

From: [Carpenter, TJ](#)
To: [Reed, Katie](#)
Cc: [Miriti, Maria](#); [Stromberger, Mary](#); [Page, Matt](#); [Hollins, Jackie](#); [Loeffler, Julie](#); [Smith, Randy](#); [Sutherland, Sue](#); [Kowalsky, Lisa](#)
Subject: Graduate School Proposal for CAA Review
Date: Thursday, April 2, 2026 11:26:08 AM
Attachments: [Graduate School Proposal - Fresh Start and Grade Forgiveness Policies.pdf](#)
[image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

Katie,

Good morning! Please find attached a proposal, with endorsement from Dean Stromberger, from the Graduate School regarding changes to the Fresh Start and Grade Forgiveness Policies.

The Graduate School proposes revising two policies in the Graduate School Handbook (GSH). Both revisions are intended to foster graduate student success: (1) Fresh Start, and (2) Grade Forgiveness. We bring these to CAA because these changes modify Faculty Rules 3335-8-26.1 and 3335-8-27.1. Per the standard Graduate School process, these updates have received approval from the Graduate Council.

Please let us know if you have any questions. Thanks!

TJ Carpenter, MS, PACE, SHRM-CP

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March 31, 2026

Council on Academic Affairs Chair Sue Sutherland

Vice Provost W. Randy Smith

Council on Academic Affairs

Office of Academic Affairs

University Square South

15 E. 15th Ave

Columbus, OH 43210

The Graduate School proposes revising two policies in the Graduate School Handbook (GSH). Both revisions are intended to foster graduate student success: (1) Fresh Start, and (2) Grade Forgiveness. We bring these to CAA because these changes modify Faculty Rules 3335-8-26.1 and 3335-8-27.1. Per the standard Graduate School process, these updates have received approval from the Graduate Council.

We propose to update the GSH to include the revised language at the conclusion of the Spring 2026 semester. Further, the Graduate School does not believe that these policy proposals will result in an undue administrative burden on its staff, nor should it delay the strong customer service it provides to graduate students, faculty, and staff.

Rationale

The Graduate School currently allows for a Fresh Start (i.e., all previous graduate credit to be eliminated from the total earned hours and graduate cGPA) when graduate students re-enroll after an absence of five or more years. The Fresh Start policy enjoys broad support from our campus community, but the Graduate School and Graduate Council are concerned that the minimum five-year period is excessive and unnecessarily delays the return to study for students. The intention of the revision is to encourage students to resume their studies in a timelier manner. We propose shortening the absence period from five to three years, provided that the student's petition is reviewed and supported by their program's Graduate Studies Committee.

For Grade Forgiveness, the Graduate School has in the past chosen not to offer Grade Forgiveness to graduate students. This position has been challenged recently by the graduate community who feels that limited grade forgiveness would be appropriate and beneficial, especially when students encounter significant health-related challenges. Additionally, the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) has taken a more conservative stance in approving late course drop petitions, leaving students experiencing serious health challenges with limited options for academic relief. We propose establishing a new policy allowing for grade forgiveness for serious health-related circumstances only.



Student Impact

The Graduate School does not anticipate that these policy changes will result in a significant influx of new petitions. The proposed Fresh Start language is technically applicable to all former graduate students; however, not every former graduate student may be interested in resuming their graduate studies after a prolonged absence. Their return also requires program support, and not all Graduate Studies Committees may agree that the student is ready to resume their studies.

The proposed Grade Forgiveness language outlines eligibility requirements that are narrow so that they would only apply to a student group that is most at need (i.e., those facing health-related challenges). Therefore, this policy revision supports students who are left with limited options due to shifting institutional processes.



Fresh Start Proposed Revision

In Section 4.2, the new language shows the reduced amount of time necessary before a Fresh Start petition may be submitted and clarifies expectations for mentorship and student success, thus better aligning it with similar Graduate School policies (e.g., Conditional Admissions, Graduate Bridge Program, etc.).

Old language:

- **“Fresh Start.** A university policy by which any student who reenrolls in the Graduate School after an absence of five years or more may petition the Graduate Studies Committee for previous graduate credit to be eliminated from the total earned hours and graduate cGPA. If the Graduate Studies Committee approves the student’s petition, the Graduate Studies Committee Chair may recommend approval to the Graduate School. No previous credit hours count in the student’s total earned hours, and no previous grades are computed in the student’s graduate cGPA. All previous courses taken and grades earned in the Graduate School remain on the student’s official permanent record. If the “fresh start” option is exercised, it applies to all course work taken prior to the absence. It may not be used selectively on individual courses or if the course work in question was used to receive a graduate degree.”

New language:

- **“Fresh Start.** Any student who reenrolls in the Graduate School after an absence of three or more years may petition the Graduate Studies Committee of the program in which they were enrolled to ask that all previous graduate credit be excluded from the total earned hours and graduate cGPA calculations. If the Graduate Studies Committee approves the student’s petition, the Graduate Studies Committee Chair may recommend approval to the Graduate School. Upon approval by the Graduate School, no previous credit hours will count in the student’s total earned hours, and no previous grades will be included in the computation of the student’s graduate cGPA. All previous courses taken and grades earned in the Graduate School remain on the student’s official permanent record. If the Fresh Start option is exercised, it applies to all course work taken through the last semester of the student’s enrollment at the university. It may not be used selectively on individual courses or if the course work in question was used to receive a graduate degree. Students returning to the Graduate School after utilizing the Fresh Start option must maintain a 3.0 cGPA during the first 10 hours of graded graduate credit. Upon approval of a Fresh Start request, the Graduate School may require a program to submit a mentorship plan designed to support the student’s transition back into graduate study and improve the likelihood of success. If a student fails to maintain a 3.0 cGPA after the first 10 hours of graded graduate credit, their program may determine that the student is not making reasonable progress to degree and may send a letter, with a copy to the Graduate School, to the student warning of possible denial of further registration ([Section 5.4](#)).”



Grade Forgiveness Proposed Revision

In Section 4.2, the following shows the altered current policy to allow for grade forgiveness when a student faces health-related circumstances.

Old language:

- **“Grade Forgiveness.** Graduate students are not eligible for grade forgiveness. If there are documented circumstances beyond the student’s control that contributed to their deleterious performance, please refer to ‘Course Withdrawal’ in [Section 3.4.](#)”

New language:

- **“Grade Forgiveness.** Per Office of the University Registrar policy, students cannot petition for a retroactive late drop after they have fully attended a course and received a final grade other than “EN.” Under the grade forgiveness policy, graduate students have an option for academic relief if they experienced serious health-related circumstances and were unable to drop a course(s) prior to the end of the semester or term. This provides limited academic relief for individuals whose academic performance was negatively affected by documented health issues but still completed the course and received a final grade other than “EN.”

This policy is not a means to improve a student’s GPA for cosmetic purposes or because of failure to drop a course before the drop deadline in the absence of a serious health-related circumstance. With grade forgiveness, graduate students may petition to repeat a course and request that the original grade and credit be removed from the calculation of the cumulative point-hour ratio (CPHR). Although the grade will no longer factor into the CPHR, the original course enrollment and grade will remain on the student’s official academic transcript. Approval of grade forgiveness is not automatic. Petitions are reviewed by the student’s Graduate Studies Committee and granted only at the discretion of the Graduate School. Students interested in seeking grade forgiveness must submit a petition to their graduate program’s Graduate Studies Committee for review. The Graduate Studies Committee reviews the petition and recommends approval or denial to the Graduate School. The Graduate School then reviews the petition and makes a final decision, which is then communicated to the student and the graduate program. To qualify for grade forgiveness under this policy, all the following conditions must be met:

- **Health-Related Circumstances.** The student must provide documentation (e.g., a letter from a medical provider confirming treatment dates) confirming significant interference with academic performance in the original course. Students should not disclose their medical diagnosis or treatment plan in this documentation; rather, the letter from the medical provider confirming treatment is sufficient. Each Graduate Studies Committee makes a recommendation to the Graduate School for final review and decision. The Graduate School’s decision is final.
- **Course Grading Requirements.** Grade forgiveness may be applied only to courses on an A-E grading scale. Additionally, students may request forgiveness only for courses in which they received a final grade of “A-” or lower.



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- **Course Repetition Requirement.** The student must repeat the same course. Grade forgiveness will be applied only after the repeated course has been completed.
- **Limitations.** Any student may use forgiveness for up to three courses during their graduate degree program. Grade forgiveness cannot be requested for courses taken during the semester or term in which the student graduates. Grade forgiveness used for a course with a grade impacted by a University State of Emergency will not count toward the three-course limit.”



April 2, 2026

Vice Provost W. Randy Smith
Council on Academic Affairs
Office of Academic Affairs
University Square South
15 E. 15th Ave.
Columbus, OH 43201

Dear Vice Provost Smith:

I offer my full support for the request to modify the two proposed small-scale updates to the Graduate School's *Graduate School Handbook* (GSH). Per standard Graduate School process, these updates have received Graduate Council approval. We intend to update the GSH to include the proposed new language at the conclusion of the Spring 2026 semester. Further, the Graduate School does not believe that these policy proposals will result in an undue administrative burden on its staff, nor should it delay the strong customer service it provides to graduate students, faculty, and staff.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions and/or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Mary E. Stromberger, PhD
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
ENGIE-Axium Endowed Dean's Chair
Professor, School of Environmental and Natural Resources

CC: Maria Miriti
TJ Carpenter