



NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF
PROFESSIONAL
STUDIES

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Northwestern University School of Professional Studies
Graduate Degree and Graduate Certificate Programs

2019–20

Northwestern University School of Professional Studies Graduate Student Handbook

Welcome to Northwestern University School of Professional Studies (SPS).

This Graduate Student Handbook is your guide to your SPS graduate program of study and Northwestern University. It will provide you with information about various practical aspects of graduate life and is intended to help you navigate through your program and its administrative procedures. The SPS Student Handbook is your reference tool for a wide range of items in the SPS student experience, from course registration to your culminating project. If, after consulting the handbook, you still have questions or unresolved issues, please contact your [academic adviser](#) or the appropriate resource.

If you are looking for your certificate of advanced graduate study or graduate degree program's academic requirements, please refer to the [curriculum](#) listed on your program page.

In addition to the policies set forth in this handbook, you are also expected to be familiar with University-enacted rules and regulations, which are found in the Northwestern University [Student Handbook](#). Please familiarize yourself with the scope and the specifics of the University's [Student Code of Conduct](#).

The Graduate Student Handbook can also be found on the [SPS website](#), where all updates and new information will be posted. SPS reserves the right to change programs of study, academic requirements, teaching staff, class meeting times and other published information without prior notice and in accordance with University procedures.

SPS hopes this handbook will help you plan your studies effectively, provide you with useful information and direct you to the resources you need.

Sincerely,



Margaret M. McCarthy
Associate Dean for Student and Alumni Services
Northwestern University School of Professional Studies

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Getting Started

New Student Orientation

An online orientation session is available in an asynchronous format to accommodate the busy schedules of working adults. All students should view the orientation session before beginning their studies at SPS. Students are encouraged to contact their [academic adviser](#) with any follow-up questions or concerns. To access the online orientation, click [here](#).

Identification Card

The University provides all students with a seven-digit identification number (typically starting with a 2) known as a student or “empl” ID. This student number is used by the registrar and student accounts. SPS recommends that students obtain a WildCARD, a picture ID card bearing the student ID. The WildCARD allows access to University libraries and use of Northwestern shuttles, including the intercampus shuttle. Students obtain their WildCARD from the Evanston or Chicago WildCARD office. For more information, click [here](#).

Online students who are unable to visit the Evanston or Chicago campuses to have a WildCARD created may email a digital photo of themselves to [Student Services](#). The photo must be taken in front of a white background from a distance of two to three feet. No other photos will be accepted. In addition, please send a notarized copy of a valid photo ID to Northwestern University School of Professional Studies; Wieboldt Hall, Sixth Floor; 339 East Chicago Avenue; Chicago, IL 60611-3008. Please mark this to the attention of Student Services.

Online students will receive their WildCARD barcode number, which provides access to certain library resources, during the first week that courses begin.

NetID

Northwestern also issues each student an electronic identification user name known as a “NetID.” The NetID will take the format of three letters and three numbers (i.e., abc123). A NetID enables students to access email, view electronic course materials, see grades and use online reference materials from the University libraries. An assigned NetID and temporary password are included in admissions materials distributed upon program admittance. Students will need to activate their account by changing the password. For more information, click [here](#).

Email Account

As a condition of taking classes with SPS, students must maintain an active Northwestern email account. Email is the University’s mechanism for official communication with students, and Northwestern expects that students will read official email in a timely fashion. All communication

from students to University administration should be conducted with a Northwestern email account. If a non-Northwestern email account is a student's primary email, he or she may choose to forward Northwestern email to the primary email account. However, students still need to maintain the Northwestern account by periodically updating the password. For more information on Northwestern email, click [here](#).

Name and Address Changes

Students who change a permanent or local street address or email address must update their address information online by logging onto CAESAR (see the [Using CAESAR](#) section for more information on the purpose and uses of CAESAR) and clicking on Personal Portfolio in the Student Enterprise Menu. Essential communications such as billing statements, convocation tickets and diplomas require up-to-date contact information. Students who change their names must provide documentation at the SPS Registrar's Office to effect a name change.

Student Loans and Financial Aid

For questions regarding financial aid, please contact the [Chicago Office of Financial Aid](#) online or at 312-503-8722. SPS recommends that students schedule an appointment with a financial aid adviser two to three months before the beginning of the loan period to review procedures and to discuss their application.

Tuition and Refunds

Tuition information is adjusted annually and can be found on the Tuition page for each [graduate program](#) or [certificate program](#).

Students who withdraw from SPS for the term may be eligible for a partial tuition refund, less any nonrefundable fees. The tuition refund policy is applied as of the date the request is received. For more information on refund policy when a course is dropped or for a withdrawal from SPS, contact [Student Financial Services](#).

Parking

Chicago Campus

When attending classes on the Chicago campus, students may park in several garages for a reduced rate if they receive validation of the parking ticket on the fourth or fifth floor lounges of Wieboldt Hall. On-campus parking permits for the Chicago campus are available through the Parking Office in Abbott Hall, Room 100, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. For more information about parking on the Chicago campus, click [here](#).

Evanston Campus

Students may park without a permit in most lots on the Evanston campus after 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and in all lots during the weekend. For additional information about parking in Evanston, click [here](#).

Required Proof of Immunization

All on-campus students taking two or more classes per quarter are required by Illinois state law and University regulations to provide proof of immunizations, in English. For more information about required documentation, please visit the [University Health Services](#) website. This policy does not apply to Distance Learning students taking only online courses.

Health Insurance

Health Insurance is a requirement for all degree-seeking students at Northwestern University. SPS students do not enroll in the NU Student Health Insurance Plan (NU-SHIP) and should pursue health insurance options external from the university.

Global Safety and Security

Northwestern University encourages its students to participate in a wide variety of educational experiences abroad. To minimize health and safety risks, the University has adopted policies and procedures to govern undergraduate and graduate travel for international opportunities and experiences. Those policies and procedures are detailed at the website of the [Office of Global Safety and Security](#). Graduate students must follow the policies outlined in the [Graduate Student Travel Policies page](#) of the Global Safety and Security page.

SPS students considering travel related to credit-bearing educational experiences, or with non-credit experiences related to their study at Northwestern should visit the Global Safety and Security website to become familiar with the policies related to international travel for Northwestern students. Students in the Global Health degree program should also refer to the Practicum section of the Program-Specific Policies section of the handbook and further details. Any questions regarding eligibility for academic or extracurricular experiences abroad should be directed to the student's [academic adviser](#).

Service Animals in Wieboldt Hall

Please see the University's Policy on Service, Assistance, and Other Animals for information about the appropriate use of and protocols associated with service, assistance, and other animals on campus: <https://policies.northwestern.edu/docs/animal-policy-final-012717.pdf>.

Students who require the use of a service animal on campus are strongly encouraged to contact [AccessbileNU](#) to register as a student with a disability and to determine what assistance is available. Employees who require the use of a service animal on campus are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Equity. [The Office of Equity](#) will assist the employee in navigating the workplace, communicating with colleagues about the presence of the service animal (if desired), and assisting with any related accommodation needs.

Program Tools and Resources

Academic and Career Advising

Student Services Philosophy

The Student Services team supports our adult students in their academic and career development, provides access to Northwestern University resources, and fosters networking and community within programs. Advisers work collaboratively with students while empowering them to develop and implement academic plans that achieve their scholarly and professional goals. The Student Services team is invested in preparing students to apply their Northwestern education to their next step of professional success.

Additional Information on Academic and Career Advising

Students with academic or career questions or concerns should turn first to their [academic adviser](#). Academic and career advisers encourage students to take full advantage of their help in:

- Academic planning and course selection
- Career resource education
- Résumé and cover letter guidance
- Supporting the student experience
- Preparing for the thesis

A meeting with an [academic adviser](#) is encouraged for new students. Academic advisers work with students by email or during pre-scheduled appointments by phone, online conference, or in-person meetings on the Chicago campus. To contact an academic adviser, email the advising team at spsacademicadvising@northwestern.edu.

Students are encouraged to reach out to an adviser whenever he or she is in need of guidance during their program of study. Follow-up conversations with an academic adviser are recommended at these milestones:

- After completing approximately a third of the curriculum
- At the start of the academic year in which graduation is expected
- Before registering for an independent thesis research project

Advisers may refer students to an SPS staff member, faculty director, or faculty member if appropriate.

Learning Management System (Canvas)

[Canvas](#) is Northwestern University's Learning Management System. Canvas is a cloud-hosted system that allows Northwestern instructors and students to deliver course materials, submit assignments and tests, view grades, and create learning activities.

Canvas course sites should be available to registered students two weeks prior to the start of the quarter. If a student registers for a class in the two weeks prior to the start of the quarter, it typically takes up to 24 hours for the Canvas course site to become available. Students who are unable to view a course site should email the course instructor.

To access Canvas and view frequently asked questions and tutorials, click [here](#).

Using CAESAR

CAESAR provides student web access to Northwestern's Student Enterprise System. Through CAESAR, students can register for classes, get an unofficial transcript and grades, see financial aid and student account information, update address and telephone numbers, check course enrollment levels and more. The [CAESAR help and how-to page](#) provides the information needed to navigate CAESAR confidently and easily and includes tip-sheets and tutorials.

Students may register for courses online through CAESAR; however, some courses do require paper registration. These include independent studies, 590 Thesis courses, practicums courses, and courses taken outside a student's program.

Before registering for classes on CAESAR, students should consult the [program course requirements and availability](#) on the SPS website. The SPS website is typically updated more quickly than CAESAR and in case of discrepancy will be regarded as the official schedule.

Bookstores

Students are responsible for checking to see what materials their instructors require for their upcoming courses. The Northwestern University Bookstores maintains a list of required books and other course materials for SPS courses. Please consult with the bookstore, either on-campus using [the online tool to find course materials](#), to find everything you need for class.

Books and required course materials are generally available before classes begin. If no books are available at the stores listed below, students should contact the instructor by email; he or she may have ordered them at another store or copy shop. Books are usually listed on the course syllabus, which is posted to Canvas by the start of classes or which may be obtained from the instructor.

For classes taught on the Chicago campus and all online courses

[Abbott Hall Bookstore](#), 710 North Lake Shore Drive, Room 140
312-503-8486

Evanston Campus Location

[Norris Center Bookstore](#), 1999 South Campus Drive
847-491-3990

The Library System

Northwestern University maintains an extensive library system to support its programs of study and research. This system includes the University Library and a number of special libraries on the Evanston and Chicago campuses, also accessible online. The library holdings constitute a collection of approximately 6 million volumes, 3.9 million microfilms and nearly 38,000 periodicals and serials.

Writing Support

The Writing Place is a free tutorial service provided to currently enrolled SPS students who feel that they need extra help with writing assignments. In-person consultations are available for on the Chicago and Evanston campuses, or can take place by phone or Skype. All appointments must be made online. Please visit [The Writing Place website](#) to view resources or schedule a consultation appointment.

Math Support

[The Math Place](#) is a free tutorial service provided to currently enrolled SPS students who feel that they need extra help with their math assignments. Appointments are available by phone, in-person on the Chicago campus, or online via Blue Jeans conferencing service. All appointments must be made online.

Tutor assistance includes help with precalculus, algebra, calculus and statistics. Sessions are most productive when the student seeks help on a specific assignment or subject and attempts an assignment before seeing the tutor. Students should bring all relevant materials, such as the course syllabus, class notes, handouts, assignment sheets and workbooks.

Policies and Procedures

SPS makes every effort to create graduate programs that meet the needs of working adults. SPS therefore allows students to manage their own course schedules, to determine how many courses they can successfully complete each quarter and to take a quarter off when needed.

Although SPS programs are flexible, there are several policies that students must adhere to in order to maintain adequate academic progress and successfully complete a program. Students should familiarize themselves with the following policies governing all graduate programs.

SPS Conduct Policies

All SPS students, as members of the Northwestern community, are expected to conduct themselves maturely and exemplify behavior consistent with Northwestern community standards. As a Northwestern student, you are expected to not only excel in the classroom but to engage in socially responsible behavior and to model exceptional conduct, character, and citizenship on campus, online, and beyond. All members of the Northwestern community are expected to deal with each other with respect and consideration. All SPS students are expected to be respectful of SPS staff time and resources.

SPS students are subject to University-enacted policies and standards, some of which are found in the [Northwestern University Student Handbook](#) and on the Office of Student Conduct website. Any violation of these policies, or assisting or encouraging others in the violation of these policies may lead to student conduct action, including discipline.

Prohibited and restricted conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Endangering self or others, including but not limited to the physical, psychological/emotional well-being of any person
- Interfering with the learning of others, including but not limited to in-person behavior, online behavior or use of University resources or systems to interfere with the work of another student, a faculty member, or a University staff member or that otherwise interferes with normal operation of University systems or processes
- Acts of fraud, misrepresentation, or dishonesty including misuse of University documents or knowingly furnishing false information to the University
- Unauthorized entry or unauthorized use of University facilities, services, equipment, account numbers, or files, including using a NetID or account assigned to another user or providing another user with access to your NetID or account
- Theft of or damage to University property
- Failure to comply to the reasonable request or instruction of a university staff member or emergency personnel acting in an official capacity

Scope of the Code of Conduct

The Student Handbook and SPS Conduct Policies apply to the following situations. SPS reserves the right to investigate and resolve reports of alleged misconduct occurring from the time of a student's application for admission through the actual awarding of a degree or completion of a course or program (even if the conduct is not discovered until after completion of program or course of study), including, but not limited to:

- During any part of the academic year, before classes begin or after classes end
- During time pursuing credit away from the campus
- During periods between terms of actual enrollment
- While on leave from the University
- Behavior occurring either on or off campus or online

Student Conduct Processes

Alleged violations of *nonacademic* University policy or professional standards by SPS students will be reviewed by the Associate Dean of Student Services and/or designee to determine if a case will move forward. Options include:

- close the case due to insufficient information;
- school resolution by Associate Dean of Student Services, and/or designee;
- refer case to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) for resolution; or
- refer case to Office of Equity (including the Deputy Title IX Coordinator).

All cases that involve allegations of violation of the Policy on Sexual Misconduct, regardless of the student involved, are referred to the Office of Equity.

SPS students in undergraduate and graduate credit-bearing, credential programs with cases that have the potential to result in separation from the University, including suspension, will be referred to the Northwestern University Office of Student Conduct (OSC) for further action in accordance with the process set forth in the Student Handbook. Cases that do not have the potential to result in separation from the University will be resolved by the Associate Dean of Student Services and/or designee.

Additionally the Associate Dean, designee, OSC or Office of Equity will determine whether interim actions should be taken while the case is pending (as detailed in the [Northwestern Student Handbook](#) Policy on Sexual Misconduct).

SPS students in non-credit-bearing programs, and those taking individual courses as a student-at-large, are expected to conduct themselves according to Northwestern University policies. Failure to follow University policies shall be considered a breach of terms and conditions for enrollment and

Northwestern University School of Professional Studies may, at its sole discretion, immediately remove student from non-credit, and individual course enrollment(s) or implement other sanctions as explained below.

Notification

When the Associate Dean of Student Services or designee determines a code of conduct violation allegation will move forward within the School of Professional Studies, the student involved is notified via University email. Notification will typically include a brief description of the alleged misconduct, including the time, date and place the incident allegedly occurred, a list of any University policies allegedly violated, and next steps. Next steps typically include a request for a written response to the allegations and confirmation of meeting with the Associate Dean and/or designee to discuss the case. The list of policies allegedly violated may be modified based on additional information revealed during case review.

Resolution Format

Cases being considered within the School of Professional Studies will be structured as a discussion. The Associate Dean and/or designee will share the information received and gathered and give the respondent an opportunity to be heard and give one's own account of the situation.

Standard of Evidence

Northwestern University Office of Student Conduct and SPS use the preponderance of the evidence standard in investigations and hearings. This means that the investigator, conduct administrator(s), or panel must determine more likely than not what occurred.

Participation

The University expects students to participate promptly and fully in all aspects of the student conduct process. If a student elects not to participate in any part of the process, the case may proceed without the respondent's participation. Respondents may be held accountable for any outcomes issued, even if they fail to participate.

Determination of Responsibility, Notification and Sanctions

At times, the Associate Dean or designee will communicate outcomes at the end of the scheduled discussion; however, other times, additional time and consultation with additional SPS leaders will be needed to consider all the information and determine outcomes. Outcomes will be communicated in a reasonable timeframe following the meeting. In all cases, students will receive notification of outcome(s) in writing. The Outcome Notification letter will be added to the student academic record.

The Associate Dean and/or designee will determine whether the respondent is responsible for the alleged policy violation and, if so, will issue appropriate sanctions. For_SPS undergraduate and

graduate credit-bearing and credential-seeking students, see Sanctions in [Northwestern Student Handbook](#).

School resolution of cases for students in non-credit programs and students-at-large taking individual undergraduate courses, will be managed by the program leadership, with sanctions appropriate to the student's open enrollment and short-term relationship with the school as determined by SPS, which may include removal of approval to register for future SPS non-credit-bearing and/or individual courses and/or immediate removal from the course or program.

Administrative Review

Parties found responsible have the right to request an Administrative Review of the outcome of a code of conduct case as detailed in the Northwestern Student Handbook under Administrative Review.

Administrative outcome reviews for students in undergraduate and graduate credit-bearing, credential programs will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct, and follow the appeals format outlined in the [Northwestern Student Handbook](#).

For students in non-credit bearing programs, and students-at-large taking individual undergraduate courses, administrative outcome reviews will be conducted by the SPS Associate Dean and an SPS academic leader.

For questions about Code of Conduct policies, please refer to the Northwestern Student Handbook and/or contact SPS Associate Dean for Student and Alumni Services.

Student Classroom Conduct

All course participants are expected to behave in a manner conducive to a successful and enjoyable learning experience. Sometimes, relatively harmless things can spoil the classroom dynamic; for example, some students are so eager to participate that they unintentionally dominate class. Students must think about their role in class as an individual student but also as an integral part of a group experience. Some disruptions are of a more serious nature and cannot be tolerated. These policies extend to student interaction with administrative staff.

Students with questions about these policies should contact [SPS Student Services](#).

Academic Integrity and Ethics

Academic integrity is fundamental to every facet of the scholarly process and is expected of every student in the School of Professional Studies in all academic undertakings. Integrity involves firm

adherence to academic honesty and to ethical conduct consistent with values based on standards that respect the intellectual efforts of both oneself and others.

Ensuring integrity in academic work is a joint enterprise involving both faculty and students. Among the most important goals of graduate education are maintaining an environment of academic integrity and instilling in students a lifelong commitment to the academic honesty that is fundamental to good scholarship. These goals are best achieved as a result of effective dialogue between students and faculty mentors regarding academic integrity and sensitivity to the nuances of ethical conduct in scholarly work. SPS strongly encourages students to visit the University's Writing Place, which provides a wealth of information about avoiding issues that could lead to failure in maintaining [academic integrity](#).

Standards of academic honesty are violated whenever a student engages in any action that jeopardizes the integrity of scholarly work. Such actions include cheating in the classroom or on examinations, including master's final examinations and papers; the intentional and deliberate misuse of data in order to draw conclusions that may not be warranted by the evidence; fabrication of data; omission or concealment of conflicting data for the purpose of misleading other scholars; submitting identical or nearly identical work for two different courses; use of another's words, ideas or creative productions without citation in either the text or footnotes; paraphrasing or summarizing another's material in such a way as to misrepresent the author's intentions; and use of privileged material or unpublished work without permission. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter for graduate students committed to intellectual pursuits, and it will be adjudicated in accordance with procedures approved by the School of Professional Studies.

It is the responsibility of every member of the academic community to be familiar with these procedures and to bear in mind relevant policies governing activities not directly addressed herein, such as internships, specific graduate programs and University research. Students are responsible for knowledge of the information provided by the [Academic Conduct Committee](#), by which SPS graduate students are governed.

Discrimination and Harassment

Northwestern University does not discriminate or permit discrimination by any member of its community against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship, veteran status, genetic information or any other classification protected by law in matters of admissions, employment, housing or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates.

Harassment, whether verbal, or visual, that is based on any of these characteristics is a form of discrimination. This includes harassing conduct affecting tangible job benefits, interfering unreasonably with an individual's academic or work performance, or creating what a reasonable person would perceive is an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Prohibited sex discrimination includes sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Examples of discrimination and harassment may include

- Refusing to hire or promote someone because of the person's protected status
- Demoting or terminating someone because of the person's protected status
- Jokes or epithets about a person's protected status
- Teasing or practical jokes directed at a person based on his or her protected status
- Displaying or circulating written materials or pictures that degrade a person or group
- Verbal abuse or insults about, directed at or made in the presence of an individual or group of individuals in a protected group

Sexual Harassment

Northwestern University is committed to the maintenance of an environment free of discrimination and all forms of coercion that impede the academic freedom or diminish the dignity of any member of the University community. The University emphasizes this policy specifically as it pertains to the prevention of sexual harassment and to the obligations of all students, faculty, administrators and staff in this regard.

It is the policy of Northwestern University that no member of the Northwestern community of any gender identity — students, faculty, administrators or staff — may sexually harass any other member of the community. Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute harassment when

- Submission to such conduct is made or threatened to be made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment or education
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used or threatened to be used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting that individual
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's academic or professional performance or creating what a reasonable person would sense as an intimidating, hostile or offensive employment, educational or living environment

For more information on discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment policies and to get help and advice, please visit the [Sexual Harassment Prevention Office website](#) or contact

University Sexual Harassment Prevention Office
Rebecca Crown Center
Room 2-636 (East Tower)
633 Clark Street
Evanston, Illinois 60208-1117
847- 491-3745
sexual-harassment@northwestern.edu

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Under the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA), all students have certain rights with regard to their educational records. A copy of Northwestern's student records policy is available at the above link. FERPA grants students the rights to inspect and review their educational records at Northwestern University; request an amendment of their records to ensure the records are not inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of privacy or other rights; consent to release or to restrict disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in their educational records, except under certain limited circumstances when, by law, consent is not required; and file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Northwestern University to comply with FERPA requirements.

Degree and Certificate Requirements

To receive a graduate degree or a certificate of advanced graduate study from SPS, students must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Completion of the program-specific curriculum, with
 - a. Adherence to policies and procedures outlined in this handbook (more information may be found in Curriculum Policies and Procedures section);
 - b. A minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.00 (more information may be found in the Grade Requirements and Academic Progress section).
2. Adherence to policies on student conduct and academic integrity to the satisfaction of SPS.
3. Timely completion of the program and submission of graduation or certificate forms. More information may be found in the Completing the Degree or Certificate section.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Federal and state regulations require recipients of financial aid to maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in their programs of study. The University expects that students will make progress toward completion of the degree or professional development program in which they are enrolled. The following requirements apply to all students for all terms of enrollment within an academic year, including those terms for which no financial aid was granted.

For additional information on SAP requirements please contact the [Chicago Office of Financial Aid](#).

Academic Probation

Graduate students at SPS are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (B) throughout their studies and to successfully complete all classes taken each quarter. Academic probation is a warning status applied to students who do not meet these minimum expectations. Students will be placed on academic probation if they have any of the following:

- a cumulative GPA under 3.00
- an F grade in a course in that term
- two or more incomplete (Y) grades

Students receiving a notice of academic probation must carefully follow any instructions in the notice and should contact their [academic adviser](#) for additional help or guidance. Students on academic probation may be dismissed from their program for consistently poor academic performance.

Additional Policies on Academic Probation

- A student's academic performance may affect eligibility for federal financial aid programs. For more information, please refer to the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy section or review the [Student Financial Aid Office](#) website regarding SAP requirements.

Dismissal from Program

SPS graduate students are expected to maintain a 3.0 ("B" grade) cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA). A cumulative GPA of 3.0 (B) or greater is required in order for a student to complete an SPS graduate-level academic program and be awarded their degree or certificate.

Graduate Degree Programs

Students in SPS graduate degree programs will be dismissed from their program immediately under the following circumstances:

- After completing two courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 1.50
- After completing three courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.00
- After completing four courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.50
- After completing five courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.60
- After completing six courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.70
- After completing seven courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.80
- After completing eight or more courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.9*

Graduate Certificate Programs

Students in a five-course SPS graduate certificate and advanced graduate certificate programs will be dismissed from their program immediately under the following circumstances:

- After completing two courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.50
- After completing three courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.65

- After completing four courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.85*

Students in a four-course SPS graduate or advanced graduate certificate program will be dismissed from their program immediately under the following circumstances:

- After completing two courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.65
- After completing three courses, they have a cumulative GPA of less than 2.85*

Any SPS student may also be dismissed for:

- Violating academic integrity
- Violating the student code of conduct

* A cumulative GPA of 3.0 (B) or greater is required in order for a student to complete an SPS graduate-level academic program and receive a degree or certificate.

Any SPS student may also be dismissed for

- Violating academic integrity
- Violating the student code of conduct

Student Affairs Petition

Students who feel that they have an extenuating circumstance related to the enforcement of school policy and procedures may request an exception to stated policies and procedures through the Student Affairs Petition process. A petition must be submitted within 1 calendar year of the academic quarter in which the issue occurred (e.g. a student must submit a petition by no later than the end of the fall quarter of 2017 to request an exception for an issue that arose in the fall quarter of 2016).

To submit a Student Affairs Petition, use the electronic form found on the SPS website on the [Forms and Documents page](#).

Students must include all relevant documents and evidence in the initial submission. Electronic supporting documents (doctors' notes, etc.) may be emailed to onlinereg@northwestern.edu or delivered to the SPS Registrar's Office on the Chicago campus. All petitions should include an explanation of the issue in question and requested outcome, legible documentation from a credible source, and an accurate timeline of their actions within the situation (e.g. last date of attendance).

Students should not use the petition process frivolously. The committee will be most understanding of cases in which the student could not have reasonably foreseen the circumstances.

Student Affairs Appeal

Students may appeal a petition decision made by a Student Affairs committee. The decisions of the Student Affairs Appeal process are final.

To submit a Student Affairs Appeal, use the electronic form found [here](#). Students must include all relevant documents and evidence to support their appeal. Electronic supporting documents (doctors' notes, etc.) may be emailed to onlinereg@northwestern.edu or delivered to the SPS Registrar's Office on the Chicago campus.

Curriculum Policies and Procedures

Curriculum Requirements

Students are required to complete the [curriculum requirements](#) in place at the time of their admission to the degree or certificate program.

If a student's program curriculum changes during their enrollment at SPS, the student may petition to change to the new curriculum by completing the [Curriculum Change Form](#). Students should meet with their academic adviser prior to requesting such a change in order to fully understand the academic ramifications of switching curriculums

Course Registration

Students should consult the [program course listings](#) for the most up-to-date information. Course descriptions, instructor information, day/time and campus information, term start and end dates and course prerequisites are listed.

Students may register for all courses through [CAESAR with the exception of the below courses](#). More information may be found at the [Using CAESAR](#) section of the student handbook.

- Independent Studies (499)
- Practicums (579/580)
- Thesis Research (589/590)
- Courses outside one's program

Course **room assignments** are posted one week prior to the beginning of the quarter.

Course Registration Deadlines

Students may register for courses from the time registration opens (approximately six to eight weeks before the quarter starts) until the end of the registration period (the Friday of the first week of classes). Exact dates for these events are found on the [graduate calendar](#).

Students are responsible for adhering to registration deadlines. It is the student's responsibility to register and, if necessary, drop classes by the posted deadlines. No one will complete this for the student, except in cases where a class is cancelled.

SPS encourages students to register for courses at the earliest possible date. Early registration helps SPS serve its students more effectively. Some courses fill up quickly, and early registration will let SPS staff know whether an additional section (where possible) is needed. Students who delay registration may find that an under-enrolled course has been cancelled due to apparent lack of interest.

If registration questions or problems arise, students may contact the SPS Registrar's Office at onlinereg@northwestern.edu or 312-503-6951.

Continuous Enrollment Requirement

Students who do not register for courses during the registration period for four consecutive quarters are considered to have “discontinued” their study at SPS upon the 4th quarter of non-enrollment and are withdrawn from their program and deactivated by the CAESAR system. In order to be reactivated and take courses again, students must submit the [SPS Request for Readmission](#). If readmitted, students must follow curriculum that is current at the time of their readmission, which could mean additional units of credit are required for the degree.

Co-curricular Activities

SPS students are encouraged to participate in the SPS graduate co-curricular program affinity groups for SPS graduate students

Students must be actively enrolled in courses and admitted to a degree or credential program in order to participate in Northwestern co-curricular activities that are not open to the public.

SPS part-time programs are structured for the working adult and therefore SPS students are not charged the Northwestern University student activity fee. SPS students are to seek counsel from their academic adviser prior to pursuing membership in student groups outside of SPS.

Northwestern University student groups, clubs and organizations may have additional membership requirements and fees.

Time Away from Studies at SPS

If students need to take time off from their program, they should register for the placeholder course, SPS 512 Continuous Registration, in order to maintain active student status and avoid discontinuation. More information on SPS 512 Continuous Registration may be found below.

SPS 512

SPS 512 is a placeholder registration course for graduate students to use in order to maintain continuous enrollment in their program in a quarter where they do not enroll in any credit-bearing courses (e.g. during continued work on a thesis project).

SPS 512 may not be taken as the first course in program. SPS 512 may only apply after completing a course and may only be taken at a maximum of four consecutive quarters.

Registration in SPS 512 will allow students to:

- Maintain an active Net ID and email account.

- Access University facilities including university libraries Access, SPS resources and Learning Studios (online tutorials)
- Avoid readmission requirement for leaves of 4 or more terms.

Students register for SPS 512 in exactly the same way that they would for any other course, via CAESAR.

Additional Policies and Information on SPS 512

- There is no cost to register for SPS 512.
- SPS 512 does not carry any units of credits, so it cannot be used to defer loans or maintain international residency requirements.

SPS 588 Residential Master’s Study

SPS 588 Residential Master’s Study is a placeholder class that confers full-time status for international students on student visas. Students should contact the Northwestern International Office to help facilitate registration.

Additional Policies and Information Relating to SPS 588

- SPS 588 is a special registration that applies only to students who are in the United States on a student visa; students who are not on a student visa cannot enroll in SPS 588 under any circumstances.
- Students on an applicable visa must be registered for their final curriculum requirements.
- Please note that SPS 588 is not in and of itself sufficient to extend a student’s visa. Students should contact the International Office for information regarding visas.
- Tuition for SPS 588 is listed on the tuition page.

Readmission Policies

Students who do not register for four consecutive quarters are considered to have “discontinued” their study at SPS and are withdrawn from their program and deactivated by the CAESAR system. In order to be reactivated and take courses again, students must submit the [SPS Request for Readmission](#). If readmitted, students are subject to the readmission fee and the following policies:

- Students will be readmitted into the curriculum that is current at the time of their readmission, which could mean additional units of credit are required for the degree.
- If a readmitted student wishes to remain in the original curriculum in which they started, you may submit a Student Affairs petition to request this accommodation.

Deferring Entry into the Program

Students have the option to delay the start of their degree program or certificate of advanced graduate study by one to four quarters.

Students may defer by sending an [email](#) to the SPS registrar.

Important Information and Policies on Deferred Entry

- Students may defer a maximum of four quarters from their term of admission. For example, a student admitted for a fall quarter may defer fall, winter, spring and summer quarters but must start the certificate of advanced graduate study or degree program by the following fall term.
- International students admitted to a full-time on-campus program that has just one start term may defer to the following academic year. For example, a student admitted for a fall quarter may defer until the following fall term.
- Students who do not start their certificate of advanced graduate study or degree program within this time must apply for readmission.

Voluntary Medical Leave of Absence

Purpose

The purpose of a voluntary medical leave of absence (MLOA) is to provide students time away from academic studies, for treatment of a physical or mental health condition that impairs a student's ability to function safely and successfully as a member of the Northwestern University School of Professional Studies (SPS) community. The authority to grant a MLOA and permission to return from a MLOA resides with the Associate Dean of Students at SPS. Each leave is individualized based on the needs of the student and handled on a case-by-case basis.

Deadlines

Students can apply for a voluntary MLOA at any time; however, in order for a MLOA to take effect during an ongoing quarter, **the process must be completed before final exam date or final coursework is due**; whichever happens first. In addition, a MLOA cannot be processed if a student has taken a final exam or final coursework for any of their classes in the given quarter.

A voluntary MLOA lasts at least two full academic quarters. If a MLOA lasts for longer than an academic year, students are expected to adhere to curriculum changes in their program of study during their absence.

Requests for reinstatement from a voluntary MLOA must be submitted no later than six weeks before the term in which the student wishes to start. Applications for reinstatement will NOT be considered after the deadlines.

Quarter of Leave	Request for Reinstatement from MLOA Deadlines
Fall quarter	Six weeks prior to the start of summer term
Winter quarter	Six weeks prior to the start of fall term
Spring quarter	Six weeks prior to the start of winter term
Summer quarter	Six weeks prior to the start of spring term

Exact deadlines are indicated on the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate](#) Academic calendar as “Application for Readmission” due dates.

MLOA Request Process

To begin the process of applying for a MLOA, students must complete a Request for a Medical Leave of Absence form through the SPS Office of the Registrar. The form and all required documents must be emailed to sps-mloa@northwestern.edu.

Students should be prepared to submit a signed statement from your current treatment provider(s) verifying the need for leave and the estimated duration of treatment. The information should be submitted to sps-mloa@northwestern.edu to be included in the student’s petition for a voluntary MLOA.

Note for Full-Time International Students requesting a medical leave: Students need to consult with a staff member from [Northwestern University’s International Office](#), who will coordinate with [Northwestern University’s International Office](#), who will coordinate with SPS.

Registration During MLOA

While on MLOA, a student may not register for classes at Northwestern until the student has been reinstated by the Associate Dean of Student Services and the Leave hold preventing registration in courses has been removed from their student account.

All incompletes must be resolved before applying for reinstatement from MLOA.

Students on medical leave are strongly encouraged to consult with Student Services in advance and have an academic plan in place, to allow registration to occur once the hold is removed.

Taking More than Two Courses in a Quarter

SPS graduate programs are designed to be completed part-time to accommodate the busy schedules of working adults. If a student's schedule allows, he or she may take up to four courses in a quarter; however, as programs are designed for part-time study, SPS cannot guarantee the scheduling of courses to accommodate the equivalent of full-time study.

CAESAR limits self-service registration to two courses. To register for more than two courses, students must contact the SPS registrar at onlinereg@northwestern.edu to request that their enrollment capacity be lifted. This request must be made before students attempt course registration on CAESAR or they will have to register for their third and fourth classes by submitting a paper registration form.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites indicate the expected background for a course. If no prerequisite is noted, none is required. Students are responsible for discussing course requirements with their academic advisers. They should look carefully at the requirements for each program or certificate and plan early how to sequence courses to take care of prerequisites.

Course Tuition and Billing

Please see the applicable SPS graduate program website for the most up-to-date tuition information. Students should consult [Student Financial Services](#) for more information about how to pay tuition.

Course Cancellation

The University reserves the right to cancel classes when necessary, including those for which registration is not sufficient.

Dropping Courses and Course Refunds

Dropping a course refers to the student removing him- or herself from enrollment. Students who drop all their courses for a given quarter are sometimes referred to as "withdrawing" from the academic quarter. At SPS, this simply indicates that an active student is not enrolled for that quarter, not that the individual is no longer a student.

How to drop a course during the Registration Period

Students can drop a course via self-service in CAESAR until the end of the registration period for the term (until the last day of the first week of the term, exact dates found on the [SPS Graduate Academic Calendar](#)). Classes dropped during this time will not appear on the student's official transcript.

How to drop a course during the term

After the end of the registration period, students may request to drop a course until the drop deadline (roughly at sixth week of the term, exact dates found on the [SPS Graduate Academic Calendar](#)). In this period of the term, students must submit a [Change of Registration form](#) to the SPS Registrar's Office in order to withdraw from the course. The SPS Registrar's Office will accept this form by email at onlinereg@northwestern.edu, providing it is sent from the student's Northwestern email account. Dropped classes during this period will not appear on the student's official transcript.

Administrative Drop Policy

It is the student's responsibility to officially drop/withdraw from classes.

Students who fail to participate in their course(s) during the first two weeks of the quarter without contacting the faculty may be administratively dropped from the course(s). Administratively dropped courses will not appear on the student record and will receive a full tuition refund.

Logging into Canvas does not constitute participation. Non-participation is defined as the following:

- No posts in graded discussion in Canvas
- No graded quizzes submitted in Canvas
- No graded assignment files uploads in Canvas

And/or

- Zero participation in the course as determined by the faculty member

Requesting to be withdrawn from a class after the drop deadline

In rare cases, a student may request to be removed from a course after the drop deadline. Requests to be removed from a class after the drop deadline is considered a withdrawal. Students may initiate a request for withdrawal by submitting the [Change of Registration form](#) to the SPS Registrar's Office until the Friday of the week prior to finals week (as long as this date is prior to the date of final exam, project or paper in the particular course has been reached), a date that we will confirm with your instructor. The SPS Registrar's Office will accept this form by email at onlinereg@northwestern.edu providing it is sent from the student's Northwestern email account.

All withdrawals after the drop deadline will result in a "W" (withdrawal) grade being posted to the student's official transcript. Graduate program students may have up to two W's on their SPS transcript. Requests for withdrawals that exceed this limit will be denied.

Additional policies regarding dropping a course

- If a student needs to drop a course, he or she must officially drop through CAESAR or through [Change of Registration form](#) submitted to the SPS Registrar; it is not sufficient to simply notify the instructor, speak with one's adviser, or cease attending class.

- Students may drop courses without academic or financial penalty during the registration period each quarter. If a student drops a course before the end of the registration period, the classes will not appear on the student's transcript and he or she will be eligible for a full refund. Please check the [SPS Graduate Academic Calendar](#) for registration period dates.
- After the registration period has ended, students may still drop a course without academic penalty until the drop deadline (check the [SPS Graduate Academic Calendar](#) for drop deadline dates). Courses dropped during this time will not appear on the student's transcript; however, students will only be eligible for a partial course refund if dropping all courses in the given quarter. For specific information on refunds, contact [Student Financial Services](#).
- CAESAR will not allow a student to drop all of his or her classes in a given term. If a student would like to drop all classes in a given term, he or she should use the [Change of Registration form](#) to request that the SPS Registrar make this change on his or her behalf.
- Students who feel that extenuating circumstances may merit an exception to any of the above should submit a [Student Affairs Petition](#) outlining the reasoning and attach any relevant supporting documentation.

Independent Study

An independent study is a customized course of study undertaken by a single student under the guidance of an instructor. Denoted by the course number 499, independent studies are comparable in their demands to other graduate-level courses.

To register for Independent Study, a student must:

1. Identify an SPS faculty member to supervise the independent study. To ensure compliance with Northwestern's academic policies and standards, all independent study instructors must be preapproved by SPS administration. If the proposed instructor was the sole instructor for a graduate-level course in the student's program during the two years prior to the intended quarter of registration, there is no need to seek prior approval from SPS. Leadership instructors are not preapproved to lead independent study classes. SPS reserves the right to reject any independent study instructor who does not have the requisite content expertise in the student's area of study. Students with questions or concerns about choosing an independent study instructor should contact their [academic adviser](#).
2. Develop a syllabus, in consultation with his or her instructor that includes a list of readings, assignments, assignment deadlines and assessment criteria as well as a breakdown of how the grade will be calculated. Please note, Independent Study courses cannot duplicate regular courses offered by SPS Academic Programs. The purpose of an Independent Study is to investigate topics not covered by regular courses offered in the curriculum.
3. Submit a completed [Intent to Register form](#), along with the course of study or syllabus, to the student's academic adviser by the deadlines given in the SPS [SPS Graduate Calendar](#). Once registration is approved, the SPS registrar will register the student.

Additional Policies on Independent Studies

- Students who drop an independent study course must tell their academic adviser immediately. The same deadlines and policies that apply to other courses apply to independent studies.
- Students should check their program's [program-specific policies](#) section for the number of independent study courses allowed and any additional requirements.
- An independent study can only be undertaken if an equivalent course is not offered by SPS once within four consecutive quarters. Required courses in a program's curriculum may not be taken as independent study courses. Students should contact their [academic adviser](#) for guidance on the independent study approval process.

Internships

Internships can provide a great opportunity for students to gain paid or unpaid workplace experience. While SPS does not actively place students in internships, the school encourages

students to seek out internship opportunities, either as a supplement to their graduate program or as part of an independent study (499).

Students in the MA and MFA Programs in Creative Writing interested in registering for a practicum should contact their [academic adviser](#).

While an internship alone cannot be directly counted for credit towards one’s degree, a student can take advantage of the internship’s experience and resources as the foundation of an independent study. To incorporate an internship into an independent study, students should follow the independent study registration procedures and additional policies listed above. In addition,

1. Students should check with their [academic adviser](#) for guidance regarding any internship requirements.
2. Students should write a detailed proposal, articulating specifically what they will be doing, what resources they will have access to at the internship and who will be supervising the internship. This proposal will need to be approved by the Assistant Director for Graduate Programs. The student’s [academic adviser](#) can help guide the student through this process.
3. Near the close of the internship, the internship supervisor should email a written evaluation of the student’s performance to the instructor. This evaluation should be based on clearly defined tasks and will factor into the student’s final grade.

Capstone Classes and Independent Thesis Research Projects

In all programs, students must complete a culminating project: a capstone or thesis. For all programs this can be achieved by undertaking an independent thesis research project (590), and in some programs this may be achieved by completing a capstone class (498). Students should check their [curriculum requirements](#) to see whether 498 is an option available in their program.

The table below outlines the differences in very broad terms. Individual programs may have specific policies regarding each of these.

	498 Capstone Course	590 Thesis
What work is required?	A student will work individually and in some programs may also be required to participate in a group project or case study.	Individually, a student will work independently under the guidance of a thesis advisor on an original project.
How long does it take?	10-week class.	Students register for 590 once only (with the exception of MFA) and have one year to complete the thesis research project.

When can a student register?	A student registers for 498 during or after his or her last quarter of classes.	A student registers for 590 during or after his or her last quarter of classes.
How does a student register?	Students register themselves in CAESAR after obtaining a permission number from their academic adviser.	Students must receive approval of a proposal and submit a Thesis Registration form. The process in full is outlined on the Thesis Intent to Register Form
How will the final project be assessed?	A student is individually assessed and graded throughout the duration of the class and is given a final course grade that is factored into his or her cumulative GPA.	Multiple drafts of the thesis are submitted until the thesis meets both Thesis Advisor and Final Reader approval, at which time a grade of P (pass) is given. Does not affect cumulative GPA.
How much is tuition?	Tuition is the cost of one unit of graduate credit.	Tuition is the cost of one unit of graduate credit.

Registering for the Capstone Class or Individual Thesis

Students may register for 498 or 590 courses in the same quarter as their last remaining course but not before. Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 to register, and are not carrying any outstanding incomplete grades (Y grade) on their SPS graduate record, to be eligible to enroll in the 498 capstone class or 590 thesis research. Students who hold a cumulative GPA below 3.0 after completing 498 must contact their academic adviser immediately. The student will be required to take an additional course, and the graduation date will be adjusted.

Thesis Registration Process

For more information on the thesis process, please see the Thesis Student Guide sheet attached to the [Thesis Intent to Register Form](#).

Students are responsible for submitting a Thesis Registration Form along with the following:

- A proposal approved by the faculty member whom you have identified; and
- The faculty member's e-mail acceptance to serve as a Thesis Advisor.

All of these documents must be submitted to the program's Faculty Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Programs at least two weeks prior to the start of the academic term in which you wish to register for the Thesis course. The student will be notified as to whether or not their proposal has been approved.

Taking Courses Outside a Student's Program

If a course is not listed in the student's program [curriculum requirements](#) or designated as an elective for that program in the [course description](#), then it is considered "outside a student's program."

- Students may not take more than 50% of their required courses outside of regularly scheduled SPS classes.

Registering for a Class outside a Student's Program

If a student wishes to take a course that is not listed in his or her certificate of advanced graduate study completion requirements or a graduate program's degree requirements, he or she must complete the following process, whether or not the course will be counted towards the certificate or degree:

1. The student must secure the documented permission of his or her [academic adviser](#) at least two weeks before planning to register.
2. The student must secure documented permission of the department offering the course.
3. Once the above permissions are secured, the student must submit the [Graduate Online Change of Registration form](#).

Additional Policies and Information Related to Registering for a Course Outside a Student's Program

- Students taking courses outside their program will be charged tuition at the same rate as if they were taking courses in their certificate or degree program.
- Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared certificate or degree.
- Students may incur additional fees associated with taking a class in another program.
- Not all programs or courses will allow outside students to enroll.

Taking Additional Courses beyond those Required by the Curriculum

Additional courses are elective courses that are not required for a student's degree completion. Students who wish to take additional courses beyond their necessary degree requirements are highly encouraged to continue their studies at SPS in a graduate certificate or certificate of advanced graduate study program after completion of their degree program.

SPS recommends that students contact their [academic adviser](#) to discuss applying for a certificate of advanced graduate study or before registering for additional courses as a degree student.

Additional Policies and Information Relating to Additional Courses

- If a student takes additional courses, the grades will count towards the student's degree grade point average and cumulative grade point average.
- For more information on grade requirements, see the section on grade requirements and academic progress.
- Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared degree or declared certificate of advanced graduate study.

Taking Courses outside of SPS (Cross-School Registration)

Students who have been admitted to a SPS master's degree program and wish to pursue academic interests not available in SPS have the option to enroll in graduate-level courses at other Northwestern schools as availability and program restrictions allow. The following policies and procedures apply to all SPS students seeking such enrollment:

- SPS does not guarantee enrollment in courses at other schools within Northwestern University.
- Students are required to consult with their SPS academic adviser about selection of any courses outside of their program degree requirements.
- Students will need to receive documented permission from the applicable department offering the course as well as permission from the instructor teaching the course.
- Students will then need to submit a Course Substitution Form at least two weeks prior to the start of the term including the following:
 - Brief statement describing why the course should be counted toward their degree;
 - Syllabus of the desired course;
 - Current NU transcript; and
 - Documented permission from the applicable department and instructor of the course.
- If the Course Substitution is approved, the student will be notified and must submit a Change of Registration Form.
- Students taking courses outside their program will be charged tuition at the same rate as if they were taking courses in their degree program.
- Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared degree.
- Students may incur additional fees associated with taking a class in another program.
- SPS students may take a maximum of three courses outside of SPS.
- For students in our Humanities programs only (MA in Literature, Liberal Studies, or Writing; MFA in Prose & Poetry): Students may not take more than 50% of their required courses outside of regularly scheduled SPS classes, i.e. classes offered through the Graduate School (TGS). There may be other stipulations that apply, so please be sure to check with your program-specific policies and consult with your academic adviser.

Please note: Whether a course is taken in another school to meet SPS program degree requirements or not, the course grade will be factored into the student's cumulative GPA.

Double Specializations

Only one specialization can be displayed on a student's transcript. Students interested in completing two specialization requirements should consider pursuing a [Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study](#) following graduation from their program.

Course Waivers

In rare situations, if a student's prior academic experience is assessed as equivalent to the mastery of the course content, a course waiver may be granted.

Applying for a waiver

To apply for a waiver, a student must consult with their academic adviser and submit a [course waiver request form](#). This request must include the following supporting documentation:

- Brief statement describing the prior coursework and why it should be considered equivalent to the required SPS course
- Syllabus of the previously taken course
- Transcripts from previous coursework

Additional Policies and Information Relating to Course Waivers

- Waivers are granted for equivalent credit-bearing coursework completed at an accredited university.
- Waivers will only be considered for courses taken within the last 10 years in which the student earned a grade of B or better.
- In situations where a course waiver is granted, the student, in consultation with his or her academic adviser, must replace the course with an elective take another course in lieu of the waived course. It is important to note that a course waiver does not change the number of units the student needs to earn in order graduate.

Substituting Courses or Taking Courses Outside of a Student's Program (within SPS)

If a course is not listed in the student's program curriculum requirements or designated as an elective for that program in the course description, then it is considered "outside of a student's program."

- Students may not take more than 50% 3 of their required courses outside of their SPS program's curriculum.

Getting Approval and Registering for a Course Substitution

If a student wishes to take a course that is not listed in his or her graduate program's degree requirements but offered by another SPS program, the student must complete the following process to determine whether or not the course will be counted towards their degree:

- Students are required to consult with their SPS academic adviser about selection of any courses outside of their program degree requirements.
- Students will then need to submit a Course Substitution Form at least two weeks prior to the start of the term including the following:
 - Brief statement describing why the course should be counted toward their degree;
 - Syllabus of the desired course; and
 - Current NU transcript (unofficial is acceptable).
 - If the Course Substitution is approved, the student will be notified and must submit a Change of Registration Form.
 - Students taking courses outside their program will be charged tuition at the same rate as if they were taking courses in their degree program.
 - Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared degree.
 - Students may incur additional fees associated with taking a class in another program.
 - SPS does not guarantee enrollment in courses outside of a student's program.
 - Students in MALS, MALIT, or MA Writing certificates of advanced graduate studies are permitted to seek course substitution waiver opportunities per the above policies

If a student wishes to take a course outside of SPS at another Northwestern School, please see the Cross School Registration section

Transferring to a New Program within SPS

To apply to transfer from one SPS graduate program to another, students must submit the following to [SPS Admissions](#) by the [admission deadline](#):

- [Application for Program Transfer form](#)
- Most recent SPS transcript
- Transcripts from any institution that a student attended since admission to his or her SPS program
- New statement of purpose
- Updated resume/CV
- Updated letters of recommendation
- Possible writing samples and other materials (please check the [admissions requirements](#) for the respective programs)

Transferring to a New Program

- Transfers between programs are reviewed by the admissions committee during the application period.

- Students who transfer will have their coursework evaluated to see if any classes can count toward the new program requirements. Students should check the Course Substitution section for eligibility.
- Students may not transfer between certificate and degree programs or visa versa. Instead, they must complete a new application for the desired program.

Stackable Graduate Certificates

Students who want to apply to a master's program *before* completing a stackable graduate certificate must complete a new application for the desired program. Completed courses will count toward the applicable master's degree, but there will be no certificate conferred.

Students who successfully complete an SPS graduate certificate that stacks into an applicable master's program can apply certificate course credits to the master's degree if they choose to apply to the master's program and are admitted. To apply to the master's program after successful graduate certificate completion, students must submit the following to [SPS Admissions](#) by the [admission deadline](#):

- Application form
- Most recent SPS transcript with certificate conferral
- Revised statement of purpose
- Updated resume/CV
- One additional letter of recommendation, preferably from an SPS faculty member from the certificate program
- Possible writing samples and other materials (please check the [admissions requirements](#) for the respective programs)
- \$75 application fee will be waived

Please note: Certificates of ***Advanced*** Graduate Study do not stack into a master's degree program.

Impact on Cumulative GPA

Please be aware that *all* graduate course grades affect the student's degree grade point average and cumulative grade point average, including graduate courses taken outside the degree or certificate program. Transferring to a different SPS program does **not** reset a student's cumulative GPA.

Changing Program Status

Any of the following are considered changes in a student's program status:

- Changing declared degree specialization or track to another within same degree program
- Changing to a new curriculum within the student's existing program.

Follow the Steps below for a Change in Program Status

1. SPS students who wish to transfer programs within SPS must complete the [Application for Program Transfer form](#).
 - a. The transfer application must include a student's unofficial SPS transcript and a brief statement as to why the transfer is being requested.
2. SPS students who wish to change their degree specialization should contact their [academic adviser](#).
3. Students who wish to change to an updated curriculum must complete the [Curriculum Change Form](#).
 - a. Students should consult with their academic advisor prior to requesting such a change in order to fully understand the academic ramifications of switching curriculums.
 - b.

Policies on Changing Program Status

- Any allowable course substitution will be determined at the time of admission. Students should check the [Course Substitution section for eligibility](#).
- Please note that any courses taken as a visiting scholar or certificate student will not transfer to degree programs.

Transferring from Northwestern Graduate Programs to SPS

Northwestern students who wish to transfer into a graduate program within SPS must apply to the SPS program as a new applicant and submit all application materials, including the application form and fee, outlined on the [admissions pages of each graduate program](#) of the SPS website.

Policies on Transferring Credits into SPS Graduate Programs from other Northwestern Graduate Programs

- Any transfer credit will be evaluated after admission to the program. Students should check the [Transfer Credit section for eligibility](#).

Transfer Credit

SPS graduate programs do not accept transfer credit from other institutions.

Students who successfully complete SPS graduate certificates that stack into an applicable SPS master's program can apply certificate course credits to the master's degree if they choose to apply to the master's program and are admitted.

Please note: Certificates of *Advanced* Graduate Study do not stack into a master's degree program.

Grade Requirements and Academic Progress

Students must pass all courses required by their [curriculum](#). Students are expected to maintain a 3.0 (B) average to demonstrate mastery of the program content. Students must achieve a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.00 before they are allowed to graduate or complete a certificate of advanced graduate study.

Grades for Graduate Credit

Each instructor determines his or her own guidelines and expectations for grades, including how attendance and participation are graded. In general, however, students are expected to commit the time and effort to attend all class meetings. The faculty member may lower a student's final grade due to absences, so students likely to miss classes for any reason should not register for the course, since it may not be possible to earn a passing grade.

The following grades may be awarded for graduate courses at SPS.

Grade	Grade Description	Grade Point Value	Awarded In
A	Passing Grade	4.0	All courses except 589 and 590
A-	Passing Grade	3.7	All courses except 589 and 590
B+	Passing Grade	3.3	All courses except 589 and 590
B	Passing Grade	3.0	All courses except 589 and 590
B-	Passing Grade	2.7	All courses except 589 and 590
C+	Passing Grade	2.3	All courses except 589 and 590
C	Passing Grade	2.0	All courses except 589 and 590
C-	Passing Grade	1.7	All courses except 589 and 590
F	Failing Grade	0.0	All courses except 589 and 590
Y	Incomplete	No grade points awarded	All courses except 589 and 590
P	Pass	No grade points awarded	Only in 589 and 590
N	No Pass	No grade points awarded	Only in 589 and 590
K	In Progress	No grade points awarded	Only in 589 and 590

Passing Grades

All grades of C- and above are considered passing grades. Students receiving one of these grades are deemed to have satisfied the corresponding course requirement. No Ds are awarded for graduate work.

Failing Grade

Grades of F may be awarded for failing work. Courses graded with an F do not count toward one's degree. Students who fail required non-elective courses must retake them. A student who retakes any class should be aware that both the grade for the original class and the retaken class are calculated in the cumulative GPA.

Incompletes

In rare circumstances, students may be granted a grade of incomplete, which is designated with a grade of Y. A student must get advance permission from the instructor and submit a [Student Affairs Petition](#) to receive a grade of incomplete. Y grades will count as a 0.00 in a student's grade point average until a final grade is submitted by the instructor.

When an instructor grants an incomplete, he or she determines the amount of time the student has to finish the work within the maximum allotted 1 term of additional time.

For courses in which a grade Y was initially assigned, students must complete the course and the faculty must submit the grade change no later than the grading deadline of the following term, or the incomplete grade will be changed to a final grade of F (failure). Instructors may establish an earlier deadline for the completion of missing work, based on considerations specific to their course. Students with extenuating circumstances can petition for an extension through a [Student Affairs Petition](#).

Students are not allowed to carry more than one incomplete (Y) grade at a time. Students who have two or more incomplete grades on their record will be placed on academic probation and prevented from registering for additional classes until the incomplete work for at least one course is turned in with a grade entered in CAESAR. Students planning to graduate must complete required courses and receive grades before graduating.

Pass/No Pass Courses

With the exception of 589 and 590, pass/no pass courses do not count towards degrees or certificates.

All 589 and 590 registrations are taken on a pass/no pass basis. A grade of K is given while the project is in progress and is later changed to a P when satisfactorily completed.

Calculating a Student's Cumulative Grade Point Average

At the end of each course students receive a letter grade that has a corresponding number of grade points associated with it. These are listed in the [grade table above](#). A student's grade point average is calculated by dividing the total grade points earned by the number of courses attempted. All courses

attempted are included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA, including courses for which a failing grade was received.

It is important that students are aware of their cumulative GPA, since the University uses this number to determine their academic status and continued participation in their programs. A student's quarterly and cumulative GPA is listed on his or her unofficial transcript, which can be viewed in CAESAR.

Grade Concerns

SPS follows Northwestern University practice which gives faculty members complete grading authority at their sole academic discretion. Accordingly, a course grade may be changed only to correct a clerical or computational error.

Grade changes are not allowed for any of the following:

- Reasons of financial reimbursement by an employer
- Dissatisfaction with the grade
- Submission of extra work or redoing an assignment after grades have been submitted to the Registrar's Office
- Unauthorized rescheduling or re-taking of an exam after grades have been submitted to the Registrar's Office

Students are entitled to an explanation of how their final course grade was determined and how the component parts of that grade were weighted. If a student seeks further clarification of a final course grade, they should discuss that matter directly with the faculty member.

If, after consulting with the faculty member, a student believes a clerical or computational error has not been rectified or believes the grade was determined in a prejudicial or capricious manner, they can submit a letter to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs with detailed documentation as evidence to support their claims. While SPS administrative staff do not have the power to change a grade assigned by an instructor, the Assistant Dean (or their designee) will investigate the student's claims, which may entail:

- Speaking with the student
- Speaking with the faculty member and relevant staff members
- Requesting additional materials

After a review of all evidence, the Assistant Dean (or their designee) will notify the student in writing of their decision regarding the grade dispute. If not satisfied with the outcome, the student has the right to appeal in writing within 10 business days to the Associate Dean of Academics with appropriate documentation and explanation of the grounds for appeal.

Students are reminded to adhere to the [University's Student Code of Conduct](#) in all their interactions with faculty members and staff.

All members of the Northwestern community – including students, faculty, and staff – must adhere to the university's policy on discrimination and harassment. If you believe you have been

discriminated against or harassed, carefully review the [university's policy on discrimination and harassment](#) and contact your academic adviser for guidance. As appropriate, your adviser may refer you to Northwestern's Equal Opportunity Office (847-491-7458 or eco@northwestern.edu).

Completing a Degree or Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study

Degrees and certificates are conferred quarterly for students who have met all of their degree requirements or certificate requirements.

Only students who have met all of their degree requirements (e.g. successful completion of required courses and achievement of cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater, and the submission of the application for graduate degree or certificate) may graduate or be awarded a certificate.

Academic Integrity

To protect the value of your academic record and the education it represents, Northwestern maintains standards of fairness and honor in all academic work. The essence of these standards is a respect for individual achievement and an intolerance of any form of lying, cheating, or theft that threatens to devalue such achievement. Northwestern has created [Academic Integrity: A Basic Guide](#) with purpose of this guide is to set forth the terms under which academic work is pursued at Northwestern and throughout the larger intellectual community of which we are members. Please read the guide carefully, as you will be held responsible for its contents. It describes the ways in which common sense and decency apply to academic conduct.

There are four main sections of the Guide:

- Principles Regarding Academic Integrity
- Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity
- Counseling and Contacts
- How to Avoid Plagiarism

Academic Integrity Violation Procedures at SPS

Instructors may require students to submit their work electronically in addition to or in place of printed form. All student work may be analyzed electronically for violations of the University's academic integrity policy and may also be included in a database for the purpose of testing for plagiarized content.

Should the issue of academic dishonesty arise, the following procedure will be followed.

Initiation of a Complaint

All cases of alleged academic dishonesty by students in graduate courses in the School of Professional Studies must be referred to the Assistant Dean of Graduate Programs. Cases should be referred within one month of the date of the alleged incident, or within one month of the date the reporting individual becomes aware of the alleged incident, whichever is later. However, no action will be taken on any case if more than one year has elapsed since the alleged incident. Once a matter has been referred to the Assistant Dean, it may not be withdrawn without his/her approval, nor may the referring faculty member resolve the case without the Assistant Dean's approval.

The Assistant Dean shall review the facts of the alleged incident, including statements of the reporting individual, the instructor(s) and any supporting material. The review process may include electronic searches of plagiarism resources, websites, computer network traffic logs and other databases. If, after the review, the Assistant Dean determines that there is cause for further investigation, he/she shall notify the student by letter of the date of the incident (if known), the course and instructor and the nature of the alleged violation. A copy of the current procedures will accompany the letter.

The student will be asked to make an appointment with the Assistant Dean to discuss the case within seven working days of the date of the letter, at which time the student may present any relevant material or statements on his/her behalf. The student will have the right, prior to meeting with the Assistant Dean, to review relevant original materials in SPS, to obtain copies of such materials if desired and to discuss the matter with an adviser or other relevant individual. Review of original materials must take place by appointment during normal working hours at SPS and within seven working days of the date of the Assistant Dean's letter.

If the student does not schedule a meeting to take place within seven working days, the Assistant Dean may make his or her determination on the basis of the evidence present at that time. The Assistant Dean may grant reasonable requests for an extension of this time deadline at his/her sole discretion.

In certain cases where timely notification is important, verbal notification of the alleged violation may be made, but such verbal notification will be followed by a letter.

Meeting with the Assistant Dean

In meeting with the student, the Assistant Dean will describe the charges made and detail the evidence supporting those charges. At this initial meeting, the student may decline to discuss the matter and/or request that the Assistant Dean defer making a determination until after a subsequent meeting between the student and the Assistant Dean, at which the student may present relevant information or evidence. This second meeting must be requested at the initial meeting and must be scheduled for a time within seven working days of the initial meeting.

The Assistant Dean has the authority to determine, based on a preponderance of the evidence available to him/her, whether a violation of academic integrity has occurred.

After his/her review, the Assistant Dean shall inform the student by letter of his or her decision and the sanction, if any, to be imposed.

Sanctions

Sanctions which may be imposed by the Assistant Dean include, but are not limited to, a letter of warning; a defined period of probation with the attachment of conditions; disqualification for academic honors; a defined period of suspension with or without the attachment of conditions; permanent expulsion from the University; notation on the official record; revocation of an awarded degree; or any combination of the previously listed sanctions. In all cases of permanent expulsion from the University, a notation shall be entered on the student's official transcript.

Any grade entered for a student in a course in which an allegation of academic dishonesty is pending against him/her, whether for the course as a whole or for a piece of work submitted in the course, is subject to modification after all proceedings and appeals are concluded. Should the student be found to have violated academic integrity, the course instructor is empowered, at his/her sole discretion, to determine the effect this violation will have on the student's grade in the course. Possible actions range from disregarding the incident in calculating the grade to failing the student in the course.

Appeals to the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee

The Assistant Dean's decision and/or sanction may be appealed to the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee by filing a written notice of appeal within 10 working days of the date of the letter of notification. The student's written notice of appeal must state what is being appealed — whether the finding of academic dishonesty, the sanction imposed or both — and must describe in detail the grounds for the appeal. The student's written notice of appeal should also state whether the student desires to present the appeal in person to the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee.

If the student so requests, he or she will be granted an opportunity to appear to present his or her case to the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee and to hear and respond to any testimony provided by the Assistant Dean or witnesses appearing before the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee. Likewise, the Assistant Dean may be present to hear and respond to testimony of the accused student or any witnesses appearing before the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee. If the student wishes to present witnesses before the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee, s/he must inform the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee at least seven working days before the appeal is to be heard of the names of the proposed witnesses and of the nature of the evidence they are prepared to present. However, the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee has sole discretion to determine what witnesses other than the accused student and the Assistant Dean it will hear, if any.

The Academic Integrity Appeals Committee shall review the appeal as soon as practical after it has been filed.

Following its review, the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee may sustain or reverse the finding of academic dishonesty, if that portion of the Assistant Dean's decision was appealed, and may, if a finding of academic dishonesty stands, sustain or modify (but not increase) the sanction, if that portion of the decision was appealed. The Academic Integrity Appeals Committee shall inform the student by letter of its decision.

Appeal to the Provost

The student may appeal the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee's decision within 10 working days to the provost of the university. Such appeals must be in writing and include a detailed statement setting forth the grounds for the appeal. Appeals to the provost will be limited to alleged errors in procedures, interpretation of regulations or alleged manifest discrepancies between the evidence and a school finding and/or sanction. The provost will receive appeals only after a sanction has been specified for the alleged violation; an appeal to the provost may concern the finding and/or the proposed sanction.

Cross-School Cases

In instances where a student registered in another school is alleged to have committed an act of academic dishonesty in a School of Professional Studies course, the authority of SPS will extend only to determining whether or not the alleged action constitutes academic dishonesty and, if so, to the imposition of any grade penalty by the instructor in the course. If the finding is affirmative and all appeals have been exhausted or the time for appeals has expired in SPS, the case will be formally referred to the appropriate authority of the school in which the student is registered for whatever further sanction that school deems appropriate.

In instances where a student registered in SPS has been found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty in a course offered by another school, the Assistant Dean will notify the student in writing of the formal referral of the matter to the School of Professional Studies for determination of a sanction, if any. Such notification will inform the student that he/she should schedule an appointment with the Assistant Dean, to take place within seven working days, to present any evidence of mitigating circumstances but not on the underlying question of guilt or innocence. If the student does not schedule an appointment within the allotted time, or within such extension of time as the Assistant Dean may grant at his/her sole discretion, the Assistant Dean will make a decision regarding any sanction based on the available information.

The Assistant Dean will inform the student in writing of any sanction imposed and of the student's right to appeal that sanction (but not issues of guilt or innocence) to the Academic Integrity Appeals Committee.

General Considerations

A student charged with academic dishonesty may not change his or her registration in the course(s) in which a charge is pending or in which a finding of academic dishonesty has been made. Nor may such students receive a University degree while a charge of academic dishonesty is pending or a suspension imposed pursuant to a finding of academic dishonesty is in effect.

At any stage of the proceedings described above, the student may be accompanied by a fellow student, a faculty member or another individual of the student's choosing, but not by an attorney. This person may not, however, take part in the proceedings; the student must speak on his or her own behalf.

Sanctions specified by the Assistant Dean for graduate programs, as modified by the School of Professional Studies Academic Integrity Appeals Committee or the provost (if an appeal has been filed), shall take effect at the expiration of the period for appeal of a decision if an appeal has not been filed, and after a decision has been reached by the School of Professional Studies Academic Integrity Appeals Committee or the provost if an appeal has been filed. If the appeal is not granted, the sanction will be applied retroactively to the date specified by the Assistant Dean, and if necessary, current registrations may be canceled.

All materials relating to an allegation of academic dishonesty will be kept in the School of Professional Studies Office of Registration and Records for up to 10 years after the incident.

All references to the Assistant Dean for graduate programs in these procedures include the Assistant Dean's designee, whom the Assistant Dean may appoint at his or her discretion.

If circumstances (e.g., departure of the faculty member) prevent the instructor of the course in which the violation is alleged to have occurred from participating at any stage of these procedures, the Assistant Dean may act on the instructor's behalf.

Completing the Degree or Certificate

All SPS Students must submit an [Application for Graduate Degree or Certificate Completion form](#) to the SPS Registrar by the deadline posted in the [SPS calendar](#).

Program Completion Deadlines

All degree-seeking students must complete their program within five years of their admission to their program or request special permission to extend this program-completion deadline. All certificate students must complete their program within 5 years or 10 quarters.

Students who are approaching the five-year deadline and wish to request an extension must submit a [Degree Deadline Extension Petition](#). When requesting a degree extension, students must demonstrate a valid reason and must provide a timetable for completion of the program.

Students whose deadline has passed and who do not submit an acceptable degree deadline request will not be allowed to graduate. Any SPS student granted an extension may be subject to additional requirements.

Graduation Ceremonies

Northwestern University hosts a number of graduation ceremonies each spring. All degree-seeking students who have completed their degree during that academic year are invited to participate in the University-wide commencement ceremony, usually held in Ryan Field. Additionally, each school holds its own Convocation ceremony, where graduates are recognized by name by the Dean of the school or the faculty director. Staff and faculty, fellow students, friends and family have the opportunity to join in the celebration. A student may participate in more than one ceremony, so he or she should make sure to RSVP for each ceremony individually. Click [here](#) for Commencement information.

Here are the things to remember about the graduation ceremonies:

- Graduation ceremonies are held once a year only, in June, for all students who completed their programs during that academic year.
- Attendance at the Graduation Ceremonies is optional. All diplomas are mailed to students following degree conferral in the quarter they completed the program.
- Only degree-seeking students may participate in the Convocation and Commencement ceremonies.
- Candidates from School of Professional Studies MA programs must select a white hood for Master of Arts and a white tassel.
- Candidates from School of Professional Studies MS programs must select a gold hood for Master of Science and a white tassel.

- Candidates from School of Professional Studies MFA program must select a brown hood for master of fine arts and a white tassel.