

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON GRADUATE COURSE AND CURRICULUM FOR CHANGES TO THE ADMISSION AND CONTINUATION POLICIES OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

This document supersedes GFC Document 832.

Background

Graduate study provides a means for intellectual and professional growth, for training the next generation of scholars, and for advancing current knowledge and best practices, but is costly to the individual and the institution. Admission decisions should reflect a selection of candidates with a strong likelihood of completing the graduate degree drawn from a diverse pool of applicants. Undergraduate GPA is still widely used as a criterion for making admissions decisions. Recognizing that some individuals whose undergraduate GPAs are below the minimum admission requirement have the ability to be successful in graduate study, we must have an objective means of demonstrating this ability.

Likewise, decisions to allow a student to continue in a graduate program must be based on a realistic assessment of the student's ability to complete the program without compromising the academic integrity of the institution.

The proposed changes allow additional ways for an applicant to demonstrate the ability to be successful in graduate studies while placing greater reliance on the program's assessment of applicants. Programs need to have confidence in those they are admitting. Programs also must provide an honest assessment of the potential for degree completion when a student is not performing well.

I. POLICY ON ADMISSION

A. Current Policy

Admission in Regular Status. An applicant must meet the requirements of the individual graduate program unit and the following Graduate School requirements in order to be considered for admission in regular standing:

- A bachelor's degree
- A minimum grade point average of 2.75 (4.0 scale), based on all undergraduate work completed prior to the awarding of the bachelor's degree.
- Proficiency in the English language (for non-native speakers of English) as demonstrated by
 - 1) a baccalaureate or higher degree awarded within the previous two years from UWM, another approved U.S. institution, or a non-U.S., English-language institution approved by the Center for International Education; or
 - 2) a score of 550 or higher on the paper-based TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) taken within the previous two years; or

- 3) a score of 213 or higher on the computer-based TOEFL taken within the previous two years.

Applicants who have undergraduate grade point averages below 2.75 and who have completed advanced degrees may be recommended for admission in regular status at the discretion of the graduate program unit.

Admission on Probation. An applicant whose overall undergraduate grade point average is 2.50 - 2.74 (4.0 scale) may be considered for admission on probation by furnishing substantial evidence of ability to do satisfactory graduate work. Such evidence must include at least one of the following:

- A grade point average of 3.0 or above attained during the final two years of the applicant's baccalaureate degree program.
- Satisfactory completion of six or more credits of program approved post baccalaureate coursework in an academic area directly related to the graduate program that the applicant has chosen. This must be recent coursework at the advanced undergraduate level; the grades earned must be a "B" or better (B- not acceptable). If these credits meet the transfer credit requirements of the Graduate School, they may be used to satisfy the graduate degree requirements with approval from the Graduate School and the program.
- Submission of score reports (sent directly from the testing service to UWM) from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), or Miller Analogies Test, that indicate a high probability of success in graduate school.
- An advanced degree.

In addition to one of the above, probationary applicants who are non-native speakers of English must demonstrate English proficiency with one of the following:

- 1) a baccalaureate or higher degree awarded within the previous two years from UWM, another approved U.S. institution, or a non-U.S., English-language institution approved by the Center for International Education; or
- 2) a score of 550 or higher on the paper-based TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) taken within the previous two years; or
- 3) a score of 213 or higher on the computer-based TOEFL taken within the previous two years.

All probationary students must consult the proposed graduate program unit for further information regarding conditions of probation and the removal of probationary status, which are unique to the program unit.

Students admitted on probation, who are not cleared from probationary status within three enrolled semesters, will receive a Graduate Dean's OK Required to Continue and must show sufficient cause for continued graduate status.

Operational Guidelines for Admission on Probation Below 2.5

Graduate applicants with an overall undergraduate grade point average below 2.5 should not be admitted. However, if the program recommends probationary admission to the Graduate School, two or more of the following items of substantial evidence must be provided:

- A grade point average of 3.0 or above attained during the final two years of the applicant's baccalaureate degree program.
- Satisfactory completion of nine or more credits of program approved post baccalaureate coursework in an area directly related to the graduate program that the applicant has chosen. This coursework must be at the advanced undergraduate level; grades earned must be a "B" or better (B- not acceptable). If these credits meet the transfer credit requirements of the Graduate School, they may be used to satisfy the graduate degree requirements with approval from the Graduate School and the program.
- Submission of official score reports (sent directly from the testing service to UWM), from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), or Miller Analogies Test, that indicate strong probability of success in graduate school.
- An advanced degree.

In addition to one of the above, probationary applicants who are non-native speakers of English must demonstrate English proficiency with one of the following:

- 1) a baccalaureate or higher degree awarded within the previous two years from UWM, another approved U.S. institution, or a non-U.S., English-language institution approved by the Center for International Education; or
- 2) a score of 550 or higher on the paper-based TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) taken within the previous two years; or
- 3) a score of 213 or higher on the computer-based TOEFL taken within the previous two years.

Admission with Deficiencies. Applicants may be admitted with specific program-defined course deficiencies provided that the deficiencies amount to no more than two courses.

The student is expected to satisfy deficiency requirements within three enrolled semesters. Deficiencies are monitored by the Graduate School and the individual graduate program unit. No course credits earned in making up deficiencies may be counted as program credits required for the degree. Failure to satisfy deficiency requirements within three enrolled semesters will result in a Graduate Dean's OK Required to Continue action.

B. Proposed Changes and Rationale

1. Add “positive recommendation for admission by the program to which the student is applying” as a criterion for admission.

This has always been a requirement, but should be explicitly stated.

2. Acknowledge international equivalents of a baccalaureate degree.

As we seek to expand our enrollment of international students, it is too restrictive to refer to a bachelor’s degree as the only appropriate credential for entry into graduate study. We have admitted and will continue to admit students from institutions outside of the U.S. who possess credentials other than a baccalaureate degree. These credentials are evaluated and accepted by the UWM Center for International Education as being equivalent undergraduate preparation to a bachelor’s degree.

3. Require that the undergraduate degree have been earned at a regionally accredited institution.

This helps ensure the quality of the undergraduate degree.

4. Require only one indicator for potential academic success from those whose undergraduate GPA is below 2.75 (vs. two or more in some cases), and more narrowly define the type of post-baccalaureate coursework that qualifies as evidence of potential.

As evidence of potential academic success, current policy requires one of the following for students whose undergraduate GPA is between 2.50 and 2.74, and two of the following for those whose undergraduate GPA is below 2.50:

- a. post-baccalaureate coursework with a grade of B or better in an area related to the proposed graduate program
- b. 3.0 or higher GPA during the final two years of the undergraduate degree
- c. submission of scores from the GRE, GMAT or MAT that indicate strong probability of success in graduate school.
- d. a graduate degree

It is reasonable to assume that option b. would rarely occur for someone whose cumulative undergraduate GPA was below 2.50. Two older studies conducted by the Educational Testing Service ^{1 2}, have shown that average quantitative scores were progressively lower across groups of increasing age or time since earning the baccalaureate. Those with lower undergraduate GPAs may not have taken the GRE or GMAT in close proximity to degree completion, so option c. isn’t really viable for this population.

¹ Clark, Mary Jo, Older and Younger Graduate Students: A Comparison of Goals, Grades, and GRE Scores, ETS Research Report, GREB-81-17R (1984), RR-84-05, 1984

² Baratz, Joan C.; Clark, Mary Jo; Hartle, Terry W., Older Students and the GRE Aptitude Test, ETS Research Report, GREB-76-13R (1983), RR-83-20, 1983

If we have confidence in a through d above as indicators of success in graduate studies, one should be sufficient (especially option d.).

Although the revised policy would only require one of the options above, programs may suggest multiple types of evidence that would strengthen an application, such as grades of B or better in additional coursework (specific courses and/or number of credits) and test scores. In any discussions with prospective students about the viability of an application, programs should never guarantee that supplying this evidence will result in a positive recommendation for admission.

Restricting post-baccalaureate coursework to courses at the advanced undergraduate or graduate level (and retaining the current criteria of a grade of B or better) will provide a better indicator of ability to be successful in a graduate degree program.

5. Expand the indicators for potential academic success for those whose undergraduate GPA is below 2.75 by allowing programs to develop their own admission tests. Programs must provide evidence of the test(s) being a predictor of success in the program, and have approval of the GFC before using such a test to satisfy admission criteria.

These tests would be at least as useful as other standardized tests such as the GRE or GMAT. It would be necessary for programs to run pilot studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of the test before seeking GFC approval.

6. Expand the indicators for potential academic success for those whose undergraduate GPA is below 2.75 by allowing professional certification/licensure in a relevant area (as determined by the graduate program and the Director of Graduate Education) to serve as evidence for admission.

Programs would be responsible for determining the rigor of the credential.

7. Officially define how the undergraduate GPA is calculated, including the “final two years.”

This will make transparent and provide official endorsement of our practice, which is to count all credits used toward the undergraduate degree in the GPA calculation. To be useful as evidence for admission, and to provide some consistency in making the calculation of the GPA of the “last two years” a minimum number of credits (48 – the equivalent of 4 semesters at 12 credits each) will be required. Counting backward from degree completion, the last full semester in which the 48-credit mark is reached will be included.

8. Eliminate the Probationary Admission category.

There is no need for a probationary admission designation since all students are held to the same general academic standards after matriculation. Students with lower undergraduate GPAs must fulfill additional requirements for admission. Having done so, they deserve the same treatment as other students. The Probationary Admission designation requires unnecessary paperwork for graduate programs and the Graduate School in tracking students admitted on probation through their first three semesters and removing them from probation. Under the current policy, it is possible for a student with a 4.0 graduate GPA to receive a “Graduate Dean’s OK Required to

Continue" action because a program neglects to remove the student from probation by the end of the third semester.

9. Remove the details of how English proficiency can be demonstrated from the Admission and Continuation Policy, but retain the requirement itself.

A separate GFC document (currently GFC document 876) has been written for the English proficiency policy.

10.a. Eliminate the two-course restriction on course deficiencies, and
10 b. discontinue tracking and removal of course deficiencies by the Graduate School.

a. In practice, programs probably are admitting students with more than two courses of deficiencies. Those who are strictly adhering to the policy may be losing students who could otherwise be admitted. A balance must be achieved between student interest and past academic experience, and the practicality of completing a degree within time limits and within the student's financial assets. Programs should develop individual programs of study for prospective students to aid in this assessment.

b. Programs are not required to communicate the specific course deficiencies to the Graduate School, only that deficiencies exist. In removing course deficiencies, the Graduate School does not audit the transcript for specific courses, but acts at the direction of the program. Therefore, all the necessary record keeping for course deficiencies occurs at the program level; there is no need for the Graduate School to be involved.

C. PROPOSED POLICY

Applicants for admission to the UWM Graduate School must have the following:

1. A baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent as determined by the UWM Center on International Education, from a regionally accredited institution, completed before the first term of enrollment in the Graduate School. Students applying to approved integrated bachelor's/master's programs are exempt from this requirement. (See GFC Document 1311 for policy on admission to integrated programs.)

2. Proficiency in the English language (see GFC Document 876).

3. A positive recommendation for admission by the program to which the student is applying.

4. A cumulative undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale, or an equivalent measure on a grading system that does not use a 4.0 scale.

Those whose undergraduate GPA is below 2.75 must provide evidence of ability to succeed in graduate study through at least one of the following:

a. GPA of at least 3.0 during the last two years of the baccalaureate program (calculated on a minimum of 48 credits).

b. Completion of six or more credits of program-approved post-baccalaureate courses. These courses must be at the advanced undergraduate or graduate

level, taken with the last five years with a grade of B or better (B- not acceptable).

c. Submission of official score reports from the Graduate Record Examination, the Graduate Management Admission Test, or the Miller Analogies Test that indicate competencies in areas related to the proposed graduate program. To be considered official, these scores must be sent directly from the testing agency to UWM, and must be received prior to admission.

d. Scores on tests developed by the proposed graduate program that demonstrate potential for success in that program. These scores must be submitted prior to admission.

e. Evidence of professional certification or licensure in a relevant area as determined by the proposed program and the Director of Graduate Education.

f. A graduate degree with a minimum 3.0 GPA

Prospective students should consult with the graduate program representative to determine which type of evidence is appropriate and sufficient for a given program. Completion of additional coursework and/or submission of test scores, or other types of evidence of ability is a requirement to be considered for admission, but is not a guarantee of admission.

All of an applicant's undergraduate coursework completed before award of the first undergraduate degree is included in the GPA computation. For courses that were repeated for credit, each attempt is included.

II. POLICY ON CONTINUATION

A. Current Policy on Continuation

Continuation. Any student's continuation in the Graduate School is at the discretion of the Graduate School, the student's graduate program unit and the major professor. The Graduate School minimum graduation GPA requirement is a 3.0 (4.0 basis) or better in all work taken toward the degree.

Academic Warning

A graduate student will receive an academic warning if his or her semester grade point average falls below 3.0.

Graduate Dean's OK Required to Continue

A graduate student will receive a Graduate Dean's OK Required to Continue action if any of the following conditions exist:

- The student's cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0

- The student is not removed from probation status within three enrolled semesters
- The student does not satisfy deficiencies within three enrolled semesters.

If a student's semester GPA and cumulative GPA are both below 3.0, the Graduate Dean's OK will take precedence over an Academic Warning. This action prevents further registration and requires petition by the student and a positive recommendation by the graduate program unit before further registration will be permitted.

Academic Dismissal

The graduate program unit may recommend that a graduate student be academically dismissed for reasons of poor academic performance, lack of progress toward degree, or failure to meet Graduate School or program requirements. The Graduate School, in consultation with the graduate program, may also initiate a dismissal for these reasons. In all cases, the Dean of the Graduate School makes the final decision regarding academic dismissal.

Recommendation for dismissal may be initiated for, **but is not limited to**, the following:

A cumulative graduate grade point average below 3.0.

Failing the doctoral preliminary examination.

Failing to re-defend the doctoral dissertation within the time period specified for deferral status.

Failing to successfully defend the doctoral dissertation upon a second attempt within the specified time period.

Exceeding the time limit for degree completion.

Accumulating U grades in dissertation courses.

B. Proposed Changes and Rationale

1. If the probationary admission category is discontinued, then delete the following under Graduate Dean's OK:

- The student is not removed from probation status within three enrolled semesters

2. If the course deficiency tracking is discontinued, then delete the following under Graduate Dean's OK:

- The student does not satisfy deficiencies within three enrolled semesters.

3. Add “accumulating U grades in thesis courses” as a potential reason for dismissal, to be consistent with dissertation courses.
4. Add “failing the dissertation defense” as a reason for dismissal, and clarify/correct language related to the dissertation defense deferral.

C. PROPOSED POLICY

Continuation. Any student’s continuation in the Graduate School is at the discretion of the Graduate School, the student’s graduate program unit and the major professor. The Graduate School minimum graduation GPA requirement is a 3.0 (4.0 basis) or better in all work taken toward the degree.

Academic Warning

A graduate student will receive an academic warning if his or her semester grade point average falls below 3.0.

Graduate Dean’s OK Required to Continue

A graduate student will receive a Graduate Dean’s OK Required to Continue action if any of the following conditions exist:

- The student’s cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0

If a student’s semester GPA and cumulative GPA are both below 3.0, the Graduate Dean’s OK will take precedence over an Academic Warning. This action prevents further registration and requires petition by the student and a positive recommendation by the graduate program unit before further registration will be permitted.

Academic Dismissal

The graduate program unit may recommend that a graduate student be academically dismissed for reasons of poor academic performance, lack of progress toward degree, or failure to meet Graduate School or program requirements. The Graduate School, in consultation with the graduate program, may also initiate a dismissal for these reasons. In all cases, the Dean of the Graduate School makes the final decision regarding academic dismissal.

Recommendation for dismissal may be initiated for, **but is not limited to**, the following:

A cumulative graduate grade point average below 3.0.

Failing the doctoral preliminary examination.

Failing the dissertation defense.

Failing to have the doctoral dissertation accepted within the time period specified for deferral status (reverts to failed dissertation defense).

Failing to successfully defend the doctoral dissertation upon a second attempt within the specified time period.

Exceeding the time limit for degree completion.

Accumulating U grades in thesis or dissertation courses.

Recommendations for Action

- A. The recommended changes are approved as proposed above.
- B. Following appropriate administrative approval, the changes will become effective Fall 2015.