**Procedures for Dismissing a Graduate Student**

The University reserves the right to terminate enrollment in an academic program and dismiss a student whose academic performance is below the standards of the program, regardless of GPA, or whose conduct is deemed improper or prejudicial to the interest of the University community. Dismissed students will not be permitted to register for graduate study, including registering as a non-degree student.

Program terminations (dismissal for a reason other than GPA) are determined by the faculty at the academic program/departmental level and may occur for a number of different reasons, including but not limited to:

- Inability to conduct independent research in a fashion appropriate with the accepted norms of a discipline,
- Inability to function within a team environment to the degree that it negatively affects the learning, practice and/or research of fellow graduate students,
- Behavior that does not meet the professional standards of a discipline (typically clinical, social work or school settings, but also including Motion Picture Arts),
- Failure to meet one or more major milestone requirements,
- Inability to pass the diagnostic/preliminary examination/comprehensive examination (note that university policy limits preliminary examination attempts to two),
- Failure to complete the doctoral degree/make timely progress towards the dissertation, or
- Extensive petitions for candidacy extension.

Graduate program handbooks should provide information about failure to meet specific milestone or behavioral requirements and the appeals process. At a minimum, the following elements must be addressed.

**Step 1:** A graduate student is identified by his/her academic program/department as not making sufficient progress towards the degree, failing to complete the degree within the specified time-period, displaying substandard academic performance, regardless of GPA, or exhibiting unacceptable behavior(s) that are relevant to professional standards.

**Step 2:** The graduate student meets with his/her major professor and/or program director to develop a remediation plan for improvement.

- The department should provide a written remediation plan or written academic “warning” to the student containing specific information about improvement(s) needed to avoid dismissal.
The remediation plan/academic warning should be developed by the department/program for the individual student and be documented accordingly. (For doctoral students, the annual evaluation is one opportunity to document unsatisfactory progress.) NOTE: programs should establish a reasonable timeline for the graduate student to respond to the remediation plan/warning. The length of time for remediation is dependent on the situation and is up to the program to decide.

The academic dean, or appropriate designee, must also be notified of the situation, the deficiencies, and the remediation steps presented to the student.

**Step 3:** If the graduate student fails to resolve/remediate the specified and documented deficiency within a reasonable timeframe, the department may initiate a program termination. If the program chooses to terminate the academic progress of the student, the following steps must be completed **prior** to notifying the student.

- The academic unit must consult with the academic dean (or designated individual) regarding their plan to terminate. The consultation should include the unit’s handbook language, the remediation steps taken, the student’s efforts to date to resolve or address the deficiencies, and the grounds for the program termination.
- At the time of dismissal, the department chair/unit head may petition the academic dean for consideration of special circumstances that they believe justify an alternative resolution.
- The academic dean’s office should inform the Registrar’s Office and the Graduate School of its intent to move forward with program termination. In conjunction, the three offices will tailor a letter specific to the circumstances of the student. The dismissal letter must be sent to the student, but also sent to several offices for processing (see below).
- At this point, programs may offer the student the opportunity to change their degree program level within the same major/plan (i.e., PhD to EdS, PhD to MS, etc.) or change their academic plan to another degree program, but this is at the unit’s discretion.

**Step 4:** A written letter must be sent to the graduate student being dismissed. The dismissal letter should be sent to the student and copied to the dean’s office, the Registrar’s Office (Kim Barber), the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement (Jennifer Buchanan), and the Graduate School (James Beck). The letter should specify the following information:

- The process followed to notify the student of their deficiencies and allow them an opportunity to rectify those deficiencies.
- The termination reasons,
- Benchmarks missed,
- The fact that dismissal from the program constitutes dismissal from the University,
- And an academic hold will be placed on registration to prevent future registration,
- Outlining alternatives a student could request, e.g., graduating with a master’s instead of Ph.D. (assuming coursework and degree requirements are met),
- Timeline to complete specific coursework, if any. For example, the letter needs to clearly articulate to the student that the courses in which they are currently enrolled need to be completed by the dismissal date in order to earn credit for them.
- Notification of the right to appeal and information about how to do so, and
- A deadline for any appeal submittal. *See “General Academic Appeals Process” for more information.