

# Criteria for Satisfactory Progress for Graduate Students in the Department of Statistics

Revised May 2017

The progress of every graduate student in the Department of Statistics will be reviewed semiannually. The reviews will take place before the start of the Spring Semester and during the Summer. The review will be conducted by a committee or person to be designated by the Department Chair.

In addition to the Departmental Criteria, the student must satisfy all rules and regulations of the Graduate School. It is the student's responsibility to understand the Graduate School rules. Students should take particular cognizance of the residence requirements as described in the Graduate School Bulletin.

As a result of each review the student will be deemed either to be making Satisfactory Progress or not. The student will be notified of the results of the review only if the Criteria are not satisfied. The consequences of failing to satisfy the Criteria are given below; the immediate consequence is to make the student ineligible for Departmental support as a TA, RA or PA.

In order to be deemed to be making Satisfactory Progress, graduate students must satisfy minimum requirements in each of the following areas:

- Grade Point Average
- Approved Credits
- Time Limits for core courses
- Time limit for first mentoring committee meeting [PhD]
- Ethics
- Handling of Incompletes

There are exceptions to the Criteria for part-time students; see below. Throughout this document, semester means Fall or Spring; Summer session is excluded (although Summer grades are used to compute grade point averages). To 'Pass' a course means to receive a grade of C or better.

## 1. Grade Point Average

At the end of each semester the Department will compute the cumulative grade point average (GPA) of each student in the program, with two exceptions. The GPA will not be computed at the end of the first semester of study, nor will it be computed in semesters during or after the passing of the preliminary exam. 'Cumulative' means the GPA in all courses numbered 301 or above in any department since entering the program. The cumulative GPA must equal or exceed 3.00 in order to satisfy this Criteria. If the cumulative GPA is below 3.00, then the student has failed to satisfy the Criteria.

## 2. Approved Credits

Prior to the semester in which the Preliminary Exam is passed, each semester the student must pass at least six credits approved by the academic advisor and in every two consecutive semesters pass at least fifteen credits approved by the academic advisor. Statistics courses listed under “Introductory Courses” and “Mathematical Foundations” on the Statistics Department course listing webpage ([www.stat.wisc.edu/course-listing](http://www.stat.wisc.edu/course-listing)) cannot be used to fulfill the required minimum number of credits. The Department requires no minimum number of credits during the semester in which the Preliminary Exam is passed and subsequent semesters; however, the student should be aware of any Graduate School rules.

The credit limit may be relaxed, at the discretion of the Department, if it is believed a lower requirement is more appropriate for a student’s academic goals.

## 3. Time Limits for core courses

The following criteria reflect the belief that the M.S. program should be a two-year program for most students. Note exceptions below for students who earn a M.S. from the Department and then decide to pursue the Ph.D. degree.

Time limits for students who begin graduate study in the Department in the Fall Semester:

1. Pass Statistics 709-710 within four semesters.
2. Pass the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam within six semesters.

Time limits for students who begin graduate study in the Department in the Spring Semester:

1. Pass Statistics 709 within four semesters and pass Statistics 710 within five semesters.
2. Pass the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam within six semesters of the first Fall Semester of enrollment; that is, the first Spring Semester is not included in the count for students who start their program in the Spring.

(Note: Students in the M.S. program usually do not enroll in 709 or 710. Thus, a typical consequence of the above time limits is that M.S. students who have not graduated after four semesters will subsequently fail to satisfy the Criteria.)

Students in the M.S. program who successfully complete the Department’s M.S. exam within four semesters and who have sufficient mathematical background to enroll in Statistics 709 shall be granted a two-semester extension to the time limits for passing 709, 710, and the Ph.D. Qualifying exam.

Students who interrupt their graduate studies with an approved leave of absence will have the above time limits modified in a reasonable manner to be determined by the Department.

#### **4. Time limit for first mentoring committee meeting**

Ph.D. students are required to select a mentoring committee of 3 or more faculty members and meet with this committee within a year after passing the qualifying examination. A Ph.D. dissertation advisor need not be selected by the time of this first meeting. The student will be expected to prepare a short oral report of his/her research activities during the past year(s) and of anticipated directions for future research. Committee members will be expected to provide feedback and direction. Students may then meet regularly with their mentoring committee, which can change membership over time. The preliminary examination may serve as the first mentoring committee meeting if taken within a year after passing the qualifying examination.

#### **5. Ethics**

The department of Statistics expects graduate students to demonstrate intellectual honesty, a responsible attitude towards colleagues and clients, and a strong sense of personal integrity. Ethical statistical practice is essential to our profession and failure to act ethically undermines our profession. Training in research ethics is required for students on some federally funded grants. Unethical behaviors include, but are not limited to, academic misconduct in a class or assignment, academic misconduct in an examination, and violation of data confidentiality. Unethical behavior constitutes failure to meet Criteria and will result in sanctions at the university level and at the departmental level. See <http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html> for academic misconduct policies and procedures at the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

#### **6. Incompletes**

Any student who received an Incomplete in a course must provide the Department with a brief written explanation of the circumstances that led to the Incomplete, including a description of the work that must be completed. For an Incomplete received during Summer or Fall, the explanation must be received before Monday of the week before the next Spring semester classes start. For an Incomplete during Spring, the explanation must be received before June 15 of the same year.

If the explanation either arrives late or is deemed unacceptable by the Department, then the student will be deemed not to be making Satisfactory Progress.

If the explanation is accepted, the student will have one semester to remove the Incomplete; otherwise in the next review the student will fail to satisfy the Criteria. For example, if a student receives an Incomplete in Fall, he/she has until the end of the Spring Semester to complete the work, receive a

grade, and report the grade to the Statistics Department. Thus, the student should complete the work in time for the instructor in the course to finish grading by the end of the appropriate semester.

In some cases, several students in a class will be given an Incomplete because the instructor is not able to complete course grading on time. In such cases, the instructor may provide the Department with one letter to cover all students affected. In these cases, the student need not write a letter to the Department.

## **7. Consequences of Failure to Meet Criteria**

A student who fails to satisfy the Criteria will lose any guarantee of support beginning with the following semester (Fall for the summer review, Spring for the pre-Spring review). Three consecutive reviews in which a student fails to meet the Criteria for Satisfactory Progress will result in the Department immediately notifying the student and the Graduate School that the student is not longer eligible to be student in the Department. The student may petition to remain in the Department after three consecutive failures to meet the Criteria.

A student who has failed to satisfy the Criteria for fewer than three consecutive reviews is eligible to take courses, finish degree requirements and receive a degree. Failure to satisfy the Criteria will not appear on the student's transcript.

## **8. Part-time Students**

A student who enters the Department as a part-time student will meet with an advisor to create individualized Criteria to be approved by the Department. It is anticipated that the individualized Criteria will follow the above guidelines on Grade Point Average and Incompletes, but the requirements on the number of approved credits and time limits will be relaxed.

A student with full-time status who wants to switch to part-time status must petition the Department for permission; permission will not be granted if it appears that a primary reason for the request is to avoid the consequences of failing to satisfy the Criteria.

## **9. Appeals and the Student's Responsibilities**

The student may appeal in writing to the Department Chair any decision on Satisfactory Progress. The results of the review will stand, pending the outcome of the appeal. Thus, it is recommended that a student anticipate potential problems and makes an appeal early.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure he/she receives the results of the Department's review. In particular, the student must check his/her departmental mailbox in a timely manner or leave a forwarding address with the staff member in charge of mail. Ignorance of the result of the review is not

grounds for an appeal. (We expect students will know they have failed to meet the Criteria before the Department does.) Also, note the student's responsibility regarding Incompletes as explained earlier.

## **Appendix**

### **Examples of Academic misconduct**

The list below is not exhaustive and focuses on examples most relevant to students taking courses. Individual instructors may have different expectations. Students are responsible for seeking out information when unsure of what is expected.

Copying or attempting to copy someone else's work, communicating answers during an exam, or using concealed information.

For a take-home exam, communicating about the exam with anyone else other than the instructor, without the instructor's consent. Using any resource not allowed by the instructor (internet, books other than those allowed, other students or friends) is cheating.

Example of collaboration on homework: 3 students meet to work on their 609 assignment.

The right way: They talk about the homework, write down some ideas on the board. Then they separate and individually write up their solutions.

The wrong way: There are 3 problems on the assignment. Student A is in charge of problem 1; Student B is in charge of problem 2; and Student C is in charge of problem 3. Student A presents her solution to problem 1 and students B, C copy down this solution. Repeat with Student B on problem 2, etc. This is cheating.

Students are encouraged to cite who they worked with on what problems, just like authors acknowledge colleagues in research publications. If someone else's code was used to do your homework, or the proof to a key step from a book or a paper, these references should be cited. Altering university documents is academic misconduct, such as altering a previously graded exam for the purpose of obtaining a grade change, or altering a student's progress form after it was signed by the student's advisor.

### **Guidelines for the first mentoring committee meeting**

#### **Before the meeting:**

Start the process as soon as you pass the qualifying exam. Build in time to identify a research area of interest and potential committee members, including a dissertation advisor ideally. Ask potential committee members to serve on your committee. Tell them about your research interests at this time, then schedule the meeting. Two months in advance is not too early to schedule the meeting, especially in the summer.

**At the meeting:** get prepared to give an oral report and discuss the following topics:

Past research activities, such as background readings on the anticipated research area and early preliminary results.

Description of anticipated directions for future research.

Elective courses already taken and planned coursework, in relation to the anticipated dissertation area.

**After the meeting:**

Follow the directions provided by the mentoring committee. Do not hesitate to seek more guidance from committee members, either individually or through regular committee meetings.