrated the potential for continued growth and contributions.

Instructional Associate Professors and Senior Instructors contribute to the university's overall teaching and student success mission through effective teaching, active mentoring and advising, and - in some cases – curricular, programmatic, or leadership contributions. While not the primary focus, some level of professional and scholarly activity may be undertaken, including efforts to stay current in the field, participate in professional development, or engage in similar activities. Faculty at this rank are active citizens of the university which typically involves participating in service activities within the LAU, college, and/or university, subject to workload policies and/or agreements. Those who are granted Graduate Faculty Status may serve on thesis and dissertation committees. All faculty at this rank are expected to

uphold high standards of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct.

2.2.2.4 Research Associate Professors

Research Associate Professors are defined by a record of independent, high-quality RSCA. These faculty members demonstrate significant contributions to their field, as evidenced by the appropriate measures of their discipline(s) or field(s) of study and a strong professional reputation. Direct teaching responsibilities are often minimal or non-existent, although faculty at this rank may mentor graduate students and postdoctoral researchers as part of their research program. Active service to the profession (e.g., manuscript reviewing, participation in professional societies) and contributions to the university's research infrastructure (e.g., serving on relevant committees) may be undertaken. Those who are granted Graduate Faculty Status may serve on thesis and dissertation committees. All faculty at this rank are expected to uphold high standards of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct.

2.2.2.5 Instructional Professors and Principal Instructors

The Instructional Professor (for those with a terminal degree) and Principal Instructor (for those without a terminal degree) ranks signify a faculty member has established a record of achievement and leadership. The expectation is to demonstrate sustained effectiveness and impact.

Instructional Professors and Principal Instructors demonstrate ongoing growth in their contributions to student success and

teaching effectiveness as evidenced by contributions to instructional quality across the institution. This includes course design and assessments that engage learners, curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, and contributions to the university's overall teaching mission. While not the primary focus, some level of professional and scholarly activity may be undertaken, including efforts to stay current in the discipline(s) or field(s), participate in professional development, or other activities. Faculty at this rank are active citizens of the university, contributing to LAU, college, and university committees, subject to workload policies and/or agreements. In some cases, they serve in important and impactful leadership roles. As experienced faculty, they are expected to contribute regularly to the intellectual life of the university and serve as exemplars of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct.

2.2.2.6 Research Professors

Research Professors are recognized by external colleagues for their established expertise in their field(s) of study and will have achieved national stature due to the impact of their RSCA, as evidenced by the appropriate measures of their discipline(s) or field(s) of study. Direct teaching responsibilities are often minimal or non-existent, although faculty at this rank may mentor graduate students and postdoctoral researchers as part of their research program. Research Professors may hold leadership positions within their professional community, such as serving on editorial boards or organizing disciplinary conferences, in addition to active service to the profession (e.g., manuscript reviewing, participation in professional societies). Contributions to the university's research infrastructure (e.g., serving on relevant committees) are often expected. As

Term faculty, with or without a terminal degree, who possess the expertise, achievements, and experience to provide professional instruction in a manner that brings relevance and distinction to the local academic unit and the University may be appointed as Professor of Practice.	experienced faculty, they are expected to serve as exemplars of professional, ethical, and collegial conduct. 2.2.2.7 Professor of Practice Term faculty, with or without a terminal degree, who possess the expertise, achievements, and experience to provide professional instruction in a manner that brings relevance and distinction to the local academic unit and the University may be appointed as Professor of Practice.
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2.2.6 Distinguished Service Professor Distinguished Service Professors are recognized as individuals whose careers have had a major impact on their field or on the university community that goes well beyond ordinary levels of service. Normally, such individuals are recommended by a Dean and appointed by the Provost. Such appointments are normally reserved for full professors. The criteria for granting the rank of distinguished service professor includes extraordinary level of impact, sustained contributions to the good of the university and the academic unit, and/or significant contributions to the field that extend beyond the boundaries of the university.	2.2.3 Distinguished Service Professor (honorific title) Distinguished Service Professors are recognized as individuals whose careers have had a major impact on their field or on the university community that goes well beyond ordinary levels of service. Normally, such individuals are recommended by a Dean and appointed by the Provost. The criteria for granting the rank of Distinguished Service Professor includes extraordinary level of impact, sustained contributions to the good of the university and the academic unit, and/or significant contributions to the discipline(s) or field(s) that extend beyond the boundaries of the university. Faculty who are granted this honorific title retain their current rank.
2.2.7 Emeritus Faculty Upon retirement from George Mason University, full-time Associate and Full Professors with ten or more years of continuous academic service may be recommended to the Board of Visitors for election to the honorary rank of Emeritus/Emerita in recognition of outstanding dedication to the university. A letter reviewing the candidate's history of teaching, research and scholarship, and service at Mason is normally initiated by the individual's LAU. The letter is forwarded to the LAU Dean, the Provost and the President for accompanying recommendations.	2.2.4 Emeritus Faculty Upon retirement from George Mason University, full-time term or tenured Associate Professors and Professors with ten or more years of continuous academic service may be recommended to the Board of Visitors for election to the honorary rank of Emeritus/Emerita in recognition of outstanding dedication to the university. A letter reviewing the candidate's history of teaching, research and scholarship, and service at George Mason is normally initiated by the individual's LAU. The letter is forwarded to the LAU Dean, the Provost, and the President for accompanying recommendations.

2.2.8 Administrators Holding Faculty Rank

Each person appointed to an administrative/professional faculty position is assigned an academic rank. **Initial appointment will normally be at the rank of Instructor. Individuals holding a terminal degree may be appointed at the rank of Assistant Professor. An academic unit and the Provost may together confer academic rank beyond Assistant Professor when appropriate. As exceptions, certain senior administrative positions will be assigned the rank of at least Associate Professor in keeping with the executive status of their position. Assignment of rank must be in accordance with *The Commonwealth of Virginia's Consolidated Salary Authorization for Faculty Positions in Institutions of Higher Education, 2001-2002*. (The assignment of rank to administrative/professional faculty does not confer, nor does time assigned to administrative/professional duties contribute to, tenure.)**

Instructional faculty who are appointed to administrative/professional faculty positions, if tenured, retain their tenured status while so serving.

Faculty who are not tenured have no automatic right to return to their previous instructional, research, or clinical faculty position.

2.2.5 Administrators Holding Faculty Rank

Each person appointed to an Administrative/Professional faculty position is assigned an academic rank. **Faculty rank for Administrative/Professional Faculty is further detailed in the Administrative/Professional Faculty Handbook.**

Instructional faculty who are appointed to Administrative/Professional faculty positions, if tenured, retain their tenured status while so serving.

Faculty who are not tenured have no automatic right to return to their previous instructional, research, or clinical faculty position.

Committee on Reimagining Faculty Roles and Rewards: Introduction & Rationale

Embrace an Integrated, Holistic Framework for Overall Excellence for Faculty

As George Mason University continues its upward trajectory as a public R1 institution with high standards for our student success mission, we must address our outdated definitions of faculty excellence and success. As the CFRR has noted earlier, we have not revised our reappointment, renewal, promotion, and tenure (RRPT) policies and procedures to account for George Mason's growth as an institution, the changing higher education landscape, or – perhaps most importantly – the known challenges that have been present within our current RRPT framework. Feedback from the broader campus faculty community has indicated that a more integrated approach to assessing excellence and impact is both highly desirable and needed.

Faculty have multiple ways in which they can contribute meaningfully to the university's mission. This could be impactful research, scholarship, and creative activity (RSCA); or impactful work such as focusing on innovative course and curriculum design, teaching, and student success. Other individuals invest their time and effort in significant service and leadership roles that result in impactful work for the university and beyond. While the university needs faculty who are having a positive impact in these variety of ways, current models of evaluation do not incentivize nor capture the richness of varied faculty contributions.

We seek to align our policy language with current practices as well as our aspirational goal of supporting the principle of equifinality – that excellence can be achieved and demonstrated in different ways depending on the faculty member, the context, and the field of study. We recommend an integrated, holistic lens from which to view and recognize impact and *overall excellence*.

Eliminate a Compartmentalized Framework of High Competence and Genuine Excellence

We propose eliminating the compartmentalized framework of “High Competence” versus “Genuine Excellence” in favor of an integrated, holistic framework of *overall excellence*. Not only would this bring us into alignment with the vast majority of our R1 peers, but it would also address some of the challenges of our current framework. These include:

- As we sought and have achieved R1 status, Genuine Excellence in Teaching has been discouraged and therefore rarely used as an option for promotion for tenure-line faculty. In fact, some college/school RRPT guidelines already discourage this and are in conflict with the current Faculty Handbook.
- There is no way to clearly differentiate faculty who deeply invest in their teaching and student outcomes from those who do not. Our goal is to provide guidance and clarity on the importance of recognizing investment in teaching and student success.

The suggested language below aligns our values, current practices, and aspirational goals. Of course, new guidance and criteria for expectations for **overall excellence** and positive impact for both the first-level and second-level reviews would need to be modified to embrace a more holistic and integrative review. Modifications to guidance would need to be made at the university, college/school, and Local Academic Unit (LAU) levels. An appropriate timeline for staged implementation would need to be established.

Update our RRPT Criteria

George Mason has had incredible success as an institution. Today, we are a top 50 public R1 university. We have received the Carnegie Classification of Opportunity Colleges and Universities, with high student access and high student outcomes. However, we have not adapted our reappointment, renewal, promotion, and tenure (RRPT) policies and procedures to account for George Mason's growth as an institution or the changing higher education landscape. In fact, it has been decades since we revised our institutional RRPT guidance, and faculty roles are more complex than ever before.

The Committee on Faculty Roles and Rewards (CFRR) recommends that George Mason University adopt a forward-thinking approach to defining faculty excellence. We believe that not only is this effort worthwhile, but it is also necessary. We must embrace more contemporary definitions of faculty work as George Mason continues its upward research trajectory and student success mission. We support the principle of equifinality – that excellence can be achieved in different ways depending on the faculty member, the context, and the field of study. The principle of equifinality brings an integrated lens from which to view and recognize faculty accomplishments. We must ensure that our definitions of research, scholarship, and creative activity (RSCA), teaching and student success, and service and leadership recognize the full scope of faculty contributions. We seek to reframe the RRPT process to value more broadly the scope of faculty contributions to their disciplinary communities and fields of study, to student success, and to the continued advancement of George Mason University.

The world of RSCA is dynamic and evolving rapidly. We need to adapt our RRPT language to include recent and emerging forms of scholarship so that our faculty are recognized for their work on the frontiers of knowledge production and translation. Our goal is to empower faculty to craft their RSCA – and provide evidence of its impact – in ways that support the broad and evolving mission of the university. Faculty should be free and indeed encouraged to pursue dynamic, creative, impactful work as they seek to meet the criteria of excellence, broadly defined. There have been national efforts to encourage public universities to reimagine RRPT guidelines. For example, in 2023, the Association for Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) published *Modernizing Scholarship for the Public Good*. The report identified reform of tenure and promotion practices as a key area for strategic action. The call encourages universities to recognize public engagement and public impact research.

Update our Definitions of Faculty Contributions

The sections below propose updated language for RSCA, Teaching and Student Success, and Service and Leadership. The committee believes this language will clarify RRPT evaluation criteria, improve transparency, and enable a comprehensive review of faculty contributions. Collectively, this will help faculty navigate the RRPT (and annual review, per the Faculty Handbook) processes more effectively. This language was informed by a review of 1) the RRPT guidelines for each of George Mason's colleges/schools; 2) national initiatives and reports; and 3) RRPT guidelines at current and aspirational Association of American Universities (AAU) institutions.

2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

Recommendations on changes of faculty status are in large measure a faculty responsibility. The faculty's role in these personnel actions is based upon the essentiality of its judgment to sound educational policy, and upon the fact that scholars in a particular field have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues. An additional reason for the faculty's role in these matters is the general competence of experienced faculty personnel committees with a broader charge that encompasses the evaluation of teaching and service. Implicit in such competence is the acknowledgment that responsibility exists for both adverse and favorable judgments.

Faculty are evaluated when they are candidates for a change in faculty status: reappointment, renewal, promotion, or conferral of tenure ([Section 2.7](#)). Candidates will be evaluated in light of the missions of the University which are teaching; research and scholarship, both theoretical and applied; and service (as defined in [Sections 2.4.1-2.4.3](#)). Only these criteria, as further developed and published by the local academic unit, and approved by the Provost, may be used in evaluations of faculty. Peer review plays a central role in the evaluation of individual achievement in each of these areas. The primary consideration in the evaluation of faculty achievements will be the extent to which these continue to improve the academic quality of the University.

2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Term Faculty

Recommendations on changes of faculty status are in large measure a faculty responsibility. The faculty's role in these personnel actions is based upon the essentiality of its judgment to sound educational policy, and upon the fact that scholars in a particular field have the chief competence for judging the work of their colleagues. An additional reason for the faculty's role in these matters is the general competence of experienced faculty personnel committees with a broader charge that encompasses the evaluation of teaching and service. Implicit in such competence is the acknowledgment that responsibility exists for both adverse and favorable judgments.

Faculty are evaluated when they are candidates for a change in faculty status: reappointment, renewal, promotion, or conferral of tenure ([Section 2.7](#)). Candidates will be evaluated in light of the missions of the University which are teaching **and student success**; research, scholarship, **and creative activity**, both theoretical and applied; and service **and leadership** (as defined in [Sections 2.4.1-2.4.3](#)). **All evaluations should consider the candidate's adherence to professional ethics (see [Section 2.10.2](#)).** **For faculty with administrative responsibilities, the impact of those responsibilities should be considered proportional to workload (2.4.4).** Only these criteria, as further developed and published by the local academic unit, and approved by the Provost, may be used in evaluations of faculty. Peer review plays a central role in the evaluation of individual achievement in each of these areas. The primary consideration in the evaluation of faculty achievements will be the extent to which these continue to improve the academic quality of the University.

Faculty are not expected to have equal commitment or equal responsibilities in each of these areas. Levels of expectation will vary with the type of decision.

Initial tenure-track and term appointments will, to some extent, recognize perceived potential rather than achievement. Reappointment, renewal, appointment without term or promotion in rank will be based on achievement rather than potential.

Term faculty candidates for promotion to associate professor or to senior instructor must demonstrate at least high competence in the primary area (instructional, research, or clinical). They must also show evidence of service. The standards that must be met in the primary area and in service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost.

Term faculty candidates for promotion to professor or to master instructor must demonstrate genuine excellence in the primary area (instructional, research, or clinical). They must also show evidence of continuing service. The standards that must be met in the primary area and in service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost.

Tenure-track candidates for tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor without term must exhibit genuine excellence either in teaching or in research/scholarship. High competence must be exhibited in both areas. Furthermore, candidates must provide evidence that their contributions in their area(s) of genuine excellence have had some significant impact beyond the boundaries of this University. If the primary strength

Faculty are not expected to have equal commitment or equal responsibilities in each of these areas. Levels of expectation will vary with the type of decision.

The standards as outlined below will be developed by the LAU and must comply with Faculty Handbook guidance and are approved by the Provost. Faculty are to be evaluated on the quality and impact of their contributions; evaluations should account for differences in assigned workload and other responsibilities as informed by college/school and LAU policies.

Term Faculty: Term faculty candidates for promotion must demonstrate overall excellence and appropriate impact in the primary area (instructional, research, or clinical). They must also show evidence of contributions to service.

Tenure-Track Faculty: Tenure-track candidates for tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor without term must present a dossier that demonstrates overall excellence in research, scholarship, and creative activities (RSCA) and teaching and student success. With respect to RSCA, candidates must provide evidence that their contributions have had a significant impact on their fields. With respect to teaching and student success, candidates must provide evidence of developing

is teaching, there should be evidence that the candidate's contributions have influence beyond the immediate classroom; if in research/scholarship, there should be evidence that the candidate's contributions have significant influence on colleagues at other institutions in this country, and where applicable, abroad. They must also show evidence of service. The standards that must be met in teaching, research/scholarship, and service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost. Appointment without term should leave no doubt about the candidate's value to the University over an extended period.

Tenured candidates seeking promotion to the rank of professor without term must maintain high competence in teaching, research/scholarship, and service while also maintaining genuine excellence in teaching or research/scholarship. In addition, evidence of significant impact beyond the boundaries of the University must be much more substantial than in cases involving tenure or promotion to the rank of associate professor without term. Clear and convincing evidence must be provided of an established external reputation in the primary field, based on consequential achievements in teaching, research and scholarship, or professional activities directly related to teaching and research and scholarship. The standards that must be met in teaching, research/scholarship, and service are developed by the LAU and approved by the Provost.

All evaluations should consider the candidate's adherence to professional ethics (see [Section 2.10.2](#)).

and strengthening their teaching and mentoring skills to facilitate student success. They must also show evidence of contributions to service. Appointment without term should leave no doubt about the candidate's value to the University as a lifetime appointment.

Tenured Faculty: Tenured candidates seeking promotion to the rank of professor without term must maintain a dossier that, taken as a whole, demonstrates overall excellence when considering all three domains of faculty contributions: RSCA, teaching and student success, and service and leadership. Evidence of impact must be much more substantial than in cases involving tenure and/or promotion to the rank of associate professor without term. Clear and convincing evidence must be provided of an established external reputation for overall excellence based on consequential achievements in RSCA, teaching and student success, and/or professional activities directly related to RSCA and teaching and student success.

2.4.1 Teaching

Effective teaching is demonstrated through a combination of course and curricular materials, learning outcomes, assignments, and assessments designed to promote student learning; through review of those materials, outcomes, assignments, and assessments by knowledgeable peers and colleagues; through student evaluations of their learning experiences; and through engaging in professional/teaching development activities.

Examples of contributions to teaching include:

- Development and implementation of new courses, curricula, and programs (face-to-face, online, or hybrid);
- Use of research-based, innovative, inclusive, and/or high-impact teaching and assessment practices;
- Development of instructional materials, including appropriate use of emerging and digital technologies;
- Training and supervision of teaching (graduate) and/or learning (undergraduate) assistants;
- Course coordination for courses with multiple sections;
- Mentoring students, both undergraduate and graduate;
- Clinical and field supervision of students;
- Student academic advising;
- Mentoring faculty colleagues;
- Participating in educational development activities to strengthen knowledge, skills, and/or abilities.

2.4.1 Teaching and Student Success

Contributing effectively to our educational mission is the responsibility of all faculty members. All faculty are expected to:

- Adapt to the evolving needs of students and the workplace in an increasingly complex technological landscape
- Engage in teaching and learning strategies that equitably support and engage students in learning, often informed by evidence-based or research-based teaching and learning strategies rooted in our disciplines and professional communities.

Effective teaching requires the demonstration of an intentional commitment to and refinement of teaching practices that lead to student engagement, learning, and success. In many cases, faculty members will provide leadership for: curricula, including the integration of high-impact practices that foster student success and educational innovations; supporting colleagues in becoming more effective educators; and engaging in activities that have impact beyond one's own classrooms. Effective teaching is typically demonstrated through a combination of:

- Course design, teaching materials, and assessments designed to promote student learning;
- Ongoing review of those materials and assessments by knowledgeable peers and colleagues;
- Student evaluations of/ feedback about their learning experiences; and

- Faculty self-assessments that demonstrate growth, continuous course improvement, and engagement in professional/teaching development activities.

Evidence of impact, significance, and/or innovation may include but are not limited to:

- Development and/or implementation of courses, curricula, and programs across modalities;
- Use of research-based, innovative, inclusive, and/or high-impact teaching and assessment practices;
- Development of instructional materials (e.g., textbooks, case studies, online study guides), including appropriate use of emerging technologies;
- Training and supervision of teaching (graduate) and/or learning (undergraduate) assistants;
- Course coordination, including providing instructor support, for courses with multiple sections;
- Chairing or co-chairing undergraduate or graduate student thesis, portfolio, comprehensive exam, or dissertation committees or other significant student mentoring that leads to student success;
- Clinical and field supervision of students;
- Student academic advising and/or mentoring;
- Mentoring faculty colleagues in course development, design, teaching, digital pedagogy, and/or assessment;
- Participating in professional development activities to strengthen teaching and learning (e.g., workshops, programs, credentials); and
- Leading professional development activities to strengthen teaching and learning (e.g., workshops, programs, credentials).

	Each local academic unit (LAU) must develop standards to evaluate its expectations for demonstrating impact with respect to teaching and student success that reflects the above definitions. Faculty are evaluated on the quality and impact of their contributions; evaluations should account for differences in assigned workload and other responsibilities.
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2.4.2 Research and Scholarship

Scholarly achievement is demonstrated by original contributions to the advancement of the discipline/field of study, or to the integration of the discipline with other fields, or by the application of discipline- or field-based knowledge to the practice of a profession.

Examples of evidence for research and scholarship include:

- Publications (peer and non-peer reviewed), including journal articles, books, book chapters, monographs, etc.;
- Sponsored research activity and grant and contract awards;
- Conference and other scholarly presentations (peer-reviewed and invited);
- Original artistic work, software and media, exhibitions, and professional performances;
- Intellectual property, patents, and evidence of relevant entrepreneurial activities;
- Other evidence indicating scholarly recognition and reputation.

2.4.2 Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (RSCA)

Excellence in RSCA builds on a faculty member's academic and/or professional expertise and is demonstrated by original contributions to:

- An individual discipline or field of study;
- Interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, or transdisciplinary knowledge;
- The application or translation of discipline- or field-based knowledge to policy, industry practice, or professional practice;
- The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL); and/or
- Public and community-engaged scholarship.

Evidence of impact, significance, and/or innovation may include but are not limited to:

- Publications (peer and non-peer reviewed), including journal articles, conference papers, books, book chapters, reports, briefs, textbooks, and monographs;
- Original artistic work, software, media, exhibitions, and professional performances;
- Other scholarly works that are single-authored, co-authored, edited, and co-edited;
- Sponsored research activities;
- Academic and professional conference and other scholarly presentations (peer-reviewed and invited);
- Scholarly digital projects, including explicitly Open Educational Resources (OERs),

	websites, digital platforms and tools, and multimodal work; • Intellectual property, patents, and evidence of relevant entrepreneurial activities; • Professional activities that evidence leadership and/or strength of expertise (e.g., editorships, organizing special sessions/workshops, invitations for activities that make other significant contributions); • Professional efforts to connect different public constituencies with university scholars (e.g., testifying before legislative bodies, research that informs practices/policies of local/regional/international/other communities, museum exhibits, media interviews or appearances, other activities considered to be the work of public intellectuals); • Other evidence that indicates scholarly recognition and reputation; and • Fostering student scholarly identity and success, for example through funding students on RSCA projects, engaging undergraduate or graduate students in RSCA work that leads to co-authorships (e.g., publications, conference proceedings, presentations). Each local academic unit (LAU) must develop standards to evaluate its expectations for demonstrating impact in RSCA that reflects the above definitions. Emphasis on the quality, significance, and impact of the work, not simply the quantity, is strongly encouraged. Faculty should be encouraged to develop an RSCA portfolio that is forward-thinking and innovative and codifies the legitimacy and expertise of the faculty member in a particular domain.
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2.4.3 Service

Service, which may include leadership responsibilities, is demonstrated by faculty participation in governance, and operational or development activities in the local academic unit, the University, or the profession. Required service in the local academic unit includes, but is not limited to, such activity as attendance at faculty meetings and participation in faculty personnel matters and curriculum development. Other examples of service to the LAU include student advising, developing or supporting co-curricular experiences for students, and mentoring colleagues.

Professional service is demonstrated by contributions to recognized societies and associations that promote research and scholarship and by consultancies and cooperative projects that make the faculty member's discipline or field-based knowledge and skills available to individuals, groups or agencies outside the University.

2.4.3 Service and Leadership

Faculty are expected to engage in institutional service, institutional leadership, and/or professional service and leadership. Service and leadership strengthen the institution and faculty professional communities and includes engagement in faculty governance. To show impact, active participation is necessary, but not sufficient.

Institutional service activities include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Participation in faculty personnel matters (e.g., recruitment activities, search committees, RRPT activities);
- Serving on instructional (e.g., accreditation, curricular, Academic Program Review) and research committees at the LAU, college/school, and/or university levels;
- Supporting student success efforts through designing and/or facilitating co-curricular experiences for students, student advising, and/or career coaching;
- Faculty mentoring, such as supporting and advising faculty peers about RSCA or career planning;
- Serving on undergraduate or graduate student thesis or dissertation committees;
- Engagement in community outreach and/or student recruitment activities;
- Coordinating and/or participating in engagement activities (e.g., public lectures/panels, workshops, reading groups, learning communities); and

Leadership is demonstrated by making significant and consequential contributions to the local academic unit, the University, professional societies and associations, and local/regional/national/international communities. Examples include, but are not limited to, chairing or co-chairing committees for the local academic unit; leading and/or actively contributing to university-wide initiatives; serving in leadership roles for professional societies and organizations; serving in significant editorial roles; leading invited or peer-reviewed workshops; leading community-based activities related in some way to expertise; and mentoring faculty colleagues in formal programs.

Each local academic unit must develop standards to evaluate its expectations for institutional and professional leadership and engagement.

- Engaging in professional development opportunities to strengthen leadership capacity.

Institutional leadership involves taking a proactive role in the work of a group/committee/unit to build and sustain important institutional functions that allow the work of the university to mature and progress. Impact may be demonstrated by showing significant, sustained contributions towards implementing strategies that advance the broader institutional mission within the LAU, college/school, and/or George Mason University. These activities include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Chairing or co-chairing committees at the LAU, college/school, and/or university levels;
- Serving as a faculty representative on the Board of Visitors (BOV), the Faculty Senate, university standing committees, ad hoc taskforces and working groups, and other university-wide initiatives;
- Leading or coordinating faculty engagement and mentoring activities (e.g., public lectures/panels, workshops, reading groups, learning communities, mentoring programs);
- Developing and/or implementing new programs and curricula; and
- Enhancing the reputation of George Mason University through special appointments and/or sustained community engagement, outreach, and/or media appearances.

Professional service and leadership are the work of developing the community of scholars within the discipline(s) or field(s) of study. To show impact, active participation is necessary, but not

	sufficient. Service and leadership to the profession may include, but is not limited to, the following examples: • Participation in professional peer-review processes (e.g., RRPT, professional organization conference planning, grant proposal review, manuscript and book review for academic presses and journals); • Service on and/or leadership for editorial boards, advisory boards, or with scholarly presses; • Service on and/or leadership for national advisory boards and foundations and/or national review panels; • Leadership of professional organization standing committees (e.g., organizing panels, developing programs, hosting major conferences); • Serving on a jury panel for a regional, national, or international professional awards competition or grant review; and • Participation in professional organization ad-hoc committees. Each LAU must develop standards to evaluate its expectations for demonstrating impact on institutional and professional service and leadership that reflect the above descriptions. They should also reflect a holistic perspective of contributions that account for where faculty might be in their career lifecycle. Service and leadership expectations should be articulated in workload policies and agreements.
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2.4.4. Administrative Responsibilities

Many faculty assume administrative responsibilities as part of their terms of employment. Evaluation of faculty performance of these responsibilities must be included in the annual review and any consideration of change of faculty status. The criteria for successful performance must be given to the faculty member in writing.

2.4.4. Administrative Responsibilities

Many faculty assume administrative responsibilities as part of their terms of employment. Administrative leadership is taking on a role and set of responsibilities that enable the work of a functional unit of the university (e.g., chair, associate chair, program director, graduate or undergraduate director, center director, course coordinator, advisor). These roles fulfill a specific set of responsibilities, are typically designated as fulfilling a defined workload, and are often – but not always – compensated. If a faculty member does not hold an administrative position and/or their contract does not indicate that they hold an administrative role, then they will not be evaluated in this area.

Each college/school and LAU must develop standards to evaluate its expectations for demonstrating impact with respect to administrative responsibilities, as appropriate. The criteria for successful performance must be given to the faculty member in writing. If administrative responsibilities are part of a faculty member's workload, then their administrative impact should be considered in annual reviews and RRPT reviews by the appropriate supervisory structure. Similarly, expectations for impact across all areas of evaluation should be proportionally modified to account for administrative workload in annual reviews and RRPT evaluations.

Summary of revisions for 2.7:

- Replaces references to “department chairs” with “LAU administrators” to more clearly include other titles for similar roles (e.g., department chair, department head, area chair, program director, school director, etc.) throughout the section.
- Revises the first paragraph to overview the roles that each level plays in the RRPT process. The last two sentences could have been seen as restricting independent judgment at some levels, were unclear about who was included as “administration,” and were unclear about what “overturn” would mean in cases with non-unanimous votes.
- Clarifies the steps for the 3rd year renewal process for tenure-line faculty.
- Defines “insufficient” as fewer than three faculty.
- Adds consistency by defining who must recuse themselves from voting for all promotion types and removes the option to vote “abstain” in RRPT processes.
- Updates some process language to account for how our practices work with Interfolio (how external reviews are added, how letters are sent, etc.)
- Specifies for all tenure-line promotions that tenured Associate and Full Professors vote on tenure cases that are a promotion to Associate Professor and that only tenured Full Professors vote on tenure cases that are a Promotion to Full Professor.
- Cleaned up other minor language and punctuation issues.

2.7 Procedures for Reappointment, Renewal, Promotion, and Tenure

Recommendations in these matters originate through faculty action in accordance with established procedures; are reviewed by senior academic administrators; and presented to the Board of Visitors. Peer evaluation of the value of scholarly or educational accomplishments is critical and highly valued in making reappointment, renewal, promotion, and tenure decisions. LAU Administrators and Deans also play an important role in evaluating scholarly and educational accomplishments, although their evaluation also depends on department, college, and university considerations. The Provost and President review all materials and make a final recommendation to the Board of Visitors, who vote on the final decision. The administration should overturn faculty personnel recommendations rarely, and only when it is clear that peer faculty have not applied appropriate standards, or when the University's long-term programmatic needs are an overriding consideration. Only in extraordinary circumstances and for clearly stated reasons should administrators substitute their own judgment of the value of scholarly or educational accomplishments for judgments made by faculty.

Reappointment, renewal, promotion, and tenure recommendations are based upon an evaluation of performance over the faculty member's total period of service at George Mason University ([Sections 2.4-2.5](#)). Scholarly achievements prior to joining the George Mason University faculty weigh less heavily in these evaluations, but are also considered. These evaluations differ from the annual review ([Section 2.6.1](#)) in their emphasis on lasting contributions, consistency of performance, and flexibility.

The terms "reappoint" or "reappointment" in this Handbook mean offering a term faculty member a contract for an additional term, which may include the same or different duties and responsibilities.

"Renew" or "renewal" in this Handbook means offering a tenure-track faculty member a contract for an additional term on the tenure track, which may include the same or different duties and responsibilities.

Faculty member duties and responsibilities that will be evaluated must be included in the appointment contract. If subsequent contracts or assignment letters are issued, the duties and responsibilities may be changed in consultation with the faculty member.

All faculty who are candidates for a change in appointment status are evaluated by faculty in the local academic unit. The processes and procedures by which they are evaluated are established by the bylaws or standing rules of the LAU and must be consistent with the procedures in this Handbook.

Local academic unit bylaws or standing rules may provide for faculty to participate in evaluation committee meetings electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear

each other simultaneously. For all voting that pertains to changes in appointment status, provision must be made for anonymous submission by a written or secure electronic ballot.

Faculty members and administrators may not participate in a review of a candidate with whom they have, or have had, a family or close personal relationship or other conflict of interest (see [Section 2.3.1.1](#)).

2.7.1 Procedures for Reappointment

Term faculty will be evaluated annually for reappointment by following the procedures defined by the local academic unit bylaws or standing rules, which should be consistent with the procedures defined in the Faculty Handbook.

Term faculty on single-year contracts will be evaluated annually, and term faculty on multi-year contracts will be evaluated in the final year of their contract appointment.

Instructors or assistant professors may receive a one, two or three-year reappointment. Senior and masterprincipal instructors, or associate and full professors may be reappointed to contracts of up to five years. After three single-year appointments, term faculty who meet satisfactory annual performance standards will normally be recommended for a multi-year appointment. Continuing to issue one-year contracts for a faculty member over many years is discouraged.

Term faculty on single-year appointments are evaluated according to the criteria in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures in [Section 2.5](#). Criteria for reappointment will focus on demonstrated performance in those areas designated in the initial and any subsequent contract letters. The local academic unit recommendation is sent to the Dean. Based on that recommendation and programmatic needs, the Dean will make the decision to reappoint, usually no later than 3 months prior to the last day of the initial contract, or usually no later than 5 months prior to the last day of the term of subsequent contracts.

Term faculty who are on or being recommended for multi-year reappointments are evaluated according to the criteria in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures in [Section 2.5](#). Criteria for reappointment will focus on demonstrated performance in those areas designated in the initial and any subsequent contract letters. The local academic unit recommendation is sent to the Dean. Based on that recommendation and programmatic needs, the Dean will make recommendations to the Provost whether to reappoint and contract length. If the Dean's recommendation differs from that of the local academic unit, then the Dean should submit a brief justification for a different decision. All multi-year reappointments must be approved by the Provost. Any decision to reappoint a term faculty member who was previously on a multi-year contract to a single-year contract must include a written justification for the change.

Final determination on multi-year appointments for up to three (3) years are made by the Provost. Contract terms greater than three (3) years require the approval of the President or designee. Notification to term instructional faculty members will be sent, in writing, usually no later than 3 months prior to the last day of the term of their initial contracts, and usually no later than 5 months prior to the last day of the term of subsequent contracts. Notification to term

research and term clinical faculty members will be sent, in writing, usually no later than 3 months prior to the last day of the term of their contracts.

2.7.2 Procedures for Renewal

Faculty appointed to a tenure-track position receive an initial three-year term (see [Section 2.1.2](#)). Tenure-track faculty will be evaluated for renewal during the third year of their initial appointment using the following procedure:

1. Tenure-track faculty are evaluated by ~~either the first-level or second-level~~ promotion and tenure committee, ~~the LAU administrator, and the Dean~~ (see [Section 2.7.3](#)) according to the criteria in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures in [Section 2.5](#). Tenure-track renewals will use the same procedures for review and voting outlined in 2.7.3.2 for these three steps; colleges and schools may also require a second-level committee review if specified in their bylaws.

The Dean will submit a recommendation for renewal or non-renewal to the Provost by March 15th. Based on this evaluation, the Provost will act on the recommendation for renewal or non-renewal by April 15th. Faculty members will be advised of their renewals or non-renewals by May 1st of the third year of their initial appointments. Faculty members receive their renewal contracts no later than May 24th of the evaluation year.

2. If the decision is for renewal, then the faculty member's contract normally will be renewed for three years, and the next full evaluation will be for tenure consideration. Under exceptional circumstances, a faculty member may be renewed for only one year, in which case another evaluation will be conducted the following year. Renewal of a contract resulting from the evaluation in the fourth year of service will be for two years, and the next full evaluation will be for tenure consideration.

3. In the event of non-renewal, the faculty member will be offered a terminal, one-year term appointment following the decision for non-renewal contingent on the faculty member having submitted an appropriate and timely dossier for the purpose of seeking tenure-track contract renewal. Contracts for faculty members who choose not to be evaluated will end on the last day of the term specified in the current contract.

4. If a faculty member is not renewed, the appeal procedure outlined in the Faculty Handbook [Section 2.8](#) may be used.

2.7.3 Promotion and Tenure

The processes for promotion of term and tenured faculty, and tenure for tenure-track faculty are initiated by the local academic unit with the faculty member's concurrence. Self-nomination is also permitted.

2.7.3.1 Procedures for Promotion of Term Faculty

A term faculty member may be considered for promotion, normally after five years of service in the current rank. Term faculty who meet the LAU criteria for promotion may be considered early; however, typical candidates for promotion have a minimum of three years teaching,

research, or clinical work at George Mason University. Promotion may occur within the period of a multi-year contract. Upon promotion, a new contract will be issued ([Section 2.7.1](#)).

Term faculty members will be considered for promotion by a local academic unit committee according to the criteria for evaluation in [Section 2.4](#) and the procedures for evaluation in [Section 2.5](#). Members of the committee are those faculty who are eligible to vote on promotion of term faculty, normally tenured and term faculty above the rank of assistant professor. Term faculty from other substantively related areas may also serve on the evaluation committee if there ~~are fewer than three~~ ~~is an insufficient number of~~ eligible or qualified term faculty in the local academic unit. Colleges and schools may elect to include a second level review. The composition of the promotion committee and the procedures used are to be specified in the LAU bylaws or standing rules.

Faculty members and administrators may not participate in a review of a candidate with whom they have, or have had, a family or close personal relationship or other conflict of interest (see Section 2.3.1.1); these faculty will be recorded in the vote as recusals. -All other eligible faculty must vote yes or no; abstentions are not permitted.

The recommendation for promotion is sent from the committee to the Dean. The Dean's recommendation for promotion is due to the Provost by November 1st. By the end of fall semester (no later than December 15th), the Provost will notify the faculty member, in writing, of a decision with accompanying justification, whether or not to recommend promotion.

Term faculty who are promoted will be announced to the Board of Visitors.

Term faculty who are denied promotion are eligible to be considered for promotion in subsequent promotion cycles.

2.7.3.2 Procedures for Promotion and Tenure of Tenured/Tenure-track Faculty

The Provost establishes the annual schedule for promotion and tenure review. Dossiers are to be prepared in accordance with the format provided by the Provost and the Dean. The candidate is responsible for assembling the contents of the dossier. The [LAU local unit](#) administrator is responsible for ~~facilitating the inclusion of~~ ~~inserting the~~ external reference letters into the assembled dossier. Each formal internal evaluation letter is included in the dossier before sending it to the next level of review.

At any time in the promotion/tenure review process before a decision is made by the Provost, a faculty member may withdraw from candidacy by so stating in writing to the Dean and the Provost. After withdrawal from candidacy, there is no further review of the dossier. Candidates who withdraw from the review process in a mandatory decision year for tenure will be offered a one-year terminal appointment for the next academic year with workload expectations determined by the unit's workload policy as it applies to tenure-track faculty.

If a faculty member is (or is to be) appointed to primary affiliation in more than one local academic unit, a recommendation for promotion and/or tenure may be initiated by any of the units. A separate evaluation leading to a recommendation and decision will be made by each

unit. An action by one local academic unit does not obligate another local academic unit to act similarly. It is required, however, that in each evaluation process the promotion and tenure committee must solicit and consider evaluations from the other units. All evaluations become part of the candidate's dossier.

In all cases of promotion and/or tenure, there are two levels of faculty review. At both levels, evaluations are carried out only by tenured faculty in accordance with [Section 2.4](#) and [Section 2.5](#). In addition to considering the candidate's dossier, faculty committees on promotion and tenure examine and include in the dossier, all relevant written evidence and testimony offered to them by members of the academic community and others with direct knowledge of the candidate's professional qualifications and achievements. Committees may provide in their bylaws or standing rules for faculty to attend meetings using an electronic connection. For all voting pertaining to promotion and tenure, provision must be made for anonymous submission by a written or secure electronic ballot.

Faculty members and administrators may not participate in a review of a candidate with whom they have, or have had, a family or close personal relationship or other conflict of interest (see [Section 2.3.1.1](#)); these faculty will be recorded in the vote as recusals. -All other eligible faculty must vote yes or no; abstentions are not permitted.

The purpose of the first-level review is for the candidate to be evaluated by colleagues who are in the best position to have observed the candidate's performance in teaching and service and who are best able to professionally evaluate the candidate's research/scholarship and publication record. Accordingly, the first-level review is undertaken by faculty in the candidate's local academic unit, which must have published bylaws or standing rules that govern renewal, promotion, and tenure procedures ([Section 1.3.3](#)).

In departmentalized colleges/schools (see [Section 1.3.5](#)), the first level of review is departmental.

In non-departmentalized colleges/schools, which are subdivided into programs or other divisions, the first level of review is carried out by faculty appointed to program(s) or division(s) to which the candidate belongs. Tenured faculty from other substantively related areas may also serve on a candidate's first-level review committee if there are fewer than three ~~is an insufficient number of~~ qualified tenured faculty in the candidate's affiliated program(s)/division(s). Program or division faculties cannot exist solely to make personnel evaluations.

In non-departmentalized colleges/schools, which are not further subdivided, the first-level review is carried out by all eligible tenured faculty in the candidate's college/school. Tenured faculty from other substantively related areas may also serve on a candidate's first-level review committee if there ~~is an insufficient number of~~ are fewer than three eligible or qualified tenured faculty in the college/school. Associate Professors and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to Associate Professor, and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to the rank of Professor.

The purpose of the second-level review is to evaluate all the candidates for promotion and/or tenure in the school/college and to make a recommendation to the Dean. The second level of review is carried out by a committee of tenured faculty. The committee members are elected by the college/school in accordance with its bylaws or standing rules ([Section 1.3.3](#)). Associate

Professors and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to Associate Professor, and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to the rank of Professor. -The second-level review committee can include members from outside the college/school who are elected in the same manner as other members of the second-level review committee.

At no time shall a faculty member evaluate a candidate at both the first and second levels of review. Faculty eligible for the first level review cannot withhold their participation at the first level to participate in the second level review.

The School of Law is exempt from the provisions specified in the above paragraphs, but it is not exempt from the requirement for two-level peer review.

The procedure for considering promotion and tenure cases is as follows:

1a. Departmental review is initiated by the local first-level promotion and tenure committee, which may be a committee of the whole. The committee communicates the results of its review to the tenured members of the department who then vote. ~~Normally,~~ Associate Professors and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to Associate Professor, and Professors vote on promotion/tenure to the rank of Professor. ~~Other voting combinations may be specified in the bylaws or standing rules.~~ The ~~department chair~~LAU administrator does not vote with the tenured faculty. The committee transmits the departmental recommendation and accompanying justification, including the division of the vote, to the ~~department chair~~LAU administrator. The ~~department chair~~LAU administrator transmits to the second-level review committee: (1) the candidate's dossier and related materials; (2) the recommendation of the departmental committee with appropriate justifications; and (3) the ~~chair~~LAU administrator's own recommendation and justification, if the ~~chair~~LAU administrator is tenured and, in Professor cases, holds the rank of Professor. If the ~~chair~~LAU administrator is not tenured or at the appropriate rank to make a recommendation, the ~~chair~~LAU administrator submits a summary of the promotion/tenure proceedings. Notification of the recommendation of the local academic unit and copies of the accompanying justifications are sent promptly to the candidate and to the faculty who participated in the deliberations before the dossier is sent to the second-level committee.

The candidate is evaluated by the second-level review committee, which must have published procedures that govern its deliberations. The procedures must include a method for communication between the committee, the candidate, the ~~department chair~~LAU administrator, and the first-level review committee. ~~Normally,~~ Associate Professors and Professors vote on promotion to Associate Professor, and Professors vote on promotion to the rank of Professor. ~~Other voting combinations may be specified in the college/school bylaws or standing rules.~~

The committee submits its recommendation ~~forwards its recommendation along with all preceding reports and recommendations~~ to the Dean. Notification of the recommendation of the second-level review committee is sent to the faculty who participated in the deliberations at the first level of review and to the candidate and LAU administrator. ~~Copies of the statement of justification are sent promptly to the candidate and the department chair.~~

~~If the second-level review committee's recommendation differs from that of the first-level review committee, the second-level review committee's recommendation and accompanying justification are sent to the first-level review committee.~~

1b. The process is analogous in non-departmentalized units, except that the role assigned to ~~department chairs~~ the LAU administrator is omitted.

2. All materials are reviewed by the Dean of the candidate's college/school. The dossier and the recommendation of the Dean are forwarded to the Provost. Notification of the recommendation is sent to the faculty bodies who participated in deliberations at the first and second levels of review and a copy of the accompanying justification is promptly sent to the candidate and the local unit administrator (the latter copy to be retained in the candidate's permanent file).

If the Dean's recommendation is different from that received from the second-level review committee, the reasons for that difference should be specified in the recommendation, which is sent to the candidate, to the faculty bodies participating in the decision-making process, and to the Provost.

3. The complete dossier is reviewed by the Provost. The Provost may consult with other academic administrators who have direct knowledge of one or more aspects of the candidate's professional performance. The Provost makes a recommendation as to whether promotion or tenure should be granted. Notification of the Provost's recommendation is sent to the faculty bodies who participated in deliberations at the first and second levels of review, and a copy of the accompanying justification is sent to the Dean, the candidate and the local unit administrator. The justification shall be retained in the candidate's personnel file.

If the Provost's recommendation is different from that received from the second-level review committee, the reasons for that difference should be specified in writing and sent to the candidate and to the faculty bodies participating in the decision-making process.

4. If the Provost recommends tenure or promotion be granted, the candidate's dossier, with all previously generated recommendations, is forwarded to the President. If the Provost recommends tenure or promotion not be granted, the recommendation is not forwarded to the President.

5. The President makes a recommendation as to whether tenure or promotion should be granted. If the President recommends tenure or promotion be granted, such recommendation is forwarded to the Board of Visitors. If the President recommends tenure or promotion not be granted, the recommendation is not forwarded to the Board of Visitors.

6. Tenure, and promotion to the rank of associate professor or professor for tenured faculty, can only be conferred by the Board of Visitors. If the Board of Visitors decides to grant promotion or tenure, the candidate will be notified in writing by the Secretary of the Board of Visitors.

7. If either the Provost or the President recommends that tenure or promotion not be granted, the candidate will be notified of the decision on or before May 1. Upon receiving notice of the Provost's or President's decision, the candidate may:

- a. accept the decision; or
- b. appeal the decision according to the procedure described in [Section 2.8](#).

In the event tenure is not granted in a faculty member's final year on the tenure-track, the faculty member will be offered a one-year terminal appointment for the next academic year with workload expectations determined by the unit's workload policy as it applies to tenure-track faculty.

8. Tenure and promotion are never granted by default.

2.7.4 Tenure-Track Contract Extension

Extension of a tenure-track contract is granted when circumstances arise that may interfere substantially with a faculty member's ability to pursue their professional responsibilities (teaching, research/scholarship, service) while on the tenure track. At the time of tenure consideration, a faculty member who has received an extension or extensions will be considered using the same tenure criteria as those applied to other faculty in the college/school.

Length and frequency

Tenure-track contract extensions are granted in one-year increments. Two extensions are normally the maximum that will be granted for any combination of circumstances. The Provost may approve exceptions to this limit. However, in no case will a candidate receive more than three extensions. Tenure-track study leaves are independent of these extensions, but should generally not immediately follow a tenure-track contract extension.

Procedure for request and approval

The faculty member's request, in writing, to the local academic unit head must clearly state the circumstances that justify an extension of the tenure-track contract. The recommendation of the local academic unit head is forwarded to the Dean, if applicable, who forwards a recommendation to the Provost for final approval.

Medically-related extensions will correspond with the [Department of Labor Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#), [University Policy 2215](#) (Family Medical Leave), [University Policy 2230](#) (Faculty Paid Parental Leave), [University Policy 2232](#) (Sick Leave Policy for Faculty under the Traditional Sick Leave Plan), and/or [the Virginia Sickness and Disability Program \(VSDP\)](#).

Circumstances

1. The birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child

A faculty member who becomes a parent should request the tenure-track contract extension within one year of the child's arrival in the family and prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made. Multiple births or

multiple adoptions at the same time result in the same one-year extension as single births or adoptions.

2. Serious health condition

A tenure-track contract extension may be requested based on a serious personal health condition or a serious health condition of a member of the faculty member's immediate family. A serious personal health condition or serious health condition within the immediate family will be defined according to the FMLA criteria for family and medical leave. Human Resources must receive written certification by the primary treating physician. The request for extension must be made within three months of Human Resources & Payroll's certification of family and medical leave.

3. Military Service

In accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), a tenure-track faculty member who is also a member of the U.S. military and is called to active duty will be granted a tenure-track contract extension. The extension will last for the duration of the active duty assignment, rounded to the nearest year, but will not exceed the extension period provided by USERRA. For example, an active duty assignment lasting between 4 through 15 months will earn a one-year extension, 16 through 27 months will earn a two-year extension. The faculty member should make the request as early as possible before entering active duty and prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made.

4. Other Extraordinary Circumstances

Tenure-track faculty members who engage in important public or University service may request a tenure-track contract extension. The request should be made prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made. If there are circumstances beyond the faculty member's control that prevent them from fulfilling the professional responsibilities required for tenure consideration, the faculty member may request a tenure-track contract extension. The request should be made prior to August 25th of the academic year in which the tenure decision would have been made.

Rationale for revisions: We have replaced the Honor Code with the Academic Standards Code, so this updated language brings the handbook in alignment with current policy.

2.10.5 Faculty Responsibility Under the ~~Honor~~ Academic Standards Code

~~Since the founding of the University, the Honor Code has been and remains a part of the educational process at George Mason. Although the students are primarily responsible for preserving and enforcing the code, the faculty share common interests with the students in matters of academic integrity.~~

The Academic Standards Code affirms our collective commitment to foster an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence at George Mason University. Faculty are expected to adhere to the Academic Standards Code and to apply the highest ethical standards in teaching, research, and scholarship.

~~Faculty are expected to have a strong commitment to the Honor Code, and to support and to encourage students in their pursuit of its goals.~~

AP.8 - Rationale

George Mason University has been offering various forms of non-degree credentials, including digital badges, micro-credentials, and stackable certificates, for several years through academic units and the Office of Continuing and Professional Education. AP.8 formalizes these existing practices into a comprehensive institutional policy that ensures compliance with SACSCOC accreditation standards and SCHEV guidance, both of which require institutions to establish clear governance structures, transparent student information, and quality assurance processes for all credential types.

This policy provides necessary clarity by distinguishing between credit-bearing credentials (which are subject to full accreditation standards and appear on transcripts) and noncredit credentials (which are issued as digital badges). It establishes faculty qualifications and assessment requirements appropriate to each credential type, clarifies approval pathways through program, college, and university governance, and defines roles and responsibilities across academic units, CPE, the Provost's Office, and the Registrar. AP.8 is intended to position the university to continue expanding these focused learning pathways as opportunity permits, while maintaining academic quality and accountability.

AP.8 Non-Degree Academic Credentials

Policy Scope

This policy governs credit-bearing and noncredit academic credentials developed and awarded by George Mason University academic units and/or Office of Continuing and Professional Education (CPE). It does not apply to degrees, minors, concentrations, or academic certificates governed under AP.5 and AP.6.

Definition

Non-degree conferring credentials (NDCs) are awarded for completing academic programs that teach focused knowledge or skills competencies. These credentials comprise more than a single course but less content than a full degree; credentials may be composed of for-credit or not-for-credit classes and structured learning experiences. The academic quality standards for non-degree credentials align with George Mason's standards for other institutional credentials, with rigor appropriate to each credential type and purpose, as defined in this policy.

AP.8.1 Categories of Non-Degree Credentials

George Mason University offers NDCs in two categories: credit-bearing and non-credit. All approved credentials must clearly publish eligibility requirements, completion criteria, credit/noncredit status, transcript eligibility, stackable pathways, and whether credits may transfer to other institutions in program materials and institutional registries per accreditation transparency requirements.

AP.8.1.1 Credit-Bearing Academic Credentials

Credit-bearing credentials are earned upon the completion of specified university credit-bearing courses.

Credit Requirements: Credit-bearing credentials range from requiring 3 to 15 credits and must be completable in two semesters or less. Credentials must use a specified curriculum (not menu-style course options) within existing academic program discipline areas with available faculty resources and may not duplicate names of existing degree or certificate programs.

Approval: Proposals must be reviewed and approved through established curricular governance pathways at the program, college/school, and university levels. Credit-bearing credentials follow the same academic standards, assessment, SACSCOC accreditation standards, and quality assurance processes as traditional academic programs. Where applicable, credit-bearing credentials are subject to accreditation substantive change notification requirements.

Degree Applications and Transferability: Credits may count toward certificate or degree requirements only if approved as part of their published existing degree requirements and electives. If multiple credit-bearing credentials can be taken together and combined into a certificate or degree ("stackable credentials"), that information should be published, and advisors must be available to explain the process and procedures for using stackable credentials to complete a degree program. All time limits

and other relevant academic policies apply. Transfer of credit-bearing credentials to other institutions is subject to receiving institution policies.

Flexibility for Professional Requirements: Credentials required to align with specific professional licensure, certification, or industry standards may depart from standard parameters with documented justification and Dean approval.

AP.8.1.2 Noncredit Academic Credentials

Noncredit academic credentials document competency achievement or program completion, but do not earn academic credit. These credentials are not subject to SACSCOC substantive change requirements but must maintain published institutional policies regarding purpose, characteristics, and student rights. Academic credentials documenting competency achievement or program completion that do not carry academic credit and are not recorded on the university transcript.

Credential Types:

- Competency-Based Credentials: Competency-based credentials must require performance-based assessment demonstrating mastery of defined learning outcomes. Assessment evidence must be documented and retained per university guidelines.
- Program Completion Credentials: The program must document satisfactory participation or completion based on attendance and instructional hours but does not require direct competency assessment. Faculty and staff professional development credentials within George Mason may be issued for university training programs and follow the same noncredit credential requirements.

Approval: Proposals that originate in academic units require approval by the Dean of the college or school in which the LAU is housed. Proposals that originate in other units require approval of the Vice President/Provost of that unit. All noncredit academic credentials must be approved by the Continuing and Professional Education Office. Credentials must meet George Mason's standards for skill development and learning outcomes, assessment appropriate to the credential type, and industry or professional alignment.

Issuance: All noncredit credentials are issued as digital badges through the university credentialing platform and include appropriate disclaimers indicating noncredit status and ineligibility for transcript notation.

Credit Conversion and Prior Learning: Noncredit credentials do not automatically convert to academic credit. Students may petition to apply documented learning from noncredit credentials (from George Mason or other institutions) toward academic credit through George Mason's prior learning assessment procedures, subject to faculty review and institutional credit limits. Acceptance of external noncredit credentials follows existing transfer credit policies.

AP.8.2 Academic Quality Standards

Outcomes: All credentials must focus on clearly defined, measurable skill development or learning outcomes with specific earning criteria documented through deliverables, assignments, or performance artifacts, aligned with academic, professional, or industry standards appropriate to the credential type.

Assessment: Credit-bearing credentials require performance-based (or competency-based) assessment meeting the same rigor as equivalent credit courses. Performance-based assessment requires students

to apply their knowledge and skills by solving real-world problems or creating, performing, or producing artifacts that demonstrate specific competencies in authentic contexts. Noncredit competency-based credentials require demonstrated mastery of defined outcomes, with assessment evidence documented and retained for quality review. Participation-based credentials document completion based on attendance and instructional hours and must specify completion criteria.

Faculty and Instructor Qualifications: Credit-bearing credentials must be taught by faculty meeting the same qualifications required for equivalent credit courses. Noncredit credential instructors must have documented qualifications appropriate to the subject matter.

Delivery Modality: All delivery formats (in-person, online, hybrid) must provide equivalent learning experiences with consistent outcomes and appropriate student support services.

Periodic Review: The office of the Provost conducts reviews of all credentials to assess compliance and continuation recommendations.

Student Appeals: Students enrolled in credit-bearing credentials may appeal assessment decisions or credential denial through existing academic grievance procedures to the Office of the Provost.

AP.8.3 Oversight and Compliance

Academic units hold primary responsibility for credit-bearing credentials and appoint a faculty lead to oversee program delivery and assessment. The Office of the Provost oversees compliance for all credential types. The Office of the University Registrar maintains official academic transcript records for credit-bearing credentials and verifies achievements and credential status.

Tuition and fees for credit-bearing credentials are assessed at the standard per-credit rate. Credit-bearing credentials may be eligible for financial aid subject to enrollment status and federal/state requirements; eligible programs are listed separately by the Office of Student Financial Aid. Noncredit credential fees are established by the sponsoring unit and approved by the Office of the Provost. Administrative fees for credentialing platform access and badge issuance are assessed per the university fee schedule.

Policies Impacted by Revisions to AP.6.6

AP.6.8 Requirements for Graduate Certificates

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university requirements and all requirements established by the graduate certificate program faculty. Individual departmental graduate certificate requirements are listed under the respective certificate programs in this catalog. Note that the following are university minimum requirements; individual programs may have higher standards and/or more restrictive requirements.

- Graduate certificate programs require a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 24 graduate credits.
- Only graduate courses may apply toward the graduate certificate.
- Credits can be transferred into a graduate certificate program. See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing for further information.
- More than half of the minimum required credits applied to the certificate must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- In the case of a certificate offered through consortium arrangements, at least one-third of the credits applied to the certificate must be earned through direct instruction at George Mason.
- Candidates must have a minimum graduate degree GPA of 3.00 for the certificate program when submitting an application for graduation. The cumulative and graduate program degree GPA calculation excludes transfer credits brought in only as credit hours through AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing and George Mason non-degree studies credits not formally approved for the certificate.
- Certificate students are subject to graduate termination policies. See [AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing](#) for further information.
- Certificate students who satisfy the degree requirements of more than one certificate at George Mason may apply coursework from multiple certificates towards a George Mason master's or doctoral degree program. No credits can be applied to more than two certificates and/or degrees. The graduation application for any graduate certificate must include a minimum of 12 credits that apply only to that certificate and not to another certificate.
- Program acceptance is subject to all applicable admissions requirements.

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AP.6.9 Requirements for Master's Degrees

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the master's program faculty. Individual departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective master's programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

- Admission. Candidates must have been officially admitted into degree status.
- Credit Hours. Candidates must earn a minimum of 30 graduate credits, which may be decreased on the basis of suitable, approved transfer work. (See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing)
- Credit Level. Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
- Institutional Credit. More than half of the required minimum credits applied to the degree must be earned at George Mason. Or, in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortium arrangements, at the participating institutions, at least one-third of the credits applied to the master's degree must be earned through direct instruction at George Mason.
- Thesis/Project Limits. A maximum of 6 credits of master's thesis research (799) or master's project may be applied to the degree.
- Quality. Candidates must have a minimum degree GPA of 3.00 when submitting an application for graduation. The cumulative and graduate degree GPA calculation excludes transfer credits brought in only as credit hours through AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing and George Mason non-degree studies credits not formally approved for the degree.

Unique Credit. At least 6 credits of the master's degree program must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate program. This requirement does not apply to doctoral students also pursuing an embedded master's degree under [AP.6.9.5 Embedded Master's Degree](#).

AP.6.9.6 Individualized Dual Master's Degree Programs

George Mason students have the option to pursue two master's degrees simultaneously. For purposes of administration, if a different rate of tuition is assessed for each program, the student will be assessed at the higher rate. The program with the higher rate will be considered the primary program. The six-year time limit for completion of each program component of the dual master's programs derives from the admission date for that program component. A degree for each program component shall be conferred upon

completion based upon student application for graduation. Students shall have a term and cumulative GPA for each term while enrolled in both programs and a degree GPA for each master's program component when the respective degree is conferred.

Students in dual master's degree programs are not eligible for transfer of credits based on a previously earned relevant post-baccalaureate degree earned prior to admission. Any transfer of credits that was granted upon admission to the initial program will be removed from the student's record upon matriculation into the second program.

Students are not eligible to pursue two master's degrees until they have completed one semester in their initial master's program. Interested students should know:

- A full admissions application must be submitted for both programs.
- Students must apply and be accepted to the second master's degree within one year of matriculation in the initial program. The application must include a written statement explaining the intellectual or pedagogical purpose behind the degree program, and the academic symmetries that exist between the underlying fields of study.
- A restricted number of credits may be shared across dual degree programs. See University Policy 3007 to determine the maximum number of credits that may be shared across component degree programs.
- Credit may be shared across two George Mason programs only. Credit may never be applied to three or more George Mason programs. See University Policy 3007 for more information on credit-sharing limitations.
- An Individualized Dual Master's Degree Program of Study form, approved by directors of both programs, must be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar upon matriculation in the second program. This will determine the maximum number of credits and specific courses that may be shared across programs. Credits that are shared between programs may need an approved Substitution/Waiver form signed by the appropriate Academic Affairs Office.

AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the doctoral program faculty. Departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective doctoral programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

- Admission. Students must have been fully admitted into degree status.

- Credit Level. Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
- Credit Hours. Candidates must earn a minimum of 72 graduate credits, which may be decreased on the basis of suitable, approved transfer work. (See AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing)
- Unique Credit. At least 24 credits of the doctoral degree program must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate program.
- Institutional Credit. More than half of the required minimum credits for the doctoral degree must be earned at Mason. Or, in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortium arrangements, at the participating institutions, at least one-third of the credits applied to the doctoral degree must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- Advancement to Candidacy. Candidates must meet the written and/or oral doctoral candidacy requirements set by the candidate's degree program.
- Dissertation. Candidates must complete a minimum of 12 credits of doctoral proposal (998) and doctoral dissertation research (999), including at least three credits of 999. A maximum of 24 credits of 998 and 999 may be applied to the degree.
- Defense. Candidates must pass a final public defense of the doctoral dissertation.
- Quality. Candidates must have a minimum graduate degree GPA of 3.00 when submitting an application for graduation. The cumulative and graduate degree GPA calculation excludes transfer credits brought in only as credit hours through AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing and George Mason non-degree credits not formally approved for the degree.

AP.6.4.4 Voluntary Resignation from Graduate Academic Program

Degree-seeking students may officially resign from their current academic program with the approval of their program chair or designee and the dean or director of the college/school. The Voluntary Resignation form must then be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar for transcript notation. Students who resign after the drop period may either complete the courses they are currently enrolled in or immediately withdraw, which will result in grades of W on the student's transcript for that academic term. All students that have resigned will be removed from any future registered courses. Program resignation

is final in that the transcript notation shall not be removed. Students that attempt to return to an academic program must formally apply for admission. See AP.6.6.3 Readmission to Graduate Study at Mason for further information. Students that are eligible for graduate academic termination may not resign without first obtaining approval through an academic termination policy exception request. See AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination for further information. Students who have not resigned or been terminated from their academic program must meet all applicable time limits. See AP.6 Graduate Academic Policies for further information.

AP.6.4.4.1 Voluntary Resignation and Transfer to a Lower-Level Graduate Degree or Certificate Program

Degree-seeking status students resigning from their current academic program, before reaching their original degree time limit, may find that they can complete the requirements for a lower-level graduate program within the same college/school. Such graduate students may request to transfer into the lower graduate degree or certificate program. The time limit for the new, lower-level program starts from the former program's admit term.

If a student has not reached the time limit for their current academic program but would exceed the time limit of the new program upon transfer, approval of the resignation and transfer is contingent upon approval of a time limit extension for the new program. A time limit extension request may only be considered for approval if the student fulfills all degree or certificate requirements for the new program prior to submission of the voluntary resignation and transfer request.

A student that is eligible for academic termination from their current program may not voluntarily resign and transfer to a lower-level program without first proceeding through the academic termination policy exception process. See AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination for further information.

Approval from the new program's program chair or designee and the dean or director of the respective college/school is required on the appropriate form for any voluntary resignation and transfer. Programs may reject coursework that is not sufficiently current.

Degree Conferral

Students must be officially transferred through the Office of the University Registrar into the new program and have the program reflected on their academic record prior to filing an application for graduation. All applicable degree or certificate program requirements must be met to have the new degree or certificate conferred.

AP.1.5.6 Retroactive Withdrawal with Dean or Dean's Designee Approval for Graduate Students

For graduate students, retroactive withdrawal begins after the end of the unrestricted withdrawal period. Retroactive course or semester withdrawals require students to obtain approval through the process provided for by the College/School's Dean's Office. Only nonacademic reasons that prevent course completion will be considered. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance.

Any graduate student, who is attempting to retroactively withdraw from courses in which they have received final grades or after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned, must obtain approval through both the College/School and the Graduate Division. Students eligible for academic termination must obtain this approval through the academic policy exception to termination or appeal process. [See AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing](#) for further information.

AP.1.5.7 Retroactive Drop with Dean or Dean's Designee Approval for Graduate Students

For graduate students, retroactive drop begins after the last day of the course's drop period. Retroactive course or semester drops are not permitted unless an academic policy exception is obtained through the process provided for by the College/School's Dean's Office. Only non-academic reasons that prevent course completion will be considered. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance.

Any graduate student, who is attempting to retroactively drop from courses in which they have received final grades or after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned, must obtain approval through both the College/School and the Graduate Division. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance. Students eligible for academic termination must obtain this approval through the academic policy exception to termination or appeal process. [See AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing](#) for further information.

AP.3.7 GPA

Quality point values are assigned to letter grades as indicated in the grading system table. A quality point score is computed by multiplying the value of a letter grade by the number of credits for the course. For example, a student receiving an A (4.00) in a 3-credit course earns 12 quality points. The GPA is computed by dividing the quality points earned by the number of credits graded A+ through F (GPA hours).

For undergraduates, the GPA computed for the current term gives the current GPA, which is the measure of academic performance in one semester and affects eligibility for the dean's list. The GPA computed for all institutional credit gives the cumulative GPA, which is the basis for the university's retention policies, including good standing, warning, probation, suspension, and dismissal. Cumulative GPA also determines students' eligibility to graduate and have university honors posted to their record at graduation.

For graduate students, the GPA computed for the current term gives the current GPA, which is the measure of academic performance in one term and can affect eligibility for graduate academic probation or termination. The GPA computed for all graduate-level institutional credit including, but not limited to, any additional George Mason graduate degree or certificate program pursued with the primary graduate program gives the cumulative GPA.. A degree GPA is computed for graduate students based on graded graduate level courses completed at the university, and through consortium agreement, and applied toward the current degree or certificate program requirements. The Degree GPA is calculated at the time of graduation after all current program requirements are completed. A degree GPA is provided for each degree and/or certificate once all program requirements for the respective program have been met and the respective degree or certificate is conferred. For more information, see [AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing](#).

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Policies Impacted by Revisions to AP.6.6

AP.6.8 Requirements for Graduate Certificates

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university requirements and all requirements established by the graduate certificate program faculty. Individual departmental graduate certificate requirements are listed under ~~their academic departments~~[the respective certificate programs](#) in this catalog. Note that the following are university minimum requirements; individual programs may have higher standards and/or more restrictive requirements.

- Graduate certificate programs require a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 24 graduate credits.
- Only graduate courses may apply toward the graduate certificate.
- Credits can be transferred into a graduate certificate program. See [AP.6.5 Credit by Exam or Transfer](#)~~AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing~~ for further information.
- More than half of the minimum required credits applied to the certificate must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- In the case of a certificate offered through consorti~~uma~~[uma](#) arrangements, at least one-third of the credits applied to the certificate must be earned through direct instruction at [George](#) Mason.
- Candidates must have a minimum [graduate degree](#) GPA of 3.00 ~~for the certificate program in coursework presented on the~~[when submitting an certificate](#) application for graduation,~~which may include no more than 3 credits of G.~~ The [cumulative and graduate program degree](#) GPA calculation excludes transfer credits brought in [only as credit hours](#) through ~~AP.6.5 Credit by Exam or Transfer~~[AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing](#) and [George Mason non-degree studies credits not formally approved for the certificate.](#)
- Certificate students are subject to graduate termination policies. [See AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing for further information.](#)
- Certificate students who satisfy the degree requirements of more than one certificate at [George](#) Mason may apply coursework from multiple certificates towards a [George](#) Mason master's or doctoral degree program. No credits can be applied to more than two certificates and/or degrees. The graduation application for

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any graduate certificate must include a minimum of 12 credits that apply only to that certificate and not to another certificate.

- Program acceptance is subject to all applicable admissions requirements.

AP.6.9 Requirements for Master's Degrees

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the master's program faculty. Individual departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective master's programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

- Admission. Candidates must have been officially admitted into degree status.
- Credit Hours. Candidates must earn a minimum of 30 graduate credits, which may be decreased on the basis of suitable, approved transfer work. (See [AP.6.5 Credit by Exam or Transfer](#) [AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing](#))
- Credit Level. Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
- Institutional Credit. More than half of the required minimum credits applied to the degree must be earned at [George Mason](#). Or, in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortium arrangements, at the participating institutions, at least one-third of the credits applied to the master's degree must be earned through direct instruction at [George Mason](#).
- Thesis/Project Limits. A maximum of 6 credits of master's thesis research (799) or master's project may be applied to the degree.
- Quality. Candidates must have a minimum [degree](#) GPA of 3.00 ~~in coursework presented on the degree when submitting an application for graduation, which may include no more than 6 credits of C-, (Grades of C+, C-, or D do not apply to graduate courses.~~ The [cumulative and graduate degree](#) GPA calculation excludes ~~all~~ transfer ~~courses-credits brought in only as credit hours through AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing and~~ [George Mason](#) non-degree studies credits not formally approved for the degree.)
- Unique Credit. At least 6 credits of the master's degree program must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate program. This requirement does not apply to doctoral students also pursuing an embedded master's degree under [AP.6.9.5 Embedded Master's Degree](#).

AP.6.9.6 Individualized Dual Master's Degree Programs

George Mason students have the option to pursue two master's degrees simultaneously. For purposes of administration, if a different rate of tuition is assessed for each program, the student will be assessed at the higher rate. The program with the higher rate will be considered the primary program. The six-year time limit for completion of each program component of the dual master's programs derives from the admission date for that program component. A degree for each program component shall be conferred upon completion based upon student application for graduation. Students shall have a term and cumulative degree GPA for each term while enrolled in both programs and a degree GPA for each master's program component when the respective degree is conferred.

Students in dual master's degree programs are not eligible for transfer of credits based on a previously earned relevant post-baccalaureate degree earned prior to admission. Any transfer of credits that was granted upon admission to the initial program will be removed from the student's record upon matriculation into the second program.

Students are not eligible to pursue two master's degrees until they have completed one semester in their initial master's program. Interested students should know:

- A full admissions application must be submitted for both programs.
- Students must apply and be accepted to the second master's degree within one year of matriculation in the initial program. The application must include a written statement explaining the intellectual or pedagogical purpose behind the degree program, and the academic symmetries that exist between the underlying fields of study.
- A restricted number of credits may be shared across dual degree programs. See University Policy 3007 to determine the maximum number of credits that may be shared across component degree programs.
- Credit may be shared across two George Mason programs only. Credit may never be applied to three or more George Mason programs. See University Policy 3007 for more information on credit-sharing limitations.
- An Individualized Dual Master's Degree Program of Study form, approved by directors of both programs, must be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar upon matriculation in the second program. This will determine the maximum number of credits and specific courses

that may be shared across programs. Credits that are shared between programs may need an approved Substitution/Waiver form signed by the appropriate Academic Affairs Office.

AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees

Candidates must satisfy all applicable university degree requirements and all requirements established by the doctoral program faculty. Departmental degree requirements are listed under the respective doctoral programs in this catalog. Programs may impose more stringent requirements.

- Admission. Students must have been fully admitted into degree status.
- Credit Level. Only graduate courses may apply toward the degree.
- Credit Hours. Candidates must earn a minimum of 72 graduate credits, which may be decreased on the basis of suitable, approved transfer work. (See [AP.6.5 Credit by Exam or Transfer](#)[AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing](#))
- Unique Credit. At least 24 credits of the doctoral degree program must be applied only to that degree, i.e., they cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another degree or certificate program.
- Institutional Credit. More than half of the required minimum credits for the doctoral degree must be earned at Mason. Or, in the case of programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortium arrangements, at the participating institutions, at least one-third of the credits applied to the doctoral degree must be earned through direct instruction at Mason.
- Advancement to Candidacy. Candidates must meet the written and/or oral doctoral candidacy requirements set by the candidate's degree program.
- Dissertation. Candidates must complete a minimum of 12 credits of doctoral proposal (998) and doctoral dissertation research (999), including at least three credits of 999. A maximum of 24 credits of 998 and 999 may be applied to the degree.
- Defense. Candidates must pass a final public defense of the doctoral dissertation.
- Quality. Candidates must have a minimum [graduate degree](#) GPA of 3.00 [in coursework presented on the degree when submitting an application for graduation; which may include no more than 6 credits of C. \(Grades of C+, C-, or D do not apply to graduate courses.\)](#) The [cumulative and graduate degree](#) GPA calculation excludes

~~all transfer courses-credits brought in only as credit hours through AP.6.5 Credit by Exam, Transfer and/or Sharing and George Mason extended studies or non-degree credits not formally approved for the degree.~~

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AP.6.4.4 Voluntary Resignation from Graduate Academic Program

Degree-seeking students may officially resign from their current academic program with the approval of their program chair or designee and the dean or director of the college/school. The Voluntary Resignation ~~form~~~~form~~ must then be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar for transcript notation. Students who resign after the drop period may either complete the courses they are currently enrolled in or immediately withdraw, which will result in grades of W on the student's transcript for that academic term. All students that have resigned will be removed from any future registered courses. Program resignation is final in that the transcript notation shall not be removed. Students that attempt to return to an academic program must formally apply for admission.

See ~~AP.6-6-3~~~~AP.6.6.3 Readmission to Graduate Study at Mason~~ for further information.

Students that are eligible for graduate academic termination may not resign without first obtaining approval through an academic termination policy exception request.

See ~~AP.6-6-2~~~~AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination~~ for further information. ~~Students who have not resigned or been terminated from their academic program must meet all applicable time limits. See AP.6 Graduate Academic Policies for further information.~~

AP.6.4.4.1 Voluntary Resignation and Transfer to a Lower-Level Graduate Degree or Certificate Program

Degree-seeking status students resigning from their current academic program, before reaching their original degree time limit, may find that they can complete the requirements for a lower-level graduate program within the same college/school. Such graduate students may request to transfer into the lower graduate degree or certificate program. The time limit for the new, lower-level program starts from the former program's admit term.

~~If a student has not reached the time limit for their current academic program but would exceed the time limit of the new program upon transfer, approval of the resignation and transfer is contingent upon approval of a time limit extension for the new program. If the student has not reached the original time limit for the current academic program but would exceed the new program's degree time limit upon transfer, the resignation and transfer may only be approved if the student has obtained approval of the requisite time limit extension request. A time limit extension request may only be considered for approval if the~~

student ~~would fulfill~~fulfills all degree or certificate requirements for the new program prior to submission of the voluntary resignation and transfer request.

A student that is eligible for academic termination from their current program may not voluntarily resign and transfer to a lower-level program ~~and must~~without first proceeding through the academic termination policy exception process. See ~~AP.6.6.2~~AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination for further information.

Approval from the new program's program chair or designee and the dean or director of the respective college/school is required on the appropriate ~~form~~form for any voluntary resignation and transfer. Programs may reject coursework that is not sufficiently current.

Degree Conferral

Students must be officially transferred through the Office of the University Registrar into the new program ~~and have the program reflected on their academic record~~ prior to filing an application for graduation. All applicable degree or certificate program requirements must be met to have the new degree or certificate conferred.

AP.1.5.6 Retroactive Withdrawal with Dean or Dean's Designee Approval for Graduate Students

For graduate students, retroactive withdrawal begins after the end of the unrestricted withdrawal period. Retroactive course or semester withdrawals ~~are not permitted unless an require students to obtain approval academic policy exception is obtained~~ through the process provided for by the College/School's Dean's Office. Only nonacademic reasons that prevent course completion will be considered. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance.

~~Any graduate student, thatwho is attempting to retroactively withdraw from courses that in which they have received have final grades after or after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned, must obtain approval through both the College/School and the Graduate Division. Students eligible for academic termination must obtain this approval through the academic policy exception to termination or appeal process. See AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing for further information.~~

~~Only nonacademic reasons that prevent course completion will be considered. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance.~~

AP.1.5.7 Retroactive Drop with Dean's Designee Approval for Graduate Students

For graduate students, retroactive drop begins after the last day of the course's drop period. Retroactive course or semester drops are not permitted unless an academic policy exception is obtained through the process provided for by the College/School's Dean's Office. Only non-academic reasons that prevent course completion will be considered. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance.

~~-Any graduate student, who that is attempting to retroactively withdrawdrop from courses in which they have received that have final grades or after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned, must obtain approval through both the College/School and the Graduate Division. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance. Students eligible for academic termination must obtain this approval through the academic policy exception to termination or appeal process. See AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing for further information. Only non-academic reasons that prevent course completion will be considered. Please see your College/School's Dean's Office for additional guidance.~~

AP.3.7 GPA

Quality point values are assigned to letter grades as indicated in the grading system table. A quality point score is computed by multiplying the value of a letter grade by the number of credits for the course. For example, a student receiving an A (4.00) in a 3-credit course earns 12 quality points. The GPA is computed by dividing the quality points earned by the number of credits graded A+ through F (GPA hours).

For undergraduates, the GPA computed for the current term gives the current GPA, which is the measure of academic performance in one semester and affects eligibility for the dean's list. The GPA computed for all institutional credit gives the cumulative GPA, which is the basis for the university's retention policies, including good standing, warning, probation, suspension, and dismissal. Cumulative GPA also determines students' eligibility to graduate and have university honors posted to their record at graduation.

For graduate students, the GPA computed for the current term gives the current GPA, which is the measure of academic performance in one term and can affect eligibility for graduate academic probation or termination. The GPA computed for all graduate-level institutional credit including, but not limited to, any additional George Mason graduate degree or certificate program pursued with the primary graduate program gives the cumulative GPA. A notation of academic warning is entered on the transcript of a graduate student who receives a grade of C or a grade of F in a graduate course. A degree GPA is computed for graduate students based on graded graduate level courses completed at the university, and through consortium agreement, and applied toward the current degree or certificate program requirements. The Degree GPA is calculated at the time of graduation after all current program requirements are completed. A degree GPA is provided for each degree and/or certificate once all program requirements for the respective program have been met and the respective degree or certificate is conferred. For more information, see AP.6 Graduate Policies AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing.

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AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing

This Graduate Academic Standing policy is designed to promote academic student success and timely degree completion. It is also aligned with the requirements that graduate students must meet to graduate. George Mason law students are referred to law school [academic regulations](#) for policies regarding academic standing.

To graduate from the intended degree or certificate program, a graduate student must, at a minimum, along with any other degree requirements, present coursework that meets conferral requirements. See [AP.6.8 Requirements for Graduate Certificates](#), [AP.6.9 Requirements for Master's Degrees](#), and [AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees](#) for further information.

Students who plan to apply for financial aid should review the requirements for making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), as found on the Financial Aid [website](#), which may differ from the requirements in this policy.

Definitions:

Good Academic Standing: Graduate students are considered in Good Academic Standing unless they are on Academic Probation or there is a notation of Academic Termination for the most recent graduate program(s) on the academic [transcript](#).

Cumulative GPA: GPA computed for all graduate-level institutional credit including, but not limited to, any George Mason graduate degree or certificate program pursued with the primary graduate program.

Degree GPA: GPA that is calculated for graduate students based on graded graduate level courses completed at the university and applied toward the current degree or certificate program requirements. The Degree GPA is calculated at the time of graduation after all current program requirements are completed.

The graduate student is responsible for timely requesting that any eligible George Mason graduate-level coursework from a prior academic program not intended for the current program degree GPA calculation or application towards current program degree requirements is removed. See [AP.6.6.4 Graduate Academic Clemency](#) for more information.

Term GPA: GPA calculated for an individual term.

Academic termination: Indicates that the student is separated from their primary graduate degree program as well as any George Mason graduate degree or certificate program being pursued at the time of termination and is not permitted to continue enrollment in the programs. A notification of termination is affixed to the student's academic record. A student may be eligible to pursue graduate study at George Mason in the future, in accordance with any applicable university and College/School [policies](#).

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Commented [PG2]: Note: consider what other catalog sections would need to be updated.

Commented [PRG3]: Clarification of what has been happening already

AP.6.6.1 Academic Probation

Graduate degree-seeking and non-degree status students shall be considered on Academic Probation if they receive a term GPA below 3.00 and/or if they receive a grade notation of **NC or NA** in an academic term. A graduate student shall not be on academic probation if a successful grade appeal raises the student's affected term GPA to 3.00 or above.

Commented [PG4]: Currently S/NC courses, NA notation for course do not figure into graduate GPA nor do they currently trigger academic warning notations.

When a student is placed on Academic Probation, the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) notifies the student, the appropriate College/School, and the LAU. The student's official transcript states "Academic Probation" for the affected academic term and remains on the transcript. Once on Academic Probation, the graduate student is expected to meet with an academic advisor to create a plan for academic recovery and/or consider alternative options.

The Academic Probation notation is put on the transcript for the affected term, and students are on academic probation during the next enrolled term. The graduate student must obtain a term GPA of 3.00 or better and not earn an NA or NC grade in the probationary term. If the student receives below the minimum 3.00 term GPA for that probationary term or receives an NA or NC grade, the student will meet the criteria for academic termination under **AP.6.6.2**. A graduate student shall not be placed on more than one term of Academic Probation during their graduate program. However, if a student receives a term GPA below 3.00 in the term that they have a graduation application filed, but has met all degree conferral requirements, including the minimum required 3.00 degree GPA, the student shall be permitted to graduate in that term but shall have a notation of academic probation for that term on the academic transcript.

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Any student that is on Academic Probation shall:

- not be permitted to retroactively drop or withdraw from courses that have unsatisfactory final grades after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned without an exception to academic policy approved by the College/School and the Graduate Division.
- be required to repeat any failed course at George Mason, when next offered in the student's academic program and **modality**, if that course is a core degree requirement in the student's current catalog year.

Commented [PG6]: Wording is based on College feedback regarding online students. If student wants to take course in modality outside their selected program modality then can submit an exception request.

AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination

A degree-seeking (doctoral, specialist, master's, certificate) graduate student will be terminated for the reasons listed below unless an academic policy exception is obtained. Non-degree status graduate students will be terminated for unsatisfactory performance as described below. **Note that the university reserves the right to terminate any student based on cancellation (by the testing administrator) of any test score required for admission.**

Commented [PG7]: Feedback: this guidance is in admissions so not needed here. Question for OGA: is it needed here?

AP.6.6.2.1 Academic Termination Criteria

Students May be Terminated for Any One of the Following Reasons:

Fully-Admitted Graduate Students Enrolled in a Degree and/or Certificate Program

- Inability to make satisfactory progress toward degree as determined by the College/School and/or Graduate Division.
 - As determined through academic program benchmarks published to the graduate student by the local academic unit, College/School, and/or Graduate Division including, but not limited to:
 - performance on comprehensive, qualifying exams, portfolios, or other required examinations; or
 - failure to meet published time limits; or
 - academic standard violation(s) as determined by the Academic Standards Office that results in a sanction of suspension or a grade-based sanction that triggers GPA-based eligibility for termination under this section¹; or
 - a finding of misconduct as determined by the designated entity; or
 - failure to meet required professional competencies; or
 - other required academic milestones or non-course requirements.
- Inability to attain a minimum 3.00 term GPA and/or obtaining NC or NA grade notations for two academic terms of enrollment.

Provisionally-Admitted Degree Seeking Graduate Students

- Any of the reasons listed for the aforementioned fully-admitted students; or
- Inability to meet provisions of admission within time limits; or
- Accumulate 12 credits of failing grades in undergraduate courses.

Non-Degree Graduate Students

- Accumulate 12 credits of failing grades in undergraduate courses.
- Inability to make satisfactory progress, as determined by the College/School and/or Graduate Division.
 - As determined through published academic benchmarks published to the graduate student by the local academic unit, College/School, and/or Graduate Division including, but not limited to,
 - academic standard violation(s) as determined by Academic Standards Office that results in a sanction of suspension or a grade-based sanction that triggers GPA-based eligibility for termination under this section¹; or
 - a finding of misconduct as determined by the designated entity; or
 - failure to meet professional competencies; or

¹ A finding of academic standard violation(s) through the Academic Standards process that results in a sanction of permanent dismissal effectively terminates the student from the academic program and requires no further action by the academic unit.

- other required academic milestones or non-course requirements.
- Inability to attain a minimum 3.00 term GPA for two academic terms of enrollment or obtaining NC or NA grade notations in two academic terms of enrollment.

Note: Undergraduate and graduate course grades are not combined to reach the termination threshold; they are considered separately.

These are minimum standards of performance; some programs have higher standards. The student is responsible for knowing the Academic Probation and Academic Termination criteria for their graduate program as well as the process for initiating an academic termination exception request to their College/School. See [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) in the catalog for further information about student obligations.

Once a student has met the criteria for termination, they will be provided an opportunity to submit an academic policy exception, as described below, through a process provided for by their College/School in conjunction with the Graduate Division and shall not:

- be permitted to retroactively drop or withdraw from courses that have unsatisfactory final grades after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned; nor
- resign and transfer, add, or change to another George Mason graduate program; nor
- be eligible for a graduate leave of absence

unless approved through an academic policy exception to termination or appeal.

AP.6.6.2.2 Academic Termination Eligibility Notification

GPA and NA/NC Grade Notation

In cases of termination eligibility due to a term GPA below 3.00 or NA or NC grade notations in two academic terms of enrollment, the Office of University Registrar (OUR) will notify the student through George Mason electronic mail within 10 business days of termination eligibility that the student's performance has reached the threshold for termination, provide notice of the start of the College/School's request for exception period which shall be no longer than 10 business days, direct the student to their respective College/School for information on submitting an academic termination exception request, and inform the student that program termination will occur and be finalized by the OUR if the exception period expires and no termination exception request has been submitted to the College/School.

Time Limit

When a student has one semester or summer term remaining before their published time limit to advancement or degree deadline, the College/School shall notify the student, in writing:

- of the approaching deadline; and

- the start of the College/School's time limit termination exception request period, which shall last not extend past the last day of classes for the expiring time limit semester or summer term; and
- how to obtain information regarding submission of a time limit termination exception request for an extension of time, if needed; and
- inform the student that program termination will occur and be finalized by the College/School within six weeks of the end of the expiring time limit semester or term if:
 - the student has not had their degree and/or certificate conferred or advanced to candidacy, as applicable; and
 - no time limit termination exception request was timely made.

Commented [PG8]: Legal wants OUR and the Colleges/Schools/Depts to use the same template language and confirm they are using that.

Other

For all other termination criteria, the College/School will be responsible for notifying the Graduate Division of its intent to terminate a student and provide documentation that published policies and procedures were followed. After review and approval, the Graduate Division will be responsible for notifying the student that the student's performance has reached the threshold for termination, provide notice of the start of the College/School's request for exception period, which shall be no longer than 10 business days, direct the student to information on submitting an academic termination exception request to the College/School, and inform the student that program termination will occur and be finalized by the College/School if the exception request period expires and no termination exception request has been made.

Commented [PG9]: Proposal after discussion with Legal regarding non-GPA, TL triggers for termination that may vary across units.

AP.6.6.2.3 Academic Termination Responsibilities

Each College/School and the Graduate Division shall publish on a publicly available web page the process(es) for initiating graduate academic termination exception requests, which include any time limit termination exception requests, and the criteria used in review. If a College/School approves a graduate academic termination exception request, the request is forwarded to the Graduate Division for an additional review and decision.

- If a College/School approves an initial time limit termination exception request, and the approved extension of time is no longer than a year, program termination will not occur at that time and the student's time limit term will be revised accordingly. Subsequent time limit extension requests or any extension requests for longer than a year, when supported by the College/School, are forwarded to the Graduate Division for review and decision.

Graduate students that have submitted a request for an exception to academic termination to their College/School and had the request denied shall have one level of appeal if timely submitted. Each College/School shall publish on a publicly available web page information that directs a student to information on how to file an appeal of a denial to an academic

termination exception request. The Graduate Division is responsible for publishing the criteria they and the Graduate Academic Appeals Committee (GAAC) use during their respective reviews.

During the review of any academic termination exception request or appeal, the student may continue in or begin new courses during the term of submission but may be responsible for any tuition or related charges. Continued or new enrollment in courses involving demonstration of professional competencies, including, but not limited to, externships or practicums, are at the discretion of the College/School. Students are advised to contact their academic program, the Mason Student Services Center and/or Office of International Program Services (OIPS), as applicable, to determine any impacts when choosing whether to continue with enrollment. Students are not permitted to register for subsequent terms until the student has a final approved exception request or appeal. If the student is terminated from the academic program **in alignment with all applicable policies and procedures, the termination is final and** they shall be immediately administratively dropped from any current and future course registration unless the student formally requests an administrative withdrawal. Students are not permitted to register for subsequent terms until the student has a final approved exception request or appeal.

If a College/School does not receive an academic exception request within their applicable exception period or the student does not timely appeal the College/School's denial of such a request, the College/School shall ensure an academic termination notification **form** is sent within one week to the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) so that a notation of academic termination is affixed to the graduate student's official record and any current or future course registration is administratively dropped or withdrawn by OUR within one week. See [AP.1.3](#) for more information.

If, after a College/School's approval, a student's academic termination exception request is denied by the Graduate Division and the appeal period has expired with no submission made, or an appeal is denied by either the Graduate Division or Graduate Academic Appeals Committee with no further appeal option, the Graduate Division shall ensure:

- o a letter of academic program termination is electronically sent to the student within one week, with a copy provided to the College/School as well as the Office of the University Registrar to put in the student's record; and
- o an academic notification form is sent to the OUR within one week of the decision so that a notation of academic termination is affixed to the graduate student's official record and any current or future registration is administratively dropped or withdrawn within one week. See [AP.1.3](#) for more information.

If a student's academic termination exception request or appeal is ultimately granted, the student will become eligible again for academic termination if they fail to maintain

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satisfactory progress as described under this policy and/or once again receives a term GPA below 3.00 or a NC or NA grade notation in a term. The student will be notified by the College/School of program termination, in writing, within six weeks of time limit termination eligibility or 10 business days of GPA, NA/NC grade notation, and/or other termination eligibility, and will not be provided the option of an academic termination exception request. The College/School shall ensure:

- the OUR is copied on the student's notification so that it can be added to the student's record; and
- an academic notification form is sent to the OUR when the student notification is sent so that a notation of academic termination is affixed to the graduate student's official record and any current or future registration is administratively dropped or withdrawn within one week. See [AP.1.3](#) for more information.

Students who receive an academic termination notation may apply for formal admission to a different George Mason graduate program under certain conditions. See AP.6.6.3 for further information.

AP.6.6.3 Subsequent Admission to Graduate Study at Mason

Former graduate students who have been terminated, dismissed, or have resigned from a George Mason graduate program are not permitted to take any additional coursework at George Mason unless a new graduate program application has been submitted, and the applicant has been admitted to graduate study. Time limits for the degree begin with the term of admission to the new program. Any previously earned eligible credit applied to a subsequent graduate program must have been earned within ten years prior to the term of admission in the new graduate program. Otherwise, an exception to academic policy must first be approved by the College/School. See AP.6.5.2 Transfer of Credits for further information.

The following restrictions **apply**:

- A student who was terminated from a graduate program or dismissed from George Mason while in a graduate program shall not be admitted to that same program for a minimum of two calendar years after the end of the academic term of termination or dismissal.
- Any student who resigns from a graduate program while on academic probation shall be on academic probation (AP.6.6.1) for one enrolled term if admitted to the same graduate program within two calendar years of the end of the resignation term.
- Any failing or unsatisfactory grades that were accumulated in a previous George Mason graduate program term that is within two calendar years of a subsequent graduate program admission term and were for courses that fulfill the new program's core requirements, shall not be excluded and will apply towards the new program's degree GPA and academic standing as described in AP.6.6. Accordingly, prospective applicants and academic programs should carefully consider whether admission, given such circumstances, is appropriate.

Commented [PG11]: Is there a way to track timing electronically.

Commented [PG12]: Feedback question for OGA: Is there a way that this could be automatically flagged for units? Can this time period of two years be enforced by those beyond the program?

Upon full admission to any graduate program at George Mason, after two calendar years from the end of the previous termination, dismissal, or resignation term, a graduate student may petition the Graduate College/School Dean or designee to grant academic clemency for up to six credits. See AP.6.6.4 Academic Clemency for more information.

Colleges/schools and local academic units may have additional restrictions concerning admission to a subsequent graduate program at George Mason. If so, those restrictions apply.

AP.6.6.4 Academic Clemency

Graduate students enrolling in a George Mason graduate program after a separation of a minimum of two calendar years may petition the Graduate College/School Dean or designee to have up to six previous graduate degree credits earned at George Mason removed from the new degree program academic record and degree GPA calculation. Courses and grades so removed will not count toward degree requirements. Note that the courses, with their original grades, and the notation “Academic Clemency,” will remain listed on the student’s transcript permanently. The petition for clemency must be filed within 12 months starting from the first day of enrollment in the new graduate program at George Mason. Approval of the request is neither automatic nor guaranteed.

AP.6.6 Graduate Academic Standing

This Graduate Academic Standing policy is designed to promote academic student success and timely degree completion. It is also aligned with the requirements that graduate students must meet to graduate. George Mason law students are referred to law school [academic regulations](#) for policies regarding academic standing.

To graduate from the intended degree or certificate program, a graduate student must, at a minimum, along with any other degree requirements, present coursework that meets conferral requirements. See [AP.6.8 Requirements for Graduate Certificates](#), [AP.6.9 Requirements for Master's Degrees](#), and [AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees](#) for further information.

Students who plan to apply for financial aid should review the requirements for making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), as found on the Financial Aid [website](#), which may differ from the requirements in this policy.

Definitions:

Good Academic Standing: Graduate students are considered in Good Academic Standing unless they are on Academic Probation or there is a notation of Academic Termination for the most recent graduate program(s) on the academic [transcript](#).

Cumulative GPA: GPA computed for all graduate-level institutional credit [including, but not limited to, any George Mason graduate degree or certificate program pursued with the primary graduate program.](#)

Degree GPA: GPA that is calculated for graduate students based on graded graduate level courses completed at the university and applied toward the current degree or certificate program requirements. The Degree GPA is calculated at the time of graduation after all current program requirements are completed.

The graduate student is responsible for timely requesting that any eligible George Mason graduate-level coursework from a prior academic program not intended for the current program degree GPA calculation or application towards current program degree requirements is removed. See [AP.6.6.4 Graduate Academic Clemency](#) for more information.

Term GPA: GPA calculated for an individual term.

Academic termination: [Indicates that the student is separated from their primary graduate degree program as well as any George Mason graduate degree or certificate program being pursued at the time of termination and is not permitted to continue enrollment in the programs. A notification of termination is affixed to the student's academic record. A student may be eligible to pursue graduate study at George Mason in the future, in accordance with any applicable university and College/School policies.](#)

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AP.6.6.1 Academic Probation

Graduate degree-seeking and non-degree status students shall be considered on Academic Probation if they receive a term GPA below 3.00 and/or if they receive a grade notation of **NC or NA** in an academic term. A graduate student shall not be on academic probation if a successful grade appeal raises the student's affected term GPA to 3.00 or above.

Commented [PG4]: Currently S/NC courses, NA notation for course do not figure into graduate GPA nor do they currently trigger academic warning notations.

When a student is placed on Academic Probation, the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) notifies the student, the appropriate College/School, and the LAU. The student's official transcript states "Academic Probation" for the affected academic term and remains on the transcript. Once on Academic Probation, the graduate student is expected to meet with an academic advisor to create a plan for academic recovery and/or consider alternative options.

The Academic Probation notation is put on the transcript for the affected term, and students are on academic probation during the next enrolled term. The graduate student must obtain a term GPA of 3.00 or better and not earn an NA or NC grade in the probationary term. If the student receives below the minimum 3.00 term GPA for that probationary term or receives an NA or NC grade, the student will meet the criteria for academic termination under **AP.6.6.2**. A graduate student shall not be placed on more than one term of Academic Probation during their graduate program. However, if a student receives a term GPA below 3.00 in the term that they have a graduation application filed, but has met all degree conferral requirements, including the minimum required 3.00 degree GPA, the student shall be permitted to graduate in that term but shall have a notation of academic probation for that term on the academic transcript.

Commented [PG5]: Hyperlink

Any student that is on Academic Probation shall:

- not be permitted to retroactively drop or withdraw from courses that have unsatisfactory final grades after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned without an exception to academic policy approved by the College/School and the Graduate Division.
- be required to repeat any failed course at George Mason, when next offered in the student's academic program and **modality**, if that course is a core degree requirement in the student's current catalog year.

Commented [PG6]: Wording is based on College feedback regarding online students. If student wants to take course in modality outside their selected program modality then can submit an exception request.

AP.6.6.2 Academic Termination

A degree-seeking (doctoral, specialist, master's, certificate) graduate student will be terminated for the reasons listed below unless an academic policy exception is obtained. Non-degree status graduate students will be terminated for unsatisfactory performance as described below. **Note that the university reserves the right to terminate any student based on cancellation (by the testing administrator) of any test score required for admission.**

Commented [PG7]: Feedback: this guidance is in admissions so not needed here. Question for OGA: is it needed here?

AP.6.6.2.1 Academic Termination Criteria

Students May be Terminated for Any One of the Following Reasons:

Fully-Admitted Graduate Students Enrolled in a Degree and/or Certificate Program

- Inability to make satisfactory progress toward degree as determined by the College/School and/or Graduate Division.
 - As determined through academic program benchmarks published to the graduate student by the local academic unit, College/School, and/or Graduate Division including, but not limited to:
 - performance on comprehensive, qualifying exams, portfolios, or other required examinations; or
 - failure to meet published time limits; or
 - academic standard violation(s) as determined by the Academic Standards Office [that results in a sanction of suspension or a grade-based sanction that triggers GPA-based eligibility for termination under this section¹](#); or
 - a finding of misconduct as determined by the designated entity; or
 - failure to meet required professional competencies; or
 - other required academic milestones or non-course requirements.
- Inability to attain a minimum 3.00 term GPA and/or obtaining NC or NA grade notations for two academic terms of enrollment.

Commented [PG8]: Insert fn stating "A finding of academic standard violation(s) through the Academic Standards process that results in a sanction of permanent dismissal is considered equivalent to a final academic program termination and requires no further action by the academic unit."

Provisionally-Admitted Degree Seeking Graduate Students

- Any of the reasons listed for the aforementioned fully-admitted students; or
- Inability to meet provisions of admission within time limits; or
- Accumulate 12 credits of failing grades in undergraduate courses.

Non-Degree Graduate Students

- Accumulate 12 credits of failing grades in undergraduate courses.
- Inability to make satisfactory progress, as determined by the College/School and/or Graduate Division.
 - As determined through published academic benchmarks published to the graduate student by the local academic unit, College/School, and/or Graduate Division including, but not limited to,
 - academic standard violation(s) as determined by Academic Standards Office [that results in a sanction of suspension or a grade-based sanction that triggers GPA-based eligibility for termination under this section¹](#); or
 - a finding of misconduct as determined by the designated entity; or
 - failure to meet professional competencies; or

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Commented [PG10]: FN like on clear copy

¹ A finding of academic standard violation(s) through the Academic Standards process that results in a sanction of permanent dismissal effectively terminates the student from the academic program and requires no further action by the academic unit.

- Other required academic milestones or non-course requirements.
- Inability to attain a minimum 3.00 term GPA for two academic terms of enrollment or obtaining NC or NA grade notations in two academic terms of enrollment.

Note: Undergraduate and graduate course grades are not combined to reach the termination threshold; they are considered separately.

These are minimum standards of performance; some programs have higher standards. The student is responsible for knowing the Academic Probation and Academic Termination criteria for their graduate program as well as the process for initiating an academic termination exception request to their College/School. See [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) in the catalog for further information about student obligations.

Once a student has met the criteria for termination, they will be provided an opportunity to submit an academic policy exception, as described below, through a process provided for by their College/School in conjunction with the Graduate Division and shall not:

- be permitted to retroactively drop or withdraw from courses that have unsatisfactory final grades after the last day of the term in which the grades were earned; nor
- resign and transfer, add, or change to another George Mason graduate program; nor
- be eligible for a graduate leave of absence

unless approved through an academic policy exception to termination or appeal.

AP.6.6.2.2 Academic Termination Eligibility Notification

GPA and NA/NC Grade Notation

In cases of termination eligibility due to a term GPA below 3.00 or NA or NC grade notations in two academic terms of enrollment, the Office of University Registrar (OUR) will notify the student through George Mason electronic mail within 10 business days of termination eligibility that the student's performance has reached the threshold for termination, provide notice of the start of the College/School's request for exception period which shall be no longer than 10 business days, direct the student to their respective College/School for information on submitting an academic termination exception request, and inform the student that program termination will occur and be finalized by the OUR if the exception period expires and no termination exception request has been submitted to the College/School.

Time Limit

When a student has one semester or summer term remaining before their published time limit to advancement or degree deadline, the College/School shall notify the student, in writing:

- of the approaching deadline; and

- the start of the College/School's time limit termination exception request period, which shall last not extend past the last day of classes for the expiring time limit semester or summer term; and
- how to obtain information regarding submission of a time limit termination exception request for an extension of time, if needed; and
- inform the student that program termination will occur and be finalized by the College/School within six weeks of the end of the expiring time limit semester or term if:
 - the student has not had their degree and/or certificate conferred or advanced to candidacy, as applicable; and
 - no time limit termination exception request was timely made.

Commented [PG11]: Legal wants OUR and the Colleges/Schools/Depts to use the same template language and confirm they are using that.

Other

For all other termination criteria, the College/School will be responsible for notifying the Graduate Division of its intent to terminate a student and provide documentation that published policies and procedures were followed. After review and approval, the Graduate Division will be responsible for notifying the student that the student's performance has reached the threshold for termination, provide notice of the start of the College/School's request for exception period, which shall be no longer than 10 business days, direct the student to information on submitting an academic termination exception request to the College/School, and inform the student that program termination will occur and be finalized by the College/School if the exception request period expires and no termination exception request has been made.

Commented [PG12]: Proposal after discussion with Legal regarding non-GPA, TL triggers for termination that may vary across units.

AP.6.6.2.3 Academic Termination Responsibilities

Each College/School and the Graduate Division shall publish on a publicly available web page the process(es) for initiating graduate academic termination exception requests, which include any time limit termination exception requests, and the criteria used in review. If a College/School approves a graduate academic termination exception request, the request is forwarded to the Graduate Division for an additional review and decision.

- If a College/School approves an initial time limit termination exception request, and the approved extension of time is no longer than a year, program termination will not occur at that time and the student's time limit term will be revised accordingly. Subsequent time limit extension requests or any extension requests for longer than a year, when supported by the College/School, are forwarded to the Graduate Division for review and decision.

Graduate students that have submitted a request for an exception to academic termination to their College/School and had the request denied shall have one level of appeal if timely submitted. Each College/School shall publish on a publicly available web page information that directs a student to information on how to file an appeal of a denial to an academic

termination exception request. The Graduate Division is responsible for publishing the criteria they and the Graduate Academic Appeals Committee (GAAC) use during their respective reviews.

During the review of any academic termination exception request or appeal, the student may continue in or begin new courses during the term of submission but may be responsible for any tuition or related charges if their exception request or appeal is approved. Continued or new enrollment in courses involving demonstration of professional competencies, including, but not limited to, externships or practicums, are at the discretion of the College/School. Students are advised to contact their academic program, the Mason Student Services Center and/or Office of International Program Services (OIPS), as applicable, to determine any impacts when choosing whether to continue with enrollment. Students are not permitted to register for subsequent terms until the student has a final approved exception request or appeal. If the student is terminated from the academic program in alignment with all applicable policies and procedures, the termination is final and they shall be immediately administratively dropped from any current and future course registration unless the student formally requests an administrative withdrawal. Students are not permitted to register for subsequent terms until the student has a final approved exception request or appeal.

⊖ If a College/School does not receive an academic exception request within their applicable exception period or the student does not timely appeal the College/School's denial of such a request, the College/School shall ensure an academic termination notification form is sent within one week to the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) so that a notation of academic termination is affixed to the graduate student's official record and any current or future course registration is administratively dropped or withdrawn by OUR within one week. See [AP.1.3](#) for more information.

If, after a College/School's approval, a student's academic termination exception request is denied by the Graduate Division and the appeal period has expired with no submission made, or an appeal is denied by either the Graduate Division or Graduate Academic Appeals Committee with no further appeal option, the Graduate Division shall ensure:

- a letter of academic program termination is electronically sent to the student within one week, with a copy provided to the College/School as well as the Office of the University Registrar to put in the student's record; and
- an academic notification form is sent to the OUR within one week of the decision so that a notation of academic termination is affixed to the graduate student's official record and any current or future registration is administratively dropped or withdrawn within one week. See [AP.1.3](#) for more information.

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If a student's academic termination exception request or appeal is ultimately granted, the student will become eligible again for academic termination if they fail to maintain satisfactory progress as described under this policy and/or once again receives a term GPA below 3.00 or a NC or NA grade notation in a term. The student will be notified by the College/School of program termination, in writing, within six weeks of time limit termination eligibility or 10 business days of GPA, NA/NC grade notation, and/or other termination eligibility, and will not be provided the option of an academic termination exception request. The College/School shall ensure:

- the OUR is copied on the student's notification so that it can be added to the student's record; and
- an academic notification form is sent to the OUR when the student notification is sent so that a notation of academic termination is affixed to the graduate student's official record and any current or future registration is administratively dropped or withdrawn within one week. See [AP.1.3](#) for more information.

Students who receive an academic termination notation may apply for formal admission to a different George Mason graduate program under certain conditions. See AP.6.6.3 for further information.

AP.6.6.3 Subsequent Admission to Graduate Study at Mason

Former graduate students who have been terminated, dismissed, or have resigned from a George Mason graduate program are not permitted to take any additional coursework at George Mason unless a new graduate program application has been submitted, and the applicant has been admitted to graduate study. Time limits for the degree begin with the term of admission to the new program. Any previously earned eligible credit applied to a subsequent graduate program must have been earned within ten years prior to the term of admission in the new graduate program. Otherwise, an exception to academic policy must first be approved by the College/School. See AP.6.5.2 Transfer of Credits for further information.

The following restrictions apply:

- A student who was terminated from a graduate program or dismissed from George Mason while in a graduate program shall not be admitted to that same program for a minimum of two calendar years after the end of the academic term of termination or dismissal.
- Any student who resigns from a graduate program while on academic probation shall be on academic probation (AP.6.6.1) for one enrolled term if admitted to the same graduate program within two calendar years of the end of the resignation term.
- Any failing or unsatisfactory grades that were accumulated in a previous George Mason graduate program term that is within two calendar years of a subsequent graduate program admission term and were for courses that fulfill the new program's core requirements, shall not be excluded and will apply towards the new program's degree GPA and academic standing as described in AP.6.6. Accordingly,

Commented [PG14]: Is there a way to track timing electronically.

Commented [PG15]: Feedback question for OGA: Is there a way that this could be automatically flagged for units? Can this time period of two years be enforced by those beyond the program?

prospective applicants and academic programs should carefully consider whether admission, given such circumstances, is appropriate.

Upon full admission to any graduate program at George Mason, after two calendar years from the **end of the** previous termination, dismissal, or resignation term, a graduate student may petition the Graduate College/School Dean or designee to grant academic clemency for up to six credits. See AP.6.6.4 Academic Clemency for more information.

Colleges/schools and local academic units may have additional restrictions concerning admission to a subsequent graduate program at George Mason. If so, those restrictions apply.

AP.6.6.4 Academic Clemency

Graduate students enrolling in a George Mason graduate program after a separation of a minimum of two calendar years may petition the Graduate College/School Dean or designee to have up to six previous graduate degree credits earned at George Mason removed from the new degree program academic record and degree GPA calculation. Courses and grades so removed will not count toward degree requirements. Note that the courses, with their original grades, and the notation “Academic Clemency,” will remain listed on the student’s transcript permanently. The petition for clemency must be filed within 12 months starting from the first day of enrollment in the new graduate program at George Mason. Approval of the request is neither automatic nor guaranteed.

Rationale

Developing dual degree programs (at the undergraduate level specifically) would have to add many more additional credits if the current catalog language focuses on concentrations across degrees rather than within degrees. The updated version of this policy makes it clear that concentration courses overlapping between two separate degree programs is fine as long as each degree program has at least 18 credits that are unique to that degree program, but that that you can't have two concentrations in the same major that are overlapping so much that there aren't 12 unique credits for each concentration (within that major).

AP.4.2.1 Definitions of Degree Components

- **Degree program, major, or field:** A program of study that normally requires at least 30 credits of coursework. The primary program name (degree and major as well as any concentrations) appears on the diploma for bachelor's and master's degrees. Only the degree name appears for doctoral degrees. An undergraduate who desires to graduate with a BA, BS, or BSEd degree in two or more subjects must meet the requirements for the major in each subject. For each major, at least 18 credits used to fulfill its requirements must be applied only to that major, i.e., cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of a concentration, minor, undergraduate certificate, or another major. For policies on graduate degrees, refer to [AP.6](#) of the University Catalog.
- **Concentration:** A second-order component of a degree [or certificate](#) program. [At the undergraduate level, concentrations are approved by the Undergraduate Council and](#) consists of at least 12 hours that are not applied to any other concentration [in the same degree or certificate program or major](#). [At the graduate level, c](#)Concentrations are approved by the [Undergraduate Council at the undergraduate level or by the Graduate Council](#) [and consist of at least 12 hours that are not applied to any other George Mason concentration \(whether in the same degree or](#)

certificate program or in a different degree or certificate program).~~at the graduate level.~~

- **Certificate:** A program of study, distinct from a degree program, that requires at least 15 unique undergraduate or 12-24 graduate credits. For each undergraduate certificate, at least 15 credits used to fulfill its requirements cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of a major, concentration, minor, or another undergraduate certificate. The name of a completed certificate program appears on the transcript after the conferral of an undergraduate degree. Certificates and certificate concentrations are approved by the Undergraduate Council at the undergraduate level or by the Graduate Council at the graduate level. For policies on graduate certificates, refer to [AP.6](#) of the University Catalog.
- **Minor:** A complement to a bachelor's degree program or major normally requiring at least 15 credits in a field other than the student's major. Of the courses presented for a minor, at least 8 credits must be applied only to that minor and may not be used to fulfill requirements of the student's major, concentration, an undergraduate certificate, or another minor. When coursework for a minor is used to fulfill a component of a major, only those credits in excess of the 30 required for a major may be applied to the requirement for unique credits.

PMG Cover Sheet

Policy name and number: Graduate Grading Policy Revisions

- AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)
- AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students
- AP.3.2 Graduate Grading
- AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales
- AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations
- AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students in Academic Difficulty

Related Policies

- AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites
- AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course
- AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates
- AP.6.8.4.3 Timeline Requirements (for graduate Bridge programs)

Responsible office or committee: Graduate Division, Office of the Provost

Type of policy:

- ☒ University Catalog
- ☐ University Policy
- ☐ Faculty Handbook
- ☐ Code of Student Conduct
- ☐ Other policy or guidelines (e.g., graduate hiring guidelines, etc.)

University Policy Type (if a numbered University Policy)

- ☒ Academic Policies
- ☐ Computing
- ☐ Financial
- ☐ General Policies
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Risk, Safety, & Resilience
- ☐ Student Policies

Policy proposal type:

- ☐ New policy
- ☒ Substantial revision
- ☐ Minor revision
- ☐ Renewal with no changes
- ☐ Rescind policy

Emergency approval requested:

- ☐ Yes (must include compelling reason in the “why” paragraph below)
- ☒ No

If you are submitting a revised policy, you should submit them with changes tracked in a Microsoft Word document.

Why is this policy or revision being proposed?

The Faculty Senate Graduate Grading Task Force is currently being formed and is charged with examining graduate grading comprehensively once it convenes. In the meantime, changes to AP.6.6 related to Academic Standing for graduate students were approved in September 2025 and will go into effect in the 2026-27 catalog. Under these changes, graduate degree-seeking and non-degree status students shall be considered on Academic Probation if they receive a term GPA below 3.00 and/or if they receive a grade notation of NC or NA in an academic term. Inability to maintain a minimum 3.00 term GPA and/or obtaining NC or NA grade notation for two academic terms of enrollment would result in eligibility for termination beginning in the 2026-27 academic year. The goal of these proposed changes is to address these specific issues now; the Faculty Senate Graduate Grading Task Force will build on this work going forward.

Currently, B- on the graduate grading scale is considered a satisfactory/passing grade and is calculated at 2.67 quality points. Concerns have been raised that with the approved change to the graduate academic standing policy, students who receive what are considered satisfactory grades may be put on academic probation or be terminated from their program. For reference, the B- grade is used infrequently (1.6% of all graduate grades from fall 2018 through summer 2025).

In certain graduate courses graded solely on an S/NC basis, the available grading options are not adequate for all circumstances and may inadvertently result in Academic Probation when a student resigns from a program or selects an alternative degree completion pathway (e.g., chooses to complete a capstone course rather than a thesis).

The proposed changes would remove B- from the graduate grading scale. Academic probation and termination would remain possible outcomes; however, removing the B- creates consistency between the grading scale and the GPA thresholds, helping ensure that satisfactory performance is reflected appropriately in GPA calculations. The proposed revisions would also introduce a new grade (satisfactory withdrawal, SW) to address the second issue.

The suggested edits to AP.1 clarify and reflect policies that have been updated elsewhere in the University Catalog. The suggested edits to AP.3.9.1 clarify the impact of a pending grade appeal for graduate students as it relates to the updated academic standing policy.

Who has been involved or consulted with in the creation/revision of this policy already?

Graduate Division, Office of University Registrar, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate Academic Policies Committee, Policy Management Group.

Questions and feedback raised in and after PMG (to be added after PMG review):

Signature Routing Form

(to be created by PMG co-chairs for numbered University Policies only)

Reviewers & date of review:

- **Policy Management Group**
- **Graduate Council**
- **Faculty Senate**
- **University Counsel**
- **Compliance and Ethics**

Senior approving officials- signatures and dates

- **Signature 1**
- **Signature 2**

PROPOSED GRADUATE GRADING POLICY REVISIONS

FEBRUARY 2026

AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)

Courses normally graded as satisfactory/no credit (S/NC) are annotated in the catalog, however, students may elect to take credit without grade points. Undergraduates may take up to 6 credits to be graded S/NC; this option applies only to electives outside the field of the major, concentration, minor, general education requirement, or certificate program. Graduate students may elect the S/NC grade option for courses not normally graded as S/NC only for courses that do not apply to their degree or certificate requirements. For more information, see [AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations](#).

AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students

Graduate students who stop attending classes without dropping or withdrawing should receive a grade of F in those courses. The grade of NA (Never Attended) is assigned to a student who is enrolled in a course but has never attended. For more information, see [AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations](#).

AP.3.2 Graduate Grading

The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing
B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing

C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

Graduate students must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in their degree program(s) in order to graduate from the program(s).

AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales

Grading scales are indicated on each course. For information on graduate academic standing, see AP.6.6. Scales are listed below and indicate possible grades which may be earned within each:

- Graduate Regular: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB
- Graduate Special: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB, S, SW, NC, IP
- Satisfactory/No Credit: allows for S, NC, SW, AB, IN, IP

AP.3.3 Additional Undergraduate and Graduate Grade Notations

Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC)

An S grade reflects satisfactory work that completes course requirements (C or better for undergraduate students, B or better for graduate students); otherwise, the student receives no credit (NC). S and NC have no effect on the student's GPA. Courses normally graded S/NC are annotated in the catalog. Students may also individually elect to take credit without a grade with restriction. For more information, see [AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points \(Satisfactory/No Credit\)](#). For graduate courses that extend beyond one term, S/NC courses have an additional grading option of SW (Satisfactory Withdrawal).

Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW)

An SW grade is available only for graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, where the graduate student is officially resigning from the graduate program, resigning and transferring to a lower-level program, or electing an alternative program option for completing a degree or certificate. A final grade of SW does not count toward minimum

program requirements and has no effect on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or any previous term grade of NC for the course.

Incomplete (IN)

This grade may be given to students who are passing a course, but who may be unable to complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control. Unless the faculty member has specified an earlier deadline, the student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the 9th week of the next term, not including summer, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Additional time may be granted upon approval of an Incomplete Extension form. Faculty members who choose to require an earlier incomplete deadline will be required to file an Incomplete Grade Contract with the local academic unit's office, detailing the work that remains to be done, the general reason for the incomplete, and the student's grade at the point of receiving the incomplete. Students who have filed their intent to graduate have only six weeks from the date of degree conferral to resolve any incomplete grades and have the final grades recorded by the University Registrar's office.

The IN grade has no effect on the GPA and remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is submitted by the instructor. If the work has not been completed and no final grade has been submitted by the established deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the University Registrar's office to the Incomplete Final Grade recorded at the time of the IN grade designation.

Incomplete, extended (IX)

IX is given by the Office of the University Registrar after receiving an Incomplete Extension form signed by the instructor and the appropriate dean. The extension gives students additional time to complete work as specified by the instructor. The final grade must be submitted to the University Registrar's office before the beginning of the final exam period for the semester in which the IN grade was originally due. A grade of IX affects the academic record in the same way as does a grade of IN.

In Progress (IP)

This grade may be given in selected courses, including graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships. IP may also be used when the work of BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core), or if a course that is graded S/NC or A/B/C/NC is not completed within one semester. IP has no effect on the GPA. With the exception of the formerly-mentioned courses, IP remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned. An IP in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, or ECON 495 RS:

Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core) not changed to a final grade by the last day of classes of the next term, not including summer, is changed by the Office of the University Registrar to an F.

IP grades will be awarded in graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, until successful completion of the requirements. Upon successful completion, the final grade of S will be assigned and IP grades for all prior terms of the course will change to the grade of S. If a student voluntarily resigns from a graduate academic program (See AP.6.4.4), voluntarily resigns and transfers to a lower-level graduate degree or certificate program (See AP.6.4.4.1), or elects, with program permission, an alternative option for completing a degree or certificate, a grade of SW will be assigned for the last term of course enrollment and any prior terms with an IP grade will be changed to SW. Any prior term with an NC grade will remain unchanged.

If progress is unsatisfactory in a term, a student is terminated, or permanently dismissed, a grade of NC will be assigned at the end of that term. In the case of termination, any prior terms will also receive an NC grade. In the case of resignation or resignation and transfer, a grade of SW will be assigned for the term of resignation and any prior terms with an IP grade. A grade of SW has no impact on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or prior terms that were graded NC.

Absent with Permission (AB)

A student who has received permission from the academic dean or director to be absent from a final exam for cause beyond reasonable control may receive a temporary grade of AB. A rescheduled exam must be administered within 10 business days of the original exam date, or the AB will automatically become an F. Final determination of academic status is not complete while the AB remains on the transcript.

Special Provision (SP)

The grade of SP may be given by a dean to students who are unable to complete the course requirements because of extraordinary long-term circumstances, such as major illness or military deployment. SP has no effect on the GPA and remains on the transcript until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned.

Never Attended (NA)

The grade of NA (Never Attended) is assigned to a student who is enrolled in a course but has never attended. NA means that the instructor has no evidence that the student ever attended class and no work was ever submitted. The NA will appear on the transcript and count toward attempted hours. The NA has no effect on the GPA. There may be financial aid implications for non-attendance. Tuition is not refunded.

AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students at Risk of Graduate Academic Suspension or Termination

An undergraduate student may request a delay from the dean in imposing academic suspension because of a pending grade appeal that could change the student's status. An approved delay allows the student to register.

If the grade appeal is successful, the official transcript is corrected and the student continues in classes as a student in good academic standing, on probation, or on warning. If the grade appeal is not successful, the student is required to stop attending all classes immediately. No record of registration for the academic period appears on a transcript and the student receives the appropriate refund as of the decision date.

A graduate student with a pending academic exception to termination submission may request that the decision be delayed until after the grade appeal is resolved if that original grade contributed towards the student becoming eligible for termination. The grade appeal must have been submitted by the time the request is made. If the grade appeal is successful, the academic exception to termination request is closed, the official transcript is corrected, and the student continues in their former graduate academic standing. If the grade appeal is not successful, the academic exception to termination request will resume immediately.

RELATED POLICY UPDATES

AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites

Course prerequisites or corequisites state requirements for student entry into courses and reflect necessary preparation for attempting the course. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these as stated in the catalog and to have taken prerequisites recently enough to be of value. The administrator of the academic unit in which the course is taught or the instructor of the course may summarily drop students who have enrolled in a course for which they have not met the prerequisites (required or recommended). Graduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of B or better; undergraduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of C or better. Individual programs may have higher standards. Questions should be addressed to the local academic unit or course instructor.

AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course

Some undergraduate and graduate level courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are

examples. All grades and credits earned are included in the calculation of the student's GPA up to the maximum allowable credits. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the grade and credits of the earliest registration of the class for which credit was earned will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA but will remain on the transcript. Effective July 1, 2011, Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described above. Students should contact the Office of Student Financial Aid to determine how repeated coursework would affect their financial aid eligibility.

Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses. All courses taken, and their grades, remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA will not change the academic standing for the earlier semester. A grade in a George Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Undergraduate Level

Undergraduate students (degree-seeking or non-degree) may repeat undergraduate courses that are not repeatable for credit. There is a limit of three graded attempts for all courses. Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses or restrict students from repeating high-demand courses for the purpose of improving a satisfactory grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by students in their major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major. (See AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major.) Appeals to this policy begin with the student's academic advisor. The grade received in a repeated course will replace the earlier grade in the calculation of the GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. All courses taken and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the GPA will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Graduate Level

Graduate students who have earned a satisfactory grade in a course that is not repeatable for credit, as noted in the catalog, are not permitted to repeat the course without approval from the dean or director of the college/school and the Graduate Division. Grades of B or

higher are considered satisfactory unless the academic program specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade in their program requirements as noted in the catalog. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course that is listed in the catalog as not repeatable for credit and in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each program establishes criteria for granting such permission.

When a course is repeated by a graduate student, the last grade received will replace any earlier grade in the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA, even if the most recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, the grades of all credits attempted count towards eligibility for academic warning, probation, termination, or dismissal. Only one grade per course may apply towards a conferred graduate degree; however, the transcript will show grades for all courses attempted. Any earlier attempts of a course listed as not repeatable for credit are excluded from graduate cumulative GPA calculation.

AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates

Courses numbered 700 and above are closed to undergraduates. Undergraduates in degree programs may enroll in graduate-level courses 500 to 699 only with written permission, which must be obtained before registration. To enroll in graduate courses for credit applicable to an undergraduate degree, under this policy, undergraduates must have completed all course prerequisites. Enrollment in the graduate course is at the discretion of the course instructor and students must submit the appropriate form.

This policy is not applicable, and written permission is waived for undergraduate students admitted to George Mason combined bachelor's/accelerated master's programs (see [AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees](#)). Undergraduates enrolled in graduate courses are eligible to receive only those letter grades applicable to graduate grading. For more information, [AP.3 Grading](#). A minimum grade of B in a graduate course is required to apply graduate credit towards a George Mason graduate degree or certificate. See [AP.6.5 Previously Earned Graduate Credit](#) for further information.

To enroll in graduate courses for credit that are not applicable to an undergraduate degree and are held in reserve to apply later toward a graduate degree, undergraduates must obtain approval through the appropriate [form](#) for reserve graduate credit. Approval is given only to George Mason seniors within 15 credits of completing undergraduate study who have successfully completed all course prerequisites. In addition, this privilege is normally extended only to seniors who have completed at least 12 credits at the university, have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better, and have a major in the program offering the course. Approval for reserve graduate credit is limited to 6 credits and does not imply approval for admission into a George Mason graduate program or that credit earned will be accepted at another graduate school.

PROPOSED GRADUATE GRADING POLICY REVISIONS

[TRACKED CHANGES]

FEBRUARY 2026

AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)

Courses normally graded as satisfactory/no credit (S/NC) are annotated in the catalog, however, students may elect to take credit without grade points. Undergraduates may take up to 6 credits to be graded S/NC; this option applies only to electives outside the field of the major, concentration, minor, general education requirement, or certificate program. Graduate students may elect the S/NC grade option [for courses not normally graded as S/NC](#) only for courses that do not apply to ~~the~~[their](#) degree or certificate requirements. For more information, see [AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations](#).

AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students

Graduate students who stop ~~or do not attend~~[attending](#) classes without dropping or withdrawing should receive a grade of F in those courses. [The grade of NA \(Never Attended\) is assigned to a student who is enrolled in a course but has never attended. For more information, see AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations.](#)

AP.3.2 Graduate Grading

The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing

B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing
B-	2.67	Satisfactory [†] /Passing
C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

Grading (Graduate)

[†]Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, Graduate students must ~~maintain~~ have a minimum GPA of 3.00 ~~average~~ in their degree program ~~and present a 3.00 GPA on(s) in order to graduate from~~ the ~~courses listed on the graduation application program(s).~~

AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales

Grading scales are indicated on each ~~specific~~ course. [For information on graduate academic standing, see AP.6.6.](#) Scales are listed below and indicate possible grades which may be earned within each:

1. Graduate Regular: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB
2. Graduate Special: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB, S, [SW](#), NC, IP
3. Satisfactory/No Credit: allows for S, NC, [SW](#), AB, IN, IP

AP.3.3 Additional [Undergraduate and Graduate](#) Grade Notations

Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC)

An S grade reflects satisfactory work [that completes course requirements](#) (C or better for undergraduate students, B- or better for graduate students); otherwise, the student receives no credit (NC). S and NC have no effect on the student's GPA. [Entire courses](#) [Courses](#) normally graded S/NC are annotated in the catalog, ~~and include doctoral dissertation courses 998 and 999.~~ Students may also individually elect to take credit without [a grade](#), with restriction. For more information, see [AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit](#)

Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit). For graduate courses that extend beyond one term, S/NC courses have an additional grading option of SW (Satisfactory Withdrawal).

Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW)

An SW grade is available only for graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, where the graduate student is officially resigning from the graduate program, resigning and transferring to a lower-level program, or electing an alternative program option for completing a degree or certificate. A final grade of SW does not count toward minimum program requirements and has no effect on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or any previous term grade of NC for the course.

Incomplete (IN)

This grade may be given to students who are passing a course, but who may be unable to complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control. Unless the faculty member has specified an earlier deadline, the student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ~~ninth~~^{9th} week of the next ~~semester~~^{term}, not including summer ~~term~~, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Additional time may be granted upon approval of an *Incomplete Extension* form. Faculty members who choose to require an earlier incomplete deadline will be required to file an *Incomplete Grade Contract* with the local academic unit's office, detailing the work that remains to be done, the general reason for the incomplete, and the student's grade at the point of receiving the incomplete. Students who have filed their intent to graduate have only six weeks from the date of degree conferral to resolve any incomplete grades and have the final grades recorded by the University Registrar's office.

The IN grade has no effect on the GPA and remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is submitted by the instructor. If the work has not been completed and no final grade has been submitted by the established deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the University Registrar's office to the Incomplete Final Grade recorded at the time of the IN grade designation.

Incomplete, extended (IX)

IX is given by the Office of the University Registrar after receiving an Incomplete Extension form signed by the instructor and the appropriate dean. The extension gives students additional time to complete work; ~~the amount of time is as~~ specified by the instructor. The final grade must be submitted to the University Registrar's office before the beginning of

the final exam period for the semester in which the IN grade was originally due. A grade of IX affects the academic record in the same way as does a grade of IN.

In Progress (IP)

This grade may be given in selected courses, including graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships. IP may also be used when the work of BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core), or if a course that is graded S/NC or A/B/C/NC is not completed within one semester. IP has no effect on the GPA. With the exception of the formerly-mentioned courses, IP remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned. An IP in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, or ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core) not changed to a final grade by the last day of classes of the next term, not including summer, is changed by the Office of the University Registrar to an F. ~~IP grades will also be awarded in courses numbered 799, 998 and 999 until successful completion, and then they will be changed to S/NC. Upon successful completion of 799, 998 or 999 and submission of the final grade, grades for all prior sections will be changed to S/NC.~~

~~IP grades will be awarded in graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, until successful completion of the requirements. Upon successful completion, the final grade of S will be assigned and IP grades for all prior terms of the course will change to the grade of S. If a student voluntarily resigns from a graduate academic program (See AP.6.4.4), voluntarily resigns and transfers to a lower-level graduate degree or certificate program (See AP.6.4.4.1), or elects, with program permission, an alternative option for completing a degree or certificate, a grade of SW will be assigned for the last term of course enrollment and any prior terms with an IP grade will be changed to SW. Any prior term with an NC grade will remain unchanged.~~

~~If progress is unsatisfactory in a term, a student is terminated, or permanently dismissed, a grade of NC will be assigned at the end of that term. In the case of termination, any prior terms will also receive an NC grade. In the case of resignation or resignation and transfer, a grade of SW will be assigned for the term of resignation and any prior terms with an IP grade. A grade of SW has no impact on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or prior terms that were graded NC.~~

Absent with Permission (AB)

A student who has received permission from the academic dean or director to be absent from a final exam for cause beyond reasonable control may receive a temporary grade of AB. A rescheduled exam must be administered within 10 business days of the original exam date, or the AB will automatically become an F. Final determination of academic status is not complete while the AB remains on the transcript.

Special Provision (SP)

The grade of SP may be given by a dean to students who are unable to complete the course requirements because of extraordinary long-term circumstances, such as major illness or military deployment. SP has no effect on the GPA and remains on the transcript until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned.

Never Attended (NA)

The grade of NA (Never Attended) is assigned to a student who is enrolled in a course but has never attended. NA means that the instructor has no evidence that the student ever attended class and no work was ever submitted. The NA will appear on the transcript and count toward attempted hours. The NA has no effect on the GPA. There may be financial aid implications for non-attendance. Tuition is not refunded.

AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students [at Risk of Graduate Academic Suspension or Termination](#)

[An undergraduate](#) student may request a delay from the dean in imposing academic suspension because of a pending grade appeal that could change the student's status. An approved delay allows the student to register.

If the grade appeal is successful, the official transcript is corrected and the student continues in classes as a student in good academic standing, on probation, or on warning. If the grade appeal is not successful, the student is required to stop attending all classes immediately. No record of registration for the academic period appears on a transcript and the student receives the appropriate refund as of the decision date.

[A graduate student with a pending academic exception to termination submission, may request that the decision be delayed until after the grade appeal is resolved if that original grade contributed towards the student becoming eligible for termination. The grade appeal must have been submitted by the time the request is made. If the grade appeal is](#)

[successful, the academic exception to termination request is closed, the official transcript is corrected, and the student continues in their former graduate academic standing. If the grade appeal is not successful, the academic exception to termination request will resume immediately.](#)

RELATED POLICIES

AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites

Course prerequisites or corequisites state requirements for student entry into courses and reflect necessary preparation for attempting the course. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these as stated in the catalog and to have taken prerequisites recently enough to be of value. The administrator of the academic unit in which the course is taught or the instructor of the course may summarily drop students who have enrolled in a course for which they have not met the prerequisites (required or recommended). Graduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of B- or better; undergraduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of C or better. Individual programs may have higher standards. Questions should be addressed to the local academic unit or course instructor.

AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course

Some undergraduate and graduate level courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are examples. All grades and credits earned are included in the calculation of the student's GPA up to the maximum allowable credits. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the grade and credits of the earliest registration of the class for which credit was earned will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA but will remain on the transcript. Effective July 1, 2011, Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described above. Students should contact the Office of

Student Financial Aid to determine how repeated coursework would affect their financial aid eligibility.

Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses. All courses taken, and their grades, remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA will not change the academic standing for the earlier semester. A grade in a George Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Undergraduate Level

Undergraduate students (degree-seeking or non-degree) may repeat undergraduate courses that are not repeatable for credit. There is a limit of three graded attempts for all courses. Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses or restrict students from repeating high-demand courses for the purpose of improving a satisfactory grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by students in their major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major. (See AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major.) Appeals to this policy begin with the student's academic advisor. The grade received in a repeated course will replace the earlier grade in the calculation of the GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. All courses taken and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the GPA will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Graduate Level

Graduate students who have earned a satisfactory grade in a course that is not repeatable for credit, as noted in the catalog, are not permitted to repeat the course without approval from the dean or director of the Collegecollege/School-school and the Graduate Division. Grades of B- ~~and or~~ higher are considered satisfactory unless the academic program

specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade in their program requirements as noted in the catalog. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course that is listed in the catalog as not repeatable for credit and in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each [unit-program](#) establishes criteria for granting such permission.

When a course is repeated by a graduate student, the last grade received will replace any earlier grade in the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA, even if the most recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, the grades of all credits attempted count towards eligibility for academic warning, probation, termination, or dismissal. Only one grade per course may apply towards a conferred graduate degree; however, the transcript will show grades for all courses attempted. Any earlier attempts of a course listed as not repeatable for credit are excluded from graduate cumulative GPA calculation.

AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates

Courses numbered 700 and above are closed to undergraduates. Undergraduates in degree programs may enroll in graduate-level courses 500 to 699 only with written permission, which must be obtained before registration. To enroll in graduate courses for credit applicable to an undergraduate degree, under this policy, undergraduates must have completed all course prerequisites. Enrollment in the graduate course is at the discretion of the course instructor and students must submit the appropriate form.

This policy is not applicable, and written permission is waived for undergraduate students admitted to George Mason combined bachelor's/accelerated master's programs (~~see: Such students are referred to~~ [AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees](#)).

Undergraduates enrolled in graduate courses are eligible to receive only those letter grades applicable to graduate grading. For more information, [AP.3- Grading](#). A minimum grade of B- in a graduate course is required to apply graduate credit towards a George Mason graduate degree or certificate. See ~~AP.6.5.2 Transfer of Credits~~[AP.6.5 Previously Earned Graduate Credit](#) for further information.

To enroll in graduate courses for credit that are not applicable to an undergraduate degree and are held in reserve to apply later toward a graduate degree, undergraduates must obtain approval through the appropriate [form](#) for reserve graduate credit. Approval is given only to George Mason seniors within 15 credits of completing undergraduate study who have successfully completed all course prerequisites. In addition, this privilege is normally

extended only to seniors who have completed at least 12 credits at the university, have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better, and have a major in the ~~local academic unit~~ (LAU) program offering the course. Approval for reserve graduate credit is limited to 6 credits and does not imply approval for admission into a George Mason graduate program or that credit earned will be accepted at another graduate school.

AP.6.8.4.3 Timeline Requirements

Bridge program students must apply to graduate and have their certificate conferred in the semester during which their final certificate requirements are fulfilled in accordance with all deadlines. Any certificate courses that the student plans to apply towards the Master's component must be completed by the semester or term of graduation specified on their transition form for the bridge program, be graded B- or better, and be aligned with the respective Master's degree program requirements. Students in bridge programs must submit their transition form to their graduate academic affairs office by the deadline to apply to graduate from their certificate program. Students must enroll in the related Master's program in the academic semester or summer session that immediately follows the term of certificate program conferral. Changes to the progression timeline must be approved by the graduate program director. Students must also adhere to all timelines specified in AP.6.5, AP.6.8.2, and AP.6.9.2. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

Once matriculated into the Master's program, all students must continue to adhere to all applicable graduate academic policies as detailed in the University Catalog.

Certificate Conferral

Students who successfully complete all program requirements within university time limits will have their certificate conferred for the semester in which they have met all certificate requirements and after completing their application for graduation. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

Master's Conferral

Students who have successfully completed all degree requirements within the university time limits will have their Master's conferred after completing their application for graduate. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

Spillover 03.04.26 AP Document

In this document are three academic policies ready for review and voting by the Faculty Senate:

A.P.4.2.1 - Definitions of Degree Components

This policy has been slightly updated based on conversation in the February Faculty Senate meeting. The proposed change affects **only** concentrations (not certificates, minors, or other degree elements). The graduate division has indicated that they wish the 12 unique credits policy to remain as written for graduate programs, so this change only pertains to undergraduate degrees.

AP.3.3 and related policies

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the Graduate Council and the Policy Management Group. The main changes to this policy are:

- The removal of the B- as a grade in the graduate grading scale.
- The addition of a Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW) grade notation.
- The removal of the Never Attended (NA) option for grading (this change was requested by the registrar and approved by the aforementioned bodies).

Grade Change: There is extensive documentation of the rationale for the removal of the B- provided before the policy revisions below, but the tl;dr version is that the change to 'good standing' from grade-based to GPA-based (AP.6.6) means that receiving a B- may place a student on probation (or dismissal) despite indications that it is a passing grade elsewhere. Data from the Grading Task Force show that it is rarely used in practice, so the effects should be minimal. The kind folks who work on the catalog have indicated they are willing to set up a streamlined process for programs to update any program-level references to B-grades as minimum required or acceptable for maintaining good standing (such updates need not be in place for next year's catalog). The B- will still be accepted for transfer credit (both internally and externally).

SW: Allows students to withdraw from a program but not receive a failing grade on otherwise satisfactory work they have contributed toward a dissertation, thesis, or project that is graded on the NC-IP-S scheme.

AP.8 Non-Degree Academic Credentials (NEW policy section in the catalog).

This policy comes from the Provost's office and specifies policies and requirements for non-degree credentials (e.g. certificates offered by Continuing Education and micro-credentials developed by academic programs). The policies aim to ensure quality standards for offerings outside of our regular academic review and assessment procedures. This policy has also been reviewed and endorsed by the Policy Management Group.

Rationale

Developing dual degree programs (at the undergraduate level specifically) would have to add many more additional credits if the current catalog language focuses on concentrations across degrees rather than within degrees. The updated version of this policy makes it clear that concentration courses overlapping between two separate degree programs is fine as long as each degree program has at least 18 credits that are unique to that degree program, but that that you can't have two concentrations in the same major that are overlapping so much that there aren't 12 unique credits for each concentration (within that major).

Proposed

AP.4.2.1 Definitions of Degree Components

- **Concentration:** A second-order component of a degree program. At the undergraduate level, concentrations are approved by the Undergraduate Council and consist of at least 12 hours not applied to any other concentration in the same degree program or major. At the graduate level, concentrations are approved by the Graduate Council and consist of at least 12 hours that are not applied to any other George Mason concentration (whether in the same degree program or in a different degree program).

Original

- **Concentration:** A second-order component of a degree program. A concentration consists of at least 12 hours that are not applied to any other concentration. Concentrations are approved by the Undergraduate Council at the undergraduate level or by the Graduate Council at the graduate level.

PMG Cover Sheet

Policy name and number: Graduate Grading Policy Revisions

- AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)
- AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students
- AP.3.2 Graduate Grading
- AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales
- AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations
- AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students in Academic Difficulty

Related Policies

- AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites
- AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course
- AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates
- AP.6.8.4.3 Timeline Requirements (for graduate Bridge programs)

Responsible office or committee: Graduate Division, Office of the Provost

Type of policy:

- ☒ University Catalog
- ☐ University Policy
- ☐ Faculty Handbook
- ☐ Code of Student Conduct
- ☐ Other policy or guidelines (e.g., graduate hiring guidelines, etc.)

University Policy Type (if a numbered University Policy)

- ☒ Academic Policies
- ☐ Computing
- ☐ Financial
- ☐ General Policies
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Risk, Safety, & Resilience
- ☐ Student Policies

Policy proposal type:

- ☐ New policy
- ☒ Substantial revision
- ☐ Minor revision
- ☐ Renewal with no changes
- ☐ Rescind policy

Emergency approval requested:

- ☐ Yes (must include compelling reason in the “why” paragraph below)
- ☒ No

If you are submitting a revised policy, you should submit them with changes tracked in a Microsoft Word document.

Why is this policy or revision being proposed?

The Faculty Senate Graduate Grading Task Force is currently being formed and is charged with examining graduate grading comprehensively once it convenes. In the meantime, changes to AP.6.6 related to Academic Standing for graduate students were approved in September 2025 and will go into effect in the 2026-27 catalog. Under these changes, graduate degree-seeking and non-degree status students shall be considered on Academic Probation if they receive a term GPA below 3.00 and/or if they receive a grade notation of NC or NA in an academic term. Inability to maintain a minimum 3.00 term GPA and/or obtaining NC or NA grade notation for two academic terms of enrollment would result in eligibility for termination beginning in the 2026-27 academic year. The goal of these proposed changes is to address these specific issues now; the Faculty Senate Graduate Grading Task Force will build on this work going forward.

Currently, B- on the graduate grading scale is considered a satisfactory/passing grade and is calculated at 2.67 quality points. Concerns have been raised that with the approved change to the graduate academic standing policy, students who receive what are considered satisfactory grades may be put on academic probation or be terminated from their program. For reference, the B- grade is used infrequently (1.6% of all graduate grades from fall 2018 through summer 2025).

In certain graduate courses graded solely on an S/NC basis, the available grading options are not adequate for all circumstances and may inadvertently result in Academic Probation when a student resigns from a program or selects an alternative degree completion pathway (e.g., chooses to complete a capstone course rather than a thesis).

The proposed changes would remove B- from the graduate grading scale. Academic probation and termination would remain possible outcomes; however, removing the B- creates consistency between the grading scale and the GPA thresholds, helping ensure that satisfactory performance is reflected appropriately in GPA calculations. The proposed revisions would also introduce a new grade (satisfactory withdrawal, SW) to address the second issue.

The suggested edits to AP.1 clarify and reflect policies that have been updated elsewhere in the University Catalog. The suggested edits to AP.3.9.1 clarify the impact of a pending grade appeal for graduate students as it relates to the updated academic standing policy.

Who has been involved or consulted with in the creation/revision of this policy already?

Graduate Division, Office of University Registrar, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate Academic Policies Committee, Policy Management Group.

Questions and feedback raised in and after PMG (to be added after PMG review):

Signature Routing Form

(to be created by PMG co-chairs for numbered University Policies only)

Reviewers & date of review:

- **Policy Management Group**
- **Graduate Council**
- **Faculty Senate**
- **University Counsel**
- **Compliance and Ethics**

Senior approving officials- signatures and dates

- **Signature 1**
- **Signature 2**

PROPOSED GRADUATE GRADING POLICY REVISIONS

FEBRUARY 2026

AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)

Courses normally graded as satisfactory/no credit (S/NC) are annotated in the catalog, however, students may elect to take credit without grade points. Undergraduates may take up to 6 credits to be graded S/NC; this option applies only to electives outside the field of the major, concentration, minor, general education requirement, or certificate program. Graduate students may elect the S/NC grade option for courses not normally graded as S/NC only for courses that do not apply to their degree or certificate requirements. For more information, see [AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations](#).

AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students

Graduate students who stop attending classes without dropping or withdrawing should receive a grade of F in those courses.

AP.3.2 Graduate Grading

The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing
B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing

C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

Graduate students must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in their degree program(s) in order to graduate from the program(s).

AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales

Grading scales are indicated on each course. For information on graduate academic standing, see AP.6.6. Scales are listed below and indicate possible grades which may be earned within each:

- Graduate Regular: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB
- Graduate Special: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB, S, SW, NC, IP
- Satisfactory/No Credit: allows for S, NC, SW, AB, IN, IP

AP.3.3 Additional Undergraduate and Graduate Grade Notations

Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC)

An S grade reflects satisfactory work that completes course requirements (C or better for undergraduate students, B or better for graduate students); otherwise, the student receives no credit (NC). S and NC have no effect on the student's GPA. Courses normally graded S/NC are annotated in the catalog. Students may also individually elect to take credit without a grade with restriction. For more information, see [AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points \(Satisfactory/No Credit\)](#). For graduate courses that extend beyond one term, S/NC courses have an additional grading option of SW (Satisfactory Withdrawal).

Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW)

An SW grade is available only for graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, where the graduate student is officially resigning from the graduate program, resigning and transferring to a lower-level program, or electing an alternative program option for completing a degree or certificate. A final grade of SW does not count toward minimum

program requirements and has no effect on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or any previous term grade of NC for the course.

Incomplete (IN)

This grade may be given to students who are passing a course, but who may be unable to complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control. Unless the faculty member has specified an earlier deadline, the student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the 9th week of the next term, not including summer, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Additional time may be granted upon approval of an Incomplete Extension form. Faculty members who choose to require an earlier incomplete deadline will be required to file an Incomplete Grade Contract with the local academic unit's office, detailing the work that remains to be done, the general reason for the incomplete, and the student's grade at the point of receiving the incomplete. Students who have filed their intent to graduate have only six weeks from the date of degree conferral to resolve any incomplete grades and have the final grades recorded by the University Registrar's office.

The IN grade has no effect on the GPA and remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is submitted by the instructor. If the work has not been completed and no final grade has been submitted by the established deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the University Registrar's office to the Incomplete Final Grade recorded at the time of the IN grade designation.

Incomplete, extended (IX)

IX is given by the Office of the University Registrar after receiving an Incomplete Extension form signed by the instructor and the appropriate dean. The extension gives students additional time to complete work as specified by the instructor. The final grade must be submitted to the University Registrar's office before the beginning of the final exam period for the semester in which the IN grade was originally due. A grade of IX affects the academic record in the same way as does a grade of IN.

In Progress (IP)

This grade may be given in selected courses, including graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships. IP may also be used when the work of BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core), or if a course that is graded S/NC or A/B/C/NC is not completed within one semester. IP has no effect on the GPA. With the exception of the formerly-mentioned courses, IP remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned. An IP in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, or ECON 495 RS:

Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core) not changed to a final grade by the last day of classes of the next term, not including summer, is changed by the Office of the University Registrar to an F.

IP grades will be awarded in graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, until successful completion of the requirements. Upon successful completion, the final grade of S will be assigned and IP grades for all prior terms of the course will change to the grade of S. If a student voluntarily resigns from a graduate academic program (See AP.6.4.4), voluntarily resigns and transfers to a lower-level graduate degree or certificate program (See AP.6.4.4.1), or elects, with program permission, an alternative option for completing a degree or certificate, a grade of SW will be assigned for the last term of course enrollment and any prior terms with an IP grade will be changed to SW. Any prior term with an NC grade will remain unchanged.

If progress is unsatisfactory in a term, a student is terminated, or permanently dismissed, a grade of NC will be assigned at the end of that term. In the case of termination, any prior terms will also receive an NC grade. In the case of resignation or resignation and transfer, a grade of SW will be assigned for the term of resignation and any prior terms with an IP grade. A grade of SW has no impact on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or prior terms that were graded NC.

Absent with Permission (AB)

A student who has received permission from the academic dean or director to be absent from a final exam for cause beyond reasonable control may receive a temporary grade of AB. A rescheduled exam must be administered within 10 business days of the original exam date, or the AB will automatically become an F. Final determination of academic status is not complete while the AB remains on the transcript.

Special Provision (SP)

The grade of SP may be given by a dean to students who are unable to complete the course requirements because of extraordinary long-term circumstances, such as major illness or military deployment. SP has no effect on the GPA and remains on the transcript until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned.

AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students at Risk of Graduate Academic Suspension or Termination

An undergraduate student may request a delay from the dean in imposing academic suspension because of a pending grade appeal that could change the student's status. An approved delay allows the student to register.

If the grade appeal is successful, the official transcript is corrected and the student continues in classes as a student in good academic standing, on probation, or on warning. If the grade appeal is not successful, the student is required to stop attending all classes immediately. No record of registration for the academic period appears on a transcript and the student receives the appropriate refund as of the decision date.

A graduate student with a pending academic exception to termination submission may request that the decision be delayed until after the grade appeal is resolved if that original grade contributed towards the student becoming eligible for termination. The grade appeal must have been submitted by the time the request is made. If the grade appeal is successful, the academic exception to termination request is closed, the official transcript is corrected, and the student continues in their former graduate academic standing. If the grade appeal is not successful, the academic exception to termination request will resume immediately.

RELATED POLICY UPDATES

AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites

Course prerequisites or corequisites state requirements for student entry into courses and reflect necessary preparation for attempting the course. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these as stated in the catalog and to have taken prerequisites recently enough to be of value. The administrator of the academic unit in which the course is taught or the instructor of the course may summarily drop students who have enrolled in a course for which they have not met the prerequisites (required or recommended). Graduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of B or better; undergraduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of C or better. Individual programs may have higher standards. Questions should be addressed to the local academic unit or course instructor.

AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course

Some undergraduate and graduate level courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are

examples. All grades and credits earned are included in the calculation of the student's GPA up to the maximum allowable credits. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the grade and credits of the earliest registration of the class for which credit was earned will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA but will remain on the transcript. Effective July 1, 2011, Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described above. Students should contact the Office of Student Financial Aid to determine how repeated coursework would affect their financial aid eligibility.

Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses. All courses taken, and their grades, remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA will not change the academic standing for the earlier semester. A grade in a George Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Undergraduate Level

Undergraduate students (degree-seeking or non-degree) may repeat undergraduate courses that are not repeatable for credit. There is a limit of three graded attempts for all courses. Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses or restrict students from repeating high-demand courses for the purpose of improving a satisfactory grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by students in their major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major. (See AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major.) Appeals to this policy begin with the student's academic advisor. The grade received in a repeated course will replace the earlier grade in the calculation of the GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. All courses taken and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the GPA will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Graduate Level

Graduate students who have earned a satisfactory grade in a course that is not repeatable for credit, as noted in the catalog, are not permitted to repeat the course without approval from the dean or director of the college/school and the Graduate Division. Grades of B or

higher are considered satisfactory unless the academic program specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade in their program requirements as noted in the catalog. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course that is listed in the catalog as not repeatable for credit and in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each program establishes criteria for granting such permission.

When a course is repeated by a graduate student, the last grade received will replace any earlier grade in the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA, even if the most recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, the grades of all credits attempted count towards eligibility for academic warning, probation, termination, or dismissal. Only one grade per course may apply towards a conferred graduate degree; however, the transcript will show grades for all courses attempted. Any earlier attempts of a course listed as not repeatable for credit are excluded from graduate cumulative GPA calculation.

AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates

Courses numbered 700 and above are closed to undergraduates. Undergraduates in degree programs may enroll in graduate-level courses 500 to 699 only with written permission, which must be obtained before registration. To enroll in graduate courses for credit applicable to an undergraduate degree, under this policy, undergraduates must have completed all course prerequisites. Enrollment in the graduate course is at the discretion of the course instructor and students must submit the appropriate form.

This policy is not applicable, and written permission is waived for undergraduate students admitted to George Mason combined bachelor's/accelerated master's programs (see [AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees](#)). Undergraduates enrolled in graduate courses are eligible to receive only those letter grades applicable to graduate grading. For more information, [AP.3 Grading](#). A minimum grade of B in a graduate course is required to apply graduate credit towards a George Mason graduate degree or certificate. See [AP.6.5 Previously Earned Graduate Credit](#) for further information.

To enroll in graduate courses for credit that are not applicable to an undergraduate degree and are held in reserve to apply later toward a graduate degree, undergraduates must obtain approval through the appropriate [form](#) for reserve graduate credit. Approval is given only to George Mason seniors within 15 credits of completing undergraduate study who have successfully completed all course prerequisites. In addition, this privilege is normally extended only to seniors who have completed at least 12 credits at the university, have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better, and have a major in the program offering the course. Approval for reserve graduate credit is limited to 6 credits and does not imply approval for admission into a George Mason graduate program or that credit earned will be accepted at another graduate school.

PROPOSED GRADUATE GRADING POLICY REVISIONS

[TRACKED CHANGES]

FEBRUARY 2026

AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)

Courses normally graded as satisfactory/no credit (S/NC) are annotated in the catalog, however, students may elect to take credit without grade points. Undergraduates may take up to 6 credits to be graded S/NC; this option applies only to electives outside the field of the major, concentration, minor, general education requirement, or certificate program. Graduate students may elect the S/NC grade option [for courses not normally graded as S/NC](#) only for courses that do not apply to ~~the~~[their](#) degree or certificate requirements. For more information, see [AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations](#).

AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students

Graduate students who stop ~~or do not attend~~[attending](#) classes without dropping or withdrawing should receive a grade of F in those courses.-

AP.3.2 Graduate Grading

The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing

B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing
B-	2.67	Satisfactory [†] /Passing
C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

Grading (Graduate)

[†]Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, Graduate students must ~~maintain~~ have a minimum GPA of 3.00 ~~average~~ in their degree program ~~and present a 3.00 GPA on(s) in order to graduate from~~ the ~~courses listed on the graduation application program(s).~~

AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales

Grading scales are indicated on each ~~specific~~ course. [For information on graduate academic standing, see AP.6.6.](#) Scales are listed below and indicate possible grades which may be earned within each:

1. Graduate Regular: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB
2. Graduate Special: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB, S, [SW](#), NC, IP
3. Satisfactory/No Credit: allows for S, NC, [SW](#), AB, IN, IP

AP.3.3 Additional [Undergraduate and Graduate](#) Grade Notations

Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC)

An S grade reflects satisfactory work [that completes course requirements](#) (C or better for undergraduate students, B- or better for graduate students); otherwise, the student receives no credit (NC). S and NC have no effect on the student's GPA. [Entire courses](#) [Courses](#) normally graded S/NC are annotated in the catalog, ~~and include doctoral dissertation courses 998 and 999.~~ Students may also individually elect to take credit without [a grade](#), with restriction. For more information, see [AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit](#)

Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit). For graduate courses that extend beyond one term, S/NC courses have an additional grading option of SW (Satisfactory Withdrawal).

Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW)

An SW grade is available only for graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, where the graduate student is officially resigning from the graduate program, resigning and transferring to a lower-level program, or electing an alternative program option for completing a degree or certificate. A final grade of SW does not count toward minimum program requirements and has no effect on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or any previous term grade of NC for the course.

Incomplete (IN)

This grade may be given to students who are passing a course, but who may be unable to complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control. Unless the faculty member has specified an earlier deadline, the student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ~~ninth~~^{9th} week of the next ~~semester~~^{term}, not including summer ~~term~~, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Additional time may be granted upon approval of an *Incomplete Extension* form. Faculty members who choose to require an earlier incomplete deadline will be required to file an *Incomplete Grade Contract* with the local academic unit's office, detailing the work that remains to be done, the general reason for the incomplete, and the student's grade at the point of receiving the incomplete. Students who have filed their intent to graduate have only six weeks from the date of degree conferral to resolve any incomplete grades and have the final grades recorded by the University Registrar's office.

The IN grade has no effect on the GPA and remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is submitted by the instructor. If the work has not been completed and no final grade has been submitted by the established deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the University Registrar's office to the Incomplete Final Grade recorded at the time of the IN grade designation.

Incomplete, extended (IX)

IX is given by the Office of the University Registrar after receiving an Incomplete Extension form signed by the instructor and the appropriate dean. The extension gives students additional time to complete work; ~~the amount of time is as~~ specified by the instructor. The final grade must be submitted to the University Registrar's office before the beginning of

the final exam period for the semester in which the IN grade was originally due. A grade of IX affects the academic record in the same way as does a grade of IN.

In Progress (IP)

This grade may be given in selected courses, including graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships. IP may also be used when the work of BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core), or if a course that is graded S/NC or A/B/C/NC is not completed within one semester. IP has no effect on the GPA. With the exception of the formerly-mentioned courses, IP remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned. An IP in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, or ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core) not changed to a final grade by the last day of classes of the next term, not including summer, is changed by the Office of the University Registrar to an F. ~~IP grades will also be awarded in courses numbered 799, 998 and 999 until successful completion, and then they will be changed to S/NC. Upon successful completion of 799, 998 or 999 and submission of the final grade, grades for all prior sections will be changed to S/NC.~~

~~IP grades will be awarded in graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, until successful completion of the requirements. Upon successful completion, the final grade of S will be assigned and IP grades for all prior terms of the course will change to the grade of S. If a student voluntarily resigns from a graduate academic program (See AP.6.4.4), voluntarily resigns and transfers to a lower-level graduate degree or certificate program (See AP.6.4.4.1), or elects, with program permission, an alternative option for completing a degree or certificate, a grade of SW will be assigned for the last term of course enrollment and any prior terms with an IP grade will be changed to SW. Any prior term with an NC grade will remain unchanged.~~

~~If progress is unsatisfactory in a term, a student is terminated, or permanently dismissed, a grade of NC will be assigned at the end of that term. In the case of termination, any prior terms will also receive an NC grade. In the case of resignation or resignation and transfer, a grade of SW will be assigned for the term of resignation and any prior terms with an IP grade. A grade of SW has no impact on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or prior terms that were graded NC.~~

Absent with Permission (AB)

A student who has received permission from the academic dean or director to be absent from a final exam for cause beyond reasonable control may receive a temporary grade of AB. A rescheduled exam must be administered within 10 business days of the original exam date, or the AB will automatically become an F. Final determination of academic status is not complete while the AB remains on the transcript.

Special Provision (SP)

The grade of SP may be given by a dean to students who are unable to complete the course requirements because of extraordinary long-term circumstances, such as major illness or military deployment. SP has no effect on the GPA and remains on the transcript until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned.

Never Attended (NA)

~~The grade of NA (Never Attended) is assigned to a student who is enrolled in a course but has never attended. NA means that the instructor has no evidence that the student ever attended class and no work was ever submitted. The NA will appear on the transcript and count toward attempted hours. The NA has no effect on the GPA. There may be financial aid implications for non-attendance. Tuition is not refunded.~~

AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students [at Risk of Graduate Academic Suspension or Termination](#)

~~A~~[An undergraduate](#) student may request a delay from the dean in imposing academic suspension because of a pending grade appeal that could change the student's status. An approved delay allows the student to register.

If the grade appeal is successful, the official transcript is corrected and the student continues in classes as a student in good academic standing, on probation, or on warning. If the grade appeal is not successful, the student is required to stop attending all classes immediately. No record of registration for the academic period appears on a transcript and the student receives the appropriate refund as of the decision date.

[A graduate student with a pending academic exception to termination submission, may request that the decision be delayed until after the grade appeal is resolved if that original grade contributed towards the student becoming eligible for termination. The grade appeal must have been submitted by the time the request is made. If the grade appeal is](#)

[successful, the academic exception to termination request is closed, the official transcript is corrected, and the student continues in their former graduate academic standing. If the grade appeal is not successful, the academic exception to termination request will resume immediately.](#)

RELATED POLICIES

AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites

Course prerequisites or corequisites state requirements for student entry into courses and reflect necessary preparation for attempting the course. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these as stated in the catalog and to have taken prerequisites recently enough to be of value. The administrator of the academic unit in which the course is taught or the instructor of the course may summarily drop students who have enrolled in a course for which they have not met the prerequisites (required or recommended). Graduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of B- or better; undergraduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of C or better. Individual programs may have higher standards. Questions should be addressed to the local academic unit or course instructor.

AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course

Some undergraduate and graduate level courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are examples. All grades and credits earned are included in the calculation of the student's GPA up to the maximum allowable credits. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the grade and credits of the earliest registration of the class for which credit was earned will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA but will remain on the transcript. Effective July 1, 2011, Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described above. Students should contact the Office of

Student Financial Aid to determine how repeated coursework would affect their financial aid eligibility.

Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses. All courses taken, and their grades, remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA will not change the academic standing for the earlier semester. A grade in a George Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Undergraduate Level

Undergraduate students (degree-seeking or non-degree) may repeat undergraduate courses that are not repeatable for credit. There is a limit of three graded attempts for all courses. Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses or restrict students from repeating high-demand courses for the purpose of improving a satisfactory grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by students in their major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major. (See AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major.) Appeals to this policy begin with the student's academic advisor. The grade received in a repeated course will replace the earlier grade in the calculation of the GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. All courses taken and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the GPA will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

At the Graduate Level

Graduate students who have earned a satisfactory grade in a course that is not repeatable for credit, as noted in the catalog, are not permitted to repeat the course without approval from the dean or director of the Collegecollege/School-school and the Graduate Division. Grades of B- ~~and or~~ higher are considered satisfactory unless the academic program

specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade in their program requirements as noted in the catalog. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course that is listed in the catalog as not repeatable for credit and in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each [unit-program](#) establishes criteria for granting such permission.

When a course is repeated by a graduate student, the last grade received will replace any earlier grade in the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA, even if the most recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, the grades of all credits attempted count towards eligibility for academic warning, probation, termination, or dismissal. Only one grade per course may apply towards a conferred graduate degree; however, the transcript will show grades for all courses attempted. Any earlier attempts of a course listed as not repeatable for credit are excluded from graduate cumulative GPA calculation.

AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates

Courses numbered 700 and above are closed to undergraduates. Undergraduates in degree programs may enroll in graduate-level courses 500 to 699 only with written permission, which must be obtained before registration. To enroll in graduate courses for credit applicable to an undergraduate degree, under this policy, undergraduates must have completed all course prerequisites. Enrollment in the graduate course is at the discretion of the course instructor and students must submit the appropriate form.

This policy is not applicable, and written permission is waived for undergraduate students admitted to George Mason combined bachelor's/accelerated master's programs ([see: ~~Such students are referred to~~ AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees](#)).

Undergraduates enrolled in graduate courses are eligible to receive only those letter grades applicable to graduate grading. For more information, [AP.3- Grading](#). A minimum grade of B- in a graduate course is required to apply graduate credit towards a George Mason graduate degree or certificate. See [AP.6.5.2 Transfer of Credits](#)[AP.6.5 Previously Earned Graduate Credit](#) for further information.

To enroll in graduate courses for credit that are not applicable to an undergraduate degree and are held in reserve to apply later toward a graduate degree, undergraduates must obtain approval through the appropriate [form](#) for reserve graduate credit. Approval is given only to George Mason seniors within 15 credits of completing undergraduate study who have successfully completed all course prerequisites. In addition, this privilege is normally

extended only to seniors who have completed at least 12 credits at the university, have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better, and have a major in the ~~local academic unit~~ (LAU) program offering the course. Approval for reserve graduate credit is limited to 6 credits and does not imply approval for admission into a George Mason graduate program or that credit earned will be accepted at another graduate school.

AP.6.8.4.3 Timeline Requirements

Bridge program students must apply to graduate and have their certificate conferred in the semester during which their final certificate requirements are fulfilled in accordance with all deadlines. Any certificate courses that the student plans to apply towards the Master's component must be completed by the semester or term of graduation specified on their transition form for the bridge program, be graded B- or better, and be aligned with the respective Master's degree program requirements. Students in bridge programs must submit their transition form to their graduate academic affairs office by the deadline to apply to graduate from their certificate program. Students must enroll in the related Master's program in the academic semester or summer session that immediately follows the term of certificate program conferral. Changes to the progression timeline must be approved by the graduate program director. Students must also adhere to all timelines specified in AP.6.5, AP.6.8.2, and AP.6.9.2. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

Once matriculated into the Master's program, all students must continue to adhere to all applicable graduate academic policies as detailed in the University Catalog.

Certificate Conferral

Students who successfully complete all program requirements within university time limits will have their certificate conferred for the semester in which they have met all certificate requirements and after completing their application for graduation. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

Master's Conferral

Students who have successfully completed all degree requirements within the university time limits will have their Master's conferred after completing their application for graduate. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

AP.8 - Rationale

George Mason University has been offering various forms of non-degree credentials, including digital badges, micro-credentials, and stackable certificates, for several years through academic units and the Office of Continuing and Professional Education. AP.8 formalizes these existing practices into a comprehensive institutional policy that ensures compliance with SACSCOC accreditation standards and SCHEV guidance, both of which require institutions to establish clear governance structures, transparent student information, and quality assurance processes for all credential types.

This policy provides necessary clarity by distinguishing between credit-bearing credentials (which are subject to full accreditation standards and appear on transcripts) and noncredit credentials (which are issued as digital badges). It establishes faculty qualifications and assessment requirements appropriate to each credential type, clarifies approval pathways through program, college, and university governance, and defines roles and responsibilities across academic units, CPE, the Provost's Office, and the Registrar. AP.8 is intended to position the university to continue expanding these focused learning pathways as opportunity permits, while maintaining academic quality and accountability.

AP.8 Non-Degree Academic Credentials

Policy Scope

This policy governs credit-bearing and noncredit academic credentials developed and awarded by George Mason University academic units and/or Office of Continuing and Professional Education (CPE). It does not apply to degrees, minors, concentrations, or academic certificates governed under AP.5 and AP.6.

Definition

Non-degree conferring credentials (NDCs) are awarded for completing academic programs that teach focused knowledge or skills competencies. These credentials comprise more than a single course but less content than a full degree; credentials may be composed of for-credit or not-for-credit classes and structured learning experiences. The academic quality standards for non-degree credentials align with George Mason's standards for other institutional credentials, with rigor appropriate to each credential type and purpose, as defined in this policy.

AP.8.1 Categories of Non-Degree Credentials

George Mason University offers NDCs in two categories: credit-bearing and non-credit. All approved credentials must clearly publish eligibility requirements, completion criteria, credit/noncredit status, transcript eligibility, stackable pathways, and whether credits may transfer to other institutions in program materials and institutional registries per accreditation transparency requirements.

AP.8.1.1 Credit-Bearing Academic Credentials

Credit-bearing credentials are earned upon the completion of specified university credit-bearing courses.

Credit Requirements: Credit-bearing credentials range from requiring 3 to 15 credits and must be completable in two semesters or less. Credentials must use a specified curriculum (not menu-style course options) within existing academic program discipline areas with available faculty resources and may not duplicate names of existing degree or certificate programs.

Approval: Proposals must be reviewed and approved through established curricular governance pathways at the program, college/school, and university levels. Credit-bearing credentials follow the same academic standards, assessment, SACSCOC accreditation standards, and quality assurance processes as traditional academic programs. Where applicable, credit-bearing credentials are subject to accreditation substantive change notification requirements.

Degree Applications and Transferability: Credits may count toward certificate or degree requirements only if approved as part of their published existing degree requirements and electives. If multiple credit-bearing credentials can be taken together and combined into a certificate or degree ("stackable credentials"), that information should be published, and advisors must be available to explain the process and procedures for using stackable credentials to complete a degree program. All time limits

and other relevant academic policies apply. Transfer of credit-bearing credentials to other institutions is subject to receiving institution policies.

Flexibility for Professional Requirements: Credentials required to align with specific professional licensure, certification, or industry standards may depart from standard parameters with documented justification and Dean approval.

AP.8.1.2 Noncredit Academic Credentials

Noncredit academic credentials document competency achievement or program completion, but do not earn academic credit. These credentials are not subject to SACSCOC substantive change requirements but must maintain published institutional policies regarding purpose, characteristics, and student rights. Academic credentials documenting competency achievement or program completion that do not carry academic credit and are not recorded on the university transcript.

Credential Types:

- Competency-Based Credentials: Competency-based credentials must require performance-based assessment demonstrating mastery of defined learning outcomes. Assessment evidence must be documented and retained per university guidelines.
- Program Completion Credentials: The program must document satisfactory participation or completion based on attendance and instructional hours but does not require direct competency assessment. Faculty and staff professional development credentials within George Mason may be issued for university training programs and follow the same noncredit credential requirements.

Approval: Proposals that originate in academic units require approval by the Dean of the college or school in which the LAU is housed. Proposals that originate in other units require approval of the Vice President/Provost of that unit. All noncredit academic credentials must be approved by the Continuing and Professional Education Office. Credentials must meet George Mason's standards for skill development and learning outcomes, assessment appropriate to the credential type, and industry or professional alignment.

Issuance: All noncredit credentials are issued as digital badges through the university credentialing platform and include appropriate disclaimers indicating noncredit status and ineligibility for transcript notation.

Credit Conversion and Prior Learning: Noncredit credentials do not automatically convert to academic credit. Students may petition to apply documented learning from noncredit credentials (from George Mason or other institutions) toward academic credit through George Mason's prior learning assessment procedures, subject to faculty review and institutional credit limits. Acceptance of external noncredit credentials follows existing transfer credit policies.

AP.8.2 Academic Quality Standards

Outcomes: All credentials must focus on clearly defined, measurable skill development or learning outcomes with specific earning criteria documented through deliverables, assignments, or performance artifacts, aligned with academic, professional, or industry standards appropriate to the credential type.

Assessment: Credit-bearing credentials require performance-based (or competency-based) assessment meeting the same rigor as equivalent credit courses. Performance-based assessment requires students

to apply their knowledge and skills by solving real-world problems or creating, performing, or producing artifacts that demonstrate specific competencies in authentic contexts. Noncredit competency-based credentials require demonstrated mastery of defined outcomes, with assessment evidence documented and retained for quality review. Participation-based credentials document completion based on attendance and instructional hours and must specify completion criteria.

Faculty and Instructor Qualifications: Credit-bearing credentials must be taught by faculty meeting the same qualifications required for equivalent credit courses. Noncredit credential instructors must have documented qualifications appropriate to the subject matter.

Delivery Modality: All delivery formats (in-person, online, hybrid) must provide equivalent learning experiences with consistent outcomes and appropriate student support services.

Periodic Review: The office of the Provost conducts reviews of all credentials to assess compliance and continuation recommendations.

Student Appeals: Students enrolled in credit-bearing credentials may appeal assessment decisions or credential denial through existing academic grievance procedures to the Office of the Provost.

AP.8.3 Oversight and Compliance

Academic units hold primary responsibility for credit-bearing credentials and appoint a faculty lead to oversee program delivery and assessment. The Office of the Provost oversees compliance for all credential types. The Office of the University Registrar maintains official academic transcript records for credit-bearing credentials and verifies achievements and credential status.

Tuition and fees for credit-bearing credentials are assessed at the standard per-credit rate. Credit-bearing credentials may be eligible for financial aid subject to enrollment status and federal/state requirements; eligible programs are listed separately by the Office of Student Financial Aid. Noncredit credential fees are established by the sponsoring unit and approved by the Office of the Provost. Administrative fees for credentialing platform access and badge issuance are assessed per the university fee schedule.

Policy Management Group Charter

Purpose and Charge

The Policy Management Group (PMG) is charged by the Provost and Executive Vice President and the Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer with facilitating a timely, transparent institutional policy process for George Mason University implementing Policy 1101 and its associated procedures. This includes all types of policies and associated procedures that are implemented at the institutional level (including but not limited to University Policies, University Catalog, Faculty Handbooks, Codes of Conduct, and Guidelines). The purpose of the PMG is to provide an opportunity for feedback and input from multiple campus stakeholders to ensure comprehensive policy review, reduce the likelihood of unintended consequences from policy changes, and facilitate a transparent policy process that includes clear communication with the campus community.

Local academic units and administrative departments may develop and set their own internal policies and procedures that impact solely their unit in alignment and compliance with university policy; these procedures are out of the scope of the PMG.

Responsibilities

The policy manager(s), with PMG engagement, will:

- Implement Policy 1101 and its associated procedures.
- Coordinate policy review and approval processes across institutional units.
- Ensure legal compliance and risk mitigation through consultation with the Office of Institutional Compliance, the Chief Risk Officer, and Office of University Counsel.
- Maintain records of policy development and revisions.
- Communicate policy updates to the university community in a timely manner.

Composition

Co-chairs:

- Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs
- Interim Vice President for Enterprise Risk Management

Policy Manager: Committee Facilitator and Recordkeeper, ex officio

Office of University Counsel: Provide legal advice to Committee, ex officio

Office of Institutional Compliance and Ethics: Provide compliance feedback, ex officio

Unit and policy area representatives designated by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in consultation with each unit to ensure appropriate representation. Co-chairs can adjust membership as needed, in consultation with the EVP/Provost & SVP/COO.

SLT Area	Area Represented	Representative (selected in collaboration with area/unit, should also select alternate)
President	Athletics	
	Human Resources	
	Office of Access, Compliance, and Community	
Provost	Accreditation	
	Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning	
	Graduate Education	
	Office of International Programs and Services	
	Registrar & Financial Aid (should liaise with APAC)	
	Research Administration: Research Council, Research Integrity	
	Undergraduate Education & Academic Advising	
	University Life (should also liaise with Student Senate)	
SVP & COO	Auxiliary & Business Services	
	Facilities & Campus Operations	
	Information Technology Services	
	Risk, Safety, & Resilience	
SVP & CFO	Fiscal Services	
University-Wide Representatives	Staff Senate	
	Academic Policies Faculty Senate representative: Academic Policies Committee	Chair or member of Academic Policies Committee
	Faculty Policy Representative: Faculty Handbook Committee, Faculty Matters	Chair or member of Faculty Handbook Committee
	Faculty Research Representative: Research Advisory Committee, Intellectual Property Committee	Chair or member of Research Advisory Committee

Governance and Decision Making

- The PMG operates under the authority of the Provost & Executive Vice President and the Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, serving solely in a review and advisory capacity. It does not hold policy approval authority.
- Recommendations are made by consensus whenever possible; otherwise, by majority vote of members present.

- Legal and compliance issues will be referred to the Office of University Counsel and/or Office of Institutional Compliance.

Communication and Transparency

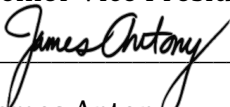
- PMG will provide input to a public-facing website with meeting agendas, policy updates, and timelines.
- Stakeholders will be invited to provide feedback during policy development and revision phases, which takes place prior to PMG review and input.

Charter Approval:

Signed by:

2A076EF67F32483...

Julie Zobel
Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer


James Antony
Provost and Executive Vice President

2/3/2026

Date

January 29, 2026

Date

University Policy 3006: Course Modality Policy

Responsible Office: Office of the Provost

Policy Procedure: N/A

Related Law, Policy & Guidelines:

- [University Policy 2207: Inclement Weather/Emergency Closure](#)
- [University Policy 3014: Distance Education](#)
- [Faculty Handbook section 2.10.4: Faculty Absences from Class](#)

I. **Scope:** This policy applies to faculty teaching all for-credit undergraduate and graduate courses. This policy does not apply to individual student requests for temporary accommodations in a class.

II. Policy Statement:

This policy governs course modality and when temporary changes can be made to course modality. Courses must be taught in the modality and on the days and times listed in the university schedule. Course modality may only be changed for the entire class temporarily for one of three reasons:

1. **Pre-planned absences:** When faculty need to be absent from class for a pre-planned professional obligation (e.g., attending an academic conference), faculty members must make arrangements in advance and notify their local unit administrator (LAU). In these cases, faculty members should either move their class to a different modality (e.g., move an In-person class to a Synchronous or Asynchronous format for that class period) or arrange for a qualified colleague to assume their teaching duties temporarily (see [Faculty Handbook 2.10.4](#)).
2. **Sudden illnesses or other emergencies:** In cases of absences due to sudden illnesses or other emergencies, faculty must notify their local unit administrator. In these situations, faculty may move their class to a different modality, arrange for a qualified colleague to temporarily assume their teaching responsibilities, or cancel class if the previous options are not feasible.
3. **Inclement weather and other campus closures:** When campus is closed due to inclement weather or other emergencies, Synchronous and Asynchronous online courses may continue as planned. Additionally, faculty may move their In-person, Hybrid, or HyFlex courses to either Synchronous or Asynchronous online modality during a campus closure to allow for instructional continuity. Instructors must communicate their plans for campus closures in their syllabi and must also email students about the plan to move to an alternate modality after the campus closure has been announced. Instructors should be aware of weather-related contingencies that may impact students' ability to attend online

and allow appropriate flexibility.

Instructors must comply with any academic accommodations approved by Disability Services for students in the class with respect to any course modality change. Any course modality changes that are planned for more than two weeks need to be approved by the local unit administrator and must be updated in Banner. In the case of extended emergencies, the Provost may authorize changes in the modality for all courses for a longer period of time.

III. **Definitions**

Asynchronous: Asynchronous online courses do not have a required time in which students and instructors must meet; however, asynchronous courses may include optional, live meetings or office hours. While there are regular deadlines, schedules of coursework are flexible. Information regarding proctored exams and/or the use of webcams must be outlined in the course syllabus.

Hybrid: A course in which a pre-determined proportion of the class is delivered using at least two alternating modalities (asynchronous online, synchronous online, face-to-face) on a planned schedule. For example, a course might meet in-person one day and synchronously online another day (Hybrid 1), in-person one day and asynchronously online for the remainder of the week (Hybrid 2), or synchronously online one day and asynchronously online for the remainder of the week (Hybrid 3). Meeting times for face-to-face and synchronous sessions must be noted at the point of student registration and should be consistent over the course of the semester.

HyFlex (Hybrid + Flexible): A course in which some students are attending face-to-face while others are simultaneously attending synchronously online. In a HyFlex model, all students engage with the same learning outcomes, assessments, instructional materials, and participate live in the same class sessions, regardless of modality in which they are enrolled.

In-person: In-person courses meet in a physical classroom on campus on specified days and times.

Synchronous: Synchronous online courses specify a required time during which instructors and students meet live, using supported video conferencing platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Zoom). Required meeting times conform to standard patterns associated with face-to-face classes and must be noted at the point of student registration.

IV. **Responsibilities:**

Faculty are responsible for (1) teaching their courses in the modality in which they are scheduled, (2) communicating their plans for course modality changes during campus closures in their syllabus and in an email to students any day that their class is impacted by a campus closure, and (3) contacting their LAU administrator any time they change their modality for a class session, except when that modality change is due to a campus closure.

LAU administrators are responsible for (1) ensuring that faculty teach their courses in the modality scheduled, (2) documenting any temporary modality changes due to the reasons outlined in this policy, and (3) communicating the expectations outlined in this policy to faculty and the procedures for performance management that will be used to address violations of this policy.

V. **Compliance:**

Faculty who change course modality or cancel class for reasons that are not outlined above may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

VI. **Amendments:** Amendments to this policy should be approved by the Provost and Executive Vice President. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

VII. **Dates:**

Approved:

Effective:

PMG Cover Sheet

Policy name and number: University Policy 3006: Course Modality Policy

Responsible office or committee: Office of the Provost

Type of policy:

- ☐ University Catalog
- ☒ University Policy
- ☐ Faculty Handbook
- ☐ Code of Student Conduct
- ☐ Other policy or guidelines (e.g., graduate hiring guidelines, etc.)

University Policy Type (if a numbered University Policy)

- ☒ Academic Policies
- ☐ Computing
- ☐ Financial
- ☐ General Policies
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Research
- ☐ Risk, Safety, & Resilience
- ☐ Student Policies

Policy proposal type:

- ☒ New policy
- ☐ Substantial revision
- ☐ Minor revision
- ☐ Renewal with no changes
- ☐ Rescind policy

Emergency approval requested

- ☐ Yes (must include compelling reason in the “why” paragraph below)
- ☒ No

If you are submitting a revised policy and procedures, you should submit them with changes tracked in a Microsoft Word document.

Why is this policy or revision being proposed?

This policy is being created to provide clarity about when faculty can temporarily change course modality and the appropriate notification and approval processes, where relevant. This is in part intended to help communicate about options for inclement weather and campus closures because informal guidance has varied over the past 5 or so years, and in part to help address concerns about faculty moving their courses from the modality advertised and in which students registered to other modalities without any process or approval.

Who has been involved or consulted with in the creation/revision of this policy already?

- Charlie Kreitzer, Executive Director for Mason Online
- Doug McKenna, University Registrar
- Doug Eyman, Chair of Academic Policies
- Instructional Continuity Working Group- chaired by Janette Muir, includes faculty and administrators from numerous units across campus
- Naomi Martinez-Jones, Office of Disability Services
- Academic Policies Committee
- Faculty Senate

Are there other policies that will be impacted by this? No, though this does reinforce some existing policies in the Faculty Handbook

Questions and feedback raised in and after PMG (to be added after PMG review):

Updates made as part of PMG review:

- Some minor wording changes (shall, must, may)
- Added a sentence allowing the Provost to authorize changes in modality for longer periods due to extended emergencies
- Added clarification in the scope that this applies to faculty teaching courses, not to individual student requests for temporary accommodations.

Feedback from Faculty Senate: Concerns were raised about the Compliance section of the document, with a suggestion from some to consider referring to the Faculty Handbook section instead. Revisions were made in the newest draft in consultation with OUC. Religious observances were also added as a pre-planned absence.

Provost recommendation: Added language from the instructional continuity email regarding scheduling ad-hoc makeup classes to the policy.

Signature Routing Form

(to be created by PMG co-chairs for numbered University Policies only)

Reviewers & date of review:

- **Policy Management Group- reviewed January 27, 2026**
- **Faculty Senate- reviewed January 28, 2026**
- **University Counsel - Eli Schlam, reviewed 1/14/26**
- **Compliance and Ethics *x NII 1/15/26***

Senior approving officials- signatures and dates

James Antony

Provost and Executive Vice President

date

Julie Zobel

Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

date