GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE PROGRAM APPEALS
14, January 2009

Working within the framework of the 2008/2009 SFU Calendar, Graduate General Regulations especially

- 1.5.4 CGPA required for Continuation and Graduation,
- 1.5.5 Graduate Students Retaking a Course,
- 1.8 Progress Withdrawal and Leave,
- 1.8.1 Progress Evaluation,
- 1.8.2 Review of Unsatisfactory progress
- 1.8.3 Withdrawal from courses and from the University,

the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) has agreed upon the following guidelines that will govern student appeals:

**The Review Process:**
At the time of the Annual Review, or at the beginning of any new semester, the graduate program coordinator will report to the GSC “in camera” on students who may have a grade below “B” or a grade point average below 3.00 (B). Also it is at the discretion of a faculty member (on the GSC or acting as an Instructor or Supervisor) to bring to the GSC’s attention any concerns they may have about a student’s performance.

In the event that a student appeals a decision by the Graduate Studies Committee accurate recordkeeping and the articulation of concerns by the GSC is critical to this process. If there are grounds for dismissal they must be clearly articulated (within calendar guidelines) in a letter to the student. If there are grounds for unsatisfactory or marginal progress in the program, the reasons must be clearly articulated (within calendar guidelines) in a letter to the student.

All formal correspondence about student progress will come from the Director, Graduate Programs who is the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee. Faculty need to be cognizant of procedures for appeal (see 1.8 Graduate General Regulations, 2008/2009 SFU calendar (p 255)). Faculty need to work with the Director, Graduate Programs to determine a path to reconciliation of disputes about grades or unsatisfactory progress in the program. To insure consistency and clarity around graduate program regulations, it is the responsibility of the Director, Graduate Programs, only, to correspond with the student about unsatisfactory progress, grade disputes or grade appeals.

The process must show compassion for the student and the difficulties their facing. Students need to be made aware of 1) the support systems available to them: Counseling Services, Student Learning Commons, English as a Second Language Support, Financial Assistance, and 2) the options available to them: repeating a course, reducing work load, auditing a course, tutor support, etc.
Extenuating Circumstances:
If proof of health concerns affecting the student’s performance are established formally (doctor’s note), the student may have the option of:

1) extending the deadline to complete their course work
2) registering in the current semester and extending the deadline by one semester to complete the course work from the previous semester.

In either of these cases, the student will be expected to complete their course work and raise their grade point average to the “B” minimum for MPH students or “C+” minimum for Diploma students. In the instance where a student is unable to meet their time lines and complete their course work, their grades will not change and they will automatically be withdrawn from the program. Students must be notified in their review letter of the impending circumstances. The instructors, senior supervisor, Director Graduate Programs and the Dean of Graduate Studies will receive a copy of the letter sent to the student.

Disputing a Grade:
Students who wish to dispute a grade should 1) notify the instructor and try to resolve the grade issue(s) with the instructor. 2) if unresolved, the student should formally request in a letter to the instructor and the Director, Graduate Programs a grade reconsideration. In response to the request, the instructor will provide written materials and examinations to a 2nd faculty member (in their area) who has agreed to grade the student’s work, and report back to the instructor on their findings.

Recommendations:
1. Upon consensus that the grade is legitimate, the grade will not change and the student will be notified in writing. The instructor will consult with the Director, Graduate Programs who will formally notify the student that the grade will not change. A copy will be kept in the student’s file and a copy will be provided the Director, Graduate Programs.
2. Upon consensus that the grade should change, the instructor will complete a change of grade form, and submit it to the Dean of Graduate Studies. A copy of the grade change form will be kept in the student’s file.
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Annual review
The Annual review is an SFU requirement. See Graduate Program Regulations 1.6.1 Progress Evaluation. The Annual Review will take place at a GSC meeting early in January, subsequent to submission of all grades from the Fall semester. The graduate program coordinator will produce transcripts for all students and identify 1) first or second year students who have a grade(s) below a “B”, or whose cumulative grade point average is below 3.00 (or B average), (refer to 1.5.4), and provide a spreadsheet to the committee of all students with current grade point averages. This spreadsheet will also identify for the committee those students whose progress may be considered unsatisfactory 1) a course with a below B grade, 2) a grade point average below 3.00 (B). The Graduate Studies Committee will discuss and make recommendations.

UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS:
The GSC agree to provide constructive (not punitive) suggestions for improvement to a student whose progress is seen as marginal or unsatisfactory. The GSC formally makes recommendations to the student in writing. A copy of the recommendation(s) is kept in the student’s file, and is given to the student’s senior supervisor. In the case of unsatisfactory progress for students with below 3.00 grade point averages, a copy of the letter is sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The GSC may recommend the following:

1. For students with a grade below a “B” but cgpa is 3.00 or above.
This student would be considered Marginal. There is concern the student may be having some difficulty in the program. The student would be required to talk to their senior supervisor about any problems they may be having. The senior supervisor is required to report to the Director, Graduate Programs on the concerns expressed by the GSC, and the result of their discussion(s) with the student.

2. For students with a grade point average below the minimum (more than one course with a grade below B).
This student’s progress would be considered Unsatisfactory. There is concern the student cannot perform to a minimum in the program. In this situation a student
1) may be asked to raise their GPA by repeating a course (s),
2) may be held back from going on practicum
3) they may be advised to reduce their course load to ensure they meet the minimum grade point requirement.
4) they may be advised that another course falling below a “B” will result in withdrawal.

A copy of this letter will be sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies. One copy will be kept in the student’s file.
Below Satisfactory Performance:
Students with below satisfactory performance may be asked to
1) repeat a course to bring their grade point average up (see 1.5.5, retaking a course), or to
ensure they have the knowledge required of the course. Currently, students with below B
performance in a core course, (required before going on practicum) are not prevented from
going on a practicum.
2) at the discretion of their instructor a student may be allowed to do additional course work
to raise their grade in a course. The grade is changed by the instructor through a change of
grade form.

Repeat Performance:
In the event the student’s grade point average does not improve (stays below
3.00 average), or their course work continues to be below a "B grade" (B- or
less) the student will be notified in writing that their progress in the program
is unsatisfactory and they may be required to withdraw. They may be required
to meet with the Director, Graduate programs and their senior supervisor, (or
GSC) to determine a plan of action. The student will have the option of
bringing a friend for support to the meeting. The student will be expected to
meet the terms of the agreement reached and within the timelines agreed
upon. The agreement will take the form of a letter to the student, a copy will
be kept on file, and a copy will be sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The
student must be notified in their review letter of the impending
circumstances. If the student does not meet the terms of the agreement, he
or she will be required to withdraw. A copy of this letter will be kept on file
and one copy will be sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies.