

Procedures for Monitoring Student Progress in the Microbiology Graduate Program

In the Microbiology Graduate Program, the progress of students is primarily monitored by their mentors, and their Thesis Committees, and overseen by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). The Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Cancer Biology (MIC) Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) sets academic requirements in the Department and helps uphold academic standards. The BIMS Academic Progress and Achievement Committee (BAPAC) reviews and acts on all recommendations from the Microbiology Graduate program regarding students failing to remain in good standing based on grades or other academic performance and/or failing to meet professional standards or exhibiting unethical or unprofessional behaviors. The academic standards are set by MIC, and the professionalism standards are set by the school and/or the institution. The BAPAC monitors the implementation of MIC policies regarding student remediation and dismissal, ensuring due process for students.

Students in the Microbiology program are required to satisfy all departmental requirements as described on the MIC website and in UVA The Graduate Record: Microbiology. The program communicates with its students through the email system of the University of Virginia. Each student is required to maintain their University email account in an active state and check it routinely. The DGS monitors progress in coursework each semester. The mentor monitors progress in the student's thesis research throughout the year.

Given the diversity of research projects and graduate student trajectories, it is difficult to define a single policy that can consider every possible scenario that may arise. Instead, these guidelines are intended to establish clear procedures for monitoring progress and for ensuring that students are clearly notified of concerns and their potential consequences.

Achievement in Coursework.

All graduate students are expected to: 1) earn a passing grade in all coursework, 2) achieve a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in each academic term and 3) maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0. A passing grade is A+, A, A-, B+, B or B- in graded courses and S in courses graded S/U. A grade of NC (no credit) is not considered a passing grade. Failure to achieve any of these expectations places a student at risk of dismissal from the Microbiology program due to failure to make satisfactory academic progress.

If a student fails to meet one or more of these expectations, the DGS will work with the student's mentor and/or the Course Directors and/or the AAC, to determine the consequences. These can include dismissal from the program or a remediation plan. In the event that program determines that the student should be offered an opportunity for remediation, this plan will outline specific steps and a timeline for the completion of each. The student will be notified in writing of the expectations and the timeline and this notification will include a clear statement that failure to adhere to the plan will place him/her at risk of immediate dismissal from the program.

If it is determined that the student must leave the program but the student has satisfactorily completed sufficient hours of graduate credit, the DGS and/or a committee of program faculty will determine whether the student's achievements merit award of the Master of Science in Biological and Physical Sciences.

Advancement to Candidacy Exam

The Microbiology program requires completion of a Qualifying exam by July 1st of the second year in order to be advanced to PhD candidacy. The thesis committee sets the standard, with the mentor, and determines whether the student has passed or failed and whether there is any revision of the written proposal and/or reexamination. The qualifying exam consists of two parts: a written document and the oral defense. There are four possible outcomes for each component of the exam: Pass (Unconditional), Conditional Pass, Conditional Fail and Fail. The student must pass both components of the exam in order to advance to candidacy. This milestone will be documented in SIS.

The outcome of the examination is provided to the student at the conclusion of the meeting, and on the 'Qualifying exam evaluation' form provided to the student. The Thesis Committee Chair prepares this form, which is circulated to the other committee members and the mentor for editing. This form is then shared with the student and DGS by email by the BIMS Administrator. In the case of Conditional Pass, the committee will communicate their expectations for remediation and a timeline for their completion, and in the case of a Conditional Fail, the committee will communicate their expectations for remediation and a timeline for their completion and a deadline whereby the student must retake the Qualifying exam.

If the thesis advisory committee's final determination is that the student has failed his/her qualifying exam, the student will not be advanced to candidacy and will be informed at the conclusion of the meeting that they have to leave the program and in writing on the Qualifying exam form. The committee and the DGS will determine whether the student has met the conditions for a Master of Science in Biological and Physical Sciences.

Academic Progress after Advancement to Candidacy

Each student has committee meetings that are at least yearly, and more frequently as required by the Thesis Committee or as requested by the student and mentor. Students in the program are expected to meet professional standards in their research and make appropriate progress as laid out by their mentor and Thesis committee. A student may be required to withdraw from the Microbiology program if the student is not making satisfactory progress toward a degree. Criteria for satisfactory academic progress may include: On time scheduling of graduate/thesis advisory committee meetings, and research progress towards the goals established at prior committee meeting.

The Thesis Committee evaluates student progress after the Committee meeting using a standard evaluation form. The Chair prepares the form, which is circulated to the other committee members and the mentor for editing. This form is shared with the student and DGS, and includes clearly stated feedback on progress, and proposes future goals.

The evaluation form includes 3 outcomes to evaluate progress; *no concerns*, *moderate concerns*, *significant concerns*.

Students with *moderate concerns* are required to schedule meetings on a 6 monthly schedule until they achieve '*no concerns*'.

- If the thesis committee has '*significant concerns*' about a student's progress they will note this on the meeting evaluation form.
- The mentor and committee will lay out a clear plan of action, expectations and milestones on this form for the student to complete prior to the next meeting.
- The committee will define the timing for the next meeting on this form, which should occur within no more than six months
- The DGS will also schedule a meeting with the mentor and the student within the next calendar month of the meeting where '*significant concerns*' were noted, to discuss the plan for the student's progress.

If a committee notes '*significant concerns*' at two committee meetings (in 12 months), indicating a student has not met the expectations that have been clearly laid out as above, this can be grounds for dismissal. The mentor and committee will call a third meeting (within 6 months), and the DGS will be invited to this meeting. The committee can vote to terminate the student from the program. The Committee Chair will notify the student at the conclusion of the meeting. The DGS will also notify the student in writing within 2 weeks of the meeting.

Failure to Comply with Programmatic, School or University Policies

A student may be required to withdraw from the Microbiology program if they fail to comply with all applicable University, School, and departmental or programmatic policies, including but not limited to those governing responsible conduct of research, safety, student conduct, academics, and the Code of Honor. Failure to comply with these policies will immediately place the student at risk of dismissal from the program. Violations will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with the adjudication process dependent on the nature of the violation and the University/School-based procedures in place to handle each.