

Progressing in your Degree

A Guide for Graduate Students

Your graduate degree at Western has requirements that you must meet to continue progressing in your program and eventually complete your degree. These requirements may be based on research activities, coursework, or program responsibilities – the composition of your degree requirements will rely on your program of study and the type of degree.

Understanding your Degree and Program Requirements

It is your responsibility to fully understand the requirements you must fulfill to continue progressing in your program and to complete your degree.

- Attend Orientation Sessions:** Sessions may be hosted by your program/faculty or the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, or may be more social and offered by groups like the Society of Graduate Students. Take these opportunities to connect with your colleagues as a chance to gain additional knowledge about your degree.
- Discuss your degree and program requirements** with your Supervisor, Supervisory or Advisory Committee, Graduate Chair, or the Graduate Affairs Assistant in your program
- Understand Expectations:** Be sure you understand what is expected of you in your program, your research group or lab, and as a Western student.
- Check Program Documentation** to ensure you understand any posted rules or milestones your program requires
- Review University Regulations:** Know where to look and how to access University regulations that govern your studies at Western. Pay specific attention to the [School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Graduate Regulation](#).

Tracking Progression

Your degree progression is a combination of many factors and is unique to your program and degree. Some degrees, such as professional Master's programs, require more coursework and minimal research activities. Doctoral degrees have fewer courses and a greater emphasis on research activities.

Academic

Academic progression refers to your activities that are related to your academic studies. In most cases, your academic progression is tracked by the grades you receive in courses you take during your degree. While programs may have higher academic requirements, SGPS states all graduate students "...must maintain a

Progressing in your Degree

A Guide for Graduate Students

cumulative average of at least 70% calculated each term over all courses taken for credit, with no grade less than 60%"¹.

A student's academic performance is reviewed at the end of each academic term. When a student fails to meet one or more academic progression requirements, their program may require the student to withdraw from the University.

Research

Research activities are unique to the area of research and project, making progression in research difficult to quantify. Students enrolled in research degrees are required to complete annual progress evaluations to ensure they are on track with their research activities. Additionally doctoral research degrees require the completion of a comprehensive or qualifying exam.

Other Requirements

Your degree or program may have additional requirements that must be met. These may include:

- **Degree Duration:** All degrees have a minimum and maximum registration period.
- **Non-Academic Milestones:** Activities that aren't academic in nature but are required for your degree, such as required training
- **Seminar participation/attendance:** Many programs require students to attend and/or participate in regular seminars or lecture series.
- **Other program related activities**

Connect with your graduate program to ensure you understand all the requirements of your degree and program.

Progression Requirements Not Met

When a student has failed to meet one or more progression requirements, they will be notified by their graduate program. Depending on the requirements that have not been met, the recommendation(s) of the graduate program may include:

- repeating a course (or courses)
- completing the outstanding milestone or requirement within a specified timeline
- developing a plan for completion the degree with the student's supervisor committee
- a change in degree level
- withdrawing from graduate studies

Students who fail to meet progression requirements are normally notified in writing of the requirements not met and may be given an opportunity to meet with the decision maker

¹ School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Graduate Regulations 3.0
<https://grad.uwo.ca/resources/regulations/index.html>

NOTE: This guide was produced by the Office of the Ombudsperson. It is not an official university document and is not intended to replace university policy.

Progressing in your Degree

A Guide for Graduate Students

(such as the Graduate Chair or Program Director) to discuss the requirements not met and what options are available.

Appealing a Progression Decision

You have the options to appeal a progression decision to your graduate program normally within four weeks of the decision. You may have been provided appeal instructions by the decision maker or it may have been mentioned in your decision letter.

If you are unsure of the process for appealing in your program, contact your Graduate Chair or Program Director.

While you do have the option to appeal, you cannot appeal simply because you don't like the outcome or don't agree with the decision – you must have **grounds** for appeal, as set out in the [Graduate Student Appeals Policy](#).

Before you decide to appeal:

- **Read over your decision carefully.** Ensure you understand what requirements haven't been met.
- **Think your academic responsibilities and program requirements:** Were there circumstances that impacted your ability to complete your academic work or requirements?
- **Think about your role:** What actions did you take to mitigate the impact of these circumstances to your responsibilities?
- **Is the outcome worth appeal?** Would an appeal drastically alter the course of your academics?

If you decide to appeal, be sure to check out the following resources to help you understand the appeals process and begin preparing your appeal.

Resources

- Policy – Graduate Student Academic Appeals:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsgrad.pdf
- Guide - Appealing: The Basics:
<https://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/pdf/appeal-basics1.pdf>
- Worksheet – Building Your Appeal:
<https://form.jotform.com/222846174237055>