

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES

Thursday, April 23, 2026 – Email Meeting

Voting Members: Sharon Campbell, Ngan Chau, Bree Dority, Janet Graham, Mary Harner, Angela Hollman, Torsten Homberger, Christopher Strickland, Erin Sweeney, Frank Tenkorang, Doug Tillman, Michelle Warren, Melissa Wuellner, Mariana Paredes, Brenton Keesee, and Megan Adkins

Non-Voting Members: Naheed Abdulrahim, Whitney Schneider-Cline, Laurinda Weisse, Emily Conrad, and Linda Johnson

I. Approval of the April 9, 2026, Minutes –

The April 9, 2026 minutes were approved via email (Strickland/Wuellner). Motion carried.

II. Graduate Studies Report

Interim Dean:

A. *Approval of 2026 Spring Graduates*

The slate of Spring 2026 graduates was approved (Hollman/Strickland). Motion carried.

B. *Review of the Revised Grade Appeal Procedure -*

The revised Grade Appeal Procedure was approved (Hollman/Strickland). Motion carried.

C. *Research Day Results*

The Council was provided with a list of winners from Student Research Day. The following awards were recognized:

- **MAGS Distinguished Master’s Thesis Award (Biological and Life Sciences):**
Sunanda Rajput, *Sex Differences in Innate Immune Response Following Peanut Exposure*
Advisor: Dr. Joseph Dolence, Biology
- **UNK Graduate Student of the Year:**
Kailey Wilcox, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Counseling, School Psychology and Family Science
- **Graduate Faculty Mentor of the Year:**
Dr. Joseph Dolence

D. *Graduate Council Election Results*

The following representatives were elected to the Graduate Council:

[B&T – Bryton Neck](#)

[COE – Philip Lai](#)

[CAS – Jonathan Dettman and Yipeng Sui](#)

Assistant Dean:

No Report

Associate Dean Engagement and Retention:

No Report

III. Committee Reports

A. Policy & Planning Committee – No Report

B. Academic Programs Committee – No Report

C. Faculty & Student Affairs Committee –

The committee is currently reviewing the Reichenbach Scholarships. Recommendations are due to the Graduate Office by May 1.

IV. Other Business

Student representatives from CBT and CAS are needed to serve on the Graduate Council for the upcoming year. Council members from these colleges are asked to submit the name of a student to be contacted about serving by May 1.

Nominations for Hooders and Student Gonfaloniers for Summer Commencement are due to the Graduate Office by Monday, June 1. A list of past hooders and student gonfaloniers was provided to the Council.

V. Announcements

Graduate Student Association has the following positions open for next year:

These are the GSA vacancies for next year:

- CBT student rep for grad council
- GSA communication coordinator
- GSA social media chair

Interim Dean Adkins expressed appreciation for the Graduate Council's work over the past year.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Rhinehart

Addendum: April 23 Graduate Council Minutes

The following information is being provided to the Graduate Council as a notification of changes to the April 23 Graduate Council Meeting Minutes. If you have any questions or oppose the additional item to the meeting minutes, please email Heather by Wednesday, May 20 by 5:00 pm. No communication is needed if you approve of this change in the meeting minutes.

Thank You

The following Grade Appeal policy was approved by the Graduate Council and was inadvertently left out of the April 23 minutes.

(Can be found in Graduate Catalog> Academics> Academic Regulations> Graduate Student Appeal Policy)

I. Appeal Process

Appeal of grades in graduate-level courses shall be made through the graduate student grade appeal procedures of the campus through which the grade was awarded. The student must follow the timeline and appeal process requirements outlined in Section II and III.

Graduate students holding admission with Non-degree status in the Graduate College, admission with a Master's objective, or a Specialist's objective should appeal in the following sequence:

Step 1: Course- Level

Students who believe their evaluation in a course has been prejudiced or capricious must first attempt to resolve the matter with the course instructor (See Section IV for definition).

Step 2: Program- Level Appeal

If an appeal is denied at the course instructor level, the student may proceed by completing the student appeal packet, available under "Student Resources" on the UNK Graduate Studies webpage. The student's written appeal should be submitted to the Graduate Program Chair (GPC) or Director (if applicable). (See Appeal Packet requirement below).

Note: If the course does not have a Graduate Program Chair or Director, the appeal should be submitted to the UNK Registrar's Office and the Dean of Graduate Studies. The appropriate Graduate Program Committee will review the appeal.

Step 3: Graduate Studies- Level Appeal

If the appeal is denied at the program level, the student may file an appeal with the UNK Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will forward the appeal to the UNK Graduate Studies Office, which will then submit the appeal to the Faculty/Student Affairs Committee of the UNK Graduate Council for review. The decision of this committee shall be final and is not subject to further appeal at the campus level.

II. Appeal Packet Requirements

The appeal packet shall include the following:

- A written statement outlining the nature of the appeal
- The reason(s) for the appeal
- The outcome being requested
- Whether it is a program-level or graduate-level appeal.
- Supporting documentation, including the course syllabus; verification of attempts to resolve the matter with the course instructor (including dates of meetings, whether in person or via Zoom, and relevant correspondence such as emails).

III. Grade Appeal Initiation Requirements and Deadlines

A student who believes a grade has been assigned incorrectly, as defined in Section IV below, shall contact the instructor of record or in the absence of the instructor, the appropriate Graduate Program Chair or Director, within thirty (30) business days of the end of the term for which the grade was assigned.

- Failure to notify the instructor/department of record within the allotted time will render the initial grade final, and no changes will be permitted.
- If the issue cannot be resolved with the instructor, a formal, written appeal must be filed with the Graduate Program Chair or Director within sixty (60) business days of the end of the term for which the grade was assigned.
- If the instructor of record is also the Graduate Program Chair or Director, the formal appeal should be made to the UNK Dean of Graduate Studies.
- If the course does not have a Graduate Program Chair or Director, the appeal should be made to the UNK Dean of Graduate Studies.

IV. Definition of Prejudiced or Capricious Grading

A course grade may be considered to have been assigned in a prejudice or capricious manner if, by a preponderance of the evidence, a student establishes that:

- The course grade was based upon the student's age, race, disability, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or another personal characteristic, or for some other arbitrary or personal reason unrelated to the instructor's exercise of their professional academic judgment in the evaluation of the academic performance of the student; or
- The course grade was assigned in a manner not consistent with the standards and procedures for evaluation established by the instructor, usually at the beginning of the course in the course syllabus, but supplemented on occasion during the semester in other written or oral communications directed to the class as a whole; or
- The course grade assigned by the instructor was the result of a clear and material mistake in calculating or recording grades. Individual elements (e.g., assignments, tests, activities, projects) which contribute to a course grade are generally not subject to appeal or subsequent review during a grade appeals procedure. However, individual elements may be appealed under these procedures provided that the following conditions are met:

- The student presents compelling evidence that one or more individual elements were graded on prejudice or capricious grounds (defined above);
- Sufficient grounds exist to determine an appropriate and professionally supported grade for the appealed element(s); and
- The revised grade for the appealed element(s) would result in a different overall course grade than originally assigned by the faculty member.

APPEAL OF GENERAL ACADEMIC MATTERS RELATED TO STUDENT PROGRAMS (OTHER THAN GRADE APPEALS)

Graduate students holding admission with Non-degree status, a Master's objective, or a Specialist's objective shall follow the appeal process outlined below:

I. Appeal Process

Step 1: Advisor–Level Appeal

The appeal may be submitted to the student's advisor.

Step 2: Program-Level Appeal

If denied, the appeal may be submitted to the UNK departmental Graduate Program Chair or Director responsible for the student's graduate program. The Student's Graduate Program Committee will meet to consider the appeal.

Step 3: Graduate Studies- Level Appeal

If the appeal is denied at the program level, the student may file an appeal with the UNK Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office shall notify the Dean of Graduate Studies and forward the appeal to the UNK Graduate Studies Office.

The appeal shall then be submitted to the Faculty/Student Affairs Committee of the UNK Graduate Council for review. The decision of this committee shall be final and is not subject to further appeal at the campus level.

Graduate Council Composition

When a student's graduate program consists of registrations essentially or entirely on the UNK campus, the UNK Graduate Council's Faculty/Student Affairs Committee will constitute the appeal board. When a student's graduate program includes substantial registrations on a campus other than the one administratively responsible for the program, three members of the Graduate Council from the other campus will be designated by the Dean for Graduate Studies on that campus to augment the UNK Graduate Council. In this case, the augmented Council will constitute the appeal board.

The decision concerning augmentation of a campus Graduate Council for a specific appeal involving registrations on a campus other than the one administratively responsible for the student's program will be made by the Deans for Graduate Studies on the campuses involved.

II. Appeal requirements and Timelines

All appeals shall be submitted in writing to the appropriate advisor, committee, or council within 30 business days following the student's receipt of notification of the evaluation. In cases involving an appeal of termination of program, an initiation of the appeal, in writing,

by the student must be filed within thirty (30) business days following the student's receipt of the official written notification by the campus Office of Graduate Studies.

III. Executive Graduate Council- NU System

There is no absolute right of appeal to the University of Nebraska Executive Graduate Council. The Executive Graduate Council will accept appeals only in those cases where in the exercise of its sole discretion it shall first find that one or more of the following grounds for accepting the appeal exist: That the campus Graduate Council has violated some element of fair procedure (example: has failed to allow the parties concerned to present their cases fully to their campus Graduate Council); That the campus Graduate Council has failed to examine or give adequate weight to important evidence relevant to one party's position; That the campus Graduate Council has given undue weight to evidence not pertinent to the case; or That some gross miscarriage of justice would be perpetrated if the decision of the campus Graduate Council is allowed to stand. A decision by the Executive Graduate Council not to accept jurisdiction of an appeal shall be final and is not subjected to further appeal.

Appeals to the Executive Graduate Council must be made in writing to the University of Nebraska Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and must specifically outline the grounds for the appeal. Such appeal must be made within twenty (20) business days of the day the decision of the campus Graduate Council is received (business days shall not include those days the University is not in session).

The Executive Council must make a decision to hear the appeal or not to hear the appeal within thirty (30) business days after receipt of the appeal. Acceptance or denial of jurisdiction over the appeal will be made in writing.

The decision of the Executive Graduate Council on the merits of the case will be made and transmitted to the concerned parties within 40 business days after the decision to hear the appeal.

No person who was a member of the department or campus Graduate Council involved in the case will be eligible to participate in the decisions of the Executive Graduate Council, either to decide whether the case should be heard or to decide the merits of the case. However, the Dean for Graduate Studies may replace members of the Executive Graduate Council not eligible for participation in the decision to hear the appeal or in the appeal itself.

IV. DENIAL OF ADMISSION

There is no right to due process hearing with respect to denial of admission of a graduate student. Therefore, there is no need for an appeal procedure for applicants for graduate programs.