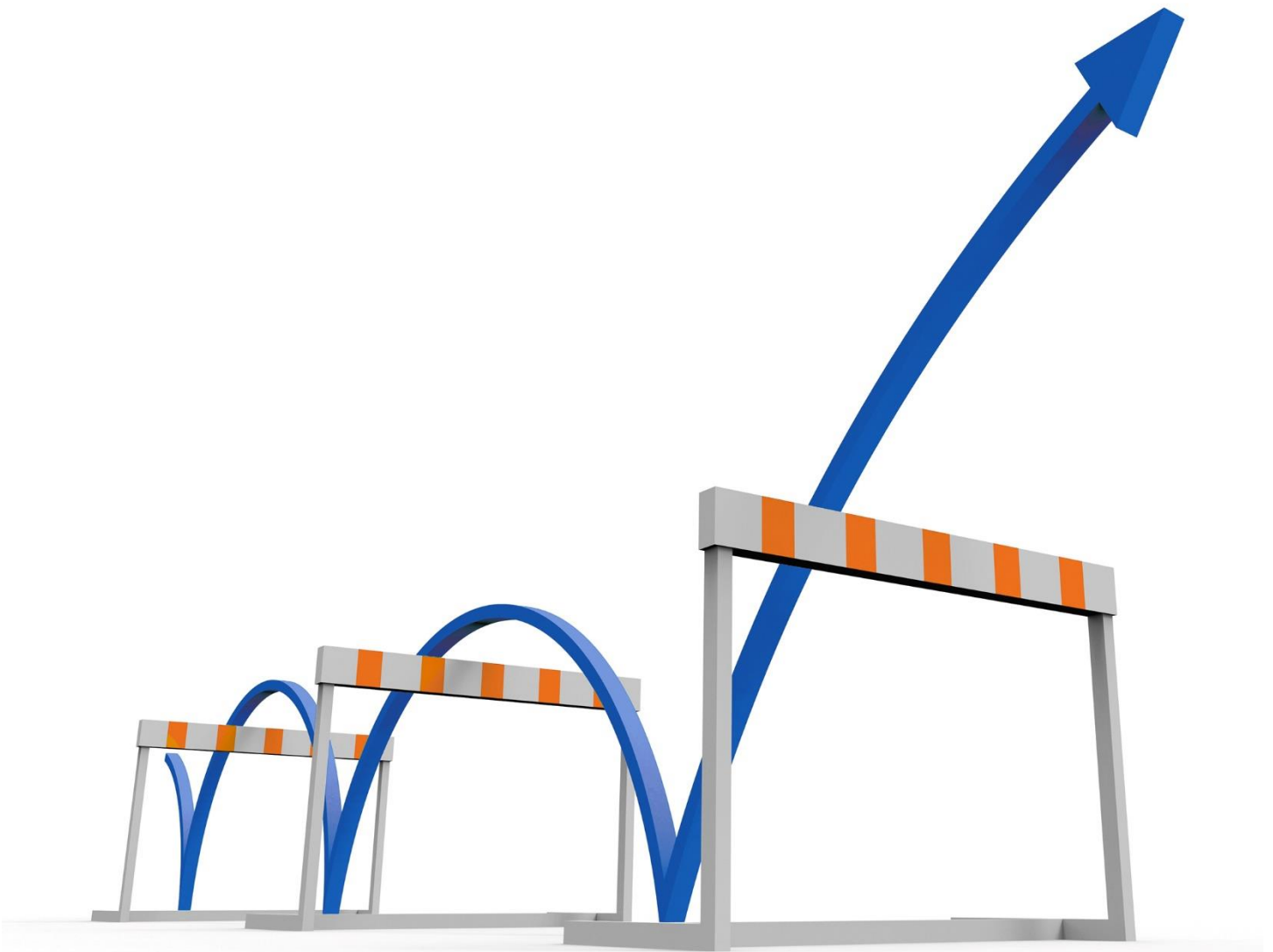


Graduate School Guidance for Academic Recovery Plans



Introduction

The UF Graduate School is here to help you support students. An academic recovery plan should be approached with the main goal of guiding graduate students to academic success and not seen as a roadmap to dismissal. That said, fairness, academic and professional standards, and the integrity of University of Florida graduate degrees require graduate student responsibility and accountability for their own success.

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What Exactly Is an Academic Recovery Plan?

An academic recovery plan (sometimes referred to as an academic action plan) is a plan to restore satisfactory academic progress for a graduate student who has fallen below expectations. The plan needs to be endorsed by a student's faculty mentor. The plan clearly describes a student's accountability for achieving specific outcomes by specific dates with clear consequences of meeting or not meeting expectations.

It is important to distinguish between an academic recovery plan and an *employment* improvement plan. The two may be closely related for a Graduate Assistant (GA) but should be addressed separately. For example, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences has developed excellent guidance for addressing academic issues as follows:

*Faculty must initiate an Academic Action Plan [i.e., Academic Recovery Plan] if academic performance is consistently below expectations. The Academic Action Plan should be set up at the beginning of a semester (at the latest) with goals/activities to be achieved by the end of that semester. It should state specific academic deficiencies noted (supported by appended emails, evaluations), required activities/outputs, the dates by which they must be achieved, and the consequences of not achieving the goals of the action plan. It should explain what academic support the faculty mentor and the department will provide to help the student achieve the goals. The Academic Action Plan should be **realistic, specific, and time-bound**. A second semester of retention in the academic program may be appropriate if the student met most but not all requirements and is showing good effort. Faculty must consult with departmental Graduate Coordinator and/or Graduate Program Advisor to draft the Action Plan. Graduate Coordinators and Graduate Program Advisors should consult with the CALS Associate Dean for Graduate Education for further guidance.*

A sample template from CALS is found in [Appendix A](#).

What Is My Role?

A graduate student's graduate faculty supervisor is primarily responsible for setting clear expectations and mentoring the student. Please see our [Individual Development Plan](#) (IDP) page for resources. But chances are that if you are reading this, you are either a graduate faculty supervisor with a student who has fallen behind on their initial plan or you are an administrator handling a case in which a student isn't meeting program expectations. In either case, your role is to clarify the student's status and articulate for the student how they can maintain or recover good academic standing, as well as explicitly state the consequences of not doing so.

Where Do I Start?

Before developing an academic recovery plan, it's crucial to identify the root causes of academic struggles and the specific academic requirements and milestones that are not being met (e.g., grade point average, supervisory committee, research proposal, qualifying exams, publications, candidacy, final exams, dissertation completion). This will assist you in creating a plan for your graduate student to facilitate retention. Underlying issues can be academic, personal, or a combination of both. Common challenges include:

- General academic issues (e.g., research difficulties, issues with supervisory committee, writing challenges, course overload, time management). If you are a faculty advisor, your department or unit graduate coordinator and staff can help with program-specific academic information and resources.
- Personal challenges (e.g., mental health issues, financial stress, family responsibilities, health problems, lack of support system). Note the availability of mental health resources from the UF Counseling & Wellness Center (counseling.ufl.edu/resources), and refer to Grad CARE by submitting a Care Concern Referral (umatter.ufl.edu/refer-or-report). Also, contact Grad CARE Assistant Director Christopher Walker (cjwalker@ufl.edu).

What Should Be Included?

Clear description of academic performance and deficiencies

Clearly describe specific academic deficiencies as related to satisfactory academic progress. Include relevant documentation.

Example:

As we have discussed at length during our weekly meetings, I believe that your dissertation research has not been adequately prioritized in your time management over the past year. Throughout X year, we have identified the lack of completion of your first research project as an area of underachievement in your Spring X semester evaluation, Individual Development Plan, and Fall X semester evaluation (all three attached). As part of our Mentor-Mentee Compact (attached), I expect graduate students in my lab to develop strong research skills through conducting high-quality scientific projects, which has not yet occurred. Therefore, it is important for us to clearly define a plan of action to eliminate any uncertainty regarding academic priorities for the Spring X semester.

Specific plan for improvement

Describe the academic plan for improvement with specific goals, due dates, and sub-steps/supporting objectives if appropriate.

Example:

Goal 1 – Complete the first experiment of your research and the associated analysis by X date.

- a. Continue working on the necessary experimental materials and procedures as outlined in your semester goals.*
- b. Complete the experimental work outlined in your proposal, including replicates and controls as required. All raw data should be organized and shared as specified by X date.*
- c. Evaluate the outcomes of the experiment, including testing all relevant treatments and controls. Ensure all raw data is uploaded and accessible for review by X date.*
- d. Conduct statistical analyses in collaboration with a designated colleague who can assist with the selection of appropriate methods and provide support with the coding.*
- e. Develop a written outline for your research article, including key sections such as introduction, research hypotheses, methods, results, and preliminary discussion points. A first draft of the outline should be submitted by X date, for feedback. After incorporating edits, the final draft should be submitted by X date, ensuring professional quality with consistent formatting, correct spelling and grammar, and well-structured arguments.*

Goal 2 – Submit the final draft of your research proposal to your committee for review by X date.

- a. A complete first draft, incorporating all sections and previous feedback, should be submitted by X date. The draft should include an overview, objectives, rationale, literature review, research plan, project timeline, expected outcomes, and data handling strategy.*
- b. After two weeks for review, I will provide feedback for incorporation into the final draft. Ensure the final draft is written professionally, with consistent formatting, correct spelling and grammar, and fully developed arguments.*
- c. Ensure the final draft includes a properly formatted list of references.*
- d. Submit the final draft to your committee for review to confirm the quality and scientific merit of the proposal.*

Explicit statement of consequences

Be very clear in describing the consequences for not meeting the goals of the recovery plan and not meeting the goals. (e.g., dismissal from the program, resignation as a major professor, etc.).

Example:

Failure to complete the outlined goals will result in an unsatisfactory grade for your research credits for the X semester. As stated in our department's program handbook, receiving a "U" grade for two consecutive semesters is grounds for program dismissal. Therefore, your continuation in the Ph.D. program in my lab is contingent upon the successful completion of these goals. If the goals are not met, it will lead to termination of your participation in the Ph.D. program under my supervision, and your assistantship will end on X date.

Clear picture of success

Make sure success is a real option, and explicitly state the positive consequences for meeting goals.

Example:

If you successfully complete the outlined goals, you will receive a satisfactory grade for your research credits for X semester. Meeting these expectations demonstrates your progress in the Ph.D. program and your ability to fulfill the requirements under my supervision. This achievement will support your continued engagement in the lab, maintain your standing in the program, and ensure the continuation of your assistantship.

Plan for monitoring continued success

Describe how the student's progress will be monitored going forward after a student succeeds in restoring satisfactory academic standing. This part should include meaningful and regular communication between the student and advisor.

Example:

To support your success, we will implement a regular progress review plan. This includes bi-weekly check-ins to discuss your advancements, address any obstacles, and adjust timelines or tasks as needed. We will assess your progress toward the goals at each review, and I will provide feedback and guidance. Additionally, if any challenges arise that could impact your ability to meet these objectives, I encourage you to communicate them promptly so we can explore solutions. Following this structured approach, we can work together to ensure you meet the program's standards and successfully continue as a Ph.D. student.

Words of encouragement and support

Write to encourage success and to show commitment to supporting the plan.

Example:

I am confident in your ability to achieve your academic and professional goals. With my support, guidance from your committee, and help from the department, you have the resources necessary to carry out this plan. We are all committed to your success.

Best Practices for Units

Set up systems to monitor and notify

The Graduate School relies on academic units to monitor graduate student progress and milestones. Depending on the size and nature of your graduate program, monitoring systems could be largely routine database checks (e.g., end-of-term GPA and grade checks), individualized (e.g., scheduled meetings with advisors), or a combination (e.g., required timelines for IDP and program plan meetings).

These monitoring systems should be used to immediately address any sign of faltering academic progress. See [Appendix B](#) for a template sample from the College of Journalism and Communications of a letter that would be automatically initiated when an end-of-term grade report flags a low grade.

In cases of a conditionally admitted graduate student, the Graduate School helps track that student's early success to ensure they meet the conditions, normally only until the end of the student's first semester. For example, the following language is included in a letter of acceptance for a new student approved to enroll with less than a 3.0 GPA:

To enroll any semester beyond your first semester, you must finish all courses in which you enroll your first semester with at least a 3.0 grade point average and no I (Incomplete), U (Unsatisfactory) or W (Withdrawn) grades. A hold will go on your records to block next-term preregistration for courses until your first-semester grades are posted on your transcript and show that you have met these conditions on your admission, thus qualifying for continued enrollment. Bear in mind that you must have at least a 3.0 grade point average (overall and major) at the end of your degree program to graduate with a graduate degree from the University of Florida.

When it's complicated, talk it over

When cases are more complicated, you'll want to engage more to get all perspectives.

When a student is struggling academically, you'll often hear directly from either the student

or the advisor (if you're not the advisor observing directly). You may be tempted to jump into action based on that first perspective but try to understand the other side before drawing conclusions.

Depending on the circumstances, a nudge for the student and advisor to set aside time to clarify expectations and work out a plan will be all that it takes to set in motion a path to academic recovery. Pointing both to useful resources such as your program's student handbook, IDP resources, and those resources listed below will also help. Resolving a misunderstanding or conflict informally is a win!

Keep records

Whatever the plan, steps toward it should be recorded in writing, shared with students, and include dates. Written evidence to support an Academic Recovery Plan may include an IDP, a typical academic program plan with advising notes, or even an email follow-up to a meeting. Keep records for all parties to be able to reference to confirm what was agreed to. These records may also serve as important attachments for an academic recovery plan (see [Appendix A](#)).

Define terms

Make very clear what is meant by *satisfactory academic progress*, *probation*, *suspension*, and *dismissal*. Although the UF Graduate Catalog defines minimum requirements (e.g., maintaining 3.0 GPA) for satisfactory academic progress, most programs have more specific and stringent requirements. Your program may have defined triggers for probation, suspension, or dismissal. These should be explicit in your student handbook and must be articulated clearly as potential outcomes in the academic action plan so they can be avoided.

- A *probation* triggered by not meeting minimum requirements allows a student to remain enrolled but requires that they improve their academic performance within a specified period (often a semester). Failure to improve may lead to suspension or dismissal.
- *Suspensions* are less common, but if applied, a suspension should serve the purpose of giving the student time away from the program to reflect, improve skills, or resolve issues that may have contributed to poor performance. Note that students who do not enroll at the university for three consecutive terms, including any summer term, must apply for readmission to the same program of their previous enrollment.
- *Dismissal* is the last resort and should only happen due to a student's failure to meet clearly outlined academic requirements over time. See next section.

Avoid “overnight” suspension or dismissal

The Graduate School strongly advises against any policy that allows a student to go immediately from good academic standing to dismissed overnight. For example, a student who actively attended and participated throughout a semester, who was not a conditional admit, and who was not on probation, shouldn't be dismissed from a program based on a single grade report without an opportunity to recover. Unless there's a conduct issue (see [The Orange Book](#)), the Graduate School recommends allowing students at least one probationary semester to attempt an academic recovery plan to get back on track and restore satisfactory academic standing.

Make sure the plan is feasible

Be realistic in developing a plan so that the student is not given false hope of success. Also, ensure that any required plan for raising a GPA is mathematically possible. It may take more than one semester.

Clarify who's responsible when a supervisor resigns, retires, or declines to continue as committee chair

Different programs have different expectations for supervisory committee/advisor assignment. Unclear expectations in this area lead to difficult situations when a faculty supervisor/chair departs the university or declines to continue to serve on the student's committee.

Make sure your program's expectations are made clear to students in written form (e.g., student handbook). See [Appendix C](#) from the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering for a sample letter referring to a program's policy.

In rare cases in which the unit is unable to resolve a conflict between advisor expectations and a student's personal challenges after consulting with Grad CARE or other university student support resources, the student or faculty member may be referred to the Office of the Ombuds (www.ombuds.ufl.edu).

Ensure consistency and fairness

The best way to ensure consistency and fairness is to publish clear expectations and rules, especially in areas in which program expectations and requirements are more stringent or more specific than what is required by the UF Graduate Catalog. Student handbooks that are distributed at orientation and made easily available online are best.

Appendix A

Sample Recovery Plan Template adapted from CALS

[letterhead]

[include date, student name, UFID, and department/program]

Dear [Student],

Summary of academic deficiencies noted (should append more detailed emails or semester evaluations to bolster the deficiencies).

Specific plan of action to be accomplished this semester:

1. Goal 1 – outcome/product – due date
2. Goal 2 – outcome/product – due date
3. Goal 3 – outcome/product – due date, etc.

Consequences for not meeting the goals of the action plan (e.g., dismissal from the program, resignation as major professor, termination of assistantship on x date, etc.).

Plan for monitoring success.

Words to show your belief in their ability to succeed and your commitment to student academic / employment success. Explain support the faculty advisor, committee, and department will provide to help student be successful.

Sincerely,

[Faculty advisor name, title, and signature]

cc: Student File, Associate Dean, Coordinator

Graduate Student Signature Acknowledges Receipt

Date

Appendix B

Sample Probation Letter adapted from CJC

[letterhead]

[include date, student name, UFID, and department/program]

Dear [Student],

Because you received a grade lower than C+ at the end of X semester, you have been placed on probation for the X semester or your next enrolled semester. The policy under which you have been placed on probation is published in the student handbook, and states *[note that this language is specific to CJC – insert your specific program’s handbook language here]*:

Any student who earns a truncated GPA less than 3.0 and/or receives a C, C-, D+, D, D-, E, I, N or U grade will be placed on probation, except for courses taken from the Levin College of Law, undergraduate statistics course, or articulation classes. For these courses, any student receiving one grade that is a C-, D+, D, D-, E, I, N or U will be placed on probation.

If students are placed on probation, they will need to work to devise a plan to improve their grades. They will need to submit the plan for approval. If they satisfy the approved plan in the term of probation and their cumulative GPA is at or above a 3.0 the probation flag will be lifted.

You will need to work with your advisor to devise a plan to improve your grades. You will need to submit the plan to the department by X date. While on probation, you may take a maximum of X credits. If you satisfy that plan in the term of probation and have a 3.0 or higher GPA average and no I grades at the end of term, the probation flag will be lifted. If your probation is not lifted and you have previously been on suspension, you will be dismissed from the program.

I urge you to consider the probation as a challenge to perform at the highest possible level and to complete the degree requirements with a true sense of pride and accomplishment.

Sincerely,

[Program associate dean or coordinator name, title and signature]

cc: Student File, Faculty Advisor, HR and Grad School Contacts as appropriate

Appendix C

Sample Letter on Securing an Academic Advisor adapted from HWCOE

[letterhead]

[include date, student name, UFID, and department/program]

Dear [Student],

This letter serves as official notification regarding your advisory support, as outlined in the [Department Name] Graduate Assistant (GA) Handbook, which requires you to maintain an advisor.

You have until [specific timeframe, e.g., "90 days from the date of this letter"] to secure an advisor. Please note that failure to obtain an advisor within this timeframe may affect your continued appointment as a GA.

To assist you in this process, we recommend the following:

1. Contact faculty members whose research aligns with your academic interests.
2. Review department resources, including faculty profiles, to identify potential advisors.
3. Reach out to the [Graduate Coordinator or other support staff] if you have questions or need further guidance.

If you have already begun this process or have additional circumstances that may impact your ability to find an advisor within this period, please inform [Name] as soon as possible. We are here to support you and ensure you have every opportunity to succeed in your program.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need further assistance.

Sincerely,

[Program associate dean or coordinator name, title and signature]

cc: Student File, Academic Advisor