5.6.1 Dismissal for Academic and Professional Reasons: Policy

Summary

This document provides guidelines to be used in the unusual circumstance that a department must consider dismissal of a graduate student for academic reasons.

Rationale

Admission to graduate programs at Stanford is highly selective. It is anticipated that every admitted student will be able to fulfill the requirements for the advanced degree. This document provides guidelines to be used in the unusual circumstance that a department must consider dismissal of a graduate student for academic reasons. These guidelines apply to all advanced degree programs except those in the schools of Law and Business, the STEP Program in the School of Education, and the M.D. program in the School of Medicine, which follow guidelines issued by the respective schools.

Policy

The principal conditions for continued registration of a graduate student are the timely and satisfactory completion of the university, department, and program requirements for the degree, fulfillment of minimum progress requirements, and meeting standards of professional behavior. The guidelines that follow specify procedures for dismissal of graduate students who are not meeting these conditions. In such cases, a departmental committee (hereafter "the committee"), whether the department's committee of the faculty or other committee authorized to act on the department's behalf such as the departmental graduate studies committee, will:

1. where possible and as early as possible, warn the student, in writing, of the situation and deficiency; a detailed explanation of the reason for the warning should be provided;
2. consider extenuating circumstances communicated by the student;
3. decide the question of dismissal by majority vote of the committee (with at least three faculty members participating in the committee's deliberation), and communicate the decision to the student in writing;
4. place a summary of department discussions, votes, and decisions in the student's file;
5. provide students the opportunity to examine their department files, if requested; and
6. provide students with information on their rights to appeal under the Student Academic Grievance Procedures [1] in the Stanford Bulletin.

Authority:
Committee on Graduate Studies (policy)  
Office of the Registrar (Vis HelpSU) (implementation)

Applicability:
Students in all advanced degree programs except those in the schools of Law and Business and the M.D. program in the School of Medicine, which follow guidelines issued by the respective schools.

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1. Guidelines for Addressing Graduate Student Professional Conduct

The success of any academic institution depends on a shared willingness to discharge the ethical obligations that bind students, staff and faculty together in a system of mutually supporting professional roles. Stanford University is no exception. (See Administrative Guide Memo 1.1.1, Code of Conduct). The relevant ethical obligations are clearly defined for faculty in the Faculty Handbook: “In order to maintain the integrity of its teaching and research and to preserve academic freedom, Stanford University demands high standards of professional conduct from its faculty.” (Faculty Handbook 4.3.A). The purpose of this policy is to similarly define the professionalism expectations for graduate students as they prepare to be responsible members of professional communities.

Graduate students are expected to meet standards of professional behavior, including: being present on campus to meet the academic and research expectations of the school or department; communicating in a timely, respectful and professional manner; complying with institutional policies and procedures; and participating appropriately in the program’s community. Graduate students are expected to familiarize themselves with applicable University policy and degree program requirements. Failure to meet these standards may be grounds for dismissal.

Information about degree program requirements is available from departments; students are encouraged to consult with faculty and staff in those programs should they have questions about local requirements.

When the University has professionalism concerns about a graduate student, the University will manage the concern utilizing the Guidelines for Dismissal of Graduate Students for Academic or Professional Reasons (above).

2. Additional Specifics For Degrees With Candidacy

Before Candidacy
The committee, before review for admission to candidacy, may vote to dismiss a student who is not making minimum progress or completing requirements in a timely and satisfactory way or meeting standards of professional behavior. Before considering dismissal, the committee should communicate with the student (which may include a meeting with the student) concerning his or her academic or professional performance and how to correct deficiencies, where such deficiencies are deemed correctable.

**At the Review for Candidacy**

In a review for admission to candidacy, if the committee votes not to recommend the student for admission to candidacy, the vote results in the dismissal of the student from the program. The department chair, or Director of Graduate Studies, or the student's advisor shall communicate the department's decision to the student in writing and orally. The student may submit a written request for reconsideration. The committee shall respond in writing to the request for reconsideration; it may decline to reconsider its decision.

**During Candidacy**

When a student admitted to candidacy is not making minimum progress or not completing university, department, or program requirements in a timely and satisfactory manner, the student's advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, or department chair, and other relevant faculty should meet with the student. A written summary of these discussions shall be sent to the student and the advisor and added to the student's department file. The summary should specify the student's academic or professional deficiencies, the steps necessary to correct them (if deemed correctable), and the period of time that is allowed for their correction (normally one academic quarter). At the end of the warning period, the committee should review the student's progress and notify the student of its proposed actions. If the student has corrected the deficiencies, he or she should be notified in writing that the warning has been lifted.

If the deficiencies are not deemed correctable by the committee (for example, the failure of a required course or examination, or a pattern of unsatisfactory behavior or performance) or if, at the end of the warning period, the student has not in the view of the committee corrected the deficiencies, the committee may initiate proceedings for dismissal. The student shall be notified, in writing, that the case of dismissal will be considered at an impending committee meeting. The student has the right to be invited to attend a portion of the scheduled meeting to present his or her own case; a student may also make this case to the committee in writing.

After full discussion at the committee meeting, the committee, without the student present, shall review the case and vote on the issue of dismissal. The student shall be sent a written summary of the discussion, including the committee's decision and the reasons for it. The student may submit a written request for reconsideration. The committee's response to the request for reconsideration shall be made in writing; it may decline to reconsider its decision.

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**Related Policies**

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- 4.6, *Doctoral Degrees: Candidacy* [6]

**Related Bulletin Sections**

- *Guidelines for Dismissal of Graduate Students for Academic Reasons* [7]
- *Statement of Student Academic Grievance Procedures* [1]

**Related Information and Forms**