Academic performance policy

1. Your Academic Obligations

The Department’s educational aim is to enable students to meet their academic potential. We are committed to helping you achieve your potential, and if in your academic work you appear to be performing below your potential, we will intervene, either informally or formally, to help you raise your performance.

Full engagement with your course, through attendance at face-to-face sessions and participation in online activities, is a key aspect of your studies. This will help both you as an individual and the cohort collectively. Poor attendance or participation may degrade the learning experience not only for you, but for all students on the course. We understand however that students, particularly those with work or caring responsibilities, may not always be able to attend or participate as much as they might have wished. The detailed minimum expectations are set out in your course handbook, including a general indication of overall attendance, and whether any elements are regarded as compulsory.

Likewise, you must submit written assignments by the specified submission dates, and to plan your studies in order to do so. If you have good reasons in respect of any particular assignment why you are unable to meet the submission date, you may apply for permission to submit late. If your reasons are accepted, you may avoid any academic penalty or incur a reduced penalty. Notwithstanding any reasons for late submission, repeated failure to meet deadlines will be regarded as an academic performance issue.

If you feel you are at risk of not meeting the expectations of your course, you should talk to your course tutor or course director in the first instance. They will provide you with guidance, taking account of your circumstances in the context of the course. Early interventions are much more likely to prove effective in addressing a study problem. Your course tutor may also take the initiative in raising with you any concerns they have over your academic performance. If you are, or have been, unable to study for good reasons, such as illness, work or family pressures, then you may wish to consider applying to suspend for a time. The Department is quite accustomed to students suspending their studies, and it may be better to do so than to struggle on.

Where it is considered that your academic performance falls below expectations, the procedures set out below will be followed. The primary aim of these procedures is to enable you to fulfil your potential and to complete your programme of study in a timely way. If your performance slips, you will be advised that this is the case and provided with guidance how to improve. You will also be advised of the timescale over which improvement is expected, and when your progress will be re-assessed. It is important, however, for you to understand the consequences of not addressing poor performance satisfactorily. In the most serious cases this can lead to suspension or withdrawal from the course.
2. Procedures covering unsatisfactory academic performance

Stage 1: Informal warning

If your performance is unsatisfactory, your course tutor [course director] will explain in what ways you are falling short of the expectations of the course. You will have the opportunity to make the tutor aware of any mitigating or complicating circumstances. Your tutor will explain what improvements you are required to make within a defined timescale. They will issue you with an informal written warning and your name will be added to the list of students whose performance is a cause for concern. The warning will indicate why your performance gives cause for concern, and the steps needed to address the underlying issues. With your permission, any mitigating circumstances will also be recorded in the warning. At the end of the given time, your tutor will speak with you again and discuss whether you have met the requirements. If so, they will inform you in writing that your performance is now satisfactory. If your performance does not improve, your tutors may report this to the Course Director [Director of Studies] for consideration under stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal warning

If you fail to produce the improvements required in Stage 1 during the specified timescale, the Course Director will arrange a time to interview you, preferably in a face-to-face meeting, but otherwise by skype or telephone. The point of this interview will be to ensure that you understand the situation and have the opportunity to make known to the Course Director all the material circumstances. The Course Director will explain the remaining concerns and requirements, including the timescale within which the required improvements must take place. You will normally then be issued with a formal warning. This will specify why your performance gives cause for concern, what is expected of you in the future, and give a date at which progress towards the agreed goals will be assessed. Failure to meet the requirements will result in your being referred to the Academic Progress Panel. If you fail, without good reason, to participate in the interview, then a formal warning may be issued without that step taking place.

Stage 3: Academic Progress Review

If your performance fails to improve, your progress will be reviewed by the Department's Academic Progress Panel. The Panel will comprise the DGS (for postgraduate student cases) or the Deputy Director (Public and International Programmes) (for undergraduate cases) who will be chair, together with two Associate Professors from the Department, who are not connected with your course.

You will be notified of the composition of the panel and the proposed time and place of the panel meeting to allow you reasonable time to prepare for it. You will have the right to attend the meeting, either in person or by phone/video link. In advance of the meeting you will be given a clear statement of the grounds for your being referred to the panel, and a copy of all documentation with which the panel is provided. You will have the opportunity to make a written submission and to bring forward material considerations and mitigating circumstances. You may be accompanied to the meeting by a fellow student, a student representative or another advisor.
The panel would consider the evidence, including but not limited to, any warnings and accompanying statements of expectation, evidence as to whether these had been met, your academic record, and any material you wished to be taken into account.

You will be asked to withdraw from the meeting before a decision is made.

The panel is empowered to:
1. Determine that your performance was in fact now satisfactory and that no further action should be taken;
2. Issue a further warning;
3. Suspend you for a period of up to three terms (subject to regulations);
4. Withdraw you from the course.

You will be informed in writing of the panel’s decision within five working days of the meeting.

**Appeals**

You have the right of appeal against the issue of an informal or formal warning to the Director of the Department, and a right of appeal against the decision of the Academic Progress Panel to the Proctors.

You must indicate your intention to appeal by writing to the Director within five working days of receipt of the warning or to the Proctors within five working days of the panel decision. In your letter you should set out your grounds for appeal: in other words, you should say why you think the decision against you is wrong and should not stand, for example, because the correct procedures were not followed. If you wish to rely on medical evidence, you must submit a report by a qualified medical practitioner.