
Dealing with Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Guidelines

Academic Policy

1 Purpose

The [Academic Progress Statute](#) enables Associate Deans to restrict the enrolment of students who are not making satisfactory academic progress, and allows the Convener of the Academic Committee to suspend or exclude students who fail to progress over a longer period of time. This document provides guidelines to clarify the University's expectations in relation to such decisions, and enables the Statute to be applied with consistency and fairness.

2 Organisational Scope

These are University-wide guidelines.

3 Definitions

For purposes of these guidelines, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Consecutive Trimesters:	A sequence of trimesters in which a student enrolls with no break in enrolment of two trimesters or more.
PGSA	Post Graduate Students Association
Satisfactory Progress:	Passing at least half the number of points attempted in the last two consecutive trimesters of study, or passing at least 36 points in the most recent trimester.
VUWSA	Victoria University of Wellington Students Association

4 Guidelines

4.1 General

- (a) These Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the [Academic Progress Statute](#).
- (b) The purpose of the [Academic Progress Statute](#) is to provide a framework within which the University can identify students who appear to be academically at risk, and:
 - (i) actively support them by providing advice on academic matters and on the relevant student services available;
 - (ii) manage their course of study to ensure they enrol in a set of courses in which they have a reasonable chance of passing;
 - (iii) suspend or exclude from the University a student who demonstrates over a number of years that they are not equipped for university study.

4.2 Providing advice to all students who fail one or more courses in any trimester

- (a) Research projects carried out within Victoria have indicated that, of students who fail more than 50% of the courses attempted in their first year of study, less than half return to study in the following year. Although a number of students leave as a result of external pressures such as employment or family commitments, there is an indication that awareness of, and access to, appropriate advice and support is a significant factor in deciding to continue with their study.
- (b) Ensuring first-year students know where to go for advice and support is very important, but more experienced students who fail a course may often benefit from a reminder of the range of support services available. Therefore all students who log into their on-line course results will see a message reminding them of the availability of the following services:
 - (i) Student Learning Support
 - (ii) Student Health
 - (iii) Student Counselling
 - (iv) Financial Support and Advice
 - (v) Career Development and Employment
 - (vi) Disability Support Services
 - (vii) Faculty Student Advisers
 - (viii) Faculty Managers
 - (ix) Associate Deans
 - (x) Victoria International
 - (xi) Kaiwawao Māori
 - (xii) Manaaki Pihipihinga
 - (xiii) Awhina programme
 - (xiv) VUWSA Student Advocacy Office
 - (xv) PGSA

4.3 Identifying students who may be academically at risk

- (a) The [Academic Progress Statute](#) uses somewhat mechanical criteria to define the set of students who may be academically at risk, and applies only to students who have:
 - (i) undertaken at least two trimesters of study (at this University or any at another tertiary institution) within the last 5 years; and
 - (ii) a pair of trimesters with no more than a single trimester gap of non-enrolment in between;
 - (iii) failed more than half the number of points attempted in those two trimesters of study; and
 - (iv) not passed at least 36 points in the most recent of those trimesters, or in a subsequent trimester.
- (b) Following the June and November examination periods each year, faculties should run the Academic Progress Report available through Student Records to identify students who meet the above criteria.

- (c) If a student falls within these criteria, it is important that their proposed enrolment for subsequent trimesters is scrutinised. Included in the list, there may be individual students or groups of students who, given their particular circumstances, are not considered to be at risk, in which case the Associate Dean may decide that no action should be taken. The focus is on ensuring that as far as possible students who need some sort of advice or intervention in order to have a reasonable chance of passing, do get supported. Inevitably, with a set of relatively simple measurable criteria, the selection will not be perfect, and there will need to be a certain amount of screening out of students for whom no intervention is required.
- (d) Where a student meets the criteria for unsatisfactory progress for the first time, it would generally be appropriate to restrict them to no more than about 60 points or 3 courses per trimester, although in some cases, a significantly lower workload may be appropriate. The Associate Dean may also decide to re-evaluate the student's situation following the next trimester of study. In making such decisions, the following points should be considered, and where appropriate, discussed with the student:
- (i) the points values of the particular courses the student wishes to do;
 - (ii) the likely difficulty and workload of the courses taking into account any indication of the student's particular skills, or academic strengths or weaknesses;
 - (iii) the student's apparent interest in, and commitment to, university study and to the particular subject area. (Research has indicated that failing students who change their major subject are about twice as likely to graduate as those who continue with the same major);
 - (iv) the impact of a reduced number of points on their eligibility for student loans or allowances. The student can be directed to the Financial Support and Advice if further information on eligibility is required;
 - (v) the time the student can realistically devote to their studies each week. For example if a student has significant family or employment commitments, a heavy academic workload is particularly difficult;
 - (vi) any other circumstances that appear to affect the student's ability to make satisfactory academic progress.
- (e) Associate Deans are encouraged to check the progress of any individual student about whom they are concerned after the end of summer trimester courses, and where appropriate, amend any restrictions or other conditions that have been applied to the student's enrolment.
- (f) Where the student's progress continues to be unsatisfactory, consideration should be given to further restricting the number of points, or excluding the student from particular courses or subject areas and encouraging them into areas for which they may be more suited.

4.4 Suspension from the University

- (a) Where the procedures in 4.3 have been followed, and the student's academic progress remains unsatisfactory after a further two consecutive trimesters, the Associate Dean may recommend to the Convener of the Academic Committee that the student be suspended from the University. In deciding upon a suspension, the Convener should be convinced that suitable support and advice has been appropriately provided to the student, and that the faculty has done all it reasonably can to assist the student to succeed, and should take account of the need for consistency across the University.

- (b) When a student performs poorly over an extended period of time, a suspension is a way of requiring them to take a break from study at this University. Ideally this encourages the student to consider alternative goals and career paths as well as alternative ways of approaching university study, and where possible, Associate Deans and other staff should suggest the student take the opportunity to consider other options. A suspension is normally for a period of one year, but may be up to two years.
- (c) If a student returns to the University following a period of suspension, they should discuss their intentions with the relevant Associate Dean, who may wish to impose some enrolment restrictions or conditions. Typically this would include requiring a meeting to check on progress following the first trimester of study.
- (d) If a student who has been suspended continues to fail, this would normally be taken very seriously, and in consultation with relevant Associate Dean, the Convener of the Academic Committee may decide to permanently exclude the student from the University.

4.5 Reporting and documentation

- (a) The Academic Progress Report includes the names and student identification numbers and course history of students meeting the criteria in section 4.3, together with an overview of the number of points attempted and passed.
- (b) Decisions regarding restrictions, suspensions, exclusions and holds should be recorded as comments on the student's Banner record.
- (c) If a student is effectively excluded from a particular qualification, the Office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic) should be notified to assist in monitoring consistency across the University.

5 Legislative Compliance

Although the University is required to manage its policy documentation within a legislative framework, there is no specific legislation directing these guidelines.

6 References

[Academic Progress Statute](#)

[Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments Policy](#)

Student Support Coordinator Project Report (February 2005), VUW Student Services.

A longitudinal Study of First-Year Students who Fail more than Half of their Courses (July 2006), Office of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Previous Version:

[archived Dealing with Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Guidelines 20090317.pdf](#)

7 Appendices

None

8 Approval Agency

Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic)

9 Approval Dates

These guidelines was originally approved on:	Unknown
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10 Contact Person

The following person may be approached on a routine basis in relation to these guidelines:

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