



Northern Illinois
University

Student Assessment: Developmental Psychology Graduate Program

Annual Evaluation

The developmental faculty meets in May to evaluate the progress of each student. Before the meeting, students are requested to provide a list of accomplishments and current curriculum vitae to their advisors and the head of the developmental area. Students are also encouraged to discuss their progress with their advisors prior to the annual evaluation faculty meeting. The evaluation of student performance is comprehensive and includes both performance in departmental requirements and professional development and functioning.

Students receive a written evaluation based on the annual review of their progress. The evaluation will note the student's achievements during the past year in research, publications, conference presentations, and teaching. The evaluation also will indicate the student's progress in the program. The following distinctions will be used to inform students of their standing in the program:

Good standing: Student is performing well in courses, making progress in research, and is on schedule for achieving major milestones in the program (i.e., defending thesis proposal, defending and completing thesis, passing candidacy exam, defending dissertation proposal, defending and completing dissertation).

Inadequate progress with need for remediation: Student is either performing below expectations in courses, or is not making adequate progress in research. Student has fallen behind schedule for achieving one or more major milestones in the program (i.e., defending thesis proposal, defending and completing thesis, passing candidacy exam, defending dissertation proposal, defending and completing dissertation) and has missed a remediation deadline. Problems must be remediated in order to return to good standing. If problems are not remediated prior to the next evaluation, the student is at risk for reduction in funding or termination.

Probation with risk of termination: Student is either performing below expectations in courses, or is making poor progress in research. Student has fallen far behind schedule for achieving one or more major milestones in the program (i.e., defending thesis proposal, defending and completing thesis, passing candidacy exam, defending dissertation proposal, defending and completing dissertation) and has missed a probation/termination deadline. If problems are not remediated in the coming semester, the student is at severe risk for reduction in funding or termination.

Students may request a reconsideration of their annual evaluation. Such requests should be made in writing to the developmental faculty within 30 days of receipt of the evaluation. Students may also provide a written response to the annual evaluation.

Assessment of Adequate Progress

The following goals and deadlines have been established to help students complete the program in a timely fashion. There are three types of deadlines: (a) aspirational deadlines, (b) remediation deadlines, and (c) probation/termination deadlines. Aspirational deadlines are goals that students should achieve in order to stay on schedule for timely progress through the program.

Remediation deadlines are deadlines that must be met to avoid probationary status with a need for remediation. Probation/termination deadlines are deadlines that must be met to avoid the risk of termination. If a student fails to meet a remediation deadline, the student and the chair of their committee are expected to compose a letter to the developmental faculty explaining why the deadline was not met and propose a way to remediate the problem. Specifically, they should indicate how and when the objective will be met as well as how the student will be able to “catch up” to meet the next milestone’s deadline. This may, but does not need to, include modifications to their anticipated time in the clinic (e.g., a reduced caseload could be requested) or coursework so that they can focus on writing or data collection. The faculty will review the proposed plan and decide if it is appropriate. Once a plan is in place, the student will need to periodically check in with their advisor regarding their progress until the goal has been reached. If the student does not make progress with their proposed plan within a specified time period (e.g., six months), the faculty will follow the remediation procedure described below.

Students who do not meet a probation/termination deadline have more serious consequences. At this point, rather than being put on probation, the faculty may determine to terminate the student from the program. Students may appeal to the faculty for extension of a termination deadline if they feel there are special circumstances that have slowed their progress; however, the onus is on the student to convince the faculty that the circumstances have been sufficient to account for the delayed progress. The guidelines below will be followed to help a student who has fallen behind in the program regain momentum and demonstrate an appropriate rate of progress.

Goals and Deadlines for Students Who Enter with a Bachelor’s Degree

M.A. thesis proposal on file

Aspirational Goal: End of fall semester of second year (Dec. 15).

Remediation Deadline: End of spring semester of second year (May 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: End of fall semester of third year (Dec. 15).

Defend final M.A. thesis

Aspirational Goal: End of fall semester of third year (Dec. 15).

Remediation Deadline: End of spring semester of third year (May 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: Beginning of spring semester of fourth year (Feb. 1).

Note: Completion of the M.A. thesis and defense fulfills the comprehensive exam requirement. Alternatively, students who do not make adequate progress toward completion of the M.A. thesis may instead complete a comprehensive exam at the discretion of the faculty. In this case, the comprehensive exam will consist of essay questions covering core topics and issues in developmental psychology. Passing the comprehensive exam will fulfill a requirement for a terminal non-thesis master's degree. A completed master's thesis is required for students continuing into the Ph.D. program.

Submit and pass candidacy exam

Aspirational Goal: Submit by beginning of fall semester of fourth year (Sept. 1).

Remediation Deadline: Submit by beginning of spring semester of fourth year (Feb. 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: Submit by end of fall semester of fifth year (Dec. 15).

Dissertation proposal on file

Aspirational Goal: End of spring semester of fourth year (May 1).

Remediation Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of fifth year (Sept. 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of sixth year (Sept. 1).

Defend dissertation

Aspirational Goal: End of spring semester of fifth year (May 1).

Remediation Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of sixth year (Sept. 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of seventh year (Sept. 1).

Goals and Deadlines for Students Who Enter with a Thesis-based Master's Degree

Submit and pass candidacy exam

Aspirational Goal: Submit by beginning of fall semester of second year (Sept. 1).

Remediation Deadline: Submit by beginning of spring semester of second year (Feb. 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: Submit by end of fall semester of third year (Dec. 15).

Dissertation proposal on file

Aspirational Goal: End of spring semester of second year (May 1).

Remediation Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of third year (Sept. 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of fourth year (Sept. 1).

Defend dissertation

Aspirational Goal: End of spring semester of third year (May 1).

Remediation Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of fourth year (Sept. 1).

Probation/Termination Deadline: Beginning of fall semester of fifth year (Sept. 1).

Formal feedback and remediation procedure

1. The student's advisor and at least one other developmental faculty member will meet with the at-risk student to understand the nature of the student's difficulties, explore options, specify identified weaknesses, and develop goals and strategies for remediation.
2. An individualized plan will be developed, and approved by the developmental faculty, that will specify student activities, expected levels of performance, methods of faculty monitoring, and schedule of evaluation. The student's research advisor or other appointed member of the faculty will be responsible for tracking the plan and evaluating the student's progress. The responsible faculty member will provide feedback on the student's progress each month at the regular clinical faculty meeting.
3. The student will be provided written feedback about their performance on a scheduled basis. The timeline for feedback will be included in the individualized plan.
4. At the conclusion of the remediation period, the developmental psychology faculty will determine whether (a) sufficient progress has been made for the student to no longer be considered "at risk," (b) to continue or modify the remediation plan, or (c) to terminate the student from the program. The faculty's decision will be communicated to the student in writing.
5. The student may appeal the faculty's decision to the department chair, who will review the recommendations with the student, the student's advisor, and other relevant parties. If the decision is unchanged, the chair will inform the student of the process for further appeal.
6. If a student is dismissed from the program, a final meeting should be initiated by the student's advisor to provide help or referrals for academic counseling, personal counseling, status of future letters of recommendation, and any other issues of concern to the student.

Grievance Procedures

Several procedures and guidelines are in place to ensure that student complaints or grievances are handled effectively and fairly.

There are informal procedures that students are encouraged to utilize to handle program complaints or grievances. Students are encouraged to bring the complaint to the attention of the program via the head of the developmental program, the CIDS area coordinator, the director of Graduate Studies, the department chair, or their faculty advisor. All student concerns and grievances will be treated fairly and kept confidential. The nature of all grievances will be documented for program development and evaluation.

Students may elect to bring complaints more formally to the department or university. Within the psychology department, students may contact the director of Graduate Studies (DOGS) or the

Graduate Student Advisory Committee regarding concerns. See the *Department of Psychology Graduate Student Manual* for information on the formal departmental grievance procedures and for information on appealing course grades.

Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the document *Northern Illinois University: Student Code of Conduct* available at http://www.niu.edu/conduct/Student_Code_of_Conduct/index.shtml.

In addition, grievance procedures for students are detailed in the Constitution and Bylaws of Northern Illinois University ([Article 12, Grievance Procedures for Students](#)).

Finally, two of the most relevant university resources for students regarding grievances are listed below:

- The [NIU Ombudsperson](#), 815-753-1414, Ombuds@niu.edu.
- NIU Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, and Education [webpage](#).