

ACADEMIC BOARD – MEETING 6/03 (24 JULY 2003)

UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS - PENALTY OF SUSPENSION

Recommendations for consideration by Academic Programs Committee

BACKGROUND

Currently, undergraduate students may be notified that they have been “suspended” when a case for unsatisfactory progress is made out by Faculties under the Unsatisfactory Progress Statute - Statute 11.5. The word “suspension” is here intended to mean termination of enrolment in a particular course. Some students understand “suspension” to mean no more than a temporary exclusion from the University, giving rise to the necessity at unsatisfactory progress hearings to explain the particular meaning used. Others assume that it means forever and from all courses.

In practice, however, the word “suspension” is not intended to be understood as a permanent termination of enrolment. Section 8 of Statute 11.5 provides that the Board may authorise re-admission of suspended students if satisfied that a student’s conditions or circumstances have so changed that there is a reasonable prospect of academic success.

A disparity may arise between local and international students: while local students may undertake "academic rehabilitation" by attending a different educational institution, attaining good grades and re-applying for a place at the University, international students who make an unsuccessful appeal to the Academic Board may have their visas revoked and may not have the option of this second chance (Students may be able to "rehabilitate" at an overseas university but they might still face problems in securing a fresh visa once offered readmission). The use of "termination" would permit Faculties and the Academic Board to indicate, where possible and appropriate, the possibilities of academic rehabilitation and a future application for a place in a course.

There is also inconsistency in the terminology of unsatisfactory progress processes for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students. While there is provision in the Unsatisfactory Progress Statute enabling the Board to “terminate” a postgraduate student’s candidature, there is no similar provision which would enable the Board to “terminate” the candidature of an undergraduate student. Before 1971 there was an umbrella student progress regulation for undergraduates but little about postgraduates except for PhD students (where 'termination' was used). In 1971 a regulation was instituted for higher degree students based on the termination process. From a process point of view, however, postgraduate coursework students are indistinguishable from undergraduates and are considered together with undergraduates and "suspended" by the Board.

A review of statutes and regulations reveals that a number of terms are used in respect of possible penalties that may be imposed on students. The following are the relevant expressions used:

- Termination of candidature,
- Termination of enrolment,
- Suspension from a course,
- Suspension of enrolment,
- Cancellation of a course,
- Cancellation of enrolment,
- Exclusion from enrolment,
- Exclusion from a course,
- Exclusion from the University “either permanently or for such period as is thought fit”,
- Exclusion from part of the University, and
- Denial or restriction of entry to premises or part thereof.

NEW STATUTE 13.1 STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Students on whom disciplinary action has been imposed are entitled to be clear about the meaning and extent of penalties imposed. Statute 13.1 governing student discipline is currently being reviewed and the draft includes a definition of both “suspension” (which is stated to be termination of a student’s enrolment for a specified period) and “termination”. The proposed new Statute includes the power to exclude, suspend and terminate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Faculties and the Academic Board adopt "termination of enrolment" in place of "suspension" in unsatisfactory progress recommendations and decisions for postgraduate (coursework) and undergraduate students, and that “termination of candidature” remain in place for research higher degree students.
2. That the Academic Board makes clear and consistent in all statutes and regulations the precise meaning of its powers to terminate enrolment permanently, to exclude a student from the University, and to suspend enrolment in a course for such a term and on such conditions as it considers appropriate, consistent with the interpretation provision of the revised Statute 13.1.
3. Following consideration of these recommendations by the Academic Board, that this matter be referred to the Legislation Committee with a view to revising Statute 11.5 and amending other statutes and regulations as necessary to ensure consistency of terminology.
4. That a list of approved definitions be inserted in Statute 1.1 (Preliminary).

Professor P B McPhee
President of the Academic Board
24 June 2003
revised 18 July 2003

ACADEMIC BOARD – MINUTES 6/03 (24 JULY 2003)

13.3 Unsatisfactory Progress Terminology

Following consideration of paper developed by the President for the Committee, the Board adopted the following recommendations:

- That Faculties and the Academic Board adopt "termination of enrolment" in place of "suspension" in unsatisfactory progress recommendations and decisions for postgraduate (coursework) and undergraduate students, and that "termination of candidature" remain in place for research higher degree students.
- That the Academic Board makes clear and consistent in all statutes and regulations the precise meaning of its powers to terminate enrolment permanently, to exclude a student from the University, and to suspend enrolment in a course for such a term and on such conditions as it considers appropriate, consistent with the interpretation provision of the revised Statute 13.1.
- Following consideration of these recommendations by the Academic Board, that this matter be referred to the Legislation Committee with a view to revising Statute 11.5 and amending other statutes and regulations as necessary to ensure consistency of terminology.
- That a list of approved definitions be inserted in Statute 1.1 (Preliminary).

The President commented that a revision of the Student Discipline Statute involving inter alia the reform of terminology would be submitted to the August Board meeting.

ACADEMIC BOARD – MEETING 9/03 (23 OCTOBER 2003)

6 Changes to Statutes relating to unsatisfactory progress of Postgraduate coursework students

In response to query at an earlier meeting the Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar prepared a paper clarifying the unsatisfactory progress rules for postgraduate coursework students.

It was recommended that the existing definition of a Higher Degree student in Statutes 1.1 and 11.3 is correct and should be retained but Statute 11.5 should be reviewed to clarify unsatisfactory progress rules for postgraduate students in coursework programs.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations and agreed to refer the matter to Legal Services for consideration in its current redrafting of Statute 11.5.