

April 27, 2021

To: The University Committee on Education Policies

From: Academic Standing Committee

Subject: Suggested changes to Academic Standing and Sanctions Policies

The request to consider changes to the current Academic Standing and Sanctions policies stems from our recent experience applying these policies. Most of our recommendations cover the need for clarification and alignment with actual practice.

I. Current Policy: Academic Warning

“The University reserves the right to consider other indicators of satisfactory progress toward degree completion in its determination of Academic Warning. These indicators include an unsatisfactory grade point average in the major (as required by the department) or Boler Core (below a 2.0 GPA), or multiple course Failures and Withdrawals.”

Rationale for change

1. We welcome the flexibility that this statement gives to the Academic Standing committee, but think that this flexibility should be granted for all sanctions, not just for Academic Warning. There are times when giving students two semesters on academic warning followed by two semesters of probation before suspension can put that student at a distinct disadvantage academically and financially. It can be in a student’s best interest for the Academic Standing Committee to have the flexibility to accelerate a student’s movement through the sanction process to give them the strongest support to succeed.

Suggested change:

We suggest UCEP consider moving the statement above to the paragraph on Good Academic Standing, before the NOTE, and changing “determination of Academic Warning” to “determination of Academic sanctions”.

Should we make that change, the Good Academic Standing section would read:

“Students maintain Good Academic Standing at the University by earning a cumulative 2.0 grade point average (GPA) or better and satisfactorily completing at least 12 credit hours per semester” Grade point averages are computed to two decimal places and truncated, not rounded.”

The University issues academic sanctions to students not in Good Academic Standing as a means to support successful degree completion. These sanctions, including

Academic Warning, Academic Probation, and Suspension, alert students to renew their focus and attention on their educational progress and plans.

The University reserves the right to consider other indicators of satisfactory progress toward degree completion in its determination of academic sanctions. These indicators include an unsatisfactory grade point average in the major (as required by the department) or Boler Core (below a 2.0 GPA), or multiple course Failures and Withdrawals.”

NOTE: Some departments require a higher GPA for students in their majors. Students should consult with their respective departments for information on the GPA requirement to be admitted to or to continue in their major.”

II. Current Policy: Good Academic Standing

“Students maintain Good Academic Standing at the University by earning a cumulative 2.0 grade point average (GPA) or better and satisfactorily completing at least 12 credit hours per semester”.

Rationale for change:

1. The clause of “satisfactorily completing at least 12 credit hours per semester” is not included among the conditions upon which we place students on Academic Warning or on Probation. According to the statement, part-time students and students who successfully completed three of their four courses and withdrew from one in one semester, or students who took a leave of absence effective before the end of the term for health or family emergencies, would not be considered in good standing, which seems unfair and excessive.

2. It is also not clear if the statement applies to each single semester (like the Academic Warning) or to a long-term average (like the Academic Probation).

Suggested change, assuming the suggested policy change in Part I above is approved:

It is our understanding that the purpose of the requirement of completing 12 credit hours per semester was to ensure students were on pace for graduating within 4 years or so. If they were not, they would be placed on Academic Warning as a way for us to identify and work with those students to develop a plan to keep them on pace.

We need to be aware that students may decide to pursue their degree at a slower pace due to family, health or financial constraints, and still be academically successful. While the “get it done in 4 years” pace may fit for many of our traditionally aged students, it does not necessarily fit for students with non-traditional paths due to personal life situations.

If UCEP believes that a link between academic standing and number of credits earned per semester is necessary, we suggest it be expressed as a fraction of the attempted credits, preferably 67% as that matches federal financial aid requirements and included in the statement regarding other indicators of satisfactory progress.

If we choose this approach, the Good Academic Standing section would read:

Students maintain Good Academic Standing at the University by earning a cumulative 2.0 grade point average (GPA) or better. Grade point averages are computed to two decimal places and truncated, not rounded.”

“Students are placed on Academic Warning whenever their semester average drops below 2.0 while their cumulative average remains above this minimum.

Students may remain on Academic Warning for two consecutive semesters. Students who do not improve their academic record after two semesters on Warning will be placed on Academic Probation.”

Students may not appeal the sanctions of Academic Warning and Probation.

The section covering the right to consider other indicators would read:

“The University reserves the right to consider other indicators of satisfactory progress toward degree completion in its determination of academic sanctions. These indicators include an unsatisfactory grade point average in the major (as required by the department) or Boler Core (below a 2.0 GPA), multiple course Failures and Withdrawals or failure to satisfactorily complete at least 67% of overall attempted credit hours.”

II. III. Current Policy: Suspension

“Students are subject to Suspension after two consecutive terms on Academic Probation.”

Rationale for change:

1. This statement is not in keeping with our practice. There are cases where students have remained on probation for more than two semesters if their GPA was close to 2.0 and their grades were improving and/or they were close to graduation. Thus, the term “subject to Suspension” may be interpreted by students as an “automatic” sanction and that does not reflect the reality of our practices.
2. The Summer term could be considered as one of “two consecutive terms” after which students are subject to Suspension. However, many summer courses are online and accelerated, which makes them more difficult to manage. Further, most students may take just one or two summer courses, which make their effect on the overall GPA limited. Thus, at the end of the summer term, students’ GPA may still be below 2.0 even if the grades earned in the summer courses were above C.

Suggested change:

We suggest UCEP reformulates this statement as “Students [are](#) subject to Suspension after two consecutive fall and spring [semesters](#) on Academic Probation.”

IV. Current Policy: Appeals

“They may appeal academic Suspension and Dismissal and do so by contacting the Chair of the Academic Standing Committee. Grounds for an appeal include GPA miscalculations or administrative error. Further information regarding the appeals process will be included in the notification email and letter. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Academic Standing Committee and received within five business days of the notification email sent date. The Academic Standing Committee will review and process appeals and related communications during regular University business days.”

Rationale for change:

We recommend changes to this policy to bring it in line with the new make-up of the Academic Standing Committee and other appeals processes on campus.

Our concern with the reasons for appeal part of the statement is that it is not clear if it is intended to mean that the only grounds for an appeal are GPA miscalculations or administrative error or if it is intended to mean that grounds for appeal include, but are not limited to, GPA miscalculations or administrative error.

The first interpretation does not reflect the past and current practice of accepting appeals that were based on extenuating, but limited, circumstances like illnesses, family emergency, or other external factors.

On the other hand, if the intention of this statement was to list two of many possible reasons for appealing, we risk that some students interpret it literally and do not submit their appeal, while others read it liberally and submit an appeal. The result is that students in similar situations may obtain very different outcomes.

There also needs to be more clarity in the appeals process and timeline for making an appeal and resolution. We therefore propose adding a link to an appeals form that will standardize the appeals process and allow for better tracking and response.

Suggested change:

“They may appeal academic Suspension and Dismissal and do so by completing and submitting [the Appeals Form \(LINK HERE\)](#). Appeals must be received within five business days of the notification email sent date. Appeals will be considered by the Chair of the Academic Standing Committee and the Boler and CAS College Deans.

Decisions will be made and communicated within 10 business days of receipt of the appeal.

Grounds for an appeal include GPA miscalculations, administrative error or extenuating circumstances such as illnesses, family emergency, or other external factors.

VI. Current Policy: Readmission

“Readmitted students may also be subject to credit hour and grade point average requirements for continued enrollment, also indicated in the readmission letter.”

Rationale for change

The policy needs clarification and expansion to reflect current and future practices.

Suggested change:

“Readmitted students may also be required to attend and pass an academic success course and be subject to credit hour and grade point average requirements for continued enrollment, as indicated in their readmission letter. Failure to meet these requirements may lead to the students being dismissed from the university.”