Academic Standards Policy — Proposed Revisions
Faculty Senate Grading Committee
November 2013

These amendments are again presented to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee for action to close a lacuna. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee approved this proposal at its 15 September 2010 meeting and recommended its adoption by the Faculty Senate. Apparently neither that action nor promulgation by the President was completed.

The Faculty Senate Grading Committee recommends amendment of UB’s Academic Standards Policy for all undergraduate programs. The amendments provide review of academic standing at the close of each fall and spring semester, use of academic warning, clarification of the criteria for academic probation, and modification of the criteria for academic dismissal. The revisions make these standards more comprehensible to students and advisors and thus more effective in their use and application. The revisions were proposed and recommended by the then Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and staff. Revisions addressing Winter Sessions are now included.

The proposed amended Academic Standards Policy with additions underlined and deletions struck through:

Academic Standards Policy – Undergraduate Programs

To maintain academic standards and determine eligibility for continued enrollment, financial aid, and participation in university activities, the University at Buffalo regularly reviews the academic records of all undergraduate students. This review addresses the quality of the student’s studies as measured by the student’s course grades.

Academic review is conducted at the end of each fall and spring semester.

Academic Good Standing

A student is in academic good standing if the student’s cumulative UB grade point average (GPA) is 2.0 or greater and one of the student's most recent two consecutive semester GPAs GPA at UB is 2.0 or greater.

A student in academic good standing is eligible for all university activities.

Academic Warning

Many students go through an adjustment period when beginning their baccalaureate studies at the university. Therefore, any student — freshman or transfer — whose first-semester GPA is less than 2.0 will be placed on academic warning.

Additionally, any student will be placed on academic warning if the student’s cumulative UB GPA is 2.0 or greater but the student’s most recent semester GPA is less than 2.0.

Although a student on academic warning will be considered in good standing for purposes of participation in university activities, he/she may be subject to an advisement checkstop — a mandatory discussion with an academic advisor to help build an effective academic strategy — before the student may complete any further registration activity.

Academic warning will not be noted on a student’s official transcript, but will be part of the student’s record.
Academic Probation

A student is on academic probation and not in academic good standing if his/her cumulative UB GPA is
2.0 or greater but his/her most recent two consecutive semester GPAs are less than 2.0.

A student is on academic probation and not in academic good standing if his/her cumulative UB GPA is
less than 2.0 and quality point deficit is less than 20 after two or more semesters of study at UB.

A student who is already on continued academic probation and persists in having a cumulative UB GPA
of less than 2.0 for the next consecutive semester and a quality point deficit of 20 or greater (after the
completion of that semester) will be considered to be on continued academic probation.

A student who is already on continued academic probation and persists in having a cumulative UB GPA
of less than 2.0 for the next consecutive semester and a quality point deficit of greater than 20 points
(after the completion of that semester), but the most recent semester UB GPA is 2.0 or greater will
be considered to be on continued academic probation.

Students may request, through their academic advisor, to have their UB winter session or summer session
grades evaluated for purposes of reconsideration of their academic probationary or dismissal status.

Students on academic probation are not eligible to participate in university activities. In addition, students
on academic probation may be subject to an advisement checkstop — a mandatory discussion with an
academic advisor to help build an effective academic strategy before the student may complete any
further registration activity.

Academic probation will not be noted on a student’s official transcript, but will be part of the student’s
record.

Academic Dismissal

A student enrolled at UB for two or more semesters who has a cumulative UB GPA less than 0.5 or 2.0 and
a quality point deficit of 20 or greater points will be dismissed from the university regardless of his/her
most recent semester GPA.

A student on continued academic probation who, at the completion of the most recent semester has a
cumulative UB GPA of less than 2.0, a grade point deficit greater than 20 points, and a GPA for the most
recent semester less than 2.0 will be dismissed from the university.

Students are reviewed for academic dismissal at the end of each academic year, but any student —
freshman or transfer — who begins study at UB in the spring semester may be reviewed at the end of the
following fall semester.

Each dismissed student will receive official notification via U.S. mail and his/her UB email account, and all
future academic-year registrations will be removed and/or blocked. The student will not be allowed to
reapply to UB and register for a period of at least one year.

Dismissed students may register in the winter session or summer session immediately following their
initial dismissal (e.g., students dismissed in May 20xx may enroll in Summer Session 20xx courses;
students dismissed in December 20xx may enroll in Winter Session 20xx+1 courses). In subsequent
semesters, a dismissed student may not register as a non-matriculated student without prior review, in
the fall or spring semester. A dismissed student may attend UB summer sessions.

A dismissed student may appeal the dismissal in writing to the Senior Provostal Officer for Vice Provost of
Undergraduate Education during a period of time specified in the dismissal letter. Consultation with an
academic advisor is required as part of the dismissal appeal process. If the appeal is granted, notice of
that will include the terms and conditions of continued study.
Comments and Observations

A: Bases for revising the Academic Standards Policy:

The current policy is complicated and can be confusing to students and advisors. The policy and process should be simplified as much as possible.

Students should receive earlier warnings of poor performance, and continued poor performance should result in consequences more swiftly than under the current policy. Rather than waiting until students have performed poorly for long periods of time, earlier and more effective warnings may provide students with an impetus to alter their behavior as early as possible, while also removing incapable students before they find themselves unable to recover from large academic deficits, having incurred substantial financial obligations and invested their own resources in a futile situation. Students who are able to succeed should be encouraged to recover earlier in their academic careers. Students who are unable to succeed in a given academic environment should be academically dismissed more swiftly so they can seek success in an environment more appropriate for them.

B. Considerations supporting proposed changes to the Academic Standards Policy

1. Modify definitions of Academic Good Standing and Academic Warning:
   1.1. The current language is confusing. Current policy keeps a student with a 2.0 or higher cumulative average in unqualified good standing until the student has 2 consecutive semester gpa’s below 2.0.
   1.2. Current policy allows a student to remain in unqualified good standing even if the student has multiple semester gpa’s below 2.0, so long as these semesters are not consecutive.
   1.3. The revision places students on Academic Warning when they have a semester gpa less than 2.0. This gives students appropriate notice of unsatisfactory performance without the penalties consequent upon academic probation, e.g., ineligibility for extracurricular activities.

2. Remove reference to continued probation:
   2.1. The current language is confusing.
   2.2. Continued probation is neither useful nor necessary.
   2.3. Students should stay on probation until their Quality Point Deficit [qpd] is 20 or greater, at which point they should be dismissed.
   2.4. By removing continued probation from the dismissal equation, all students with a qpd of 20 or more are to be dismissed. This prevents the current possibility of a student being on probation with a qpd exceeding 20 and remaining at UB until the student has been on continued probation and has an extremely high qpd from which they cannot recover.

3. Changing dismissal criteria for first year students:
   3.1. Having different dismissal criteria for different students is confusing. Setting the same dismissal criteria of a cumulative gpa below 2.0 and 20 or greater qpd is clear and understandable.
   3.2. The current policy only dismisses first-year students with a gpa below 0.5. Yet if a student completes 30 credits in his or her first two semesters with a gpa of 0.5, the student would have a qpd of 45. Allowing students with a qpd of 21-45 to continue despite an extremely high qpd from which they cannot recover is no service to the students.
   3.3. This change is correlative to and dependent upon the changes in probation criteria discussed in 2. supra.
4. Removing the latest semester GPA from consideration for dismissal:
   This change eliminates an inappropriate opportunity for students to avoid dismissal. As the policy currently stands, a student could have less than a 2.0 cumulative GPA, but as long as the student gets a fall or spring GPA above 2.0, the student will not be dismissed. A student may achieve a spring GPA above 2.0 in a variety of ways that do not serve as indicators of the student’s ability to complete a baccalaureate program successfully, e.g., taking all classes S/U or P/F. These considerations are not altered by the move to academic review at the end of fall as well as spring semesters.

5. Academic Review conducted at the end of each semester
   5.1 The current language does not support the practice of reviewing students who were dismissed and placed on dismissal deferral for the current semester. The language needs to be changed to enable this. The review frequency statement is moved from the dismissal section to the beginning of the Policy since it applies to all of Academic Review, not just dismissal.
   5.2 Dismissed students should be able to take winter or summer classes in the winter or summer session immediately following their dismissal, but should be reviewed prior to registration in subsequent winter or summer sessions.
   5.3 UB now has an Undergraduate Non-Matriculating Students Policy which requires a minimum 2.0 GPA to continue to enroll during any semester. Given this requirement, dismissed students should not be allowed to take courses as non-matriculating students during any semester without applying for reentry.
   5.4 Summer or winter session grades may be a useful component of the student appeal process. Students who have been dismissed in the most recent semester should be able to attempt winter or summer coursework after conferring with an academic advisor.

6. Required consultation with an advisor for dismissal appeal:
   This statement is reflective of current practice, in which all dismissal appeals must be signed by an academic advisor.

7. Notation on the student record:
   7.1 Currently, academic probation and warning are not noted in the student’s record in our student information system or in the degree audit system. This compromises the services students receive as Academic Advisors need to look at a separate database to determine if students are on probation. Some student service providers do not presently have access to this database.
   7.2 To improve services for students on academic warning or probation, UB should record all academic standing categories in the central student system. To avoid unnecessary negative consequences for students on warning or probation, only dismissal should show on the transcript.

C. Alignment of Academic Standards Policy and Financial Aid eligibility:

1. Federal and State financial aid eligibility criteria and requirements differ. Aligning UB’s academic standards with one but not the other would be confusing. Aligning with both is impossible.
   1.1. The Academic Standards Policy incorporates quality point deficit, a very useful measure of academic success or difficulty, but not one used in financial aid standards.
   1.2. The problems students have are not merely a result of differing academic standards and financial aids policies. Students need to be informed and advised more effectively than they are now; these improved academic standards will assist. Though UB’s Academic Standards Policy is included in the Undergraduate Catalogue, students often do not understand financial aid regulations or categories; e.g., fail to differentiate financial aid probation from academic probation. Improved communication to and understanding by students and advisors of the Federal and State financial aid programs criteria and requirements are the means to address these issues successfully.
D. Additional Information

These revisions of the Academic Standards Policy will enable UB to gain more utility from the new Student Information Systems. The programs and applications of the SIS in process of installation can provide, with no modifications required, these data to determine academic standing:
1. GPA – cumulative, by semester, and by academic year
2. Units passed – cumulative, by semester
3. Units attempted – cumulative, by semester; non-GPA units can be excluded
4. Prior academic standing, not including semesters for which the student has Ws [withdrawn from all courses]

The new SIS will thus support review of academic status at the close of each semester, identification of students who should receive academic warning, probation or dismissal, and provide such information to advisors and students as they assess progress and make plans.

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