



Graduate Student
handbook
2018-19



neiu.edu

 **Northeastern**
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME

Welcome Letter from the CGSR Dean	4
Introduction	5
College of Graduate Studies and Research	5
Master's Goals	6
Graduate Students at NEIU	7

FIRST STEPS AS GRADUATE STUDENTS AT NEIU

Being Admitted to NEIU	8
Degree Program Timeline	8
Next Steps	9
Class Registration	10
Paying Tuition	10

SUCCEEDING IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate Academic Policies	11
Academic Standing	11
Grade Point Average	11
Catalog Year	11
Graduate Degree Credits	11
Repeating Courses	11
Academic Probation	11
Dismissal for Academic Reason	12
Inactive Status	12
Transferring Courses	13
Grade Appeal Process	14
Leave of Absence	16
Program Extension (6-Year Rule)	16
Program Change	16

FINANCING YOUR GRADUATE EDUCATION

Financial Aid	17
Merit Tuition Scholarships	17
Need-Based Tuition Scholarships	17
Graduate Assistantships	18

COMPLETING YOUR PROGRAM & GRADUATION

Graduation Requirements & Application	19
Graduate Thesis	20
Thesis Registration	20
Thesis Submission	21
Commencement	21
Master's Hooding Ceremony	22
Diploma Verification	22

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

23

LIBRARY RESEARCH SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

25

CONTACT INFORMATION

26

WELCOME

Dear Northeastern Graduate Students,

Whether you have been Northeastern students for many years or are new to Northeastern, as Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research, I would like to wish you a warm welcome to graduate school at Northeastern Illinois University. The faculty and staff are all dedicated to your success as our students.

The College of Graduate Studies and Research works in close collaboration with all of our graduate programs, and in particular with our Graduate Program Advisors, to ensure your success. Together we have assembled this Graduate Student Handbook to present you with some of the most important information about graduate studies at Northeastern. It is particularly useful as you start out or finish up your studies here, but it also has a lot of information that will be useful throughout your journey through your graduate studies here at Northeastern. Please be sure to check in with your Graduate Program Advisor regularly during your program, but do not hesitate to contact the College of Graduate Studies and Research at any time for information or guidance.

We wish you a productive, informative, and enjoyable time at Northeastern, and the best of success as you move on to your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Stern". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael J. Stern, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Graduate Studies & Research

Introduction

This handbook will provide helpful information throughout your time as a graduate student at NEIU. Please be aware that the [Academic Catalog](#) is the authoritative source of information, in case of any conflicting information.

Other useful resources include:

- the [NEIU](#) and [College of Graduate Studies and Research](#) websites
- the [International Programs](#) website (for international students)
- the [University Student Handbook](#) (useful information for both undergraduate and graduate students)
- specific disciplinary graduate program Handbooks

College of Graduate Studies and Research

The College of Graduate Studies and Research at Northeastern Illinois University is committed to the development of scholars and leaders through outstanding graduate and post-baccalaureate programs. Under the guidance of committed faculty, the students in our programs master critical thinking and analysis, integrate theory and practice, and pursue creative and scholarly endeavors. The College offers the majority of its course work during the late afternoon and evening hours and on Saturdays to accommodate working individuals.

Accreditation

The College of Graduate Studies and Research operates under NEIU's regional accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges. It maintains close ties to other graduate schools across the country through its association with the Council of Graduate Schools, the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools, and the Illinois Association of Graduate Schools.

Master's Goals

It is the mission of Northeastern Illinois University to prepare a diverse community of students for leadership and service in our region and in a dynamic, multicultural world. In the College of Graduate Studies and Research, our programs offer opportunities for our students to achieve mastery in the following areas: Knowledge, Tools of Inquiry, Relevance, Communication, and Professionalism. Students will demonstrate that mastery through both coursework and a culminating experience appropriate to the program.

KNOWLEDGE

Graduate students will pursue and master advanced, specialized knowledge within their discipline.

TOOLS OF INQUIRY

Graduate students will develop academic curiosity and expertise in using tools of inquiry reflecting the norms and standards of their discipline. This expertise includes research ethics and methodologies, modes of critical thinking and problem solving, and appropriate uses of technology.

RELEVANCE

Graduate students will apply their knowledge and tools of inquiry to contextualize their learning within broad global, public, and academic communities.

COMMUNICATION

Graduate students will develop professional communication skills, giving them the ability to engage in the critical, open exchange of ideas. They will be able to participate in diverse, collaborative networks within and across disciplines.

PROFESSIONALISM

Graduate students will be prepared to serve and lead effectively in a diverse, global society according to the professional standards of their discipline. They will be ready to establish themselves as ethical individuals in their professional lives.

Graduate Students at Northeastern

Northeastern Illinois University welcomes many different types of graduate students pursuing a wide range of opportunities. Northeastern offers more than 50 master's degree and post-baccalaureate programs in business, education, liberal and fine arts, and physical and social sciences:

- Master's degrees (M.A., M.S., M.A.T., M.B.A., M.S.W.)
- Graduate certificates
- Teaching endorsements
- Teaching licensure

Graduate students who are not in a specific graduate program at Northeastern may also enroll in graduate-level classes. These students are referred to as Graduate Students-at-Large (GSAL).

Graduate academic policies apply to all graduate students.

Graduate Students-At-Large

Graduate students-at-large (GSAL) are students who have already earned a baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally-accredited college or university, and who wish to take graduate-level courses without applying to a specific graduate program. GSAL are welcome and encouraged to contact Graduate Program Advisors for information on course offerings.

Graduate International Students

If you are an international student (on a J-1 or F-1 student visa), you must adhere to all additional regulations that pertain specifically to international students (please see the Graduate International Students section at the end of this handbook).

Please refer to the International Programs website and stay in contact with the International Student Advisor to ensure you are obeying all of the legal regulations, and that you remain in good status with the Department of Homeland Security's SEVIS system (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Contact the [Office of International Programs](#) with any questions related to your international student status here at Northeastern: 773-442-4796 or International-Programs@neiu.edu

FIRST STEPS AS GRADUATE STUDENTS AT NEIU

BEING ADMITTED TO NEIU

Congratulations on being admitted to graduate study at NEIU.

Most graduate students are granted full admission to their graduate program at Northeastern. If you have been granted provisional or conditional admission, you are subject to additional requirements that you must fulfill. Please refer to your admission acceptance letter and consult with your assigned graduate program advisor to make sure you understand these requirements.

DEFERRING ADMISSION

A student who is admitted to a program but cannot enroll in the semester for which admission was granted may request to defer enrollment. Generally, students are allowed to defer enrollment for up to one academic year. To defer your admission, send a written request to Graduate Admissions at graduateadmissions@neiu.edu. Students are required to comply with any program changes that occur during their deferral.

DEGREE PROGRAM TIMELINE

- Beginning your program
 - Meet with your graduate program advisor
 - Set up your NEIU email and NEIUport accounts
 - Register for first semester classes and pay tuition
- Taking classes
 - Keep in touch with your graduate program advisor each semester to ensure progress towards completion of your degree
 - Follow registration and payment deadlines each semester
- Preparing to graduate
 - Complete all of your courses
 - Fulfill your graduate culminating experience by taking comprehensive exams or completing your thesis/master's project/capstone. Be sure to fulfill any preparatory steps that are required for your particular graduate culminating experience.
- Graduating
 - Apply for graduation
 - Attend the Master's Hooding Ceremony (Master's degree students)
 - Attend Commencement

Please note: You are responsible for adhering to the deadlines published in the official [Academic Calendar](#).

NEXT STEPS

Meet with your Graduate Program Advisor

Your Graduate Program Advisor is a faculty member in your program who plays important roles throughout your tenure as a graduate student. Graduate Program Advisors oversee your admission to the program, advise you on your program of study, inform you of departmental regulations and procedures, monitor your academic progress, provide guidance regarding graduate policies, and review your graduation application when you are about to finish your program. They are also responsible for submitting nominations for merit tuition scholarships.

Make an appointment to meet with your Graduate Program Advisor to discuss the requirements of your academic program and your plan of study, and to ensure that you select the most appropriate courses for your first semester. The name of your Graduate Program Advisor is indicated in your admission letter. You can [locate your Advisor's contact details in Northeastern's online employee directory.](#)

Graduate Students-at-Large are also welcome and encouraged to contact Graduate Program Advisors for information on course offerings.

Set up your NEIU email and NEIUport Accounts

First, activate your account in **NEIUport**, the University's secure online portal, so you can have access to information, online tools, and university services. Once it is activated, explore the Current Student tab in **NEIUport** to learn how to:

- check the status of financial aid awards (if applicable)
- look up, register and pay for classes
- look up required textbooks
- register your vehicle for parking on campus
- locate forms and academic resources information
- inform the University about changes to your contact information
- view your academic profile, your unofficial transcript ,and any holds on your account
- check your end-of-semester grades

After activating your NEIUport account, you will be able to access additional University accounts, as well as **Student Computing Services (SCS)** computer lab workstations at all of Northeastern's locations. Use your NETID/username, along with the password you create when you activate your NEIUport account, to access the workstations and your other Northeastern online accounts.

Nmail is your University-issued email account. You will be provided with your Nmail address during the NEIUport activation process. The password you create for NEIUport will be the same password you will use to log in to your Nmail account. Official University communications will be sent to your Nmail account.

You are responsible for reading and responding to these communications, so please be sure to check your Nmail daily.

N-Safe is the system the University uses to provide students, faculty, and staff with security and school closure alerts. Sign up for N-Safe and choose how you'd like to be notified, by email and/or text message.

Desire to Learn (D2L) is an online learning environment that houses syllabi, course materials, and tools you will use for many of your courses. D2L also enables you to communicate with the faculty members teaching your courses and with your classmates. Familiarize yourself with D2L before your first day of classes.

CLASS REGISTRATION

After meeting with your Graduate Program Advisor, [peruse the class schedule](#) and [register for classes via NEUport](#).

Be aware of [registration deadlines](#) listed each semester in the online [Class Schedule](#). Before registering, carefully read all the instructions. If you encounter any difficulties with registration, please contact the Registration Office at (773) 442-4040, registration@neu.edu, or stop by the Enrollment Services Center (D101).

PAYING TUITION

- Refer to the [Registrar Services website](#) for all registration and payment deadlines, tuition and fees information, registration guidelines, and related enrollment policies.
- Bills and billing information are available through NEUport. Bills are not mailed. Remember that you are financially responsible for the classes for which you register.
- Pay your bill using NEUport or by visiting the Cashier's Office (D 107) during business hours, online, or over the phone.
- Once you register, you are responsible for the full cost unless you officially drop your course/s by the appropriate refund deadline. If you are unable to pay your tuition in full at the time you make your initial payment, you may select the Deferred Payment Plan and pay in four installments.
- The University does not cancel your registration for non-payment. Instead, you are asked to review and accept a Financial Agreement document upon registering. You are financially responsible for the classes for which you register. The dates for dropping classes and the associated credit/refund percentages are available in the Tuition and Fees Refund/Credit section of the course schedule. For payment due dates, please refer to the [Tuition and Fees Payment Schedule section](#).

SUCCEEDING IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

GRADUATE ACADEMIC POLICIES

Below are some of the most common graduate policies, along with information about navigating the policies. For the official source of academic policies, please refer to the Graduate Policies section of the [Academic Catalog](#).

You will find all the related forms on our website, under [Current Student Resources tab](#).

ACADEMIC STANDING

To remain in good academic standing, a graduate student must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. In addition, a graduate student in a degree or certificate program must make satisfactory progress toward his/her degree or certificate. A student must be in good academic standing to graduate.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

A graduate student's Grade Point Average (GPA) is determined based on the grades received in all graduate-level courses taken, beginning from the term of initial enrollment in graduate status at Northeastern. All grades received, including those of courses that were taken multiple times (see Repeating Courses policy), will count toward a student's GPA and will appear on a student's transcript. A graduate student must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 to be awarded his/her degree or certificate. This requirement is non-petitionable.

CATALOG YEAR

A graduate student's catalog year is the academic year in which the student is first enrolled after being admitted to a graduate program. A student's catalog year is not affected while the student is on an approved leave of absence. A re-admitted student is subject to the catalog year requirements based on the semester of his/her re-admission (see Inactivation/Re-admission Policy below).

GRADUATE DEGREE CREDITS

1. All graduate credits are at the 400 level or above, except for a limited number of 300 level courses that have been approved for graduate degree credits in a specific master's degree program (referred to as "300-starred" (300*) courses). Programs may permit students to apply up to three 300* courses, to a maximum of ten credit hours, to fulfill program requirements. Students should consult with their program advisors for details concerning graduate degree credits for 300*-level courses. Graduate students may only take the graduate level of 300* courses.
2. A maximum of two courses with grades of "C" may be counted toward satisfying program requirements. Courses with grades below "C" do not count toward satisfying program requirements.

REPEATING COURSES

A student can take a specific course a maximum of two times (excluding course withdrawals), unless the course is formally approved as "repeatable."

ACADEMIC PROBATION

A graduate student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. If, in subsequent terms, the student earns grades that restore his/her cumulative GPA to 3.0 or above, he/she will be returned to good academic standing. If a student needs to be placed on academic probation for a third time after he/she has returned to good academic standing in two previous probation instances, he/she will be dismissed from the program. A student whose cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 will be dismissed without academic probation.

A student who is on academic probation and who does not restore his/her cumulative GPA to 3.0 in subsequent terms will be permitted to remain on academic probation as long as he/she earns at least a 3.0 GPA for the term. If, in any subsequent term, the student on academic probation fails to earn a 3.0 GPA for the term, he/she will be dismissed.

DISMISSAL FOR ACADEMIC REASONS

A student may be dismissed from his/her program for the following academic reasons: sub-standard GPA (see Academic Probation policy); failure to make satisfactory progress toward completion of his/her program; and/or receiving more than six credit hours of unsatisfactory grades (C, D, or F). A student may also be dismissed as a consequence of acts of academic misconduct (see the University Code of Conduct).

To "rescue" a student from dismissal, a program advisor and a student who has experienced extenuating circumstances may meet to develop a plan outlining the course of action the student must follow to return to good academic standing. This meeting must occur immediately upon a student's dismissal, and the plan must be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research within a week of that dismissal. This plan must be approved by both the program and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research or the Dean's designee. Failure to meet the terms of this plan may not be appealed and will result in dismissal. The form for the Graduate Academic Progress Plan can be found [here](#).

INACTIVE STATUS/RE-ADMISSION POLICY

A student who does not register for coursework for three consecutive semesters, including the summer term, will have his/her graduate status changed from "Active" to "Inactive" and will not be allowed to register for additional classes. To be reinstated for registration, a student must do at least one of the following:

1. Apply for readmission to his/her original program;
2. Apply for admission to a new program; or
3. Apply for admission as a graduate student-at-large.

Readmission to a student's original program is not guaranteed. All re-admitted students are subject to the catalog year requirements of their semester of re-admission and enrollment.

To avoid becoming inactive, a student who knows they must be absent from their program for three or more terms should request a leave of absence. The [Leave of Absence Request form](#) must be completed by the student and his/her her advisor, and submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

Reactivation after being away: If you have been away from Northeastern for longer than a year and upon trying to register see a screen that reads, "Student status prevents registration," please take note of the following: Your records have been moved to inactive status. This is not a dismissal or meant to be punitive. Northeastern needs to keep an accurate record of students enrolled in graduate programs. If a student has been absent from their graduate program for 3 consecutive terms (including summer), without submitting a request for a Leave of Absence, that student is assumed to have dropped out of the program and left the university. An inactive student who wants to come back to complete their program needs to apply for re-admission. This entails completing a new application and paying the application fee, and providing transcripts from schools attended since leaving NEIU. (Recommendation letters, test scores, and other documents will already be on file in Graduate Admissions and need not be resubmitted.) The admissions packet will be sent to the program for their review. It is the decision of the program whether the inactive student can return. An accepted student is admitted for an upcoming semester, and must adhere to the requirements of the new catalog year. Courses completed during their previous time in the program can count towards their degree, if the courses (1) meet the program requirements of the new catalog year and (2) were taken within 6 years of the planned graduation date.

GRADUATE TRANSFER CREDIT POLICY

Graduate transfer credits are any credits used to fulfill Northeastern Illinois University graduate degree requirements which are:

1. Earned at Northeastern prior to the term of admission to a graduate program; OR
2. Earned at a regionally accredited college or university or recognized international college or university. These transfer credits may be earned either prior to or after admission to a Northeastern graduate program.

All graduate transfer credits that are used to fulfill degree requirements need to be approved by the program.

Students should submit their transfer credit request form before the completion of 9 credit hours after admission to the program. Any delay in the completion of the transfer credit request may impact the student's graduation date. Credits transferred in the final semester before graduation will delay graduation until the credits are posted. Credits earned for thesis hours are not transferable. Coursework credits are eligible for transfer credit only if they meet the following criteria:

1. Credits must be for graduate-level work;
2. The course grade must be a "B-" or higher;
3. Credits must have been completed within 6 years of expected graduation.

Courses taken at Northeastern prior to admission to a graduate program: Credit for coursework taken at Northeastern prior to admission to a graduate program, which the student wishes to count towards that graduate program, is limited to no more than 50% of the program requirements, except in the case of credits from an earned graduate certificate. The entirety of credits from an earned graduate certificate can be counted towards a graduate degree program. No additional transfer credit is allowed if credits from an earned certificate represent 50% or more of the total program requirement credits.

Courses taken outside of Northeastern: Graduate transfer credits can be earned either before admission to the student's program or after admission to the program, provided that the total number of transfer credits (regardless of when they were earned) does not exceed 9 hours. All transfer credits earned after the student has been admitted to his/her program must be approved by the advisor, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research prior to enrollment at the other institution.

WAIVER OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students considering applying for a waiver of specific course requirements based on demonstrated competence may petition the appropriate graduate program advisor(s). If a waiver is approved, the student must complete alternate credits equal in number to those waived.

Grade Appeal Process, Leave of Absence, Program Change and Program Extension

Please note: All related forms are hyperlinked in the text below and located on the [Registrar's section of the University website](#).

GRADUATE GRADE APPEAL POLICY & PROCEDURE

Every student has the right to appeal a final grade in a graduate-level course they consider to be unreasonable, unjust, or capricious. A grade appeal can be initiated no later than two semesters (including summer) after the grade was assigned. The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research makes the final decision on graduate grade appeals.

PROCESS FOR APPEALING A GRADE IN A GRADUATE COURSE:

1. The student must first consult the faculty member who issued the grade for reconsideration of the grade. The Chair or Coordinator and other members of the department are encouraged to be available for consultation with the faculty member and the student at this stage. Note: This is the only stage at which an appealed grade can be changed to an A, B, C, D, or F. At every subsequent stage of the grade appeal process, the Chair, Associate Dean of the graduate program's college, or Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research can change the grade to a P only.
2. If the faculty member is unavailable or the student contests the faculty member's decision and wishes to continue the appeal, the student should next approach the Chair of the department in which the course was taught. The Chair may designate the relevant program's Coordinator to serve this role. The student must present a written statement to the Chair/Coordinator explaining the reasons he/she believes the grade is unreasonable, unjust, or capricious. The Chair/Coordinator is responsible for investigating the student's claims by gathering relevant information, and preparing a written statement of the findings of the investigation. At the conclusion of this investigation, the Chair must recommend that the student's grade appeal be supported or denied. The Chair shall communicate this recommendation and its rationale in writing to the student and the faculty member.

If the faculty member who issued the grade is also the Chair/Coordinator, the student should appeal directly to the Associate Dean of the college in which the course was taught, submitting a written statement explaining the reasons he or she believes the grade is unreasonable, unjust, or capricious. The Associate Dean is responsible for investigating the student's claims by gathering relevant information, and preparing a written statement of the findings of the investigation. At the conclusion of this investigation, the Associate Dean must recommend that the student's grade appeal be supported or denied. The Associate Dean shall communicate this recommendation and its rationale in writing to the student and the faculty member (Chair/Coordinator).

3. If the student believes that the process was flawed or that there was evidence that was not considered, he/she can appeal to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research. In addition to the appeal materials already provided to the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean in Step 2 above, the student must justify why he or she believes the decision should be reconsidered, and include any new pertinent information. Disagreement with the outcome of the deliberations of the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean is not sufficient on its own to pursue an appeal with the Dean. If the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research agrees that the process was possibly flawed or there was evidence not considered, he/she will convene the Graduate Grade Appeal Committee to hear the grade appeal.

The Graduate Grade Appeal Committee, selected each year, will consist of five members, as follows:

- Two faculty members from the Graduate College Advisory Committee,
- Two Masters' Degree program students in good standing selected by the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research, and
- The representative of the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

Before hearing any appeals, any student serving on the Graduate Grade Appeal Committee must fill out and sign a FERPA Privacy and Confidentiality Understanding/Agreement, available from the College of Graduate Studies and Research or the University Registrar.

The Graduate Grade Appeal Committee will investigate the case and hold a hearing. The student, the faculty member, and the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean involved with Step 2 shall be invited to participate. If the student fails to attend the agreed-upon, scheduled hearing, the hearing will be canceled and the grade appeal dismissed without further review.

The Graduate Grade Appeal hearing generally lasts one hour and follows this format:

- The student has 10 minutes to present the appeal, after which the committee members may ask questions of the student. The faculty member of the course has 10 minutes to respond, after which the committee members may ask questions of the instructor.
- The Chair (if he/she is not the faculty member), Coordinator, or Associate Dean may add comments and answer any questions the committee members may have.
- The student does not ask questions of the faculty member, Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean, and the faculty member, Chair, Coordinator, and Associate Dean do not ask questions of the student.
- The student may have 2 or 3 minutes for final rebuttal and the committee may ask final questions of the student, faculty member, Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean.
- Everyone except for the Graduate Grade Appeal Committee leaves the hearing room.
- The committee members discuss the appeal.
- The Dean's representative leads the discussion.
- When the discussion is complete, the committee members take a vote on the appeal.

The committee will communicate to the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research its written recommendation, which will be one of the following:

- a. If the Committee decides that the challenged grade is unreasonable, unjust, or capricious, it shall so communicate to the Dean its recommendation that the grade be changed to a P.
- b. If the Committee decides there is insufficient evidence to support the student's claim, it shall recommend to the Dean that the original grade stand.
- c. If the committee cannot agree on the appeal, the lack of agreement will be communicated to the Dean.

After receiving the recommendation of the committee and reviewing the materials submitted by the student, the faculty member, and the Chair, Coordinator, or Associate Dean, and the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research may decide that the grade should remain as recorded, or that it should be changed to a P (Pass). If the grade is changed to a P, the credits for the course will count toward the student's degree requirements, but the grade will not contribute to the GPA.

The Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research will share his or her decision in writing with the student, the faculty member, and the Chair, Coordinator, and/or Associate Dean, and a copy of the decision will be placed in the student's records. The decision of the Dean is final.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

You can find the Leave Of Absence request form the [Registrar's Forms page](#).

If you know you will need to be away from your graduate academic work for longer than three consecutive terms (including summer), you need to file a Leave of Absence (LOA) request to avoid being inactivated. Please attend to the following information fully to ensure that we can process your request and you will be able to successfully return to your program.

The support of your program is critical to successfully returning from a leave of absence to complete your program. Therefore, as soon as you know you will need to leave, meet with your program advisor to assess your current status in the program and to develop a plan for your return. This plan must take into account the 6 year rule, a policy that states you cannot count courses toward your degree that were completed more than 6 years prior to the time of your program completion. The clock does not stop during your LOA. You can read about the 6 year rule, and other graduate academic policies, [here](#). Your advisor will need to write a memo of support for your leave, explaining how you will complete your program successfully upon your return. Without the explicit, written support of your program, your LOA will not be approved.

If you are an international student on an F-1 Visa, you must meet with the International Student Advisor as soon as you know you will need to take a LOA to determine whether your immigration status will be jeopardized.

It's important to keep in mind that your academic standing will remain fixed while you are on LOA. For example, if you are on probation, then the semester you return, you will still be on probation and will need to earn a 3.0 term GPA or higher to avoid dismissal. You can read about probation and dismissal, and other graduate academic policies, [here](#).

It's also important to remember that if you fail to return in the term you listed on your request, your student status will be moved to inactive, and you will have to apply for re-admission to the university.

PROGRAM EXTENSION

College of Graduate Studies and Research policy states that all credits applicable to the degree must have been completed within a maximum of six years prior to the granting of the master's degree. This includes course credits, transfer credits, and thesis, research project, practicum, and/or internship credits. If a student fails to complete his or her program in six years, coursework that is more than six years old will be considered outdated and must be retaken or replaced. Extensions of currency, in which an outdated course can be considered current by the program and the College of Graduate Studies and Research, are not routine, but may be granted under special circumstances. The student must submit a formal petition in order to apply for an exception to this six year rule. The form for that petition is called a [Time Extension Request Form](#).

PROGRAM CHANGE

A student wishing to change from a current degree program to another degree program must submit a [Request for Change of Study Program form](#), along with all required documentation, to Graduate Records (D-101D). This will initiate the process of admission into a new program. Admission to this program is solely at the discretion of the admitting program.

FINANCING YOUR GRADUATE EDUCATION

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

At Northeastern, we believe that cost should not be a barrier to your pursuit of an excellent college education. Many student financial aid resources exist, and we're here to help you take advantage of them. [The Financial Aid Office](#) will help you create a financial plan that works for you; the office offers ongoing workshops on financial aid and provides support for you to conduct research on grants and scholarships. We can also answer questions by phone at (773) 442-5016 and email at financial-aid@neu.edu.

Graduate students who have been admitted to a master's degree program qualify for federal loans, provided they are enrolled at least half-time. To initiate this process, fill out the Free Application for [Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#); NEIU's ID number is 001693. The deadlines for scholarships are often earlier than deadlines for admission, so start the application process early. Read more about [applying for FAFSA](#).

In addition, the College of Graduate Studies and Research administers three types of graduate-level scholarships:

- Graduate Assistantships
- Merit Tuition Scholarships
- Need-Based Graduate Scholarships

You will find all information, guidelines, deadlines and applications on the [Financing Your Graduate Education](#) section of the website.

MERIT TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS

All graduate programs award a limited number of Graduate Merit Tuition Scholarships each Fall, Spring, and Summer semester. The awards are administered through the College of Graduate Studies and Research, based on nominations submitted by each program's Graduate Advisor/Coordinator.

All active students with a GPA of 3.5 or higher in graduate degree programs, as well as prospective students who have applied for admission to a programs will automatically be considered. There is no student application. Graduate Merit Tuition Scholarships are awarded before the beginning of the semester in which the tuition scholarship will be used. Nominated students will be notified via email by the College of Graduate Studies and Research. The scholarships typically cover tuition of one three credit hour course for one semester (students are responsible for University fees).

GRADUATE NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS

The College of Graduate Studies and Research, working together with the Financial Aid Office, oversees the administration and distribution of Graduate Need-Based Tuition Scholarships. These scholarships are awarded based on a combination of demonstrated need (determined from the required FAFSA application) and academic excellence (GPA). Application and all instructions can be found in the [Financing Your Graduate Education](#) section on the College's website.

Eligibility:

- Applicants must have been admitted to a graduate degree program by the Scholarship application deadline. Graduate students-at-large and students in certificate, focus, licensure or endorsement programs are not eligible.
- Must demonstrate financial need, as determined through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

- Must be United States Citizens or Permanent Residents (eligible non-citizens).
- Must be registered for a graduate level course – scholarships can only be applied to a course which contributes to a student's academic progress toward fulfilling the requirements of the graduate degree.
- Academic standing:
 - o Continuing students – must be in good academic standing.
 - o New students - must have a 3.00 or better undergraduate cumulative grade point average on a 4.00 point scale.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate Assistants are graduate students who provide academic and program support to departments and/or various university units and offices in exchange for a tuition waiver and a monthly stipend. Graduate assistantships are quite competitive, and vary in responsibilities by department. Graduate Assistantships serve multiple roles both for the students who are awarded them as well as for the university.

1. For the student, a graduate assistantship provides:
 - a. financial support, so that the student can focus his or her attention on advancing in their graduate work at NEIU, and
 - b. a work experience that will advance their training in their field.
2. For the university, graduate assistantships:
 - a. attract high quality students, thereby enhancing the quality of its graduate programs; and
 - b. support the academic work of the faculty, by involving advanced students in the teaching, scholarship, and creative activities missions of the university.

Eligibility Requirements

- o Admission to a degree-seeking graduate program (Graduate Students-At-Large are not eligible)
- o Good academic standing - at least a 3.0 grade point average
- o Enrollment in at least three graduate-level credit hours per semester

How to apply

- Fill out an [online application for Graduate Assistantship](#).

You will be contacted by the hiring department when an opening that matches your skills, experience, and field of study becomes available.

Graduate Assistantship Compensation

- 20 hours of work per week = \$600 stipend per month PLUS tuition & fees waiver for 3 courses (9 credit hours) per semester
- 15 hours of work per week = \$450 stipend per month PLUS tuition & fees waiver for 2 courses (6 credit hours) per semester
- 10 hours of work per week = \$300 stipend per month PLUS tuition & fees waiver for 1 course (3 credit hours) per semester

COMPLETING YOUR PROGRAM & GRADUATION

Graduation Requirements

Master's degree students must earn a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and complete all degree requirements in order to graduate. Refer to the [Academic Catalog](#) for the semester/academic year for which you were admitted for specific graduation and degree requirements (referred to as your "catalog year"). Meet with your Graduate Advisor to go over the [Graduation Application](#) before submitting it to the Graduate Records office.

Applying for Graduation

Northeastern has three graduations per year: May, August, and December. Master's degree students must submit the [Application for Graduation for Master's Student](#) by the published deadline in person to the Graduate Records Office (D-101D) or by mail to:

Northeastern Illinois University
Graduate Records Office
5500 N. St. Louis Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625

Direct questions regarding graduation application status to the Graduate Records office at graduate-records@neiu.edu

Graduation Application Filing Deadlines

Month of Anticipated Completion of Degree Requirements	Master's Degree Graduation Application Filing Deadline
May	Sept. 1 until November 1
August	Feb. 1 until April 1
December	March 15 until May 15

Note: Master's students completing a thesis must submit the final, approved thesis no later than the date published in the [Academic Catalog](#). For more information, please see the "Electronic Thesis Submission" section below.

Need to Change Your Graduation Date After Applying for Graduation?

If you are unable to complete all graduation and degree requirements by the last official day of the semester in which you anticipate to graduate, you will be dropped from graduation for that semester and be required to submit a Change of Graduation Date form for your new semester of graduation. The [Change of Graduation Date form](#) is available for download, or you may obtain the form from Enrollment Services (D-101) or the Graduate Records Office (D-101D).

GRADUATE THESIS

Note: You will find the Thesis Manual and all other thesis guidelines, policies, and related documents on the [Master's Thesis Resources](#) section of the College's website.

In some graduate programs, the completion of a master's thesis represents one of a number of possible culminating experiences in the discipline. Completion of the thesis requirement includes successfully fulfilling: (1) generally, at least six credit hours of thesis research and writing with a grade of P or HP; (2) a thesis defense; and (3) the approved submission of the finalized thesis to the College of Graduate Studies and Research. Students fulfilling the requirements of a thesis option must register for at least one graduate-level credit hour in all semesters in which they are actively working on their thesis, until the completion of the thesis requirements. The successful completion of six credits of thesis hours does not guarantee the satisfactory completion of the thesis requirement.

Thesis credit is graded each term a student is engaged in thesis work using grades of High Pass (HP), Pass (P), or No Pass (NP). Only HP and P grades are satisfactory and count for credit toward the degree. At most, six credits of thesis hours may be counted toward fulfilling degree requirements that include a thesis option.

If a student receives a grade of NP for thesis hours, a program may require the student to switch to one of the other possible culminating experiences in the discipline. Students receiving grades of NP in their thesis hours for two consecutive semesters will not be allowed to continue with the thesis.

Substitution of up to six credits of P/HP (Pass/High Pass) thesis hours for non-thesis research credit hours is allowable, with the approval of the program, if the program offers such hours.

GRADING SCALE FOR GRADUATE THESIS WORK

- High Pass: Outstanding academic progress on the thesis, an outstanding defense of the thesis, and/or an outstanding thesis.
- Pass: Satisfactory academic progress on the thesis, a satisfactory defense of the thesis, and/or a satisfactory thesis.
- No Pass: Student has not made satisfactory academic progress on their thesis or their thesis does not meet the academic standards of the program.

THESIS HOURS REGISTRATION

Students who are planning a thesis should consult with their thesis advisor well before the beginning of the semester in which they start thesis work. Students must register for each semester in which they are working on the thesis until they defend, for a total of at least 6 hours.

Please be aware of the registration deadlines, which can be found [here](#) and differ from registration deadlines for other, non-individualized courses. No thesis registration forms will be processed after the deadline.

Please be aware that for initial thesis hours registration, a brief proposal/prospectus is required to be submitted along with the [Thesis Registration Form](#). Some programs have a template to be completed by students as their thesis proposal/prospectus. Some programs expect students to write the proposal/prospectus on their own (with advisor review and approval). In some programs, the thesis advisor writes the proposal/prospectus. Students should check with their advisor about their program's expectations of the proposal/prospectus. Note: This brief proposal/prospectus submitted for registration is not the full thesis proposal some programs require a student to develop in their first semester of thesis work.

Process: Complete the [Thesis Registration Form](#) with the thesis advisor. The advisor submits the form with the brief proposal/prospectus to the department chair. From there, the form is processed and, once approved, Graduate Records enrolls the student in Thesis Hours for the semester.

ELECTRONIC THESIS SUBMISSION

Submission of the Master's Thesis to the College of Graduate Studies and Research

All Northeastern students completing a Master's thesis must submit the thesis electronically through ProQuest's ETD Submission Process.

Preliminary Deadline: Students planning to defend and submit their thesis should create their ETD account and enter their background information into the system at least four weeks before the last day of finals of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.

Deadline: The thesis should be submitted via ETD for review by the College of Graduate Studies and Research at least three weeks before the last day of finals of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. This will allow sufficient time for corrections and/or adjustments to the thesis to be made by the student. The deadline for submission will be publicized at the beginning of each semester on the [Thesis Deadlines](#) page.

Electronic Thesis Submission Process

1. Create a single PDF file of the textual part of the thesis, including the [Title page](#). Do not use compression or password protection, and make sure that all fonts are embedded
2. External/Internal links to multi-media files should be identified in the abstract.
3. Use only acceptable file formats for multi-media files (see the ProQuest site for guidelines on acceptable file formats).
4. Submit the thesis to the ProQuest website <http://www.etdadmin.com/neiu>. Note: the single thesis file is to be reviewed and submitted by the student, except in rare instances when the Dean or Associate Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research submit on the student's behalf. Students and the College of Graduate Studies and Research receive email confirmation of thesis submission.
5. The College of Graduate Studies and Research reviews the document for compliance with policy and format as outlined in this manual. CGSR does not review disciplinary content. CGSR will email the student the status of their manuscript: Accepted, Minor Revisions, Major Revisions Requested, or Rejected.
6. The student must revise the electronic document until it has been approved.
7. Upon final approval of the thesis and after submission by the College of Graduate Studies and Research of the approved thesis to ProQuest, the student may order bound copies from ProQuest.

For more guidance on the technical aspects of preparing the thesis for electronic submission, please review the Publishing Guide provided by ProQuest. Note: you do not need to have created an ETD account to access this guide. http://www.etdadmin.com/UMI_PreparingYourManuscriptGuide.pdf

COMMENCEMENT

Northeastern Illinois University has two Commencement ceremonies per year: May and December. [Information regarding participation in Commencement](#) is sent by the Student Union, Event, and Conference Services Office to all students who have applied for graduation by the appropriate deadline. Although you are not required to participate in the Commencement ceremony in order to graduate, we welcome your participation so that you can be publicly recognized for your achievement!

Students who apply for August or December graduation are eligible to participate in the December Commencement ceremony. Students who apply for May graduation are eligible to participate in the May Commencement ceremony. In addition to attending the University Commencement, you will be also invited to a Master's Hooding Ceremony, sponsored by the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

MASTER'S HOODING CEREMONY

The Master's Hooding Ceremony is a special graduate student graduation event in which you will be formally hooded with the academic hood specific to the discipline of your master's degree.

All graduates must obtain regalia in order to participate in the Master's Hooding Ceremony. The same regalia that you wear for the Ceremony may be worn at Commencement.

The Hooding Ceremony takes place before the Commencement, approximately in the last week of November/first week of December in the Fall semester and the last week of April in the Spring semester.

You will receive a communication from the College of Graduate Studies and Research (graduatestudies@neiu.edu) with detailed information approximately 4-6 weeks before the Ceremony. More information can also be found in the [Graduation section](#) of the College of Graduate Studies and Research website.

Registration for Commencement does not automatically register you for the Hooding Ceremony. Please be sure to register for both if you plan on attending both ceremonies.

Diplomas/Transcripts Showing Your Degree Posted

Diplomas and final transcripts are not released until the \$30 graduation fee is paid and all holds and/or indebtedness to Northeastern have been resolved. Typically, diplomas and transcripts showing your degree earned are available six to eight weeks after the official end of the semester in which you applied for graduation. You will receive an email with instructions on how to receive your diploma.

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

International students MUST attend the mandatory International Student Orientation and report to the Office of International Programs before the beginning of their first semester.

As a student in F-1 status, you are responsible for learning, understanding, and complying with U.S. federal laws and regulations governing your visa. This is very important - failure to do so will violate your legal status in the United States and will have serious consequences.

The Office of International Programs is the authoritative department for all government regulations that a student must adhere to while on a student visa. Please confirm any advice given to you concerning USCIS regulations from academic advisors, professors and other international students with the International Student Advisor. Below are some of the additional policies and procedures that pertain to you as an international graduate student.

Deferring Admission

An international student must obtain their F-1 or J-1 visa from a U.S. Consulate, or change of status granted through USCIS, in order to begin your graduate program. If you are not granted the required documentation in time for the semester you have applied for, you must defer your admission. To do so, you must fill out the [Deferment Form](#) and email it to graduateadmissions@neiu.edu and copy International Programs at International-Programs@neiu.edu

Reduced Course Load

Graduate students on an F-1 Visa must be enrolled full-time (9 credit hours) each Fall and Spring term. The Designated School Official (DSO) in the Office of International Programs is required to report to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that each enrolled international student, whether newly admitted or a continuing student, has: 1) reported to the school; and 2) is fully enrolled in their current semester. The following exceptional situations may justify a reduced course load, if your application for such a status is approved:

- o documented illness or medical condition
- o academic difficulty
- o the final semester of your program

Contact the Office of International Programs to obtain the Reduced Course Load form and more information on each of the exceptions to full-time enrollment. Your Graduate Program Advisor must sign the form, and you may need to submit additional documentation.

Financing Your Graduate Education

- International Students are not eligible for Financial Aid grants and loans, or Need-based Tuition Scholarships, as they require submitting a FAFSA (application for federal student aid)
- International students may be hired as Graduate Assistants, receive Merit Tuition Scholarships, or apply for external scholarships. The [Institute of International Education](#) has a Funding for United States Study, which is a good source for international students who want to apply for scholarships. If you receive any of these external funds, you must submit a copy of the award notification to the Office of International Programs to be added to your I-20 record.

Dismissal for Academic Reason

- According to immigration regulations, all international students are expected to make sufficient academic progress over the course of their studies and remain in good academic standing. It is important to contact the International Student Advisor in advance if your academic standing may be in jeopardy. If you are dismissed and you are not able to appeal the dismissal, then you will automatically fall out of status, and your I-20's and DS-2019's will be terminated. If this is the case you must leave the country.

Employment

- International students are allowed to work ON CAMPUS ONLY, for a maximum of 20 hours per week, and must maintain full-time status. The conditions of your VISA prohibit you from working outside of campus. If you are offered employment on campus, you will need a Social Security number to begin your assignment. Make an appointment with the International Student Advisor to receive a letter that you will submit to the Social Security Office in order to obtain your Social Security number and card.
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT): F-1 students are eligible to obtain an internship ONLY if they are registered for a course that requires a practical training from that course. Contact the International Student Advisor for more information.
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) is temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization; it is an opportunity for international students to participate in professional, temporary employment that is directly related to their major area of study, but not a part of the academic curriculum. Contact the International Student Advisor for more information.

Completion of the program

- The Office of International Programs will be notifying F-1 students during the final semester indicated on their I-20. This notification will detail the options to remain in the United States that are available after graduation. These options include: Optional Practical Training (OPT); or applying for another master's degree or doctorate program. If you need more time to complete your program, see Program Extension, below.
- If you want your immediate family to attend your graduation ceremony (Commencement), the office can issue supporting letters for your parents, siblings, grandparents, spouse, and children.

Program Extension

F-1 Students who need to extend their I-20 in order to complete their program will need to submit new financial documentation (Financial Statement and Sponsor's Official Bank Letters). You must submit this to the Office of International Programs before the end date of your I-20.

LIBRARY AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

The Ronald Williams Library supports the university's teaching and learning mission as well as the information and research needs of the entire university community. Graduate students may find the following services of particular interest:

- Personal research consultation services from a subject librarian, including individual appointments to support assignments, papers, and long term projects such as Master's theses
- [Research guides](#) and access to over 180 research databases such as JSTOR and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses with on and off campus
- Borrowing materials from over 86 academic libraries in Illinois through CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois)
- Comfortable study areas and a café suitable for quiet private study or collaborative small group learning
- Print, electronic, and media holdings of approximately 1.2 million items
- Rapid interlibrary loan and textbook reserve services
- Adaptive library services for students with disabilities
- Access to Multimedia Recording Studio outfitted with Camtasia and Audacity recording programs
- A Multimedia Learning Resource Center (MLRC) housing media collections along with computing resources for digital media editing
- Special research collections, including the University Archives and the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) for Chicago and Cook County

For more information on specific library services and for direct online access to library collections and services, consult the RWL website at www.neiu.edu/library.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The CGSR Dean's Office is open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and can be reached at graduatestudies@neiu.edu or (773) 442-6012. We are located on the lower level of Lech Walesa Hall, room LWH-0041.

For your graduate advisor contact information, and all other units and departments on campus, visit the [University Directory](#).

Department	Email address	Phone number
College of Graduate Studies and Research	graduatestudies@neiu.edu	(773) 442-6012
Graduate Records	Graduate-records@neiu.edu	(773) 442-6001
Financial Aid	Financial-aid@neiu.edu	(773) 442- 5040
Registration Office	Registration@neiu.edu	(773) 442-4040
University Police	Neiu-cops@neiu.edu	(773) 442 -4100
Student Health	Health-services@neiu.edu	(773) 442-5800c
Information Center	Info-center@neiu.edu	(773) 442-4636
Library		(773) 442 -4400

	Useful links
College of Graduate Studies and Research website	https://www.neiu.edu/academics/graduate-college/
Academic Catalog	https://www.neiu.edu/academics/academic-catalog
Academic Calendar	https://www.neiu.edu/academics/registrar-services/academic-calendar
Class Schedule and Registration	https://www.neiu.edu/academics/registrar-services/class-schedules-and-registration
Registrar (links to graduate forms and documents)	https://www.neiu.edu/academics/registrar-services
Activate your NEIUPort	http://homepages.neiu.edu/~neutemp/NEIUport/NEIUport%20Activation%20Instructions%20-%20V2.pdf
Financial Aid	https://www.neiu.edu/financial-aid/
Library	http://www.neiu.edu/library/
Student Life	https://www.neiu.edu/university-life/
Student Health Services	https://www.neiu.edu/university-life/student-health-services
Parking	https://www.neiu.edu/university-life/parking
Campus Recreation	https://www.neiu.edu/university-life/campus-recreation
Technology Services	https://www.neiu.edu/university-life/technology-services
University Student Handbook	https://www.neiu.edu/university-life/dean-students/student-handbooks