Criteria for satisfactory progress for graduate students in the Department of Statistics

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The progress of every graduate student in the Statistics PhD program and in the Statistics MS program (options: Statistics, Biostatistics, Applied Statistics) is reviewed semiannually. The reviews take place before the start of the Spring Semester and during the Summer. The review is conducted by the graduate program coordinator or by a person to be designated by the Department Chair.
In addition to the Departmental Criteria, the student must satisfy the Graduate School regulations. It is the student's responsibility to understand the Graduate School rules, including policy UW-1218 about minimum standards for satisfactory progress. Students should take particular cognizance of the residence requirements UW-1246 and other graduate school policies, as described in the Graduate School website and in the Guide.
As a result of each review, the student is deemed either to be making Satisfactory Progress or not. The student is 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 funding guarantee from the Department, with no guaranteed Departmental support as a TA, RA or PA.
Determination of ineligibility for funding guarantee due to failing the Criteria may not be changed retroactively, due to the need for advanced planning for TA, RA or PA hiring.
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
- Examinations and time limits
- Annual assessment on progress [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 computes the cumulative grade point average (GPA) of each student in the program, with two exceptions. The GPA is not computed at the end of the first semester of study, nor 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 the Criteria. If the cumulative GPA is below 3.00, then the student fails to satisfy the Criteria.

2. Approved credits

Before becoming a dissertator, the student must pass at least six advisor-approved credits each semester and at least 15 advisor-approved credits in any academic year (Fall and Spring). To ensure steady progress towards fulfilling degree requirements, courses used to fulfill the minimum number of credits should be taken from the lists of “core” and “methods” courses as listed in the Guide as a priority.
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. Examinations and time limits

PhD students must pass the qualifying examination, which may be attempted a maximum of two times; an oral preliminary examination; and a dissertation defense. MS students in the Statistics and Biostatistics options must pass the MS examination, which can be attempted at most twice. Failure to pass either exam within the time limits detailed in the Guide means failure to meet the Criteria.

The MS program should be a two-year program for most students. Students who earn an MS from the Department and then decide to pursue the PhD degree follow the time limits for that program. See Policy UW-1221 for Graduate School rules on time limits to use coursework credits towards degree requirements.

4. Annual assessment on progress for PhD students

The Graduate School requires that PhD students receive annual written assessments on their progress to degree, see UW-1250. We believe that such feedback enhances graduate student success by fostering transparency, goal-setting, and effective communication. All PhD students are required to fill out a Qualtrics survey, sent via email each spring, in which they write a self-evaluation. This student self-evaluation is forwarded to the student’s advisor. For students who have not yet passed the qualifying examination and started their dissertation research, their advisor is their “academic”

advisor; otherwise it is their “research” advisor with whom they conduct research. The student advisor then fills out a Qualtrics survey in which they write an assessment about the student’s progress to degree. The advisor’s assessment is sent to the student. After receiving this written feedback, the student and their advisor should meet to discuss class selection, research progress and future plans. The student should also meet with their advisor in the Fall to discuss course selection.

Students who fail to complete the survey with their self-evaluation for the required annual assessment are deemed to fail to satisfy the Criteria and not to be making satisfactory progress toward the degree, unless an exception is granted by the Director of Graduate Studies.

After passing the qualifying exam, PhD students should select a mentoring committee of 2-4 faculty members, including at least one who is a tenured or tenure-track professor in the Department of Statistics. A research advisor need not be selected by the time of their first mentoring committee meeting, and membership of the committee may change over time.
If the student has not yet completed all course requirements, the student and committee should determine a plan of which courses to take and when, prior to each Fall semester. This plan may be modified. The student and committee are encouraged to meet annually, for the student to receive feedback on their research, and to discuss the timing of their preliminary examination and dissertation defense.

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.

6. Incompletes

Any student who received an Incomplete in a course must provide the graduate program coordinator 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 is deemed not to be making Satisfactory Progress.
If the explanation is accepted, the student has 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 are 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 is ineligible for funding guarantee from the Department. They are not guaranteed support as a TA, PA or RA beginning with the semester following a review determining their failure to meet the Criteria (Fall for the summer review, Spring for the pre-Spring review), and until a semester following a review determining that they satisfy the Criteria. Failure to meet the Criteria is determined at the end of each semester (Fall and Spring). This determination may not be modified retroactively, because TA hiring needs advanced planning.

A PhD student who fails the qualifying examination for the second time is dismissed from the PhD program. Otherwise, a student who fails 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.
Three consecutive reviews in which a student fails to meet the Criteria for Satisfactory Progress results in the Department immediately notifying the student and the Graduate School that the student is no longer eligible to be a student in the Department. The student may petition to remain in the Department after three consecutive failures to meet the Criteria. For example, a student who is simultaneously pursuing two Master's degrees may reasonably be allowed four years to complete the degrees.

If a PhD student is dismissed from the PhD program, then their funding guarantee (if any) is cancelled immediately. If a PhD student dismissed from the PhD program is

admitted to pursue an MS degree in the Department, then any funding guarantee from their former PhD admission letter does not apply to their admission in an MS degree program.

9. Part-time students

A student who enters the Department as a part-time student should meet with an advisor to create individualized Criteria to be approved by the Department. It is anticipated that the individualized Criteria follow the above requirements, except that the requirements on the number of approved credits and time limits may l 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.

10. 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 anticipates potential problems and if seeking an appeal promptly does so. In case an appeal results in changing a review to 'meeting the Criteria' retroactively, ineligibility for funding guarantee may not be changed retroactively if the appeal occurs after TA and PA offers are sent for the upcoming semester (which typically occurs in mid-November for spring TA hiring, and mid-July for fall TA hiring, although the exact timing varies from year to year).
It is the student's responsibility to make sure they receive the results of the Department's review. In particular, the student must check their wisc.edu email 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. Also, note the student's responsibility regarding Incompletes as explained earlier.

11. 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 about expectations.

Examples of academic misconduct include copying or attempting to copy someone else's work, communicating answers during an exam, or using concealed information. For a take-home exam, examples include communicating about the exam with anyone else other than the instructor, without the instructor's consent. It is a violation to use any

resource not allowed by the instructor (e.g., internet, generative AI, books other than those allowed, other students or friends).

Here is an example involving homework assignments. Suppose three students meet to work on their STAT 609 assignments. Acceptable behavior: The students talk about the homework, write down some ideas on the board, and then separate to individually write up their solutions. Misconduct behavior: 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 their solution of problem 1 while Student B and Student C copy down the solution as if it were their own. This is cheating.

Students are encouraged to cite people they worked with on specific problems, just like authors acknowledge colleagues in research publications. If someone else's code was used to do one’s homework, or the proof to a key step was taken from a book or a paper, these references should be cited.

Altering university documents is academic misconduct. Examples include altering a previously graded exam for the purpose of obtaining a grade change.