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## POLICIES REGARDING PROGRAM PERFORMANCE, REMEDATION, AND TERMINATION

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### Overview

The Psychology Department and the Counseling Program recognize that training graduate students is a developmental process. That is, the competencies needed to function as a professional develop over time, and this process may vary from student to student. The faculty is committed to working with students to develop not only the general competencies of professionals in the field of Counseling Psychology but also their individual professional talents. Therefore, the policies provided here regarding lack of progress and lack of competence and the remediation of those issues take into account the fact that some problems may be easily solved whereas other problems may require more intense attention. In those instances in which the issues are more serious or difficult, the solution needs careful attention to assure that the student is given an opportunity to demonstrate outcomes that signal the problem has been resolved. It should also be noted that the General Requirements for progress in graduate studies promulgated by the Psychology Department would have to be met to remain in good standing. Therefore, these policies regarding lack of progress or lack of competence are deemed to be complementary to and to reinforce the general requirements of the University, Department, and Program for remaining in good standing.

There are three levels designating lack of progress or lack of competence:

- Level I:** The first level deals with less serious issues that typically may be resolved in the course of one semester.
  
- Level II:** Issues at the second level are more serious and require more careful planning on the part of the faculty and student in order to address the problem.
  
- Level III:** The third level involves chronic unresponsiveness to remediation plans or egregious violations that might include issues such as academic or professional dishonesty, or serious ethical violations.

As has always been the case, the student will be placed on probation (unsatisfactory status) if it is determined by the Counseling Faculty, in conjunction with the coordinator of clinical training and other relevant personnel (e.g., clinical supervisor, professors in other areas), that a student is not making satisfactory progress or lacks competence in any area related to coursework, research and scholarship, comprehensive examinations, assistantships, clinical work, professional behavior, personal behavior, or adherence to the Program's mission. The student will be notified in writing of this decision.

## **Level I. Less Serious Issues Involving Lack of Progress and Lack of Competency**

In many situations, the problem and the solution will require the completion of one of the tasks noted in the website section on benchmarks for student progress ([click here](#)). In these instances, a letter (e.g., annual evaluation letter, midyear letter, or special letter) to the student will contain actions that need to be taken in order to be removed from probation. In these cases the student will be required to submit a statement in response to the letter enumerating a plan for the timely completion of the task or tasks and, if necessary, evidence of having obtained extensions to deadlines, which are reviewed and provided by the Graduate Committee in conjunction with the Counseling Program director and faculty. If in the faculty's collective judgment the student's unsatisfactory performance in any domain listed above would be remediated, partially or wholly, by personal counseling, the faculty may recommend that the student seek counseling.

## **Level II. More Serious Issues of Lack of Progress and Lack of Competency**

In more serious cases of unsatisfactory progress or lack of competence, prior to the development of a remediation plan, the student would be asked to meet with the faculty to discuss the lack of progress or competence. Such a meeting is devoted to working on a remediation plan that would include some actions as well as outcomes so that all parties may be able to judge that the deficiency has been remediated. The student is encouraged to contribute to the remediation plan; however, the faculty will, in the final analysis, be responsible for writing the final plan. That plan will be communicated to the student in the form of a letter from the faculty (i.e., annual evaluation letter, mid-year letter, or special letter). That letter will describe the problem that needs to be remediated, the actions that need to be taken to remediate the problem, and the outcomes that will be assessed to determine changes in the student's performance. As noted above, if in the faculty's collective judgment the student's unsatisfactory performance in any domain listed above would be remediated, partially or wholly, by personal counseling, the faculty may recommend that the student seek counseling. The student may be asked to sign a release for the purposes of determining if the student is actually attending counseling sessions.

## **Level II. Serious or Egregious Problems of Lack of Progress and Lack of Competency Which May Result in Termination**

If a student is determined by the faculty to be chronically unresponsive to remediation plans, then the problem is considered serious and one that might result in termination from the program. In cases where the problem involves a serious lack of progress or lack of competency in coursework, research and scholarship, comprehensive examinations, assistantships, clinical work, professional behavior, personal behavior, or adherence to the program's mission or serious ethical or legal violations, the faculty will seek professional consultation initially from within the university and in some cases outside the university to determine a course of action, one of which would be termination from the program. Thus, there may be instances in which termination is a result of chronic unresponsiveness to remediation or is the result of some egregious behavior that is inconsistent with becoming a competent professional in the field of counseling psychology.

The decision to terminate a student must be approved by two-thirds of the faculty of the Counseling Psychology program (including the coordinator of clinical training) and approved by the Graduate Committee. If a student does not agree with the decision of the faculty and the Graduate committee, he or she may use existing University of Notre Dame appeal and grievance procedures, which are enumerated in the Graduate School handbook ([click here](#)).

## **Conclusion**

As noted earlier, these policies and procedures for lack of progress and lack of competence do not supplant but rather complement the Department's and University's guidelines regarding the evaluation of graduate student progress. One Departmental policy that may be evoked in conjunction with policies stated here is the Post-Master's/3rd Year "Gate." That policy requires the program faculty to assess the progress of graduate students either at the completion of the Masters Thesis or at the end of their 3rd year of studies. The policy states that. "The program will decide if the student should proceed with additional preparation for the Ph.D. or should terminate at the point of the evaluation." Thus, whereas any of the policies can be invoked at any time, part of the ongoing evaluation of students in the Counseling Program will include whether documented lack of progress or lack of competence warrants termination at the Post-Master's/3rd Year "Gate."

## **Emendation**

Finally, the program faculty would like to acknowledge the student input that contributed to the development of this policy and to encourage students to continue to give feedback so that the policy can be improved further in the future. This is the first iteration of a plan to manage a complex issue. Please let the Program Director know of any improvements that might be made. Anonymous or any other kinds of feedback are welcome.