POLICIES ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS, WARNINGS, DISMISSELS, APPEALS, CREDITS AND REGISTRATION: Approved by the Executive Council, February 27, 2020

(1) Admissions

Admissions criteria should be set with the reasonable expectation that students will have a high probability of success. Programs may be asked to provide evidence and rationale to support criteria chosen, where evidence may include factors such as completion rates; academic performance; post-graduation outcomes.

(2) Academic requirements

All programs must inform applicants and current students in writing about requirements, including courses, research, qualifying exams, internships, or other activities, and the expected timetable for meeting the requirements. Admitted students and enrolled students must be informed about the levels of performance needed to remain in good academic progress within the program. It is the responsibility of programs to develop a process for informing students and confirming that students have the information. SGS will periodically review academic requirements, standards, timetables and procedures for communicating information to the students.

(3) Timetables

Timetables for meeting requirements must be realistic and take into consideration factors such as the academic goals of the program, available resources (such as staffing) as well as expected student workload per semester. SGS has an established policy and process for requiring that doctoral students request an Extension of Time after seven years of study. There is no comparable time limit set by SGS for students enrolled in terminal master’s program. Master’s programs that wish to adopt time limits must develop specific justifications based on academic considerations, and include processes that allow students to request extensions of time. Master’s programs may not set upper or lower limits on the number of credits taken per semester without specific academic justification that applies to all students equally within the program. The timetables and limits on credits per semester must be available for review by SGS.

Master’s students: Master’s students may request alternative timetables. Requests should explain how the alternative timetables will allow the student to meet the academic goals established by the program, and allow steady progress toward the degree. Alternative timetables may include taking more than the recommended number of credits per semester in order to complete the degree earlier (credits above 18 require permission from the program director); or taking fewer than the recommended number of credits per semester. The program may elect not to grant either of these requests on the grounds of justifiable academic considerations or resource availability. If needed the School of Graduate Studies dean may be consulted by programs or by students as part of attempts to agree on suitable timetables. Unresolved disagreements may be grounds for SGS appeal (see #9 below). Students and programs are responsible for determining and addressing the effect of alternative timetables on non-academic issues, including visa status or eligibility for financial support.

Doctoral students: Alternative timetables for selected doctoral students may be instituted prior to completion of the qualifying exam. Alternative timetables for doctoral students (a) may involve taking a fewer credits than required for full-time status, with appropriate justification; (b) must be approved by the program director; (c) do not exempt doctoral students from the SGS policy that requires an Extension of Time to be approved after 7 years of study, and (d) must be accompanied by a year-by-year plan for completion of the degree, with the plan updated annually. Students and programs are responsible for determining and addressing the effect of alternative timetables on non-academic issues, including visa status or eligibility for financial support.
Programs must report annually to the School of Graduate Studies the name and progress of any doctoral students who are following program-approved alternative timetables.

(4) Registration for “Matriculation Continued”

Under some circumstances graduate students (master’s or doctoral) may register for “matriculation continued”. Matriculation continued is a zero-credit offering that allows students to remain enrolled while not registered for either courses or research credits. Matriculation continued is not available to doctoral students who have completed the qualifying exam (admission to candidacy). A maximum of two semesters of matriculation continued is allowed. International students on visas are responsible for verifying the effect of registration for matriculation continued on their visa status.

(5) Academic progress review and academic standards

Programs must conduct periodic reviews of academic performance (grades) no less frequently than once per semester. Academic review includes written warnings to any student who may not be in good academic progress.

Satisfactory academic progress will require that students who have attempted 12 or fewer credits have earned a GPA of at least 2.5; those who have attempted 13 or more credits must have earned a GPA of at least 3.0. No more than 9 credits of coursework bearing grades of C or C+ may be used to meet degree requirements (exceptions will be considered for courses taken in the medical and dental schools).

More than one grade of “U” in courses that are graded S/U also constitutes a failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress.

Programs may establish stricter academic standards than those above.

(6) Repetition of courses

Matriculated and non-matriculated students are only allowed to repeat up to three courses, each no more than once, during their enrollment. Courses repeated while in a non-matriculated status will count towards the repetition regulation for those students who progress to matriculated student status. Repetition of any course results in both the original grade and the new grade appearing on the transcript; however, with the addition of an E prefix, the original grade is not calculated into the student’s cumulative grade point average. Students repeating a course, including courses from which they withdrew, must re-register for the course and are subject to paying tuition for that course.

(7) Academic warnings

Written warnings must be issued by the program each semester to any student who is not maintaining satisfactory academic progress according to the standards established by SGS (#5) and by the program. Such warnings must be accompanied by recommended steps to improve performance. These steps include procedures established by the program, such as opportunities for consultation with faculty or program staff for academic help and support. In addition students must be informed of resources available in the university [by CAPS, ODS, Learning Resource Centers and ELL]. Students must be informed about the processes for appealing academic decisions established by the program as required under the bylaws of the School of Graduate Studies and the process for appealing academic decisions to the School of Graduate Studies (see #9 below, should the program appeal not be resolved in the student’s favor.)
Notice of failure to maintain good academic progress for two semesters may be accompanied by a formal notification in writing that processes for dismissal may be undertaken.

Programs must maintain comprehensive records of the academic performance of students and be prepared to provide SGS with information about any student who has received an academic warning, including efforts taken by the program and the student to improve performance, and the results of such efforts.

(8) Recommendations for dismissal

Programs may initiate processes to dismiss a student following the second semester of written warnings of failure to maintain good academic progress, where the second consecutive warning is accompanied by a formal notification that a process for dismissal is being initiated. Recommendations for dismissal must be approved by the Program Director in consultation with relevant faculty, such as the student’s major advisor, thesis committee members or committees established within the programs to carry out academic reviews and set academic standards.

Students must be informed in writing that processes for dismissal are being undertaken by the program. Students must also be informed of availability of counseling and other university services, including CAPS, ODS, Learning Resources Centers and ELL; the process for appealing academic decisions to the program as required under the bylaws of the School of Graduate Studies; and the process for appealing academic decisions to the School of Graduate Studies (see #9), should the program appeal not be resolved in the student’s favor.

Should the appeals process within the program not rule in the students favor, a recommendation for dismissal may be sent to the SGS Dean who may delegate the process of initial review to one or more senior deans within SGS. Initial review may result in (a) a delay in dismissal accompanied by specific recommendations to the program for improving the academic performance of the student; (b) recommendation that the student file a formal appeal with the School of Graduate Studies (see #9 below), or (c) decisions to process the dismissal of the student from the School of Graduate Studies.

Programs may not adopt alternative procedures as part of any attempt to circumvent the above policies, such as registration blocks. Programs must make students aware of their right to withdraw at any time, including after exhaustion of all appeals, but programs must not encourage withdrawal in lieu of the processes outlined above, including full informing students of their rights, and informing students of available university or program resources to improve academic performance.

(9) School of Graduate Studies Appeals

In the case of a recommendation to dismiss a student, or any other academic disagreement that cannot be resolved within the appeals process established by the program, students may appeal to the School of Graduate Studies. Appeals will be sent to the SGS Dean who may delegate a process of initial review to one or more senior academic deans within SGS. If initial review is not undertaken or fails to resolve the dispute, the student may file a formal appeal with SGS, which will be considered by the SGS Appeals committee according to the procedures specified in the SGS bylaws. Appeals must be filed no later than one semester following the occurrence of the issue that prompted the appeal. In the case of an unsuccessful appeal of a dismissal, students must be informed of their right to voluntarily withdraw.

(10) Failure to maintain continuous registration
All students are expected to maintain continuous registration while enrolled in the School of Graduate Studies. Students who fail to maintain continuous registration are at risk of formal dismissal, where dismissal of such students may be initiated by the program or by the School of Graduate Studies, and must be approved by the School of Graduate Studies.

Doctoral students who have been admitted to candidacy and who do not maintain continuous registration may apply for “restoration of active status”. This application must be approved by the program director and accompanied by a fee of one credit in-state tuition for a maximum of 5 semesters (payable to SGS).

All students who have not maintained continuous registration (including doctoral students who have been admitted to candidacy) must apply for readmission to the School of Graduate Studies before filing for degrees.

(11) Credits

A total of 72 credits are required for the doctoral degree, of which 24 must be research credits. A minimum of 30 credits are required for the master’s degree, of which 6 (for thesis based master’s) must be research credits.