

*Policies on Evaluation (Including Probation and Dismissal)  
for Graduate Students (Master's and Doctoral)  
in the Department of History at Stony Brook University*

The status of graduate students in the Department of History will be periodically reviewed to insure progress and, where applicable, determine the renewal of his or her teaching assistantship or fellowship. In particular, two criteria, "Academic" and "Teaching," will be reviewed.

### 1. Academic

The timely, satisfactory completion of academic assignments is expected. Minimum requirements for remaining in good standing are as follows:

- a) A student must maintain a GPA of 3.0.
- b) A student in good standing should receive no more than one Incomplete in any given semester. For the purpose of determining standing in the program, failure to resolve an Incomplete by the deadline set by the instructor is interpreted as a failing grade; this will automatically result in the loss of good standing.
- c) A student must pass the relevant foreign language examinations on time.
- d) A student must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of their advisor, sufficient progress towards their degree.

A student who does not remain in good standing may be put on probation. Extenuating circumstances, such as illness or exceptional stress due to factors beyond a student's control, will be considered in assessing a student's progress through his or her program. However, the crucial aspect for all to understand is that maintenance of good standing, as well as (for doctoral students) renewal of Teaching Assistantships and/or fellowships, is *not* automatic.

### 2. Teaching

If a student's performance as a Teaching Assistant is the subject of sufficient negative comment by his or her supervisor, colleagues, and/or students, the Graduate Committee will determine the extent to which the complaints are justified and recommend remedial action as necessary to improve the student's teaching. Teaching Assistantships and fellowships will be revoked in cases of grave dereliction of teaching responsibilities.

## **Overview of Evaluation Procedures**

Evaluation can have four outcomes. The Graduate Director in consultation with the faculty may decide that:

- a) a student is making satisfactory progress in the program and is thus in good standing (though his or her advisor may still be asked to speak with the student in question about issues that come up during the evaluation process);
- b) a “letter of concern” may be sent to the student, indicating a specific area or areas of concern;
- c) a student may be put on Departmental probation, indicating serious deficiencies in the student’s progress; or
- d) a student may be dismissed from the program. This is only possible under certain specific circumstances, namely a) if he/she has previously been placed on probation, and has failed to fulfill the requirements set out in his or her letter of probation; b) if he/she has failed to pass required examinations or milestones as stated in published Departmental policy; or c) in cases of proven academic dishonesty.

## **Student Review**

### Grading

Grading is an important component of student review. While we understand the desire to encourage and support beginning students, faculty are responsible for assigning grades that adequately distinguish among different levels of performance and accurately reflect the performance of individual students.

### Mid-Year Review

At mid-year, the Graduate Director should query all faculty teaching graduate courses (especially those teaching the Core Seminar) to determine if there is cause for concern regarding any specific student—and monitor the progress of any students who have previously received letters of concern or who are already on probation. If there are reasons for concern in a particular case, the student should be sent a letter of concern that identifies the problem, explains remedial measures, and makes clear that failure to improve will result in probation at the end of the academic year.

### End-of-Year Review

In accordance with the Graduate School requirement that students be evaluated in writing at least once each academic year, the Department will review the progress of all students at the end of the Spring semester. To insure the value of this end-of-year review, final papers in all graduate courses should be due at a date that will allow instructors to read all papers *before* the end-of-year review. The annual review will normally take place during the final week of scheduled classes or the first week of final exams.

Following the end-of-year review, letters will be sent to all students notifying them of their status. Advisors will be expected to meet with their advisees, either at the end of the academic

year or at the beginning of the fall semester, to discuss their progress, including both areas in which advisees are doing well and those in which they need improvement (i.e. quality of written work, research skills, participation in class, etc.).

### During the Year

If during the course of the year an instructor comes to have a major concern about the academic performance of a student and/or if s/he suspects that the student has committed a substantive violation of academic standards (such as plagiarism), then the instructor is responsible for reporting this to the Graduate Director, who will then meet with the student to discuss the issue. The Graduate Director will then consider what action (a letter of concern, probation, or dismissal), if any, might be appropriate. If the Graduate Director believes that probation or dismissal might be called for, the matter should be referred to the Department chair, who is then responsible for setting up a review committee (see below under “Probation and Dismissal”). After the review committee has made its decision, the Graduate Director should inform the student of the decision and of possible methods of recourse (including the grievance procedure set forth in the Graduate Bulletin).

### Doctoral Students Who Have Been Advanced to Candidacy

If at any point after a student has been advanced to candidacy, the advisor and other committee members feel that he or she is not making sufficient progress, the student should be sent a Letter of Concern (see below under “Disciplinary Actions”) setting forth the specific areas of concern, and the student should then meet with his or her advisor to discuss how these problems might be remediated. If at any point after three years beyond the advancement to candidacy the advisor and other committee members feel that the student is not likely to complete a dissertation that meets Departmental standards, the advisor should ask the graduate director to convene the graduate review committee to review the case for possible probation and dismissal. If, after a semester on probation, the student has not made sufficient progress such as to demonstrate that he or she is indeed going to be capable of satisfactorily completing a dissertation, he or she may be dismissed from the program.

## **Disciplinary Actions**

### Letter of Concern

In certain instances, faculty may identify problems, which—if not corrected—may deleteriously impact a student’s progress in the program. Such problems may include difficulties in making the transition to graduate study, time management problems, etc. In such cases, the Graduate Director may send the student a letter of concern describing the problem, explaining the potential consequences, and suggesting that the student work with his or her advisor to remedy the problem.

## Probation and Dismissal

If the Graduate Director determines that either probation or dismissal may be warranted, one of the following procedures will be followed, based on the situation:

- a) If a student fails to either attend class regularly or fulfill his/her responsibilities as a Teaching Assistant, he or she may be immediately placed on probation. Instructors are to notify the Graduate Director if a student misses more than one meeting of a graduate course. Such students should be notified immediately that they are jeopardizing their status in the program (as well as their TA or fellowship funding, if applicable). If a student is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for his/her absences and does not resume regularly attending classes, he/she may immediately be placed on probation. The same holds with regard to TA responsibilities.
- b) In all other cases, the Department Chair will convene a review committee composed of the Department chair and two other tenured faculty (excluding the student's advisor), as well as the Graduate Director and the student's advisor (both non-voting). If the Chair is the advisor, a third tenured member will serve in the chair's stead.

The task of the review committee is to review the student's academic performance to date and determine whether problems identified are serious enough to warrant probation or dismissal. If the committee recommends probation, the committee should set out the specific conditions ("terms") that the student would need to fulfill in order to return to good standing. The Graduate Director will then inform the student of the review committee's decision and the terms stipulated. In this case, as in the case of dismissal, the Graduate Director will send copies of all relevant correspondence to the student, the Department chair, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Assistant Dean for Graduate Records.

A student may remain on Departmental probation for a maximum of two consecutive semesters. The criteria for Departmental probation include, but are not limited to, receiving a course grade below a "B" in a History Department course (i.e., excluding language courses) and/or failing to rectify incompletes within the period of time stipulated by the instructor. To facilitate the enforcement of this policy, faculty should when granting an Incomplete always specify the date by which the completed coursework is to be submitted.

If a student is placed on probation, then the same review committee should be convened at the end of the semester to review the student's interim performance and decide whether the student has fully met the terms of probation. If a student violates or fails to meet all of the terms of the requirements stipulated in the original terms of probation, the student may be immediately dismissed.

If a student has met the requirements stipulated in the original terms of probation, but new concerns have emerged in the interim, the committee will inform the student in writing, spell out the specific criteria that must be met by the end of the following semester in order to return to good standing in the program, and make it clear that the failure to do so will result in dismissal from the program. If at the end of the second semester of probation, the review committee determines that the student has still not made satisfactory progress in his or her coursework and

developed the academic and professional skills needed to successfully complete the doctorate, then the committee may decide to dismiss the student from the program. Students have the right to appeal such decisions using the grievance procedure described in the Graduate Bulletin.

## **Advising, Prospectus, and Advancement to Candidacy**

### Advising

Although advisors are appointed for incoming graduate students based on their expressed interests, students are permitted to change advisors in accordance with the evolution of their scholarly interests. However, all such changes must be approved by the Graduate Director and the student's current advisor, who is expected to certify that the student has been making adequate progress towards the degree. If a student has not been making such progress, then the advisor should refer the student to the graduate director to convene a review committee.

### Prospectus

A doctoral student is expected to develop a prospectus that the student's advisor believes will provide a cogent framework for a viable dissertation project. This prospectus must be approved in writing by the student's advisor and two other faculty members, and such approval should normally be taken to indicate a willingness on the part of these faculty members to serve on the student's dissertation committee. The approved prospectus must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator, along with the sign-off sheet containing the signatures of the student's advisor and two other faculty members no later than the date of the oral examination. The inability to craft a prospectus capable of gaining such approval may lead to probation and, if problems with the prospectus are not rectified, dismissal from the program. A student who is unable to gain the approval of the faculty member who has until that point served as her or his advisor should not normally be permitted to change advisors or dissertation projects at this point.

### Oral Examinations for Doctoral Students

Oral examinations to advance to candidacy should only be scheduled if the faculty members serving on the student's examination committee believe that the student has mastered the relevant body of scholarly literature, and if the student's prospectus has been completed and approved by the student's advisor and two other faculty members as discussed above. The oral examination, which should last approximately two hours, should test the student's command of the relevant scholarly literature and require him or her to explain and defend the dissertation project set out in the prospectus. If the student passes the oral examination, then the faculty who served on the committee should normally be willing to serve on the student's dissertation committee. Passing the oral examination does not automatically lead to advancement to candidacy. Students should be advanced to candidacy only after completing all requirements, including oral examinations, approval of dissertation prospectus as noted above, and any necessary language requirements.

Oral examinations are graded on the following scale: Pass with distinction, Pass, Low Pass, Pass with Terminal Master's Degree and without Advancement to Candidacy, and Fail. Oral examinations may be repeated only once, as stipulated in Graduate School regulations.

## **Time Limits and Leaves of Absence**

### Time Limits

Students are expected to complete the dissertation within seven years of achieving G4 status. Students may petition the Graduate School for a one-year time-limit extension. However, such requests will not be approved by the Department unless the advisor and the Graduate Director both believe that the written work submitted to date is of such a quality that they can reasonably expect the student to complete an acceptable dissertation on the basis of this extension. The Graduate Director is not allowed to approve any time-limit extension paperwork without the prior approval of the student's advisor.

### Leaves of Absence

Graduate School regulations state that students are expected to be enrolled continuously unless they have been granted a leave of absence. Official leaves of absence must be approved by both the student's advisor and the Graduate Director. Leaves of absence may be renewed each semester for a maximum of two years, after which the student will be considered to have withdrawn from the University.

Students on probation may be granted leave with the understanding that reenrollment is subject to conditions imposed by the review committee in placing them on probation.

Students who do not comply with continuing enrollment requirements will be considered to have withdrawn from the University. Such students *may* be readmitted by the Department. However, such decisions are entirely at the discretion of the Department, and the Department and/or the Graduate School may set specific requirements to be fulfilled by the readmitted student during the first year of his or her readmission. Readmission will be revoked for students who do not fulfill these requirements.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Regulations concerning academic dishonesty can be found in the Graduate School Bulletin. As stated in the Bulletin, academic dishonesty may lead to immediate dismissal from the program.