

Appendix D

Department of Biology Standard Operating Procedures for evaluating Annual Progress Reports

Last modified: 11/9/2021

Purpose of APRs

The purpose of student annual progress reports (APRs) is to enable the GAC to determine whether key milestones are being met that will ensure timely progress towards the doctoral or master's degree. The GAC is **NOT** responsible for evaluating research progress and quality. This is the responsibility of the student's advisor and thesis committee. Instead, evaluation of the APR is intended to determine whether a student is in good standing in progress towards degree and to identify other impediments to student progress, including administrative, academic, and advising issues.

Satisfactory progress towards degree (aka good standing) as determined by the APR is one component of being eligible for TA funding; the other component is successful completion of previous TA responsibilities, which is assessed by the Associate Chair for Education and **NOT** the GAC. Eligibility for RA support is determined by the individual faculty or staff serving as Principal Investigators for the research projects.

Evaluation of APRs

Each year, student progress reports are submitted by July 1st. Each progress report will be assigned to a minimum of two GAC members, who will check for indicators of dissertation/thesis progress (courses completed, evidence of research output such as conference presentations, publications, grants) and evaluate the following specific milestones:

PhD-specific milestones:

1. Pre-qualifying exam students:
 1. Is the student on track to complete required coursework prior to the qualifying exam?
 1. 12 credit hours of non-BIO 795 coursework
 2. 6 credit hours of BIO 770 (current requirement, may change)
 3. Is the student earning Bs or better?
 - b. End of Year 1: has the student joined a lab and formed a dissertation committee?
 - c. End of Year 2: has the student set a target qualifying exam date and format?
 - d. End of Year 3: has the student passed their qualifying exam?
2. Post-qualifying exam students:
 - a. End of Year 4:
 - i. Did the student give their fourth-year presentation?
 - ii. Has the student submitted a manuscript and/or do they have clear plans for manuscript submission?
 - iii. Does the student have a target dissertation date?
 - b. End of Year 5 +:
 - i. Has the student submitted a manuscript and/or a manuscript in preparation?
 - ii. Does the student have a target dissertation date sometime within the next year?
3. All students:
 - a. Year 2+: Has the student had a committee meeting within the last year?
 - b. All Years: Is the student maintaining a 3.0 GPA (required to be in good standing in the graduate school)?

MSA-specific milestones:

1. Is the student on track to complete required coursework (30 credit hours total)?

- a. 3 credits of BIO 770
 - b. At least 15 credits must come from 600-700 level courses
 - c. At least 20 credits must come from regular (non-research or residency) courses
 - d. At least 20 credits must come from BIO prefix courses
 - e. 6 credits of BIO 768
 - f. Is the student earning Bs or better?
2. End of year 1: has the student formed a thesis committee?
 3. End of year 2+: Was there a committee meeting within the past year and does the student have a target thesis defense date?

Possible outcomes of APR evaluation (see below for more details on each outcome):

1. **Satisfactory progress:** all milestones met.
2. **Satisfactory progress, with contingencies:** critical milestones met (or, if not, an explanation for the delay and a plan for meeting missed milestones is provided), but some deficiencies need to be addressed.
3. **Unsatisfactory progress:** critical milestones missed.

Definition of satisfactory progress (in good standing in progress towards degree):

PhD students:

Student progress is considered satisfactory when all milestones have been met, including:

1. A committee meeting within the last year (Year 2+).
2. Year 1: joined a lab and formed a committee (Note: for rotation students, this can be done by the end of the fall semester of Year 2).
3. Year 2: in consultation with the committee, have agreed on a format and semester for the qualifying exam.
4. Years 1 and 2: On track to complete coursework prior to qualifying exams.
5. Year 3: qualifying exam passed.
6. Year 4: 4th year presentation completed, manuscript submitted or in preparation.
7. Year 5+: target defense year, manuscript submitted.

MSA students:

Student progress is considered satisfactory when all milestones have been met, including:

1. Year 1: Formed a committee.
2. Year 1: On track to complete required coursework by end of year 2.
3. Year 2: Student has completed course work, had a committee meeting within the last year and has clear plans for completion of these items by the end of Year 3.

Satisfactory progress, with contingencies (in good standing in progress towards degree):

There can be various reasons as to why students do not meet particular milestones by a target date. If a student has not completed a milestone by the target date, the student's APR should include a brief explanation as to why this milestone has not been met and a specific plan for completing this milestone. This plan should be approved by the advisor and dissertation/thesis committee. With the GAC's approval, the student can still be considered in good standing contingent on completing this milestone before the next semester or the next APR. Specific deficiencies and contingencies may include:

PhD students:

1. Student did not have a committee meeting within the last year

- a. Must have a meeting within the semester.
2. By end of year 1, hasn't formed committee
 - a. Must form a committee by the end of the fall semester.
3. By end of year 2, hasn't determined semester and format of quals
 - b. Must decide on timing and format by the end of fall semester.
4. By end of year 4, hasn't given 4th year seminar
 - a. Must give a seminar ASAP in the fall semester.
5. By end of year 5 and beyond (evaluated yearly), does not have a clear defense date target.
 - a. Must have a committee meeting in fall of year 6 to lay out defense plans.
 - b. Year 6 and beyond: Committee meeting each semester until the student defends.
6. If a student gets lower than a B in a graduate course, this puts them at risk of falling out of good standing with grad school (>3.0 for good standing)
 - a. Must have a meeting with their advisor to identify problems with coursework and discuss resources available for improving study/writing/time management.

MSA students:

1. Student did not have a committee meeting within the last year if in year 2+.
 - a. Must have a meeting within the semester.
2. By end of year 1, student hasn't formed committee.
 - a. Must form a committee by the end of the fall semester.
3. By end of year 1, student has completed less than 10 credit hours of regular coursework *OR* by the end of year 2, student has not fulfilled all coursework requirements.
 - b. Must describe how required coursework will be completed by the end of year 2 *OR* by the end of the target defense semester.
4. By end of year 2, student hasn't defended master's thesis
 - a. Must have a committee meeting in fall of year 3 to lay out defense plans.
 - b. Year 3 and beyond: Committee meeting each semester until the student defends.
5. If a student gets lower than a B in a graduate course, this puts them at risk of falling out of good standing with grad school (>3.0 for good standing)
 - a. Must have a meeting with their advisor to identify problems with coursework and discuss resources available for improving study/writing/time management.

Unsatisfactory progress (NOT in good standing in progress towards degree):

Progress reports are deemed unsatisfactory when one or more of the following milestones are not met and GAC approval has not been given for the delay:

PhD students:

1. Student has not had a committee meeting within the last **two** years.
2. Student has not taken their qualifying exam by the end of the summer following Year 3 and has not received permission from the DGS to delay until Year 4.
3. Student has not given their 4th year seminar by the end of the fall semester of Year 5.
4. Student has not defended or does not have a clear defense plan by the end of Year 6.
5. Student is not in good standing with graduate school (GPA<3.0).
6. Student did not address contingencies to stay in good standing (see above).

MSA students:

1. Student has not had a committee meeting within the last **two** years.

2. Student has not completed required coursework by the end of Year 3.
3. Student has not defended or does not have a clear defense plan by the end of Year 3.
4. Student is not in good standing with the graduate school (GPA<3.0).
5. Student did not address contingencies to stay in good standing (see above).

Process for students making unsatisfactory progress:

Upon concluding that a student's progress is unsatisfactory, the GAC will contact the student and the student's advisor to address the situation. When a student's progress is considered unsatisfactory, they will be placed on probation until the issue is resolved, which includes the following conditions:

1. The student and advisor will be required to submit a plan to the GAC and the student's advisory committee for getting back on track within two weeks of receiving the progress report evaluation. The GAC will then schedule a meeting with the student and advisor to discuss this plan. Together, they will agree on a plan of action and target dates for completion of missed milestones.
2. While on probation, the student will be ineligible for department enrichment and fellowship support (including but not limited to Ribble mini-grants, department travel funds, and Merit/Morgan fellowships).
3. While on probation, the student will be required to submit a progress report *each semester*.
4. While on probation, the student will be required to meet with their committee *each semester*.
5. If a student does not meet the target dates outlined in their plan by **March 1st**, the student will become ineligible for TA funds for the following academic year. Students may still receive RA support at the discretion of their research supervisor.
6. If the student does not meet targeted milestones after 2 semesters on probation, they may be recommended for dismissal from the program.