

General Policies

Family and Medical Accommodation Policy for Graduate Students

The Graduate School at NDSU is committed to promoting an environment where students can successfully balance their academic and family responsibilities. The goal of this policy is to provide consistent, equitable treatment to all graduate students, regardless of family status, by providing timeline extensions for completing preliminary/qualifying examinations and by offering modified duties to students experiencing a serious health condition or needing to provide care to a new child or a seriously ill family member.

1. Extensions for Completing Preliminary/Qualifying Examinations, Final Examinations, and/or Disquisitions

Eligibility:

A graduate student is eligible to apply for a time extension on completing preliminary/qualifying examination, final examination, and/or disquisition upon showing that they are:

1. In good academic standing and making progress toward degree completion, and
2. Undergoing childbirth, caring for their newborn, caring for their child with a serious medical condition, adopting a child, accepting foster placement of a child, experiencing their own serious medical condition, or experiencing a serious medical condition of a spouse/partner or parent for which they have caretaker responsibilities (medical certification may be required).

Length of Extensions:

While each extension granted under this policy will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, absent extraordinary circumstances, the additional time granted by this policy will not exceed two years.

A graduate student undergoing childbirth, adopting a child, or accepting foster placement of a child shall be entitled to receive an extension of up to one extra year for completing preliminary/qualifying examination, final examination, and/or submitting a disquisition.

A graduate student experiencing their own serious medical condition, caring for their child with a serious medical condition, or experiencing a serious medical condition of a spouse/partner or parent for which they have caretaker responsibilities shall be entitled to receive an extension of up to six extra months for completing a preliminary/qualifying examination, a final examination, and/or submitting a disquisition.

Application/Approval Process:

Graduate students who wish to obtain an extension under this policy must document their eligibility in writing to their academic unit prior to the effective date of the extension – retroactive requests will not be considered, absent extraordinary circumstances. The student's academic unit and the Graduate School will then assess the student's eligibility and approve/deny the extension. Additionally, international students on a visa must have their extension approved by the Office of International Student and Study Abroad Services.

Leave of Absence

Students requesting an extension may also choose to take a leave of absence from their graduate program. International students will need to consult with the Office of International Student and Study Abroad Services to determine if they are eligible for a leave of absence.

2. Modified Duties for Graduate Assistants

Eligibility:

A graduate assistant is eligible for "modified duties" if the graduate assistant:

1. Becomes a parent through childbirth, adoption, or foster placement of a child;
2. Has a health condition that makes him or her unable to perform regular duties but does not necessitate a reduction in workload; or
3. Will be caring for a child, spouse/partner or parent who has a serious health condition.
4. Must have served as a graduate assistant for at least one academic term.

Definition and Length of Modified Duties:

"Modified duties" means a change to duties and goals without reduction of stipend for a limited period of time. A graduate assistant taking modified duties will still be at a 100% workload and 100% stipend; however, the nature of the responsibilities for this time period will be adjusted. Modified duties will include a revision of workload for up to the equivalent of a semester. If warranted and supported by appropriate medical documentation, graduate students can be excused from most, if not all, of their regular duties for up to six weeks without a reduction in pay. All eligible students will be granted a Parental Accommodation period for up to six weeks immediately following the birth of a child or the adoption of a child under the age

of 6 for which the student has parental responsibilities. (Additional time may be granted based on medical documentation of exceptional medical circumstances experienced by the student or his/her child, spouse, partner, or dependent parent.)

Regardless of circumstances, modified duties agreements must conclude within 12 months.

Application/Approval Process

A graduate assistant requesting modified duties shall document their request in writing to their supervisor and department chair/head. The graduate assistant and the department will engage in an interactive process to determine how the graduate assistant's duties will be modified and the duration of the modified duties. In the event that an agreement cannot be reached between the graduate assistant and the department, the Dean of the Graduate School shall assist in reaching an agreement. To ensure that all parties are operating under the same understanding, the agreement for modified duties shall be put in writing. Graduate assistants accepting modified duties are subject to the regular evaluation procedures used in the program; however, such evaluations shall be based on the agreed upon modified duties.