

## **Procedures for Monitoring Student Progress in the Pharmacology Graduate Program**

The Pharmacology Department has implemented a multi-tiered system to monitor the progress of students in the Pharmacology Graduate program that includes the student's mentor, the Graduate Advisory/Thesis Committee, and oversight provided by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the Pharmacology Graduate Committee.

Academic standards (e.g. achievement in coursework or other academic performance issues) are set by the Pharmacology program. Professionalism standards (e.g. ethical and other professional behaviors) are set by the school and/or the institution. The BIMS Academic Progress and Achievement Committee (BAPAC) reviews and acts on all recommendations from the Graduate Program and monitors the implementation of Pharmacology policies regarding student remediation and dismissal, to ensure due process for students.

Students in the Pharmacology Graduate program are required to satisfy all departmental requirements as described in UVA The Graduate Record. 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 guidelines outlined below establish goals and procedures for monitoring student progress and for ensuring that students are cognizant of concerns and their potential consequences and are notified in a timely manner. Procedures are organized by program stage and milestone.

### **Achievement in Coursework**

The standing of a graduate student in each course is indicated by one of the following grades: A+, A, A-; B+, B, B-; C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- and F. B- is the lowest satisfactory grade for graduate credit. In courses where the grading option is Satisfactory(S)/Unsatisfactory (U), Unsatisfactory (U) is considered to be a failing grade, as is a grade of No Credit (NC). Students must achieve a minimum grade point average of 3.00 during each academic term and sustain a minimum grade point average of 3.00 cumulatively in order to maintain good academic standing. Unsatisfactory performance during a given semester may be considered sufficient reason for a student to be placed on academic probation or asked to leave a program.

If a student fails to meet one or more of these expectations, the DGS will work with the Pharmacology Graduate Committee to determine an appropriate response. This may include implementation of a remediation plan or may result in dismissal from the Program. In the event that the Program offers an opportunity for remediation, a plan will be developed by the DGS, in conjunction with the Pharmacology Graduate Committee and student's Thesis Committee. All plans will outline specific goals and a timeline for their completion. The plan will be codified in writing (expectations and timeline) and

upon notification, the student will be advised that failure to achieve the stated goals will place the student at risk for immediate dismissal from the Program.

If it is determined that the student must leave the Program and the student has satisfactorily completed sufficient hours of graduate credit, the Pharmacology Graduate Committee will determine whether the student's achievements merit the award of a Master of Science in Biological and Physical Sciences.

### **Advancement to Candidacy Exam**

The Pharmacology Graduate Program requires completion of a qualifying exam by July 15<sup>th</sup> of the student's second year. This requirement is in addition to completion of the coursework, both of which are required to advance to Ph.D. candidacy. The exam is conducted by an examination committee, the composition of which is defined in the Pharmacology curriculum document. Satisfactory completion of this exam will be determined by the examining committee, with four possible outcomes for each component of the exam: High Pass, Pass, Conditional Pass, and Fail. The student must pass both components of the exam, written and oral.

In the case of a conditional pass on either portion of the exam, the examining committee will explain to the student at the conclusion of the exam the perceived deficiencies, and discuss the expectations for remediation and the timeline for completion. In addition, the examination committee chair will provide a written report that summarizes the outcome, expectations and timeline. This report will be distributed via email to the student, the mentor, the DGS, and the members of the examination committee within two weeks of the meeting. This report will include a clear statement that, should the student fail to meet the expectations/timeline outlined in the report, the student will be at risk for dismissal from the Program. If the examination committee makes a final determination that the student has failed the qualifying exam, then the case will be referred to the Pharmacology Graduate Committee. The Pharmacology Graduate Committee will make the final decision as to whether the student will be offered a second opportunity to take the qualifying exam or if the student will be dismissed from the Program. The decision of the Graduate Committee will be documented and provided to the student in writing. Successful completion of course work and the candidacy exam will allow the Graduate Committee to determine if a student is eligible for Advancement to Candidacy in the Pharmacology Ph.D. program. This milestone will be documented in SIS.

On successful completion of the Advancement to Candidacy Exam, all students are eligible to receive the Master of Science in Biological and Physical Sciences. If a student fails the Advancement to Candidacy Exam, the Pharmacology Graduate Committee may recommend another written exercise with an oral defense for the student to complete, which may serve as the Final Exam required for the Master of Science in Biological and Physical Sciences.

### **Academic Progress after Advancement to Candidacy**

Monitoring academic progress after the Advancement to Candidacy Exam is the purview of Mentor and the Graduate Advisory/Thesis Committee, with oversight by the

DGS and the Pharmacology Graduate Committee. The Pharmacology program requires that the Advisory/Thesis Committee meet twice annually. However, the Advisory/Thesis Committee may require more frequent meetings. At each meeting, the Committee will be informed by the student and his/her mentor about progress towards completion of the PhD. Criteria for satisfactory academic progress may include:

- On time scheduling of Thesis/Advisory Committee meetings.
- Successful completion of/work towards goals as outlined by the Thesis/Advisory Committee.
- Attendance at/participation in required programmatic activities (e.g. seminar, Journal Club, Retreat, etc.).
- Adherence to programmatic policies.

The outcome of each Committee Meeting is documented on the Committee Meeting Progress Report form available on the Pharmacology website. The form is completed by the student's mentor and is signed by all members of the Thesis/Advisory Committee (including the mentor), the student, and by the DGS. On the form, the student's progress is evaluated with an Overall Summary and rated as Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory. At the close of the meeting, the Committee will delineate goals for the next period and provide a defined timeline for achievement/implementation of these goals. The Committee may, at its discretion, require more frequent scheduling of committee meetings. If recommended, this will become the expectation for that student, superseding the basic programmatic requirement of semi-annual meetings.

If the DGS is not on the Thesis/Advisory Committee, the student will meet with the DGS to discuss the assessment and recommendations of the committee; if satisfied by the proceedings, the DGS will also sign the progress report. Once the progress report is completed and signed, the student will return the progress report to the Pharmacology Graduate Program office for retention in the student's file.

In the event that the Thesis/Advisory Committee expresses concern about the student's progress, this will be conveyed orally to the student at the close of the meeting. A written committee report will be prepared as described above. This report will include a statement concerning: 1. the perceived deficiencies; 2. the potential risk for dismissal due to failure to achieve satisfactory academic progress; and 3. a summary of the committee's expectations, including a timeline for their completion. As above, the committee may require more frequent meetings to enable more effective monitoring of progress. If a determination is made that the student has not met the expectations established in prior committee reports, the Thesis/Advisory Committee will refer the case to the Pharmacology Graduate Committee for review and final decision. The Pharmacology Graduate Committee may elect to cease funding or to dismiss the student from the Program. The outcome will be communicated to the student in writing.

### **Failure to Comply with Programmatic, School, or University Policies**

Graduate students in the Pharmacology Graduate Program are expected to comply with all applicable University and School of Medicine policies, including but not limited to those governing responsible conduct of research, safety, student conduct, academics,

and the Honor Code. 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.