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## DOC 2012-06 Graduate Academic Standards and Progress Policy

University of Dayton. Office of Graduate, Professional and Continuing Education

University of Dayton. Graduate Leadership Council

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# PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: Graduate Academic Standards and Progress Policy  
SUBMITTED BY: Office of Graduate, Professional & Continuing Education, and the University of Dayton Graduate Leadership Council.  
DATE: March 16, 2012  
ACTION: Legislative Concurrence  
REFERENCE: Senate Constitution, Article II.B.2.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The graduate Academic Standards and Sufficient Progress policies published in the University of Dayton's online graduate bulletin lack specificity and substance ([1,2], Appendix). In particular they do not:

- specify consequences or expectations associated with a failure to maintain good academic standing;
- provide academic units with clear authority to dismiss students whose academic performance has seriously impaired their ability to succeed academically; or,
- address the consequences of earning "C" or "F" grades.

Moreover, the Sufficient Progress policy speaks primarily to a student's *rate* of progress and not to his or her academic performance ([1], Appendix).

Most academic units have recognized the shortcomings in University policy and have adopted their own policies regarding appropriate academic standards and progress for their graduate students. Through this proposal the Office of Graduate, Professional and Continuing Education (GPCE), in collaboration with the University of Dayton Graduate Leadership Council (GLC) seeks to standardize University policy.

In most cases the policy proposed herein will mirror current practice/policy in the various academic units. In some instances, however, the proposed policy will be more strict than unit level policy. In these cases, unit level policy will have to be revised to be in harmony with University policy if this proposal is approved by the Academic Senate. In those instances where unit policy is more strict than the proposed university level policy, no unit level change will be required. In all cases, though, the policy proposed herein has been developed in collaboration with a broad constituent base after discussions with a great many faculty, Program Directors and Department Chairs, through venues such as Graduate Program Directors Collaborative luncheons, Graduate School Faculty Roundtable meetings and multiple GLC and GLC Executive Committee meetings.

For ease of reference, current University and unit level policy regarding academic standards and progress, as well as "I," "IP" and "CR" grades, are summarized in the Appendix of this proposal.

## **2.0 Proposal & Rationale**

In order to standardize University policy and enhance the academic standards and rigor of graduate programs campus-wide, the Office of Graduate, Professional & Continuing Education, in collaboration with the Graduate Leadership Council, proposes the following:

2.1) Sub-section **V. General Academic Information (Sufficient Progress)** under the General Information tab in the 2010 online Graduate bulletin shall be eliminated in its entirety. This sub-section currently reads as follows ([1], Appendix):

“Students are expected to maintain sufficient progress toward a degree or certificate. At various intervals, usually at each registration period, and especially at the midpoint in the program, the advisor or program director will discuss the rate of progress with the student. Students not showing promise of completing the program in a reasonable time may be advised to withdraw from the University.”

Rationale: This statement gives no specific guidance to students, their advisors and/or program directors as to what constitutes sufficient progress. Moreover, it does not give authority to dismiss underperforming students. Merely suggesting that in some cases students might be advised to withdraw from the University is insufficient.

2.2) The last paragraph of sub-section **V. General Academic Information (Academic Standards)** under the General Information tab in the 2010 online Graduate bulletin shall be eliminated. This paragraph currently reads as follows ([1], Appendix):

“The various deans will review at intervals the work of their graduate students, and in consultation with the program directors and/or chairs of the departments, will recommend that those who are not doing work of high caliber be advised to discontinue courses leading to a degree. The disciplinary authority of the University is vested in the president by right, and in the deans and other officers on whom jurisdiction may be conferred for specific cases and in restricted areas.”

Rationale: The expectation that Dean’s will periodically review the work of all the graduate students in their units is unreasonable. Moreover, there is no indication as to how “high caliber” work might be gauged. Finally, this statement fails to give Deans clear authority to dismiss underperforming students.

2.3) The following policy statements shall be inserted after the “EM-Examination” credit discussion in sub-section **V. General Academic Information (Academic Standards)** under the General Information tab in the online Graduate bulletin [1].

**“Academic Standing:** A graduate student’s academic standing is determined according to the cumulative quality-point average at the end of each term. In addition:

- a) To be in good academic standing, a graduate student must maintain a cumulative quality-point average of at least 3.0 at all times. A cumulative quality-point average of at least 3.0 is also required for graduation.
- b) Thesis and dissertation credits may only be assigned “IP” and “CR” grades and do not count toward the minimum quality-point average of 3.0.
- c) A cumulative quality-point average below 3.0 will result in the student being placed on academic probation.

d) A graduate student on academic probation must complete a written academic recovery contract with his or her graduate program director which shall specify goals, expectations and a timeline for achieving good academic standing. This contract must specify the duration of the probationary period, which may not be shorter than one academic semester nor longer than one calendar year, and must be approved by the student's academic dean, or designee.

e) Students whose academic performance has seriously impaired their ability to succeed at the University of Dayton may be subject to academic dismissal by his or her academic dean, who authorizes the dismissal and notifies the student of his or her status. Graduate students who may be dismissed include: (a) those who fail to achieve good standing at the end of an agreed upon period of academic probation; (b) those who receive one or more grades of "F"; and, (c) those who have accumulated six or more semester hours of "C" grades, regardless of the cumulative quality-point average.

f) The Registrar will post *Academic Dismissal* on the permanent record of any student who is dismissed."

Rationale: In addition to being in harmony with current University and unit policy (where it exists), the revised policy proposed here gives clear authority to dismiss underperforming students and gives clear guidelines by which to assess whether or not a student is making sufficient progress toward graduation. Moreover, both to ensure clarity of expectations and to increase a student's likelihood of graduation, it is wise to require an underperforming student and his or her advisor or program director to develop a specific plan of action aimed at helping the student achieve good academic standing in a timely fashion.

Regarding the proposed stipulation that thesis and dissertation credits be assigned only "IP" and "CR" grades, while letter grades given by some units to thesis/dissertation credits are commonly assigned only after a student has completed all other degree requirements (thereby not strongly influencing a student's academic standing according to the proposed policy), assigning grades to thesis/dissertation credits is commonly viewed as merely a method of "padding" a student's grade point average (i.e., "A's" are more commonly given than not to completed theses/dissertations). This conflicts with the University's goal of promoting a high level of academic rigor among its programs.

2.4) The **CR - Credit, I - Incomplete** and **IP - In Progress** grades in sub-section **V. General Academic Information (Academic Standards)** under the General Information tab in the online Graduate bulletin shall be revised to read as follows [1]:

**CR - Passed:** Credit is awarded, but no corresponding quality points are given. This is used for all thesis and dissertation credits and for other special courses that do not affect the 3.0 cumulative quality point average needed to be in good standing.

**I - Incomplete:** To be used when a course has otherwise terminated but the student, for an acceptable reason, has not completed all the work for the course. The "I" has 0 quality points per hour and does not affect the cumulative quality point average. An "I" in a graduate course must be removed within one calendar year from the date listed on the grade report, or it will be changed to an "F" on the student's permanent record and the quality-point average adjusted accordingly. The time limit may be extended under exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the dean, if application for the extension is made within the one year period noted.

**IP - In Progress:** This designation is used in lieu of a grade for thesis/dissertation credits or other courses which have not terminated at the end of a semester. Upon completion of the thesis/dissertation all "IP" designations will be changed to "CR" in the student's permanent record. For other courses, appropriate letter grades will replace "IP" designations after the course is completed and the quality-point average will be adjusted accordingly.

Rationale: First, the former verbiage for "IP" grades mistakenly references "P" grades and does not account for the plus/minus grading system that is now in place. The revised language describing "IP" and "CR" grades is then in keeping with the rationale provided in section 2.3, above.

As for the suggested time limit on grades of "I," this is in keeping with the goal of encouraging students to progress steadily toward completion of their degrees and mirrors similar undergraduate policy. In fact, there have been cases in the recent past where "I" grades have been carried on a student's record for nearly ten years. To avoid unfortunate and unexpected challenges for students wishing to complete their degrees after long periods of academic dormancy (e.g., if an instructor leaves the University) a time limit on "I" grades is appropriate. Allowing one calendar year to finish incomplete graduate course work seems reasonable.

2.5) Sub-section **V. General Academic Information (Time Limit)** under the General Information tab in the online Graduate bulletin shall be revised to read as follows:

"All requirements for a free-standing graduate certificate must be satisfied within four calendar years from the time of matriculation. All requirements for a certificate associated with a concurrent degree program must be satisfied within the time limit associated with that degree.

All requirements for a master's degree must be satisfied within seven calendar years from the time of matriculation.

All requirements for a doctoral degree must be satisfied within nine calendar years from the time of matriculation.

For legitimate and substantial reasons, requests to extend the time to complete masters and doctoral degrees may be considered. Such requests must be formally submitted to the Office of Graduate, Professional & Continuing Education for review. Ordinarily, such requests must be made prior to expiration of the normal time to complete degree requirements. Except in very unusual cases, only one such request for an extension will be considered for any student.

In addition to articulating circumstances that have prevented completion of degree requirements within the time periods specified above, and the reason(s) for requesting the extension, the request must also include a detailed plan for degree completion, including a schedule of the remaining coursework to be taken and other specific milestones to be met. Moreover, the plan for completion must describe how the plan ensures that the student's knowledge in his or her academic field can be considered up-to-date and current. Students are cautioned that in some cases this may include a requirement to re-take some or all of their previously taken coursework."

Rationale: The essential policy change proposed here is the stipulation that all doctoral degree requirements be satisfied within nine calendar years from the time of matriculation, requests for time extensions notwithstanding. Current policy stipulates that all doctoral degree requirements must be completed within five years after admission to candidacy. For full-time doctoral students

the proposed policy will in many cases be more generous than current policy, as candidacy exams are commonly taken in the second year of a student's doctoral program. Most part-time doctoral students making steady and sufficient progress toward their degrees will not be adversely affected in either case. Nevertheless, current policy can be viewed as encouraging students to delay in taking their candidacy exams for as long as possible. There have been cases of doctoral students leaving their degree programs dormant for many years without being admitted to candidacy. In addition to encouraging doctoral students to progress at a steady pace toward graduation, one central reason for the time limits on completing graduate degrees is to ensure the relevancy of course work taken. However, students who leave their doctoral degree programs dormant for long periods of time without being admitted to candidacy do not trigger the automatic review of coursework relevancy that is required of other students when they resume pursuit of their doctoral degrees. Moreover, especially in those cases where candidacy examinations are based upon master's level course work, delaying the candidacy exam for many years can put students at a severe disadvantage if they later wish to compete their degrees. The proposed language instead serves to encourage doctoral students to take their candidacy exams as early as possible, thereby promoting steady progress toward graduation.

No changes to the master's or graduate certificate time limit guidelines are proposed.

### **3.0 Promulgation**

The policies proposed herein shall take effect immediately and retroactively when final approval is given by the Academic Senate, with two exceptions. First, students with outstanding "I" grades will be permitted to complete all required coursework within one calendar year from the end of the academic term in which this proposal is given final approval. In addition, letter grades previously assigned to thesis/dissertation credits need not be changed to the "CR" designation.

To facilitate informing the graduate student body of the new policy requirements, this document will be distributed by the GPCE office to all graduate program directors and department chairs after final approval by the Academic Senate. Program Directors will in turn be asked to share and discuss this information with their students. The online graduate bulletin will be updated during the next revision cycle.

### **4.0 References**

- [1] University of Dayton Graduate Bulletin, <http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30>.
- [2] University of Dayton Undergraduate Bulletin, <http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=31>.

### **5.0 Other Concurrences & Approvals**

- 1) GLC Executive Committee (unanimous vote of approval on 5/13/2011)
- 2) Provost's Council discussion (9/20/2011)

# Appendix

## (August 2010 Bulletin Information)

### **A. From the Online Undergraduate Issue**

#### **A.1 Academic Standing**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=31&p=3588&c=3601>)**

The student's academic standing is determined by the cumulative grade-point average at the end of each term.

1. To be in good academic standing, a student must have a cumulative grade-point average of (a) at least 1.7 at the end of the first and second terms, (b) at least 1.8 at the end of the third term, (c) at least 1.9 at the end of the fourth term, and (d) at least 2.0 at the end of the fifth and succeeding terms. For part-time and transfer students, a block of 12 semester hours of credit is considered one term. A cumulative grade-point average of at least 2.0 is required for graduation.
2. A cumulative grade-point average below the one required will place the student on academic probation. The student's academic dean will notify the student of his or her probationary status. A student on probation must follow a restricted academic program not to exceed 15 semester hours.
3. It is the responsibility of any student on academic probation to complete a contract with the dean for the purpose of determining the nature and limitations of the student's future academic and extracurricular activities.
4. Students whose academic performance has seriously impaired their ability to succeed academically at the University of Dayton are subject to dismissal. A student who is subject to academic dismissal can be dismissed only by his or her academic dean, who authorizes the dismissal and notifies the student of his or her status. Students who are subject to dismissal include (a) those who fail to achieve good standing at the end of a term on probation and (b) those who have a term point average of less than 1.0, regardless of cumulative grade-point average.
5. The Registrar will post "Academic Dismissal" on the permanent record of any student who is dismissed.

### **B. From the Online Graduate Issue**

#### **B.1 Academic Standards – General Academic Information**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3444&c=3465>)**

To be in good standing, a graduate student must maintain a 3.0 quality point average at all times.

*<descriptions of the various grades have been eliminated for brevity>*

The various deans will review at intervals the work of their graduate students, and in consultation with the program directors and/or chairs of the departments, will recommend that those who are not doing work of high caliber be advised to discontinue courses leading to a degree. The disciplinary authority of the University is vested in the president by right, and in the deans and other officers on whom jurisdiction may be conferred for specific cases and in restricted areas.

#### **B.2 Sufficient Progress – General Academic Information**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3444&c=3453>)**

Students are expected to maintain sufficient progress toward a degree or certificate. At various intervals, usually at each registration period, and especially at the midpoint in the program, the advisor or program director will discuss the rate of progress with the student. Students not showing promise of completing the program in a reasonable time may be advised to withdraw from the University.

### **B.3 Time Limit – General Academic Information**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3444&c=3455>)**

All requirements for a free-standing graduate certificate must be satisfied within four calendar years from the time of matriculation. All requirements for a certificate associated with a concurrent degree program must be satisfied within the time limit associated with that degree.

All requirements for a master's degree must be satisfied within seven calendar years from the time of matriculation.

All requirements for a doctoral degree must be satisfied within five calendar years after admission to candidacy.

### **B.4. Academic Standards & Progress – College of Arts & Sciences**

At the academic unit level, the College of Arts & Sciences has no specific policy regarding academic standards and/or sufficient progress towards a graduate degree.

### **B.5. Academic Standards – School of Business Administration**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3467&c=3494>)**

The faculty of the University of Dayton School of Business Administration is committed to a rigorous learning environment which challenges MBA students to achieve high levels of performance. This environment fosters the development of mature business skills and abilities in students.

*<discussion of foundation, core and elective courses has been eliminated for brevity>*

The faculty maintains high expectations of students. In creating and maintaining a climate of challenge, faculty require students to demonstrate significant academic achievement. The faculty communicate these expectations to students early in each semester by setting high, realistic goals, which are reinforced in the classroom. The faculty then carefully evaluates student performance in light of these objectives, and may use the full range of grades to evaluate student performance. A 3.0 G.P.A. or higher must be attained and is required for graduation.

*<descriptions of the various grades have been eliminated for brevity>*

If an "F" grade is received in a foundation, Integrated Core, or Capstone course, the student must repeat the course and achieve a passing grade. Both the original grade and the new grade are computed in the cumulative grade point average.

*<additional descriptions of various grades have been eliminated for brevity>*

#### Academic Probation

A student will be placed on probationary academic status if his or her cumulative grade point average is below 3.0 after completing nine or more semester hours of graduate credit. While on probation, a student may not transfer core, capstone, or elective credit from another university or college and may not receive financial assistance administered by the School of Business Administration.

A student on academic probation whose cumulative grade point average reaches 3.0 or better within the following nine semester hours of graduate credit is returned to good standing. Except under extraordinary circumstances, upon completion of these additional nine semester hours of graduate credit, a student will be dismissed if the cumulative grade point average continually remains below 3.0. A student who has returned to good academic standing, but whose grade point average subsequently is below 3.0 will be again placed on academic probation. A student returning to academic probation will be permitted to complete up to an additional nine semester hours of graduate credit in order to return to good standing, provided the student does not exceed nine semester hours beyond initial degree requirements and is eligible to graduate within the five-year limit for post-foundation credits. Failing this, the student will be dismissed.

*<description of grade appeals has been eliminated for brevity>*



## **B.6. Academic Standing – School of Education & Allied Professions**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3470&c=3473>)**

To qualify for graduation, a student must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 (B) in all work undertaken toward the degree.

## **B.7. School of Engineering**

### **B.7.1 Master's Degree Requirements - Academic Standards**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3474&c=3476>)**

Master's degree students are required to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of a B (3.0) in coursework, with no more than six semester hours of C. Grades received from a thesis are Pass/Fail, and do not count toward the minimum grade point average of 3.0. Students who fail to meet these standards are placed on academic probation or dismissed from the program.

### **B.7.2 Doctoral Degree Requirements - Additional Requirements**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3474&c=3483>)**

The student must satisfactorily complete the courses listed in the doctoral plan of study with a 3.0/4.0 or better cumulative GPA. One grade of "F" or more than one grade of "C" may be grounds for dismissal from the program pending recommendation of the doctoral advisory committee. Grades received from a dissertation are Pass/Fail, and do not count toward the GPA.

Two thirds of the semester hours required beyond the master's degree should be earned at the University of Dayton. Generally, this is 48 semester hours beyond the master's degree.

Candidates must be registered for a minimum of two semester hours every semester during their candidacy including the semester in which the dissertation is defended. Students are expected to complete the dissertation requirements for the doctoral degree within five years after the candidacy examination has been passed.

Any other specific requirements and sequences leading to these degrees are described in the following sections or in departmental and program documents.

## **C. "I", "IP" and "CR" Designations**

### **C.1. Undergraduate Bulletin (Grades & Scholarship – Academic Regulations)**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=31&p=3588&c=3599>)**

**I- Incomplete.** This grade indicates that the student has obtained the instructor's recommendation, subject to the chairperson's approval, to complete some portion of the work of the term that for reasons beyond the student's control was not completed before the end of the term, provided that the rest of the work has been of satisfactory grade. An "I" must be removed within thirty days from the date listed on the grade report, or it will be changed to an "F" or "NC" (option 2) on the student's permanent record. The time limit may be extended under exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the dean, if application for the extension is made within the thirty-day period noted.

**IP - In Progress.** This symbol is used in lieu of a grade for a course which has not terminated at the end of a term or summer session. A grade with corresponding credit and quality points (see grading Options 1 and 2) will be assigned when the course has been completed. Replaced "P" in September 2008.

### **C.2. Graduate Bulletin**

#### **C.2.1 Academic Standards – General Academic Information**

**(<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3444&c=3465>)**

**CR - Passed:** Credit is given, but no corresponding quality points are given. This is used by certain departments when the thesis or special courses are not to affect the 3.0 cumulative quality point average needed to be in good standing.

**I - Incomplete:** To be used when a course has terminated but the student, for an acceptable reason, has not completed the work of the course. *The "I" has 0 quality points per hour and does not affect the cumulative point average. It can be changed to a letter grade if the student has completed the work. Otherwise it will remain on the permanent record indefinitely.*

**IP - In Progress:** For the thesis or for courses which have not terminated at the end of semester. After the course or thesis is completed, the "P" is replaced on the permanent record by an A, B, C, F, or with the corresponding credit and quality point average.

### **C.2.2 Academic Standards – School of Business Administration** (<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3467&c=3494>)

**Incomplete "I" Grade:** A student in good standing in a course may, after the official withdrawal deadline (refer to the Graduate Composite for the specific date), petition to the professor for an "I" grade. This grade is appropriate if conditions beyond the control of the student have led to an inability to complete all the course requirements. The professor may assign this grade if the reasons presented by the student are deemed acceptable, the student has completed a sufficient amount of coursework to justify this grade in anticipation of completion of the work, and the professor and student agree to a time-phased plan of action for completing the coursework.

In the School of Business Administration, the additional coursework must be completed and graded by the end of the following regular (non-summer) term in order for the professor to assign a letter grade. If the coursework is not completed by this date, or the professor has not yet submitted a final course grade, the "I" will remain permanently on the students record.

### **C.2.3 General Requirements – School of Education & Allied Professions** (<http://bulletin.udayton.edu/content.ud?v=30&p=3470&c=3473>)

**"I" and "IP" Grades:** The "I" grade may stand for a period of no more than one year from the end of the term in which the grade was assigned. If the grade is unchanged after one year, it becomes permanent and the course must be retaken.

The "IP" grade may stand for a period of no more than two years from the end of the term in which the grade was assigned. If the grade is unchanged after two years, it becomes permanent and the course must be retaken.