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## 5. Academic Policies

This chapter describes a number of academic policies and terms that the Seminary has established to help students accomplish their educational goals in an equitable and efficient manner. Further explanations of any of these policies or terms may be obtained from the faculty advisor, one of the seminary Deans, the Registrar, or the Vice President of Academics.

### Academic Integrity

As a Christian institution that places a high priority on honesty, integrity, and a Biblical commitment to truth, Lincoln Christian University will treat incidents of cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously. The course instructor may impose penalties which may include failure of the assignment involved, requirement of additional work, and/or failure of the course. The Seminary Deans will be advised of all such incidents. Further actions, taken by the Deans, may include academic probation (with special conditions imposed), suspension, or dismissal from seminary. A student may appeal these penalties first to the Seminary Deans. If further appeals are necessary, the Deans will consult with the Vice President of Academics. (See “Appeals” on page 61 for further clarification). Examples of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty include submitting someone else’s work as one’s own, failing to document appropriately quoted material or others’ unique ideas, using sources not permitted to complete a test or assignment, lying, or other types of unethical behavior in fulfilling academic requirements. Students with any question about what is inappropriate should consult with the instructor.

### Academic Terminology

The Seminary employs the following terms in describing and implementing its academic programs, in addition to the other terms and policies used later in this chapter:

- Block Class:** a course that is offered in an all day format (usually Thurs.) one day each month of the fall, spring and sometimes the summer semester.
- Core Course:** a course required to complete a degree program (see also “Advanced Standing” policy below).
- Credit Hour:** a 50-minute period of instruction (most 3-hour credit courses are offered in 2 ½ hour periods on one day per week for 15 weeks).
- Elective:** a course that may be chosen from among one or more areas of study to meet degree requirements.
- Intensive:** a course offered for a one-week period (during mid-term break in the fall, in January, spring semester and some summer school courses).
- Semester:** a 15-week period in the fall and in the spring.
- Seminar:** a course format that stresses peer interaction and group discussion under faculty guidance.
- Student Portal:** the Web-based portal requiring a Web-browser and Internet access which then allows students to review their academic and financial records as well as register for classes.
- Syllabus:** a document that describes in some detail an individual course and its requirements.

## Academic Calendar

The 2-year academic calendar for the Seminary may be accessed by logging on to the LCU website at [www.lincolncchristian.edu](http://www.lincolncchristian.edu).

## Advanced Standing

Lincoln Christian's Seminary grants advanced standing in certain situations. Advanced standing "without credit" allows a student in any of the Seminary's degree programs to substitute another course in place of a required (core) course if the student has had a comparable course or can demonstrate proficiency and if the student's faculty advisor approves (the program descriptions in Chapter 3 provide more specific details).

## Advisors

Lincoln Christian University believes that personal relationships established between students and faculty are crucially important. To that end, each student is assigned a faculty member as an advisor, who meets with him or her as often as needed or desired. The primary purpose of the Seminary's advising program is to assist students in the development and implementation of their educational and vocational plans, with the faculty advisor also serving as a mentor. An important tool in the academic advising process is the "degree audit" (see more specifics in the Degree Audit section following). This form, may be accessed through the student portal and indicates what courses or other academic requirements a student has completed and still needs to complete in order to graduate in a certain degree program.

In the Seminary's advising program, it is the responsibility of the faculty advisor to help the student clarify life goals, develop educational objectives, suggest appropriate courses and other learning experiences, explain institutional policies, and refer students to other appropriate resources as needed. Each student must consult with their faculty advisor each semester before registering. It is the responsibility of the student to meet on an ongoing basis with his or her faculty advisor, provide accurate and appropriate information as needed, understand and follow academic requirements and policies, and, when in doubt, ask. Ultimate responsibility for understanding and meeting all academic requirements rests with the student.

For some matters, it may be most appropriate for advisors to refer students to other sources. Institutional sources to which students may be referred include the Seminary Deans, the Vice President of Academics, the Vice President of Student Development, the Associate Dean of Seminary Spiritual Formation, the Registrar's Office, the Seminary Student Counseling Office, the Office of Financial Aid, and international students may be referred to the Dean's Office for special assistance.

## Appeals

Students may appeal an academic decision to one of the Deans, who may consult with the Vice President of Academics. Such appeals over academic decisions may include disputes over assigned grades, other individual faculty decisions and requirements, or institutional requirements and decisions. When the matter involves the decision of a faculty member, the student is encouraged to discuss the matter first with that faculty member, whenever possible, before making any appeal. The Dean(s), who may consult with the Vice President of Academics, will decide the appeal, in as timely a manner as possible, after processing all relevant information. Any decision involving non-academic decisions (e.g. student discipline cases) may be appealed to the Vice President of Student Development.

## Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class session of their courses unless hindered by some reasonable circumstance (e.g. illness, family emergency, ministry/work conflict, or some other extenuating circumstance). It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor as soon as possible of the reason for an absence. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make clear in the course syllabus (distributed at the beginning of the semester) any attendance requirements for that course. Students who violate any attendance requirements outlined in the syllabus are subject to any of the following: failure of an assignment, resubmission of an assignment, compensatory work, lowering of the assignment or final grade, failure of the course, and/or dismissal from the class. The final decision as to what action will be taken is up to the instructor, who may consult with one or both of the Seminary Deans, if so desired. Students may appeal any faculty decision as outlined above under “Appeals.”

## Catalogs

The Seminary has developed curricular programs and other resources described throughout this catalog to help it accomplish its mission and program goals for its students. The Seminary cannot guarantee, however, that every student will fulfill the mission or meet all the program goals.

The catalog functions as the official document of all curricular expectations for any given student in any given program. Approval of the curriculum is the responsibility of faculty, under the leadership of the Academic Deans. The Registrar’s Office, however, has significant responsibility for managing all curricular expectations for all students in a fair and reasonable manner. Part of that process includes online degree audits that the Registrar’s Office prepares for each student (and his or her advisor), which are based on the catalog in effect. Since Lincoln Christian publishes a catalog every two years and since faculty may approve curricular changes more often than that, an online supplement will be issued every other August to document any major changes that have occurred since the last catalog. Regardless of when they are approved, catalog changes are generally implemented only on an annual basis each August. Also, catalogs are generally not implemented before the date on the catalog (e.g. a 2010-2012 catalog printed in the fall of 2009 is not implemented until the fall of 2010). This allows for a more manageable implementation process. Students will be held accountable to the catalog under which they enter, unless they petition in writing to the Registrar’s Office to change to a new or revised program described in a later catalog. Such permission requires the approval of the student’s advisor and the Registrar.

The Seminary also reserves the right to modify the requirements and regulations in this Catalog, according to the processes it has established. Students should view this Catalog, therefore, as an informational, rather than a contractual, document between the Seminary and the student.

## Changes of Program or Specialization

Students changing from one program or specialization to another should secure a Change of Program form from the Registrar’s Office, or through the student portal and get the necessary signatures, and return it to the Registrar, paying the appropriate fee (see “Other Fees and Costs” in Chapter 7). Students making such a change will be responsible for meeting the degree and other program requirements shown in the catalog in effect at the time.

## Chapel

Chapel is both an academic and spiritual concern at Lincoln Christian University. It arises out of our theological mission as a Christian higher education community and out of the character of our students as Christians who are called to worship God and encourage one another. For these reasons, the Seminary provides a weekly chapel service (usually on Wednesday mornings), during which time no classes are held so that the entire Seminary community can come together in corporate worship. No attendance is taken, but students are encouraged to participate as much as possible. Chapel service also provides a time to communicate information important to the Seminary community.

## Degree Audit

The Registrar's Office maintains degree audits showing progress toward completing a degree or certificate. A student may access his or her degree audit via the student portal. (A degree audit cannot be made until the student has declared a program or specialization.) When a student changes programs or specializations a new degree audit is prepared.

## Distance Learning

The Seminary provides a variety of distance learning courses to help students pursue a degree program, though no degree program can be completed entirely through distance learning. Students in all programs can take up to five distance learning courses appropriate to a degree program with the approval of the faculty advisor, except students in the 1-year M.A. program. Master of Arts students in the 1-year program can take no more than 3 distance learning courses. Students needing more flexibility in pursuing a degree are encouraged to consider one-week intensive courses and independent studies, within the guidelines of the Seminary's residency requirements (see page 67). The Seminary's distance learning courses are offered via the internet using the learning management software called ANGEL. For more information on the Seminary's Distance Learning program, please contact the Director of Admissions at 217-732-3168 x 2275.

## Discipline or Dismissal

The Student Covenant describes several situations that might lead to the discipline or dismissal of a student for a variety of reasons (see Student Covenant; see also Due Process below). Behavioral matters are typically addressed by a discipline committee composed of the Deans, the Associate Dean of Student Formation, faculty and student representatives. Academic matters are typically addressed by one or both of the Deans and/or others they may delegate (particularly faculty).

Situations of a primarily academic nature that might lead to discipline or dismissal include, but are not limited to, attendance problems, plagiarism (page 60), violating probation (page 66), disrupting classroom decorum, etc. Discipline may be invoked by a faculty member or by a Dean and may involve any of the following: apology and change of behavior, resubmission of an assignment, compensatory work, reduced grade, failure of assignment or course, dismissal from class or the Seminary, or other appropriate action. A student may appeal a faculty disciplinary action as outlined under the "Appeals" policy on page 61.

## Due Process

Although denial of due process by a private religious institution is not considered a violation of U.S. Constitutional law, the Seminary makes this privilege available to students, within the guidelines set forth in this section. Students agree to abide by the regulations in the Student Covenant and the academic policies in this catalog by virtue of their enrollment. Students who violate the Seminary's regulations or policies may be disciplined (as described above under "Discipline"). Students subject to disciplinary action may request a hearing with the one(s) making the decision, and the decision-maker(s) will hear the student in a fair and timely manner, which constitutes "due process" for Lincoln Christian University. Additionally, a student may appeal any resulting disciplinary action under the guidelines described above in the "Appeals" policy.

## Educational Rights and Privacy

Lincoln Christian University abides by the regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. This act governs how student educational records should be handled. Graduate students may request to see their educational records by contacting the Registrar's Office.

This information is not released to any outside party without the student's written permission or without a legal cause, unless it is considered "public" or "directory" information (e.g. name, address, phone number, email address, name of specialization, type of program, years enrolled, advisor's name, and/or honors received.) Even "public" or "directory information" will not be released if the student makes a written request to that effect to the Registrar's Office.

## Full-Time Status

Students enrolled for 8 or more semester hours are considered to be full-time. For those who qualify for Veterans Administration benefits under U.S. Code, Title 38, this same 8-hour minimum also applies.

## Grades

The Seminary awards grades on a 4.0 scale, with 4.0 equaling a grade of A. Students must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 (between a B- and a C+) in order to graduate. Grades of Pass, No Pass, and Withdraw do not affect one's grade point average (except grades of withdraw are computed for those eligible for veteran's benefits). Each faculty member is responsible for his or her own grading system, though all final grades are awarded based on the 4.0 scale.

## Graduation Requirements

Students are approved for graduation by the administration and faculty under the authority of the Board of Trustees. In order to be approved for graduation, students must meet the following requirements:

- 1) Completion of all academic requirements for the degree, with a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5
- 2) Meeting of all financial obligations to the Seminary, and
- 3) Demonstration of mature Christian character, as judged by the Seminary faculty and administration.

Students who have not met all these requirements will not be approved for graduation, nor will they be allowed to participate in the Commencement service without all requirements being met. Those unable to attend the Commencement service because of distance or other circumstances must make a written request in advance to the Registrar for permission to graduate in absentia. The Seminary holds public Commencement services only in May, though it grants degrees in May, August, and December. Students must complete a “Declaration of Intent to Graduate” form (available from the Registrar’s Office or on the student portal) prior to the semester in which they expect to receive their degree.

## **Greek and Hebrew Language Requirements**

As a graduate theological school committed to the study of the Scriptures, the Seminary at Lincoln Christian University believes that every student needs to have a basic understanding of the original languages in which the Bible was written. To that end, the Seminary requires basic proficiency in the Greek and Hebrew languages. Proficiency in these languages may be demonstrated by successful completion of the Greek and Hebrew proficiency exams or by the following course requirements: 1) for M.Div. students or M.A. students specializing in an area of Bible or Theology, successful completion of NT610-611 and OT610-611 or 2) for M.A.C. students or M.A. students specializing in an area of Ministry, successful completion of BI603-604, plus 6 additional hours of Bible or Theology courses. A student that switches from a program that requires BI603-604 (and who successfully completed those 6 hours) to a program that requires NT610-611 and OT610-611 for 12 hours must take the proficiency exam for NT610 and OT610. If a student successfully passes the proficiency exams for NT610 and OT610 they can then take an exegesis class. If a student is unable to pass the proficiency exam in either the NT and/or the OT area, that student will then have to take NT610 and/or OT610 before being admitted to any exegesis courses. Such students should consult with their faculty advisor for advice on which approach may be best for them.

## **Honors**

Seminary students who complete their studies with a minimum grade point average of 3.75 (on a 4.0 scale) are recognized at Commencement as having graduated “with honors” and those with at least a 3.90, “with highest honors.”

## **Incomplete Work**

When students are unable to complete the required work for a course by the last day of the semester because of some unavoidable circumstance (such as serious illness or a death in the family), they may request a 30-day extension of time to complete the work. Incompletes are allowed only for unusual circumstances, and must be requested before the last week of the semester. To request an incomplete, secure an Incomplete Form from the Registrar’s Office or the student portal, have it signed by the instructor, and return it with the appropriate fee (\$25) to the Registrar before the grading period ends. Students have a maximum of 30 days to complete the work. If the work is not completed within 30 days, the grade automatically becomes an F, unless the instructor stipulates otherwise.

## **Independent Study/Research**

Students desiring to complete a course through independent study (outside of the classroom) must receive permission from the course instructor and their advisor. Independent studies may be completed for an existing course (particularly if a scheduling conflict is involved) or for a course designated as a 900-level (Research in...). Usually, no more than 9 hours in the Master of Arts (6 hours if in the 1-year M.A. program) and 15 hours in the Master of Divinity degree programs may be completed through independent study or individual research. A \$75 per credit hour fee is charged for independent study courses in addition to the current tuition rate.

## **Mentored Ministry**

The Seminary places a strong emphasis on personal relationships that students develop with faculty and with other professionals associated with their educational and life career plans. The Seminary's advising program (see "Advisors" policy above) allows students to develop a personal relationship with a faculty member. Beyond this involvement, Master of Divinity students are also required to be involved in a mentoring relationship with a professional or church leader outside the Seminary. This requirement is met by completing LS701 Mentored Ministry Experience (described in Chapter 4). The Seminary's Director of Mentored Ministry oversees this program and assists students in finding an appropriate mentor (e.g. an area minister, a church leader, or a staff member at a church-related institution). For more information, please consult the Mentored Ministry Manual (available from the Seminary Office).

## **Military Leave**

Students who are called up for active military duty during the semester will receive academic credit and refunds under these two guidelines. First, students leaving during the first ten weeks of the semester may withdraw and receive a grade of "W" (withdraw), which carries no academic penalty. They are also eligible for a pro-rated refund of their tuition and any room and board charges. Second, students leaving during the last five weeks of the semester will be given full credit for their courses and receive grades equivalent to the level of work they had demonstrated prior to leaving. No further work will be required unless they request it to improve or establish their grades, in which case the instructor must decide what would be appropriate. No refund will be given. Finally, no matter when during the semester a student leaves for active military duty; he or she must contact the Registrar's Office to withdraw officially from school. A student may not withdraw more than two weeks before he or she is required to report for active military duty.

## **Nondiscrimination Policy**

Lincoln Christian University admits students of any sex, race, color, age, and national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students at the Seminary. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, physical disabilities, or national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, or other programs.

## **Probation**

The Seminary imposes two kinds of probation: academic and social. Academic probation occurs when a student in a degree program fails to achieve a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) at the end of any given semester. When that occurs, the Registrar's Office notifies the student in writing and warns the student that he or she has one semester to improve his or her cumulative grade point average to at least 2.5. If the student does not do so within a semester, he or she is subject to dismissal at the end of that semester. Academic probation may also be imposed by one of the Seminary Deans for violation of an academic policy (e.g. plagiarism), in which case the conditions of probation will be described to the student in writing.

Social probation may occur when a student violates a regulation or policy in the Student Covenant (e.g. immoral behavior). The Seminary Deans and/or the Vice President of Student Development may impose social probation, in which case the conditions of probation will be described to the student in writing. A student may appeal any decision to impose probation under the guidelines listed under "Appeals" above.

## Proficiency Exams

The Seminary offers proficiency exams for several of its core courses. For example, Greek and Hebrew language requirements may be met through proficiency exams. Students in any degree program may fulfill the requirements for LS600 through a proficiency exam. Students in the Master of Divinity and the Master of Religious Education program who have not had a major in Bible in their undergraduate program may meet the requirements for BI501 through a Bible knowledge proficiency exam. A modest fee (except for BI501) is assessed for each proficiency exam (see “Other Fees and Costs” in Chapter 7).

## Residency

The Seminary requires students in any of its degree programs to complete at least 24 hours of courses through the Seminary, i.e. not transfers. These 24 hours may be taken in several ways, but at least 9 of them must be through classes on our campus (i.e. not through independent study, distance learning, or thesis/extended research paper). Students may appeal the residency requirement to their faculty advisors in the case of any special circumstances.

## Schedule Changes

To add or drop a course during periods of online registration, students may complete the desired change through their student portal. No fees result from making changes during this period. Changes made after this period are done by contacting the Registrar’s Office. These changes result in a fee charged to the student’s account if done after the full refund period. To add a class after the first week of class, students must get a Change of Schedule form from the Registrar’s Office, have it signed by the instructor of the course, and return it to the Registrar’s Office.

Refund of tuition and fees (if any) will be computed from the date the drop is initiated (see “Refund Policy” in Chapter 7). Failure to officially withdraw from a class will result in the assigning of an “F” and the loss of tuition and fees for that class. A student may not drop any course after four weeks without permission from the Registrar or an Academic Dean.

## Shared Credits in Two Degree Programs

Students who wish to complete two degrees at the Seminary may do so provided they meet two basic guidelines: 1) they must complete the requirements for each degree, and 2) one full year (24 hour minimum) of class work must be completed for the second degree. For example, students desiring to complete a 75-hour Master of Divinity and a 48-hour Master of Arts program must meet all degree requirements for each program, completing at least 99 hours total (75 for the M.Div. and 24—half of 48—for the M.A.). Students pursuing a second degree beyond the Master of Divinity degree are eligible for a 15% tuition discount on any hours required after the first 75 hours. Please notify the Financial Aid Office when registering for such hours to ensure that the 15% tuition discount is applied (after the first 75 hours).

## Special Needs

The Seminary accepts students who meet its admission requirements without regard to disability. Reasonable accommodations are provided for all students with special needs who self disclose and who provide documentation of disability. Contact the Seminary Office for further assistance and details.

## Time Limitations

As a general rule, degree programs should be completed within twice the amount of time normally required with full-time study. This means that the 75-hour Master of Divinity degree should be completed within six years (12 semesters), the 60-hour Master of Arts in Counseling within five years (10 semesters), the 48-hour Master of Arts within four years (8 semesters), and the 1-year Master of Arts within 4 semesters. Students may petition for additional time for extenuating circumstances (see also the “Satisfactory Academic Progress” policy in Chapter 7 for financial aid limitations).

## Transcripts

Current students may access and print an unofficial copy of their transcripts by accessing their own academic records through the Student Portal. Alumni or students may examine their official transcript by making a verbal request in the Registrar’s Office. Except during times of unusual workload or other exceptional cases, the request will be honored immediately (in all cases by the next work day). A printed copy of the transcript will be made available in person or by mail only with the written authorization of the student involved. To secure a transcript, current students should fill out a Transcript Request form in the Registrar’s Office or on the LCU Web site; former students and those enrolled in courses outside of Lincoln should send a written request to the Office of the Registrar, Lincoln Christian University, 100 Campus View Drive, Lincoln, IL 62656-2111. A \$5 fee is charged for each transcript copy, whether official or otherwise. There is a fee of \$35.00 for any student requesting transcripts be mailed overnight. Transcripts will be withheld from any student whose account is not paid in full.

## Transfer of Credits

Lincoln Christian College and Lincoln Christian Seminary accepts credits transferred from other institutions provided they meet these five criteria: 1) are documented through an official transcript, 2) demonstrate appropriate quality (i.e. from an accredited institution with final grade of a least C), 3) are done at a comparable level (e.g. a freshman-level class is not comparable to a senior-level class), 4) fulfill requirements for the student’s chosen program here, and 5) meet any applicable residency requirements. All transfer of credit decisions are made by the Registrar, using the above criteria. The Registrar may consult with various faculty as needed to provide appropriate flexibility and fairness. Credits from non-accredited institutions may be considered if the student can provide sufficient documentation (e.g. syllabus and assignments) to verify the appropriate quality of the credits. Students can appeal a transfer of credit decision to the Academic Dean if they feel their request was denied unfairly.

## Withdrawal from the Seminary

A student may not withdraw from the Seminary during the semester (except for an individual course; see “Schedule Changes”) without permission from one of the Seminary Deans or the Registrar. The student is expected to meet all obligations involving instructors, fellow students, deans, dormitory residents, accounting, library, etc. Refunds of tuition and fees will be made according to the schedule shown under “Refunds” in Chapter 7.