

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Graduate Division

Policies, Principles and Practices

I. Seven Year Limit for Advanced Degrees

Policy

At both the Masters and Doctoral levels, students must complete the degree within seven years of matriculation or they will be placed on probation.

Principle

Most graduate students complete course work and other substantive learning within the first two years of matriculation. Their knowledge and skills should be of the most current state possible within the discipline. Both knowledge and skills are likely to be forgotten or become out of date over time and the forward movement of the discipline, bringing into question the students ability to integrate their learning into the kind of culminating product most likely represented by a dissertation or thesis. The odds of successful completion of these requirements are likely to decrease over time.

Practice

As the seventh year approaches, students are warned of the impending end of the seven-year period and of the fact that they will be placed on probation. To avoid probation, students in consultation with their adviser must present a reasonable and detailed time line with benchmarks that can be monitored by the graduate program. Extensions of the seven-year limit will be granted if the student satisfactorily meets this condition. Students who fail to complete benchmarks or do not graduate within the extended period are subject to probation. Extensions may be granted for more than a year at a time, but in such cases, the program must provide the Assistant Dean with an annual report on the student's progress and a lack of progress may result in probation prior to the end of the extension period.

II. Seven Year Limit for Courses

Policy

At both the Masters and Doctoral levels, courses taken over seven years prior to a given date cannot be used toward the degree requirements.

Principle

Most graduate students complete course work and other substantive learning within the first two years of matriculation. Their knowledge and skills should be of the most current state possible within the discipline. Both knowledge and skills are likely to be forgotten or become out of date over time and the forward movement of the discipline, bringing

into question the students ability to integrate their learning into the kind of culminating product most likely represented by a dissertation or thesis.

Practice

Problems in this area are usually brought to light only in the context of requests for extensions of the seven year limit for the degrees. At that point, any concerns about the currency of the courses must be addressed to the program with a request that they provide some justification as to the currency of any required courses. There must be objective evidence of the currency of the knowledge based on the use of it through research, application, or subsequent courses taken. If there is no such justification, a remedy must be sought in terms of re-taking the course or some other form of review of the content. Usually, the ability of the student to prepare a satisfactory thesis or dissertation proposal is acceptable evidence of the currency of their knowledge.

III. Grade Conversion

Policy

Any grade for a graduate level course must be converted to a grade within two semesters of the end of the course in which the original grade was assigned. This applies to the conversion of the incomplete grade as well.

Principle

As the gap between the time that the actual course was taught and the time a grade is converted, there is decreasing certainty as to how well a faculty member can accurately assess the student's performance in the context of the original course, especially where the grade is based on a standard relative to overall class performance.

Practice

Most requests for conversion will be accepted if the request is within two years of the end of the original course. Exceptions to the policy involving longer periods of time are only granted when the faculty member can demonstrate the means by which a grade can be validly assigned or the lack of need for continuity between the original course and the conversion of the grade.

IV. Academic Probation and Dismissal

Policy

A student who fails to maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher in courses potentially applicable to the degree is subject to being placed on academic probation. This does not include courses required to remedy deficiencies or transfer courses, with the exception of credits "transferred" from Outreach College. During their first semester graduate students who have attempted eight or more credits may be placed on probation. Following the first semester a student may be placed on probation following any term during which their GPA falls below the criterion. This decision is made unilaterally by the Graduate Division at the end of the semester when the criterion grade point average can be calculated for completed courses.

Any second term following probation during which the student's GPA falls below the criterion of 3.0 will result in the student's dismissal, even if the student had a period during which he or she was not on probation.

Principle

The criterion for being awarded an advanced degree is that a student must have a GPA of 3.0 or higher for all required courses. Note that the policy refers to all "potentially applicable" credits, to include credits that will not be used for the degree. Since all courses numbered from 300 to 499, 600 to 699 and 700 to 799 may be used for a degree requirement, the actual calculation of a grade point average for purposes of probation is to use all graded courses qualifying for graduate credit. This will prevent students from "picking and choosing" which courses to use toward their degree until such time as they file for graduation. Any student who falls below that criterion is, accordingly, in jeopardy of not being able to earn the degree. The process of placing a student on probation is intended to serve the student with notice of such jeopardy.

Practice

Students may appeal being placed on probation if the appeal is based on a grading error or dispute. If the appeal is upheld, the probationary status will be removed and the student returned to good standing. A graduate program may also appeal the probationary status of a student or a student's dismissal by providing either a sound academic reason for the appeal or justifying it on the basis of an error made by the program in advising the student. In cases where students are placed on probation due to a grade for a course that will genuinely not be used toward their degree, probation will be rescinded if departmental support is given, but the decision is irreversible, i.e., the student cannot later request that the course be used, even if it is repeated. There is no appeal for the use of non-UH Mānoa or lower division courses for the purposes of grade point calculations.

V. Continuous Enrollment/Registration in the Semester of Graduation

Policy

Students must be enrolled continuously unless a leave of absence is requested. Students who are not enrolled in a given semester must re-apply through the Graduate Records Office. Students who plan to graduate within a given semester must be registered for at least one credit in that same semester.

Principle

The pursuit of an advanced degree presumes that continuous study is necessary to provide the depth and breadth of knowledge required, i.e. that the period of time devoted to such study is focused within a coherent span of time. These policies assure that the student maintains such a focus of study and is awarded a degree in a timely manner continuous with the student's course of study. For a student graduating in a

given semester, it is also important to recognize the faculty and staff time given to award the degree. Tuition funds are used to assist with the support of personnel time for such purposes.

Practice

Students who do have a break in their enrollment are referred to their programs who may determine whether they can be readmitted. The decisions of the program are usually upheld by the Graduate Division as long as there is no threat to the seven year rules for courses or for the overall period of study. The requirement to be registered in the semester of graduation is only waived in the case of students who have completed all requirements, but may have missed the deadline for filing the thesis or dissertation during the semester. In these cases, the student will receive the degree in the following semester (See Policy VII). For periods longer than one semester, this requirement is only waived with the support of the program and under very extenuating circumstances as the tuition revenue should not be lost without compelling reasons.

VI. Leaves of Absence

Policy

If a graduate student has advanced knowledge of a need to be absent for one or two semesters, the student should request a leave of absence. These leaves are granted only once and for a maximum of one full year or two semesters. Students must have completed at least one term before being granted a leave.

Principle

The leave of absence is the only official exception for the continuous enrollment policy. It should be granted only in the case of extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control or in the case of an unusual educational opportunity that will not allow the student to be registered. In all cases, it should only be for one year at most due to concerns that the continuity of the student's educational experience will be seriously compromised.

Practice

Standard leaves of absence may be approved by the staff of the Graduate Records Office. A second leave of absence or a leave lasting longer than one year will only be approved in the case of a major medical problem, a family emergency, or an outstanding educational opportunity. The judgment as to whether a case qualifies will be made by the Assistant Dean. In no case will a third leave or a leave of more than two years be approved. In such cases, the student must break from enrollment and hope that the program will allow them to re-enter.

VII. Deadline for Submitting Theses and Dissertations

Policy

For all Master's Plan A and doctoral students, the deadline for submitting the final version, with all required faculty signatures, of a thesis or dissertation is the Friday six weeks prior to the end of the semester.

Principle

The Graduate Records Office requires time to process the theses and dissertations prior to the end of the semester. Submission of the thesis or dissertation is also the final requirement for degree completion for most students, so it signals the need for a degree audit which also requires processing time.

Practice

This deadline may be waived by the Records Office staff through the first three weeks following it. Any such waiver must be supported by the program. Anyone requesting a waiver to submit more than three weeks after the deadline must have the permission of the Assistant Dean. Permission will only be granted with the support of the Graduate Chair and the identification of extenuating circumstances. In no case will a thesis or dissertation be accepted for a student for graduation within a given semester after the last day of that semester. The student will be awarded the degree the following semester, but may be required to register. Special circumstances may govern this decision for international students affected by SEVIS rules. A student who is allowed to submit a thesis or dissertation beyond their "final" semester is considered to be a student up to the date of submission, after which they have 60 days to remain in the country.

VIII. Transfer of Credit, Course Substitutions for and Waivers of Degree Requirements

Policy

Masters' students must take a minimum of 16 credits in residence to earn a University of Hawai'i at Mānoa degree. Any number of credits beyond that may be transferred as long as the request is made in the first semester and the credits are from an accredited school, are at the upper division or graduate level, a grade of B- or higher has been earned, and the course was not used for a previous degree. Grades do not transfer with the credits.

Principle

The Graduate residency requirement is for two full semesters and 16 credits to assure that the degree is taken with a significant number of credits at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Any credits beyond that minimum may be transferred. Since the standard for graduation is a 3.0 GPA and the transfer grades are not used, the student must have

by the admitting program, a grade point average of less than 2.7 can result in an applicant's acceptance, for example, a strong showing in relevant courses.

X. Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) for International Students

Policy

Applicants from nations where English is not the language of instruction at the tertiary level or where such instruction is known not to occur at a consistently high level of proficiency are required to submit official records of TOEFL scores. The scores must be no more than two years old. Students must obtain a minimum score to be admitted, although borderline students can be admitted contingent upon their completion of English Language Institute course work. To be a graduate assistant, a TOEFL score of 600 is required.

Principle

Students must be able to read, write, listen and speak English at a high level of proficiency to be successful in learning the material required to earn advanced degrees. We must rely on official scores due to justifiable concerns over forgeries. The two year limit on test scores is to assure that the assessment of non-English speaker is current. For TAs, the need to be more proficient in English is a consequence of their need to communicate effectively with undergraduates. RAs must be able to communicate in English in case of laboratory emergencies.

Practice

Exceptions to this policy will be granted if there is strong, authoritative and objective evidence in support of an applicant's English proficiency demonstrating that the TOEFL is not an accurate measure of that proficiency. There are, however, no standard exceptions to the requirement for official TOEFL scores. We will defer receipt if we have an unofficial report, but the official scores must be provided before the student can register. The IELTS may be used in place of the TOEFL.

Graduate Assistants who will be working in safe labs or who will not be communicating with undergraduate students may be excepted from the 600 minimum TOEFL score by petition to the Associate Dean.