

## **GRADUATE STUDENT PETITIONS COMMITTEE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Graduate and postbaccalaureate students seeking waivers from requirements, or exceptions and deviations from established regulations or procedures should first determine the appropriate level for accommodating such a request: the department, the Division of Graduate Studies, or other university-level administrative units (see APM 247, *Guidelines and Policies for Graduate and Postbaccalaureate Student Petitions/Appeals*). Often the submission of a formal petition is required for such actions. The Graduate Student Petitions Committee is charged with the responsibility for reviewing and adjudicating such graduate and postbaccalaureate petitions, per the following guidelines.

### **I. AUTHORITY, PURPOSE, AND LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

Graduate students at California State University, Fresno, in pursuit of their educational objectives, are required to conform to academic requirements and policies which have been established by the State Legislature, the Board of Trustees of the California State University system, and the Division of Graduate Studies at California State University, Fresno. In administering these academic requirements and policies, the university endeavors to exercise wisdom and judgment so that the educational needs of the individual student may be served well. Thus, a student is permitted to petition for exceptions to established policies and regulations when they have met or propose to meet a Division of Graduate Studies requirement or regulation by an alternative means that is educationally justifiable. (Note regulations which cannot be waived; see this document, Section II.)

The authority to act on requests for deviations from academic requirements rests ultimately with the president of the university. The president, however, has delegated this responsibility to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost), who in turn, has delegated it to the Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies. An administrative committee, the Graduate Student Petitions Committee, will serve as the appeals body for decisions made or deferred by the dean of Graduate Studies. The committee has five members: three faculty appointed by the Provost upon recommendation of the University Graduate Committee, one representative from the university graduate office designated by the graduate dean, and one graduate student appointed by the University Graduate Committee. The faculty on the committee shall be members of a Graduate Faculty Group, including at least one who is currently serving as a department graduate program coordinator. The representative from the university graduate office shall possess expertise in admissions and evaluations. The faculty shall serve for two-year terms, with the terms staggered to ensure continuity. The graduate student shall serve a one-year term.

A quorum shall be a simple majority of the current membership. The chair shall be determined by a process of the committee and shall serve for a term of one year. The Dean of Graduate Studies or designee will notify the chair when meetings are needed. Students may expect to hear within two weeks after filing a petition. The committee should plan to meet once per term or more frequently as necessary to accommodate petitions.

The committee serves as a hearing body for requests to waive campus policies and procedures filed with the Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies. Requests which cannot be approved by the graduate dean will be referred to the committee and the student will be advised to file a formal Petition. Committee decisions on petitions will be reported to the student and the Dean of Graduate Studies. A decision made by the Graduate Student Petitions Committee can be appealed to the Provost. The committee is responsible for submitting an annual report of actions taken, the nature and volume of requests received and any recommendations for Policy/procedural changes to the University Graduate Committee.

## II. LIMITATIONS TO COMMITTEE ACTION

The committee has recognized limitations to its authority and responsibility as follows:

- A. State Regulations (Title 5) – These regulations cannot be waived; action by the committee is limited to interpretation and application of the appropriate regulations.
- B. CSU System-Wide Policy - These regulations also cannot be waived; action by the committee is limited to interpretation and application of the appropriate policy statement(s).
- C. University Requirements - Decisions regarding university-wide policies and regulations that apply to all students (undergraduate and graduate) will be subject to established campus guidelines for review levels and procedures including review by university-wide committees (e.g., Division of Student Affairs, Student Academic Petitions Committee, Records Adjustment Committee, Registrar's Office) with representation from members of the Graduate Faculty Group as appropriate.
- D. Administrative Procedures - Changes necessitating verification of official documentation normally are referred to the Registrar's Office (e.g., dual class enrollment, incorrect course number, course withdrawal).
- E. Department Requirements - Decisions regarding interpretation and modifications of the requirements for an academic program or departmental policies and regulations are referred to the department or graduate program concerned for appropriate action within the limits of Title 5 and university policies.
- F. Precedents - Action taken on a petition will not establish precedent for future student petitions.

## III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOLLOWED FOR ACTION ON ACADEMIC PETITIONS

- A. All requests for a waiver of the following are initially submitted to the graduate dean:
  - 1. Admission/Classification/Graduate standing/Advancement
  - 2. Change of Major
  - 3. Educational Leave
  - 4. Excess Unit Study Load
  - 5. Extensions of Time/Time limits/Course Validation
  - 6. Thesis/Committee Requirements/Disputes
  - 7. Others as determined by the Division of Graduate Studies.
- B. Advice on these matters and forms may be obtained through the Division of the Graduate Studies Office.
- C. The graduate dean (or designee) shall consider the request from the student, all documentation and recommendations. A positive recommendation will be based on information from the department and college or school dean. If the Division of Graduate Studies cannot approve the petition, it will be forwarded to the Graduate Student Petitions Committee.

- D. Formal petitions must include:
1. an appropriate Academic Petition Form
  2. a letter from the student with the rationale for the request for a waiver to a university requirement, policy, or procedure
  3. supporting documentation (e.g., evidence of hardship, administrative error, or other circumstances)
  4. written recommendations from the graduate program coordinator and faculty
- E. The committee will have the option to grant a separate hearing to any of the parties to the dispute not to exceed 20 minutes.
1. The presentation must be restricted to material contained in documentation.
  2. Any of the parties to the dispute may bring witnesses.
  3. Students or any of the parties to the dispute may not be represented by legal counsel.
- F. Students requesting to be heard by the Graduate Student Petitions Committee will give permission for their records to be presented to the committee members.
- G. Members of the committee will be expected to recuse themselves from participation in cases of conflict of interest (e.g., the student is from their department).
- H. The student and the graduate dean will be advised of the committee decision.
- I. A decision made by the Graduate Student Petitions Committee can be appealed to the Provost.

**References:** *Title 5 California Code of Regulations*  
 Guidelines and Policies for Graduate and Postbaccalaureate Student Petitions /  
 Appeals (APM)

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