

Responsible Office: School of Education Dean's Office

School of Education Satisfactory Academic Progress in Graduate Degree Program Policy

Rationale/Purpose of the Policy

Continuation in the Graduate School is at the discretion of a student's program, a student's faculty advisor, and the Graduate School. A student may be placed on probation or dismissed from the Graduate School for not maintaining satisfactory academic progress. In special cases, the Graduate School permits students who do not meet these minimum standards to continue on probation upon recommendation and support of their advisor.

Definitions

Add explanations of key terms or concepts specific to the policy. *(optional)*

Scope

Add a general statement about who and/or what the policy applies to. *(optional)*

Policy Details

Satisfactory Academic Progress

The Graduate School sets minimum standards that all graduate students in the university must meet. Many departments and programs have additional requirements that exceed these Graduate School minimum requirements. The definition of satisfactory progress varies by program.

Most programs require satisfactory progress to continue guaranteed funding support.

The Graduate [Guide](#) includes the Graduate School's minimum degree requirements and satisfactory progress chart, as well as each program's minimum degree requirements and satisfactory progress chart.

In determining satisfactory academic progress, the Graduate School monitors the following: cumulative grade point average, Incomplete grades, English as a second language for some international students, the grades of students admitted on probationary status, enrollment in minimum required credits (underload), and unsatisfactory (U) grades. Detailed information for each is below.

Cumulative Grade Point Average

Graduate students must meet the Graduate School's minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 in order to graduate. When a graduate student's cumulative GPA drops below 3.0 for one semester, the Graduate School notifies the student via email (with a copy to the department's graduate coordinator) that they are placed on academic **probation**, and the Graduate School places a GSD LGR enrollment hold on registration for the following semester. The student cannot continue enrolling until the probationary semester's grades are reported and their cumulative GPA is above 3.0.

Incomplete (I) Grades

If a graduate student has not resolved all Incomplete grades by the end of the subsequent semester of enrollment, these (I) grades are considered unsatisfactory. Graduate students are not permitted to graduate with Incomplete grades on their record. The Graduate School issues **warnings** for Incompletes that have not yet lapsed into bad standing, and for three or less credits of Incompletes. The Graduate School places the student on academic **probation** for having more than three credits of Incompletes in bad standing and uses the GSD INC service indicator (enrollment hold) to ensure that this requirement is met before continued enrollment is permitted.

If a student is placed on probation due to Incompletes, the student will receive an email notification with a copy to the department's graduate coordinator.

ESL Required at Admission to the Graduate School

International graduate students may be required to take the ESLAT upon arrival at UW-Madison. This requirement applies to the following test scores: TOEFL (paper-based) test scores below 580; TOEFL (internet-based iBT) test scores below 92; IELTS scores below 7;. The ESLAT is administered by the English as a Second Language Program. ESLAT results may indicate that a graduate student is exempt from taking an ESL course, or these results may indicate a recommended ESL course. Graduate students for whom the ESLAT was required and who are not exempt based on the test results **must enroll in the recommended ESL course during their first semester at UW-Madison**. The Graduate School monitors successful completion of the ESL course for these students. The GSD ESL service indicator (enrollment hold) ensures that this requirement is met before continued enrollment is permitted.

Underload (1 CREDIT)

All graduate students, including both full- and part-time graduate students, are required to enroll in a minimum of 2 graded, graduate-level credits each fall and spring semester. Those who are enrolled in only 1 credit each fall and spring semester are notified by the Graduate School that they are under-enrolled. They are required to correct their enrollment immediately, and a GSD UNL hold is placed on their record, prohibiting them from enrolling in the subsequent term, until they meet the minimum enrollment requirement.

Unsatisfactory (U) Grades

If a course has been structured to offer the S/U grading option (such as research), a grade of S is equivalent to a grade of B or better. The Graduate School monitors U grades. Since these grades are very rare, cases are handled individually. Upon identification of a graduate student with a U grade in research, we contact the faculty advisor to find out more about the situation. GSD LGR holds are not automatically placed for U grades but may be if necessary.

Leaves of Absence

If students have pre-enrolled for a future term and plan to take a leave of absence, they must be sure to drop all courses before the first day of class. Previously enrolled students who wish to return to Graduate School after a leave of absence should follow the instructions for [Readmission to Graduate School](#). Any student who does not enroll for a Fall or Spring term is considered to be a “reentry” and must pay the Graduate School online application fee. Any student granted readmission must adhere to the most current requirements as listed in the Graduate School Academic Policies and Procedures. Master’s students who have been absent for five or more consecutive years lose all credits they have earned before their absence. Doctoral students who have been absent for ten or more consecutive years lose all credits they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; however that coursework will not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

Non-dissertators: The Graduate School has no formal policy regarding a leave of absence at the pre-dissertator level, although some programs do. Therefore, it is critical that students contact their major programs before considering a break in enrollment of one or more terms.

Dissertators: A candidate for a doctoral degree should be aware that failure to take the final oral examination (i.e., dissertation defense) and submit the dissertation within five years after passing the preliminary examination may require another preliminary examination and admittance to candidacy a second time.

Dissertator Continuous Enrollment

Once students achieve dissertator status, they must maintain [continuous enrollment](#) until completion of the doctoral degree. To maintain continuous enrollment, a dissertator must enroll each Fall and Spring semester for 3 credits (in graded 300-level courses or above) directly related to their dissertation research (e.g., research and thesis and/or required seminars). In some cases, the 3 credits can be a combination of research and a seminar. Fall and Spring enrollment are required regardless of the student’s location.

Audit and pass/fail courses do not satisfy this requirement. Additional courses beyond the required 3 credits taken on the audit or pass/fail basis will result in the removal of dissertator fee status.

A dissertator is exempt from the requirement to enroll for the Summer term unless they are defending and/or depositing their dissertation or have a Research Assistantship (RA), fellowship, or traineeship

that requires Summer enrollment, or are using university facilities and other resources (including faculty and staff time).

If a dissertator does not maintain continuous enrollment, they will be assessed a degree completion fee equal to 12 times the per-credit rate effective at the time their dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School for final review.

EXAMPLE: GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK “CRITERIA FOR SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS”

Below is a template that departments should use to outline “Criteria for Satisfactory Academic Progress” in their Graduate Student Handbooks. The standard language in black font should be kept verbatim, while anything in red font and brackets can be adapted to reflect particular degree requirements or departmental procedures.

Department of [X] Criteria for Satisfactory Academic Progress in the [Graduate Degree] Program:

1. Enrollment Requirements

- a. Please see the Graduate School’s [official enrollment requirements policy](#). **All** of the following credit requirements (except F-1 and J-1 visa requirements) must be satisfied by graded courses numbered 300 or above; courses numbered below 300, audit, and/or pass/fail do not satisfy the Graduate School’s enrollment requirements.

Table 1. Full Time Enrollment Status at a Glance		
CATEGORIES	MINIMUM ENROLLMENT FOR FULL-TIME STATUS: FALL OR SPRING	MINIMUM ENROLLMENT FOR FULL-TIME STATUS: SUMMER (GENERAL 8-WEEK DHH SESSION)
Dissertator	Exactly 3 credits directly related to research	Not required unless summer degree; or if RA, trainee-mo. Appointment, or fellow (w 12-mo. appointment), 3 cr. required.
RA, non-dissertator	8 cr.	2 cr.
TA/Lecturer (SA) 33%, non-dissertator	6 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum
TA/Lecturer (SA) 50%, non-dissertator	4 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum
PA 33%, non-dissertator	6 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum
PA 50%, non-dissertator	4 cr.	Not required unless receiving summer degree, 2 cr. minimum
Fellow, non-dissertator	8 cr.	2 cr. for 12-mo. Appointments; not required for 9-mo. appointments
Trainee, non-dissertator	8 cr.	2 cr.
International Student (F-1/J-1 visa), non-dissertator, if no other category in this list	8 cr.	4 cr. when summer is admit semester (2 cr. when summer is admit semester and student holds RA appt. or at least 33% TA or PA appt.)
<i>If none of the above, full-time enrollment is:</i>	8 cr.	4 cr.

[b. In addition to the Graduate School's policy, the Department of [X] has the following program-specific requirements for minimum enrollment credits:

i.

ii.]

c. A student who does not meet the minimum enrollment requirements will be in a state of unsatisfactory academic progress.

2. Grade Criteria

a. According to Graduate School guidelines, all graduate students must have a cumulative grade

point average of 3.0 (B) or higher.

[b. As permitted by the Graduate School, the Department of [X] has set its own higher GPA requirement, whereby all graduate students must have a cumulative GPA of [X].]

[c. As permitted by the Graduate School, the Department of [X] has specified that a student may

not receive more than [one] grade below a [B] (or a "U" grade) in any 12-month period.]

[d. As permitted by the Graduate School, the Department of [X] has specified that, if a student receives a grade below a [BC] in a required course, the student must repeat the course and earn a [B] or higher.]

e. A student who does not meet these minimum GPA requirements will be in a state of unsatisfactory academic progress.

3. Time-to-Degree Criteria

a. *Part-time* [MA/MS, MSAT, EdS, and OTD] students' time-to-degree criteria will be established

by the Department of [X] on an individual case-by-case basis.

b. Full-time [MA/MS, MSAT, EdS, and OTD] students must complete all requirements for the degree within a specified number of years of their admission to the program.

i. Full-time MA/MS students must complete all requirements for the degree within [X] years of their admission to the program.

ii. Full-time MSAT students must complete all requirements for the degree within [X] years of their admission to the program.

iii. Full-time EdS students must complete all requirements for the degree within [X] years of their admission to the program.

iv. Full-time OTD students must complete all requirements for the degree within [X] years of their admission to the program.

c. Full-time MFA students have one year from the date of passing their MFA qualifier to mount their final thesis exhibition.

i. A student's failure to complete their degree within a three-year period may result in

having to be re-admitted to the MFA program.

- ii. Alternatively, a student who does not complete the requirements for the MFA may receive an MA degree after the second year with the approval of their advisor.
- d. Full-time PhD students have five years from the date of passing their preliminary examination to finish their final oral examination (i.e., dissertation defense) and deposit their dissertation. Failure to complete their degree within this five-year period after the preliminary examination may result in having to retake the preliminary examination or be re-admitted to candidacy.
 - i. See the Graduate School's [official 5-year policy](#).
 - ii. If extenuating circumstances mean that a PhD student may not be able to defend and deposit the dissertation within the five-year time period, the student's advisor, in consultation with the department chair, may request an extension by contacting the Graduate School PhD Degree Coordinator.
- e. Full-time students who fail to meet the aforementioned time-to-degree requirements in the specified time will be in a state of unsatisfactory academic progress.

4. Re-Entry Admission (see [Readmission to Graduate School](#))

- a. Students re-entering an MA/MS, MSAT, MFA, EdS, OTD, or PhD program following an absence must meet the program requirements in place at the time of re-entry.
- b. In addition, the student's program of study will be reviewed by the advisor or the appropriate departmental subcommittee to determine whether any content needs to be repeated.

[5. Coursework and Post-Coursework Checkpoints: *FILL IN THIS SECTION IF A DEGREE PROGRAM HAS PARTICULAR CHECKPOINT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE'S COURSEWORK OR POST-COURSEWORK PERIODS . . .*

- a. Specific timelines for MA/MS degree requirements.
- b. Specific timelines for MSAT degree requirements.
- c. Specific timelines for MFA qualifier, MFA final thesis exhibition, or other degree requirements.
- d. Specific timelines for EdS degree requirements.
- e. Specific timelines for OTD degree requirements.
- f. Specific timelines for PhD preliminary examination or other degree requirements.
- g. A student who does not meet the aforementioned coursework and post-coursework checkpoint requirements will be in a state of unsatisfactory academic progress.]

6. Satisfactory Academic Progress Reviews

- a. The department will review each graduate student's record at the end of each [semester/year] to determine whether a student is making satisfactory academic progress. ***[Insert link to department's annual review policy for graduate students.]***
 - i. If unique extenuating circumstances mean that a student is unlikely to make

- satisfactory academic progress in a given term, then, before the review specified in 6.a., the student's advisor may submit a request for extension to the department chair and the [Graduate Program Committee].
- ii. A decision on a request for extension will be made by the [department/Graduate Program Committee] at least one month in advance of the time of the review specified in 6.a.
 - b. If a student is not making satisfactory academic progress, the [advisor/department/Graduate Program Committee] will place the student on probation and establish a plan of study to resolve deficiencies and complete requirements (or complete the program) by the end of the next term [i.e., either the next academic-year term or the next summer term, depending on the structure of the degree program; this plan to resolve deficiencies cannot extend beyond one semester or summer]; see 7.a., below.
 - c. If a student has not received an extension (under 6.a.i. and 6.a.ii.) or has not resolved deficiencies and returned to satisfactory progress by the end of the next term [i.e., either the next academic-year term or the next summer term, depending on the structure of the degree program] (under 6.b.), then the student will be considered in a state of unsatisfactory academic progress, and the department must follow the "School of Education Policy for Graduate Student Dismissal Related to Unsatisfactory Academic Progress" (below).

7. Notification of Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

- a. A student who does not meet the criteria for satisfactory academic progress by the end of a specific term will be notified of that fact, will be placed on probation, and will receive a plan of study to resolve deficiencies and complete requirements (or complete the program) by the end of the next term, as noted in 6.b. above.
- b. A student at risk of failing to complete the specified plan to resolve deficiencies will be notified at least one month before the end of that term. An enrollment hold (MNC) will then be entered in SIS and will be lifted only if the student completes the plan of study (or the program).
- c. If, after notification, a student fails to complete the specified plan to resolve deficiencies and complete requirements (or complete the program) before the start of the next term (and the associated enrollment hold (MNC) has not been lifted), then the student will not be permitted to enroll in the next term and will be referred by the student's advisor to the department chair, who will consult with the [department/Graduate Program Committee] about evidence of unsatisfactory academic progress. If the evidence of unsatisfactory academic progress is substantiated, the chair will recommend dismissal according to the procedures in the "School of Education Policy for Graduate Student Dismissal Related to Unsatisfactory Academic Progress" (below). This recommendation can happen only after the specified term's grades have been submitted.

8. Conduct Criteria

- a. All graduate students must abide by the university's Code of Student Conduct and Community Standards in all academic and nonacademic matters

(<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>).

b. Departments will uphold the Code of Student Conduct and Community Standards and enforce these standards.

[c. If your department has specific conduct standards associated with professional licensure and/or program accreditation, insert them here.]

9. Disability Accommodations

a. Graduate students with formally approved disability accommodations should consult their department chair and the McBurney Center to discuss individual circumstances as they relate to departmental criteria for satisfactory academic progress.

School of Education Policy for Graduate Student Dismissal Related to Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

All persons who have been accepted by the Department of [X] to pursue studies for the [MA/MS, MSAT, MFA, EdS, OTD, or PhD] degree are required to meet the department's minimum criteria for satisfactory academic progress each term, as outlined in the Graduate School Criteria for Satisfactory Academic Progress as well as the department's Graduate Student Handbook. The following policy takes effect in cases of unresolved Graduate School holds on enrollment and/or when the department chair, following department procedures for reviewing satisfactory academic progress (see criteria above, including #6 on reviews of satisfactory academic progress), has determined that a student's holds indicate the student has not met the criteria for satisfactory academic progress and therefore should not be permitted to continue in the graduate program (i.e., the student should be dismissed).

In cases of unresolved Graduate School holds on enrollment or when the department chair, following department procedures for reviewing satisfactory academic progress has determined that a student's holds indicate that the student has not met the criteria for satisfactory academic progress, the chair will convene a meeting of the whole department faculty to consider the evidence of unsatisfactory academic progress and vote on the question of dismissal. Such a vote must take place on the following schedule:

Dismissal votes that follow the fall term must be taken before the start of the spring term.

Dismissal votes that follow the spring term must be taken before the end of the 9-month faculty contract year.

Regardless of whether the department faculty votes to dismiss or not dismiss a student, the decision will be effective immediately. The student will be notified of the decision via email as soon as possible, but within no more than five business days. The email to a student who has been dismissed will include an attachment with a letter of dismissal, together with any other relevant documents. Also within five business days of a decision to dismiss, the dismissal letter and documents will be sent to the Graduate School's Assistant Dean for Academic Services as well as the general Academic Services email address (gsacserv@grad.wisc.edu).

A student who has been dismissed will be contacted by Academic Services in the Graduate School and informed of the requirement to have a program home. An enrollment hold (MNC) will be entered in SIS, and a confidential Advisor Note will be entered to document the dismissal. If the student finds a new program home and completes the program change process prior to the deadline for initial enrollment for the next term, the enrollment hold will be removed, and the student may begin the new program. If the student cannot find a new program home prior to the deadline for initial enrollment for the next term, and if the student is not on a formal approved Leave of Absence, then enrollment at the university will be terminated.

Dismissal Appeal Process

A student can appeal a department's dismissal decision. Within five business days of being notified of the dismissal, the student must file a written appeal with the Senior Associate Dean in the School of Education. The appeal should explain why the student believes the dismissal constitutes a misapplication of the department's policy on satisfactory academic progress. On receipt of the student's written appeal, the Senior Associate Dean will convene an ad-hoc committee comprising at least three members of the School of Education Academic Planning Council to review the appeal; no member of this ad-hoc committee can belong to the department that dismissed the student. At its own discretion, this ad-hoc committee may ask for additional information from the student and/or department and may choose to hold a hearing at which both parties will be asked to speak separately (i.e., not in the room at the same time). The ad-hoc committee will then make a written recommendation to the Dean of the School of Education, who will render a final written decision on dismissal or non-dismissal. Unless a longer time period is negotiated, this written decision from the Dean shall be issued within twenty (20) business days from the date when the student's appeal was filed with the Dean's Office.

The Departure of a Student's Advisor or Discontinuation of an Advisor Role

The departure of a student's advisor from the university or the discontinuation of an advising role should not be grounds for dismissing a student from a graduate program. If a student's advisor is no longer willing or available to serve as the advisor but the student is making satisfactory academic progress, the department chair must find a new advisor and constitute a new graduate committee for the student. If at any point the student does not make satisfactory academic progress, the department should follow the procedures outlined above, and if the result of these procedures is a vote of dismissal, then the student will have no academic home in the department. If the student cannot find a new program home in another department prior to the deadline for initial enrollment for the next term, and if the student is not on a formal approved Leave of Absence, then enrollment at the university will be terminated.

The policies and procedures above in no way supersede or substitute for regulations of the Graduate School.

SAMPLE PROBATION LETTER:

[DATE]

Dear [X],

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that you have been placed on academic probation in our graduate program owing to unsatisfactory academic progress, and you are therefore at risk of dismissal.

As outlined in the department's Graduate Student Handbook, "A student who does not meet the criteria for satisfactory academic progress by the end of a specific term will be notified of that fact, will be placed on probation, and will receive a plan of study to resolve deficiencies and complete requirements (or complete the program) by the end of the next term." You have not met the criteria for satisfactory academic progress, because [X, Y, Z].

We are placing you on academic probation through the end of the [Fall/Spring] semester [YEAR]. During the probationary period, your plan to resolve deficiencies and complete requirements is as follows. You are expected to [meet regularly with your advisor, reply to emails from your advisor and me within two business days, and make regular progress on your dissertation, etc.]. If you are not meeting these conditions, I will ask the Graduate Program Committee to determine whether you are making satisfactory academic progress.

SAMPLE DISMISSAL LETTER:

[DATE]

Dear [X],

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of your dismissal from our graduate program and your rights of appeal regarding this decision.

This decision follows an Academic Probation letter sent to you on [DATE], from which I quote: ["We are placing you on academic probation through the end of the Spring 2022 semester. . . . During the probationary period, you are expected to meet regularly with your advisor, reply to emails from your advisor and me within 2 business days, and make regular progress on your dissertation. If I receive a report that you are not meeting these conditions, I will return to the Graduate Program Committee the question of whether you are making satisfactory academic progress."]

Your advisor, Professor [X], informed me that you did not meet the terms of this letter, because you [have not been meeting with her/him regularly and have not made progress on your dissertation for more than a year]. Moreover, Professor [X] has informed me that [s/he] will not continue as your advisor due to the lack of progress or effort toward the dissertation.

As a consequence, the Graduate Program Committee has determined that you have not made satisfactory progress, have not resolved deficiencies or completed departmental requirements and therefore may no longer continue in our Ph.D. program.

To ease your transition out of our program, your student status will continue until the end of the [Summer/Fall/Spring 20[XX]] term, but, as a student who is not in good standing, you will not be able to register for courses in our department or hold an assistantship during that time.

If you feel that your dismissal from the program is in error or that you have grounds for appeal, please contact me immediately. Please note that only the dismissal decision is appealable. You cannot appeal the withdrawal of your advisor nor the campus policy requiring an advisor. [Both the department and the Graduate School have placed enrollment holds due to your needing to find a new advisor.]

I know this letter may raise concerns for you. Should you need additional support, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Dean of Students Office, where the graduate student support specialist is [X].

Sincerely,

[X]
Chair of the Department of [X]

Related UW–Madison Policies

Graduate School Criteria for Satisfactory Academic Progress (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1218>):

Related UW–Madison Documents, Web Pages, or Other Resources

List and provide the link (for a PDF, Word document, etc.) or URL for any related UW–Madison documents, web pages, or other resources that provide relevant information and may be necessary to ensure compliance with the policy. *(optional)*

External References

Policy Administration

Approval Authority

School of Education Dean

Policy Manager

School of Education Senior Associate Dean for Academic Programs

Policy Contact(s)

School of Education Executive
Assistant for Dean’s Office Staff

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Policy contact’s position title.

Policy contact’s full name.

Policy contact’s email address.

Policy contact’s phone number.

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Policy History	
Effective Date	04/26/2023
Date Issued	Select the original date the policy was released to the university as approved. <i>(optional)</i>
End Date	Select the date the policy is no longer in effect. <i>(optional)</i>
Next Review	Select the date the policy is next scheduled for review. <i>(optional)</i>

Revised Dates

- 02/28/2024

Reviewed Dates

List all the dates the policy was reviewed, using MM/DD/YYYY format. *(optional)*