

(1) PROPOSED NEW TEXT

3.1.7: Normal Academic Progress: Undergraduate

To complete a baccalaureate degree within the university's standard four-year timeframe, a student is expected to maintain consistent academic progress by averaging 15 or more credit hours per semester to satisfy the 120+ credit requirement for graduation. The university defines a full-time undergraduate course load as carrying between 12 and 18 credit hours each semester. Falling below the 12-credit threshold reduces a student to part-time status, which may delay graduation and affect eligibility for certain services. Normal degree progress requires enrolling in and successfully completing major and/or college requirements each term. All degree criteria should be fulfilled within eight consecutive regular semesters.

The university recognizes that unexpected circumstances may disrupt a student's academic path and provides mechanisms for flexibility. Students may petition the Committee on Standing of Students (SOS) for an approved leave of absence of up to one year.

3.21.8: Normal Academic Progress: Master's and Certificate Programs

The university defines a standard full-time graduate course load as a minimum of nine credit hours per semester. To graduate within their anticipated timeline, students must sequence and complete all core requirements, prerequisites, and electives across consecutive semesters to complete the degree in the timeline indicated in the catalog. Full-time status may be maintained with fewer than nine credits of registration after fulfillment of degree credit-hour requirements and continuing a program of full-time study and research. In such cases, the status must be certified each semester on the Graduate Full Time Certification request form, first by the department and then by the appropriate college and filed no later than the 5th day of class in the semester in which certification is requested.

Normal academic progress dictates that specific curricular milestones, which vary by program, are met on schedule each term to avoid delays in graduation. Grade requirements include the following: no final course mark lower than "C-" may be credited toward a graduate degree, and regular students who receive more than four final grades below "B-" will not be permitted to continue their registration without a required time away and reapplying for admission to the program. Note that specific academic program requirements may be more strict. For programs containing a thesis, research project, or capstone requirement, a critical checkpoint for tracking this advancement is the mandatory annual review, wherein students must submit an academic self-evaluation to their program faculty for formal review.

The university recognizes that unexpected circumstances may disrupt a student's academic path and provides mechanisms for flexibility. Students may petition the Committee on Standing of Graduate Students (SOGS) for an approved leave of absence of up to one year.

3.21.9: Normal Academic Progress: Doctoral

The university defines a standard full-time graduate course load as a minimum of nine credit hours per semester. To graduate within their anticipated timeline, students must sequence and complete all core requirements, prerequisites, electives, and research requirements across consecutive semesters. Full-time status may be maintained with fewer than nine credits of registration after fulfillment of degree credit-hour requirements and continuing a program of full-time study and research. In such cases, the status must be certified each semester on the Graduate Full Time Certification request form, first by the department and then by the appropriate college and filed no later than the 5th day of class in the semester in which certification is requested.

To maintain regular student status and demonstrate satisfactory academic progress toward a doctoral degree, a candidate must balance coursework with the completion of research milestones. Students must complete the university requirement of 72 post-baccalaureate credit hours, or a minimum of 48 credit hours for those admitted with an approved prior master's degree, in addition to department requirements and dissertation research. Grade requirements include the following: no final course mark lower than "C-" may be credited toward a graduate degree, and regular students who receive more than four final grades below "B-" will not be permitted to continue their registration without a required time away and reapplying for admission to the program. Note that specific academic program requirements may be more strict. Normal progress dictates that students complete foundational 400-level coursework, satisfy departmental qualifying and general examinations on schedule, and officially petition for admission to doctoral candidacy. In addition, for completion of a doctoral degree, a dissertation is required. The dissertation is a substantial body of original, independent research that advances new knowledge within a discipline and demonstrates a scholar's capability to operate as an independent researcher and authority in their field. Progress is formally monitored via a mandatory annual review checkpoint; students must submit a comprehensive self-evaluation to their advisor and dissertation committee. This annual evaluation reviews research productivity and dissertation benchmarks to ensure consistent progress each year.

The university recognizes that unexpected circumstances may disrupt a student's academic path and provides mechanisms for flexibility. Students may petition the

Committee on Standing of Graduate Students (SOGS) for an approved leave of absence of up to one year. A second year of leave may be requested, as outlined in our Graduate Leave of Absence policy.

(2) PROPOSED NEW TEXT WITH MARKUP

This is entirely new text

(3) ORIGINAL TEXT

This is entirely new text

(4) EXPLANATION FOR NEEDED CHANGE

Lehigh has no language defining our standard expectations for the timelines or requirements for the completion of undergraduate degrees or graduate degrees.

At the undergraduate level, we do offer clarity on full-time status (R&P 3.1.5) and “Good Standing” (R&P 3.10.1)--but we do not make clear that a full-time student in Good Standing may not be making normal academic progress toward the completion of a degree in our standard four-year time frame.

At the graduate level, we only offer clarity on full-time status (R&P 3.21.4) and general guidance on academic standing (3.21.5), but we do not explain how we evaluate whether a student is making progress in a graduate program, especially given the variability in milestones across our programs and their time horizons.

With a new federal rule change on duration of status for international students, this gap in our policies could result in students who are unable to make an appeal to the federal government for their continuation at Lehigh beyond the federally mandated period (4 years for undergraduates; length of program for Master’s students; 4 years for doctoral students). Policies and documentation to demonstrate normal academic progress will help us to support our international students, while also communicating our expectations around academic progress more broadly to all students.

(5) EXPLANATION FOR WHY CHANGE ADDRESSES ISSUE

The new language offers clarity on our expectations for normal academic progress at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

At the graduate level, given the variability in program expectations, this language also establishes an annual review to ensure that students are making progress that is appropriate to a given department or program (rather than attempting to impose standardized university milestones).

(6) PROPOSAL HISTORY

- Duration of Status Academic Progress Group tasked with addressing policy gaps: 8 June 2026
- Group meeting 10 June 2026 to discuss next steps
- Sabrina Jedlicka, Deputy Provost for Graduate Education, drafted language to share with group 22 June 2026
- Faculty Senate Chair Jenna Lay reviewed the draft and offered suggestions on 22 June 2026
- Full group reviewed the draft 25 June 2026
- Sabrina Jedlicka socialized the language with graduate program directors, graduate associate deans, and undergraduate associate deans and incorporated feedback (July 2026)

(7) PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION DATE

November 2026 for R&P; catalog updates immediately following.

(8) IMPACTS ON OTHER PARTS OF R&P

There should be no impacts on R&P numbering or cross referencing.