Academic Policy Updates
AY 21-22

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Academic Affairs
New or Revised Policies for AY 21-22

• Revised policy on English language proficiency requirements
• New policy for academic forgiveness
• Revised policy for doctoral examinations
• Revised leave of absence policy
English Proficiency Policy Revision

• The previous version of the English proficiency policy did not clarify expectations for domestic applicants who may be exempt from taking the TOEFL but required to take the EPT upon arrival to campus.
• The revised policy now clarifies the expectations for demonstration of English proficiency for domestic applicants and international applicants.
English Proficiency Requirements for Admission

• **Domestic applicants.** All domestic applicants are exempt from taking the TOEFL or IELTS for admission. However, some domestic applicants may be admitted on limited status and be required to take the English as a Second Language Placement Test (EPT) prior to enrolling at Illinois. Success in your Illinois graduate program depends upon your ability to converse in, write and understand English. The EPT may be required of domestic applicants:
  - who have lived, been educated, or worked professionally primarily outside of the United States* or another approved country; or
  - who have U.S. permanent resident, asylee or refugee status and have lived in the United States for less than two years from the first term of enrollment.

• **International Applicants.** All international degree-seeking applicants are required to submit the results of the TOEFL or IELTS as evidence of English proficiency unless they qualify for an exemption. Official scores are required to be submitted directly from TOEFL/ETS or IELTS. Minimum Scores for English Proficiency Requirements for Admission are available on the Graduate College website. Students not meeting the minimum score for admission may be admitted on Limited Status and be required to take the English as a Second Language Placement Test (EPT) prior to enrolling at Illinois.

*If your educational or professional work experience has primarily been within Guam, Puerto Rico, or the Northern Mariana Islands, you will be required to take the EPT.*
English Proficiency Exemptions

Applicants who meet one of the following criteria are exempt from submitting a TOEFL or IELTS exam and from taking the English as a Second Language Placement Test (EPT) prior to enrolling at Illinois:

• Completion of at least two years of post-secondary full-time study, as defined by the home institution, in an approved country where English is the primary language and at an institution where English is the primary medium of instruction, within five years of the proposed term of initial enrollment.

• Completion of at least two years of professional work experience in an approved country where English is the primary language within five years of the proposed term of initial enrollment.

• Completion of a post-secondary degree in an approved country where English is the primary language and at an institution where English is the primary language of instruction, within five years of the proposed term of initial enrollment.

Approved Countries with English as the Primary Language

• Illinois Graduate Admissions recognizes the following countries as having English as the primary language: Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon-Anglophone, Canada(excluding the Quebec Province), Dominica, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Granada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malta, Malawi, Mauritius, New Zealand, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Scotland, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, St. Kitts, Swaziland, Tanzania, Trinidad & Tobago, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States*, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

*If your educational or professional work experience has primarily been within Guam, Puerto Rico, or the Northern Mariana Islands, you will be required to take the EPT.

English Proficiency for Teaching Assistants

• Please note that all English proficiency requirements and exemptions listed above are for admission purposes only. Admissions minimums are not equivalent to minimums required for holding a teaching assistantship; and not all exemptions apply for those holding a teaching assistantship. For more information, please see the English Proficiency Requirement for Graduate Teaching Assistants.
Academic Forgiveness (New!)

• Students who are applying for re-entry to the Graduate College and who are returning after at least two years with a GPA significantly below their department minimum may petition the Graduate College for Academic Forgiveness. If granted, the student’s GPA for graduation will be calculated based on previously taken coursework as identified in the re-entry process and the courses taken upon return. All courses will remain on the student’s transcript.
Academic Forgiveness Process

• As part of the Graduate College re-entry petition, students will work with their program to propose which courses previously taken will count toward degree completion and which will be set aside. The Graduate College will document these as a part of the re-entry process. Courses that are set aside will not be included in the computation of GPA for graduation purposes.

• Students will be limited to requesting prior coursework for up to two-thirds of the required hours for the degree to count towards degree completion. Students will be required to complete the remainder of the credit hours after re-entry to the program.

• The list of courses identified in the re-entry petition, plus the courses taken upon re-entry will be used to calculate the student’s GPA for graduation purposes. The combination of these hours must meet the program’s required minimum GPA to be eligible for graduation. All courses taken and grades earned in the Graduate College will remain on the student’s transcript.

• The prior coursework requested to count towards the degree are subject to the time limit policy and it will be up to the student’s program to determine if those courses are still applicable for the degree.

• Students are eligible for the academic forgiveness policy once during their enrollment in the Graduate College.
Doctoral Committees and Examinations

• The previous version of the policy required that the student, a committee chair and at least one additional voting member be physically present in the examination room on campus. Students in extraordinary circumstances a student could petition to participate remotely.
Remote participation. Synchronous remote participation of the student or committee member(s) is permitted on preliminary and final examination committees under the following conditions:

- Technology must allow all participants to communicate throughout the examination and to access all materials presented. Video technology is encouraged for remote committee members and required for a student participating remotely.

- The chair (or co-chair) and at least one additional voting member must be physically present in the examination room on campus. The chair (or co-chair) is responsible for coordinating the use of any technology, for recessing the examination if technical problems prevent full participation, and for making arrangements to resume the examination promptly.

- In extraordinary circumstances, the student can petition to participate remotely. Approval must be received from all members of the committee. The Graduate College strongly encourages the student to participate in person.

- Students in fully online doctoral programs can participate remotely without a petition.
Format and Results of a Final Examination (Defense)

• The examination consists of an open, oral examination open to the academic community of the University followed by a private, closed-door deliberation of the committee. The student is informed of the result immediately following the deliberation.

• All voting members of the committee must participate for the entire duration of the final examination the deliberation, and determination of the result.

• Students must adhere to departmental procedures or requirements. These procedures and requirements must be clearly communicated to all students in advance of the exam.

• For final examination committees, the student’s dissertation adviser (i.e., director of research) need not be the chair of the committee. Co-directors of research are acceptable.

• For final examination committees, committee members should be chosen for their expertise in the student’s research area but may also be chosen to give diversity in viewpoint, methodology, or academic discipline. The faculty of a department may establish procedures or requirements for introducing diversity in the membership of the final examination committee (e.g., by including members from more than one sub-discipline within the department, from other departments, or from other institutions).

• No audio or video recording of the examination or deliberation may be made without the express permission of the student and all members of the committee.
Leave of Absence Policy

Previous version of the policy:

• Contained different types of leave (personal/academic)
• Required that LOA be requested before the term begins
• Established a maximum of 2 semesters of leave
• Degree time limit was not automatically extended
Academic Leaves of Absence

• An academic leave of absence provides an opportunity for a student to not enroll for one or more semesters. An academic leave of absence may be used for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to, health reasons, personal reasons, active military service, or dependent or family care responsibilities. Students who are on an approved academic leave of absence are not expected to make progress on the degree. In addition, students on academic leaves of absence should not expect that faculty will provide feedback on academic work, including proposals or drafts of theses.

• Enrolled students who need to take time away after the semester has begun are not eligible for academic leaves of absence. Students should consult with their program on academic and registration options and human resources regarding employment leave options.

• Graduate students in degree-seeking programs are eligible for a total of two terms (fall and/or spring semesters) of academic leave. Students must document their request for a leave and meet the eligibility requirements. Students who anticipate not being enrolled for one or more terms, (fall or spring semesters, not summer), for whatever reason should meet with their program adviser before the first day of classes of their period of non-enrollment to request an academic leave of absence.

Academic Standing

• Student status does not change during the period of an approved leave of absence. The student’s academic standing that was in place when the leave began will be in place for the approved re-entry term.

Timing and Limits

• All academic leaves should be requested before the term begins and cannot be approved for a term in which the student had registered and withdrawn. An academic leave of absence cannot be requested for a previous term.

• Students are eligible for a two terms of academic leaves of absence (spring or fall semesters) during a student’s degree program. These terms may be consecutive or approved individually. In exceptional circumstances a student may, upon submitting a petition, receive approval for additional academic leave after exhausting the two initial terms.

• When an enrolled student withdraws from the current term, this term will not be counted towards an academic leave of absence.
Degree Time Limits
• An approved academic leave of absence extends the Graduate College time limits for completion of the preliminary examination and the time to degree by the number of approved leave terms (up to a maximum of two terms).
• If the student’s time to degree will have expired by the start of their academic leave, then they will need to petition for a time extension when requesting the academic leave of absence.

Summer-only Graduate Programs
• Students who are enrolled in summer only programs must apply for a leave of absence before taking a summer term off. Students in summer only programs are eligible for two summer terms of leave.

Reentry after Leave of Absence
• At the time their leave of absence is approved, students will be approved to re-enter the same graduate program for the designated term following their leave.

Procedures to Request a Leave of Absence
• Requests for a leave of absence should be approved by the student’s academic department prior to the first day of classes. To request a formal academic leave the student should complete the Request for Academic Leave of Absence form before the first day of classes of the term of non-enrollment.

Absent Without Leave Policy
• Degree seeking graduate students are required to request a formal academic leave of absence before not being enrolled for one or more terms, (fall / spring, not summer). Students in summer-only programs are required to request a formal academic leave of absence before taking a summer term off from their enrollment. There are potentially negative consequences for failing to request an academic leave of absence. Students who do not enroll and do not meet with the program and document their status with an approved academic leave of absence before a period of non-enrollment are considered absent without leave. A program may put an advising hold on a student who is absent without leave. A student who is absent without leave may be prevented from reenrolling, may have additional degree requirements to complete if allowed to return, or may be subject to new degree requirements.
General Policy Information

• Policies found in the Graduate College Handbook are voted on and approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee.

• Once approved by the GC Executive Committee they are reported to the Senate Educational Policy committee.

• The Graduate College Handbook is updated annually in the Summer and academic policies are effective for the upcoming academic year.

• Policies found in the Graduate College Handbook are campus level policies and apply to all graduate students/graduate programs.
Questions

https://grad.illinois.edu/handbooks-policies

Questions?
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