Graduate Student Administration: Updates and Initiatives

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Vice Dean, Students
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Areas of Focus

- Academic progress
- Supervision and interpersonal
- Academic misconduct
Academic Progress
Good Standing

Definition

– comply with the General Regulations (SGS and Program) and
– satisfactory progress towards the completion of the degree.

Termination of registration:

– fails to comply with the General Regulations
  or
– fails to maintain satisfactory progress
  • the general standards of the School of Graduate Studies
  or
  • the specific standards of the graduate unit.

(SGS Calendar 2014-15)
Why Problems Arise…

• Academic failure
• Insufficient assistance (Accessibility Services, health, …)
• Expectations may be unclear
• Poor planning (students and faculty)
• Inadequate follow-up of early warning signs
• Lack of supervisory committee meetings
• Unclear (and unwritten) outcomes of meetings
• Lack of definitive end point for courses
Academic Progress
- All Students -
Clarity in

• Course outlines
• Program requirements: handbook, website
• Consequences of not meeting course or program requirements
• Opportunities for second chances? When?
• Timelines
• Expectations
Academic Expectations and Resources

• Important to clarify at the beginning of program...and revisit
• Include in departmental handbook/website
• Discuss during orientation
• Discuss during initial meeting(s) with supervisor/advisors
• Resources for support
  o Accessibility Services
  o CAPS
  o ELWS
Academic Progress
- Doctoral Students -
Candidacy

Candidacy must be achieved by the end of the third year for all doctoral programs,

except

The five-year PhD program, flexible-time PhD program option, and professional doctoral programs begun on a part-time basis. For those exceptions, candidacy must be achieved by the end of the fourth year of registration.

(School of Graduate Studies Calendar 2014-15)
Candidacy and Qualifying Exams

• Be clear about the requirements
• Make sure the requirements are described in detail and easily available to all students
• Make sure there is a clear policy on consequences of failure: re-writing and termination
• Detect problems and concerns early
• Provide support and assistance
Grades
What grades mean
SDF, FZ, INC, WDR

- Instructor should base grade on actual mark - an assignment not submitted should mean zero!
- SDF (Standing Deferred): incomplete course work with rationale. Has a deadline—use it!
- FZ (Fail): Final grade for a failed course
  - Don’t default to blanks or INC
- INC (Incomplete): Final grade where FZ is not appropriate. It carries no credit, not included in averaging.
  - Should be used only in exceptional circumstances
  - INC should not be used to protect students from the consequences of poor academic performance or poor choices.
- WDR (Withdrawn): Withdrawn without academic penalty (approved late withdrawal) – no credit and not included in averaging

- See updated policy (July 2012) [http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/INC-SDF-WDR.aspx](http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/facultyandstaff/Pages/INC-SDF-WDR.aspx)
Termination

- Recommendation to Vice Dean, Students
- Clear evidence of failure to maintain good academic standing
- Show that expectations were clearly stated
- Student should have been forewarned, advised; are there “second chances”?  
- Are there any extenuating circumstances?  
- Has student been offered support (e.g. accessibility services, health services)  
- Withdrawal vs. termination  
  - Termination of registration is an action by the program  
  - Withdrawal is a student-initiated action  
  - Termination can be appealed, withdrawals are not appealable  
- Follow procedures on SGS website
Supervision and Interpersonal Issues
Graduate Supervision

Guidelines for Students, Faculty, and Administrators

Supervision Checklists

Appendix 2

Checklist for Students at the Onset of Supervision

☐ I chose my supervisor (or agreed to the choice) after appropriate review of supervisor options
☐ I have had sufficient initial meetings with my supervisor and have discussed:
  ☐ Potential or actual thesis topic
  ☐ Funding
  ☐ Applying for scholarships and awards
  ☐ Teaching assistantships
  ☐ Research assistantships
  ☐ Requirements for and availability of space
  ☐ Expected hours of work
  ☐ Timelines and major milestones including anticipated completion time

Appendix 3

Checklist for Supervisors at the Onset of Supervision

☐ To establish a collegial environment, I will:
  ☐ Create a positive work and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment.
  ☐ Provide advice on professional development and both academic and non-academic career opportunities.
  ☐ Be available to my student as the first point of contact for conflict resolution.

☐ I will undertake the following academic mentoring activities:
  ☐ Assist the student in navigating his or her program of study and the University community.
  ☐ Assist the student where needed about the requirements for his or her degree, policies of the University and School of Graduate Studies as well as resources and referrals to campus services.
  ☐ Advise and approve, if appropriate, all aspects of the student’s academic program including courses, comprehensive/qualifying examinations, language, seminar, internship/practicum requirements, etc.
  ☐ Help the student formulate an appropriate research project. Discuss the required knowledge and skills to undertake the desired research program, the expected time to completion as well as the level of independence that is expected.
PhD Committee Meetings

- Make sure they occur (at least once a year)
- Consider more than pass fail:
  - E.g. satisfactory – problematic – fail
  - Include comments and suggestions
- Student should have opportunity to respond in writing
- Are expectations clear?
  - What happens if not satisfactory?
  - Is this clearly described in your handbook?
Resolving Conflicts

• Remain objective
• Look for underlying cause(s)
• Seek alternative solutions or compromise
• Use U of T and SGS rules and regulations
  o Consider flexibility and exceptions
• Seek advice:
  o Faculty: Graduate Vice/Associate Dean
  o SGS: SSO, Director of Student Services, Vice-Dean
  o Student Retention Officer (Helen Slade, ext. 6-0424)
  o Student Crisis Response Officer (Becky Smith, ext. 6-7111)
Mental Health

• Be aware of signs:
  o Marked personality change
  o Inability to cope with problems and daily activities
  o Strange or grandiose ideas
  o Excessive anxieties
  o Prolonged depression and apathy
  o Marked changes in eating or sleeping patterns
  o Extreme highs and lows
  o Abuse of alcohol or drugs
  o Excessive anger, hostility, or violent behaviour.

(HealthyMinds.org, American Psychiatric Association)
Mental Health

• Refer student to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
• SGS: Director of Student Services
• Student Retention & Crisis Response Officers
  o Coordinator – Student Academic Progress, Helen Slade, ext. 6-0424
  o Student Crisis Response Officer, Becky Smith, ext. 6-7111
• Annual Health Services workshop for academic administrators
November 27, 2014
9:30 am – noon

SGS/CTSI workshop
Best Practices in Graduate Supervision
Robarts Library (CTSI Room 4036)
Academic Misconduct
Academic Offences & Ethical Conduct

- Framework to Address Allegations of Research Misconduct (2013)
- SGS and University policies on ethics
  - Research ethics
    - Policy on Ethical Conduct in Research (1991)
    - Research Involving Human Subjects: Student Guide on Ethical Conduct (updated 2011)
    - Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
  - Other
    - Statement on Human Rights (2012)
    - Policy & Procedures: Sexual Harassment (1997)
Why Comply With Code?

• Academic integrity is fundamental to our mission
• Our graduate students shouldn’t cheat
• Ensures fairness
  o Need dispassionate judgment, consistent sanctions across University
  o Must respect rights of all parties
• Identify repeat offenders
• No choice: “instructor shall make a report to the department chair”
Help Prevent Offences By

• Considering workshops for students and faculty
• Including information on the Code of Behaviour and plagiarism in course outlines
• Remind students that ignorance is no excuse
• Reducing temptations and opportunities – many sources for information. For instance:
  o UofT Academic Integrity website:
  o the SGS website for ‘Academic Integrity’
  o FAS Academic Handbook for Instructors
  o UTM: [www.utm.utoronto.ca/academic-integrity/students](http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/academic-integrity/students)
  o UTSC: Office of Academic Integrity (Dean and Vice-Principal, Academic)
Academic Integrity at the University of Toronto

The University of Toronto is committed to the values of independent inquiry and to the free and open exchange of ideas. Academic integrity underpins these values and is thus a core part of the University's commitment to intellectual life. Extending beyond our immediate intellectual community of students, faculty, and staff at the University of Toronto, our intellectual community embraces all who have contributed to the sum of human knowledge.

Honesty and fairness are fundamental values shared by students, staff and faculty in the University of Toronto community. The ethic of intellectual honesty goes hand in hand with the University's efforts to advance and disseminate knowledge by drawing fairly on the ideas of others, by presenting and testing ideas, and by giving and receiving appropriate recognition.

In our Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters we have identified academic offences that are in direct opposition to the University's mission to foster internationally significant research and excellent programs—a mission that can be realized only if members of the University appropriately acknowledge sources of information and ideas, present independent work on assignments and examinations, and complete and submit group projects in accordance with the standards of the discipline being studied. The quality of teaching and scholarly inquiry across the University depends on academic integrity and we uphold our core values through our standards of academic conduct and sanctions for academic offences.

http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/
Procedures

• Academic Matters
  o When in doubt
    ▪ Consult SGS (Emma Thacker, Luc De Nil)
  o Sanctions cannot be determined by instructor
    ▪ Chair or delegate involved for minor offences
      <10% in coursework
    ▪ Dean of SGS involved for offences >10% or other
      offences, e.g. in thesis
Sanctions

• At departmental level
  o Sanction possible only when student admits
  o Maximum penalty zero for piece of work

• At SGS level
  o Sanction possible only when student admits
  o Dean can refer to Provost if serious or no admission
  o Max penalty one-year suspension
  o Transcript notation

• At Tribunal, GC level
  o Up to expulsion or revocation of degree
Academic Integrity

Including information on the rules, procedures, sanctions and appeals processes involved in cases of cheating, plagiarism and other academic misconduct.

http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/Assets/Students+Digital+Assets/Vice-Provost$!2c+Students/Publications/academicintegrity.pdf
Contact

Thank you

- Email: sgs.vdeanstudents@utoronto.ca
- Phone: 416-978-5986
- Website: www.sgs.utoronto.ca

Questions?