Policy on Student Progress

Please note: The following policy, approved October 30, 2014, applies only to the basic and biomedical sciences PhD programs. See a list of links to other programs' policies [1].

Policy on Student Progress: Requirements, Notification, Remediation, and Review

1. Criteria for satisfactory academic progress
The policy regarding satisfactory academic progress in the basic science PhD programs is as follows:

First and Second Year Students
First year students meet with their graduate advisors once a quarter. Student progress is assessed at the end of the year on the basis of course grades and rotation reports, plus additional comments from course directors and advisors about students who might be struggling.

Second year students meet with the graduate advisor at least once during the year. In the second year, the student is evaluated on the basis of his/her progress toward and then successful completion of the qualifying exam. Substandard work or unprofessional conduct in the lab (as reported by the PI) would constitute unsatisfactory progress toward the qualifying exam, as would failing grades in any courses taken in year two.

Third Year Students and Beyond?
Students must form their thesis committee within one quarter (three months) of passing their qualifying exam and meet with the committee within six months of the exam and annually thereafter. Students are expected to complete all degree requirements within five years. The thesis committee should serve as a guide to the student through both easy and difficult phases of their thesis work.

A thesis committee report must be completed and submitted to the graduate program administrator following each meeting; this report should specify whether the student remains in good standing and is making satisfactory progress toward the degree. The thesis committee chair will be responsible for follow-up and submission of the report to the program administrator. Coursework is tracked electronically via the online registrar’s database, and a list of completed coursework will be submitted to the committee chair prior to each meeting.

Tracking of annual thesis committee meetings is done by the program administrator. The date of the initial meeting is recorded, and then the program administrator notifies all second-
year students and above annually thereafter at least one month ahead of time that they must meet with their thesis committee. A copy of this reminder is sent to the thesis committee chair, committee members, and thesis mentor. Delinquent meetings or committee reports are referred to the graduate program’s executive committee.

Unsatisfactory progress indicators include:
- Falling below a 3.0 GPA
- Failing grades in any course
- Failure to find a lab after four rotations
- Unsatisfactory work in the lab (rotation or thesis, as reported by the PI)
- Unprofessional conduct in the lab (rotation or thesis, as reported by the PI)
- Failing the qualifying exam the first time
- Disciplinary problems and other conduct and professionalism infractions that fall within the scope of UCSF’s Code of Conduct.

2. Process by which failing students will be notified and remediated

Students whose progress is unsatisfactory (according to one or more of the criteria listed above) will be notified and will meet with the advisor and the program director to develop an individualized remediation plan to address the deficiencies. The meeting results in a memorandum of understanding that clearly outlines specific steps and associated deadlines that the student must fulfill in order to receive a satisfactory report. The report is then signed by the following parties: the student, the thesis advisor (or graduate advisor if no thesis lab has been chosen), and the program director. At this point, the report is filed in the student’s academic file within the program, and the Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs is notified.

Should the student be unable to fulfill the expectations according to the timeline outlined in the letter, the student will be subject to dismissal from the program. Depending on the student’s standing in the program, he or she may be allowed to leave with a terminal master’s degree. The process for in-depth review of a student’s eligibility for dismissal will follow the UCSF Divisional Procedure for Student Grievance in Academic Affairs, section 4.0 [2], and will be conducted by the following in-depth committees for each program.

3. Composition of the in-depth review committee, should one be necessary

Bioengineering: Executive committee
BMI: Executive committee
Biophysics: Executive committee
BMS: Executive committee
CCB: Executive committee
DSCB: Executive committee
Neuroscience: Executive committee
OCS: Steering committee
PSPG: Executive committee
Tetrad: Graduate curriculum committee

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