

# **SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

Effective August 2013  
Updated September 2015

Students are expected to meet two standards in their course of study:

- Satisfactory Performance refers to the requirement of minimum grade performance in course work, and the passage of the required series of written and oral examinations.
- Satisfactory Progress refers to the speed and timeliness of progression through course work, exams and writing the dissertation.

A student whose performance or progress is not satisfactory is subject to dismissal from the program, and, in general, must petition to remain in the program. Even in instances in which the petition process is waived or petitions are approved, students are expected to get back on schedule to meet satisfactory progress standards or to petition to reschedule their academic time line. Students are responsible for discussing with their academic advisers, and bringing to the attention of the Coordinator of Graduate Studies, any circumstances that will prevent their meeting academic progress standards.

Students funded on Graduate Assistantships are held to additional Satisfactory Performance standards, and may have the Satisfactory Progress standards more strictly enforced (see details below). The Department must assure that departmental funds are being invested in high-performing students who are progressing efficiently through the program requirements.

## **Satisfactory Performance Standards**

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average across all Econ courses, a 3.0 grade point average across all regular courses, and a 3.0 GPA in all regular and non-regular courses combined. Regular courses are distinct from independent or group study, open content seminars, thesis or dissertation credits, study abroad, supervised college teaching, internships, or any courses graded on a pass/fail basis. Failure to meet the minimum GPA requirements will result in academic probation and, if not rectified, dismissal from the program.

Students funded on Graduate Teaching Assistantships must meet the requirements above; in addition, a grade below B (including a B-) in any required course will trigger a review of the student's overall record and of whether continuation of support is merited. The student's record is reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the Graduate Program Committee. The Graduate Coordinator will make the student aware of the review before it takes place and will convey the GPC's decision after the review is completed.

Graduate students must pass the prescribed set of examinations. For MA students the requirement is the final Master's examination, which is either the defense of the thesis for Plan A, or completion of the technical paper process for Plan B. For PhD students the requirements include the Qualifying Exam, the preliminary oral exam (dissertation proposal defense), and the final oral exam (final dissertation defense). Only two attempts are allowed for each exam. Two failures on an

exam will lead to dismissal from the program. *Note:* Students with documented learning disabilities (documentation must be provided to the Graduate Coordination from the Office of Resources for Students with Disabilities at CSU) and students with religious commitments will be given appropriate accommodations regarding the QE and must consult with the Graduate Coordinator well in advance of the exam to arrange for those accommodations.

### **Satisfactory Progress Standards – while course work is being completed**

During the first three years in the PhD program students are expected to complete their course work (core courses, field courses and elective courses) and pass the Qualifying Exam. Making satisfactory progress during this time includes the following:

- Before the end of the advising period in the second semester, students must have filed with the department a written semester-by-semester course plan including field and elective courses, approved by their advisor.
- In general, graduate students are expected to take at least nine credits of regular courses each semester until all course work has been completed. In some semesters, independent study credits may be approved in place of a regular course.
- In addition to the above, graduate students should sign up for 3 dissertation credits (ECON 799) each semester for the first six semesters. Failure to do so may result in charges in later semesters for students to complete the 18 credit requirement. *Note:* there are circumstances under which it may be in a student's interests to defer those credits to their fourth or fifth year and you should discuss this with the Graduate Coordinator.
- PhD students are expected to complete core courses within the first three semesters of the program. This includes ECON 501, 505, and 635 in the first (fall) semester; ECON 504, 506, 705, and 735 in the second semester; and ECON 704 and 706 in the third semester.
- Exceptions to the nine-credit rule include: (a) PhD students in the third semester are allowed to take only Econ 704 and 706, but should be aware that a field course offered that semester may not be offered again until 2 years later; (b) students in later semesters, who have completed all offered course work and are awaiting the offering of field and elective courses identified in their course plan on file, may take less than nine credits; (c) students who are privately funded and are pursuing the degree on a part-time basis may follow a plan approved by their advisor and on file with the department.
- MA students are expected to complete the MA course requirements in no more than three semesters. The final oral examination should be no later than the fourth semester.
- PhD students must attempt the Qualifying Exam in January after the third semester (after completion of Econ 704 and 706). A student failing the exam must retake it at the next opportunity (which is in the summer after the second year). Failing to attempt the exam according to schedule counts as a Fail, unless an exception has been approved by the Graduate Program Committee and Department Chair.
- PhD students entering with graduate transfer credit will have the satisfactory progress expectations adjusted accordingly.

### **Satisfactory Progress Standards – after course work is completed**

For students who have passed the QE's and completed all of their required coursework, satisfactory progress guidelines apply to the process of completing their dissertation research when they are receiving funding from the department as instructors. Although the Department cannot make a

formal contractual commitment to its instructors beyond one year at a time (by Colorado Statute employment contracts for instructors can only be for one year) it makes an informal commitment to fund each qualified student in the instructor pool for three years. Combined with three year of funding as a GTA, fully funded students can expect 6 years of funding, which the Department believes is a realistic framework for completion of the PhD. Students who do not complete their PhDs in six years cannot count on continued employment as instructors.

Completing the dissertation by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> year – Making Satisfactory Progress:

Ideally, students will complete the PhD program in 5 years. That will typically involve:

- Completing all coursework by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year.
- Selecting a dissertation advisor and forming a committee by early Fall of the 4<sup>th</sup> year, and defending their dissertation proposal late in Fall or early in the Spring of the 4<sup>th</sup> year.
- Having a job market paper completed by the beginning of the Fall of the 5<sup>th</sup> year and having a significant amount to the dissertation research completed by that time (to be prepared for the interruption to the research process involved in the job market process).
- Spending almost all of the Fall of the 5<sup>th</sup> year applying for jobs and arranging for interviews at the AEA meetings in January (the beginning of the Spring of the 5<sup>th</sup> year). Note: The application process involves having several written documents to submit to prospective employers (cover letters, vitae, teaching philosophy, evidence of teaching effectiveness, dissertation abstract, job market paper, statement of research interests, letters of recommendation, etc.)
- Spending a significant part of the Spring of the 5<sup>th</sup> year on the job market process (attending interviews at the AEA meetings, organizing and flying out for campus visits, considering offers and accepting an offer).
- Resuming dissertation research sometime in the Spring semester of the 5<sup>th</sup> year.
- Defending the dissertation (final defense) late in the Spring or in the summer of the 5<sup>th</sup> year. Note: summer defenses can be difficult because committee members may not always be available. Summer defenses should be scheduled in the Spring to make sure all committee members can be present in person or via videoconferencing.
- Make the Spring or Summer graduation deadline. If the Summer deadline is not met students must get a letter from the department and the Graduate School certifying that all the requirements for the PhD have been completed and the degree will be conferred the following Fall.

Role of ECON 798:

One of the last classes a PhD student will typically take is the dissertation seminar in the Spring of their 3<sup>rd</sup> year. This seminar is designed to help transition students from coursework to research. The seminar is most effective at that and helping students graduate in 5 years when certain things happen:

1. Students talk with faculty members during the course of the seminar to find out who would be potentially good dissertation advisors and committee members. That includes searching for a good outside member. Getting their ideas and feedback through the seminar process will build a foundation that makes identifying a dissertation topic and working on the dissertation proposal more expedient.
2. The momentum that students build up during the seminar is not lost and continues to build through the summer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year and into the Fall of the 4<sup>th</sup> year. The summer of the 3<sup>rd</sup>

year is a crucial time for getting a lot of reading done and immersing oneself in the literature that will ultimately be the literature review for the dissertation.

If there are delays and/or disruptions in the dissertation research process then students are expected to follow the same cycle as above but one year later – which will be in their 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years. The department considers this less than ideal but still making satisfactory progress.

#### Beyond the 6<sup>th</sup> year – Not making satisfactory progress:

Students who have not completed their dissertations by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> year raise concerns. Those students are not considered to be making satisfactory progress and will typically not be funded as instructors after the 6<sup>th</sup> year. In circumstances where the department has a need for qualified instructors exceptions to this may be considered. In that case the department chair and the graduate coordinator will contact those students and their dissertation committee members (before the end of the Spring semester of the 6<sup>th</sup> year) to discuss their situation and their plans. If after consultation with the student and dissertation chair the concerns are assuaged and there is a clear plan for completion and funding is available, the student may continue to be employed as an instructor. If however, after consultation it is determined that the student does not have a clear plan for completing their dissertation the department chair may decide not to continue employing the student as an instructor into their 7<sup>th</sup> year.<sup>1</sup>

Students who cannot meet the satisfactory progress standards may at any time ask their academic adviser to co-sign a petition to the Chair, to reschedule their academic time line in light of their specific situations. This petition should be submitted to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies who will submit it to the Graduate Program Committee for advisory comment before passing it on to the Chair who makes the ultimate decision. Such petitions may involve an extension of the time period in which the student is expected to complete the degree. This may apply to students who must take English courses as they begin the graduate program or who must take courses to refurbish their skills in economic theory or quantitative methods (statistics or mathematics). It may also include students who want to pursue a graduate degree on a part-time basis or who want to take a leave of absence from graduate study. Such students should also consult the Graduate and Professional Bulletin for Graduate School requirements for continuous enrollment, readmission, and time limits.

#### **Funding Limits for Department Funded Students**

Satisfactory Progress standards imply the limitations on the number of semesters the Department will support students on assistantships (that provide tuition support), and instructorships (that do not provide tuition support). In particular:

- PhD students should be able to complete the Qualifying Exam and all course work in 5 or 6 semesters. Consequently, qualified PhD students will typically be advanced to Instructor status after 6. Funding as an instructor will typically end at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> year and is extended only in exceptional circumstances in cases of compelling departmental need.
- Students entering the PhD program with course credit for other graduate work will have the term of their funding adjusted in an equitable way that will be determined upon

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted there is a 10 year time limit for completing the MA and PhD as set out in the *Graduate and Professional Bulletin*, E.1.12 Time Limit.

admission.

- The department intends assistantship support to be targeted mainly at PhD students. From time to time, an MA student may end up with assistantship funding. The maximum term of funding for an MA student will be 2 semesters.

Students not funded by the Department who expect to apply for funding at a later time should be aware that their performance in relation to the progress standards would be a factor in the Department's consideration of their subsequent applications for funding.