General Policies: Satisfactory Progress

Graduate School Rules

The Graduate School requires that students complete all work for the doctoral degree within ten years of admission to the Graduate School. This includes quarters spent On-Leave (or out of Graduate Student Status) as well as time for a Master's degree from the University of Washington, or a Master's degree from another institution (if used to substitute for credits of enrollment).

The Graduate School requires a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 for Master's and PhD degrees. The Department tracks low scholarship and cumulative grade point averages quarterly. It is very difficult to recover from, e.g., a 0.0 grade, given the relative small pool of numerically graded graduate courses.

It is the responsibility of the student, department (chair, graduate program coordinator, academic advisor, and graduate program assistant) and the supervisory committee to make sure that a student is making satisfactory academic progress.

Physics Department Guidelines on Satisfactory Progress

The above typical Ph.D. Timeline and the Program Sequence sections serve as guide to determine whether you are making satisfactory progress. Students must be making satisfactory progress to continue their Teaching and/or Research Assistantships.

In summary:

1. The Master's Review must be passed prior to the start of the third year.
2. All students are expected to have found a research home and a doctoral advisor before their third year in our graduate program.
3. All students are expected to meet regularly, at least quarterly, with their faculty advisors.
4. All students are expected to be enrolled in Physics 600/800, starting in the Winter of their first year.
5. The Doctoral Supervisory Committee needs to be established before the end of the fourth year at the latest.
6. The General Examination is expected to take place during the third or fourth year.
7. Students and their advisors are expected to aim for not more than 6 years between entry into the Physics Graduate Program and completion of the Ph.D. In recent years the median time is close to 6 years.

Moreover, all students are required to complete an Annual Activities Report, every spring quarter. This report includes comments from their faculty advisor or research advisor, as well as a proposed time schedule for finishing the degree. These reports help students to maintain satisfactory progress and encourage advisor-student contact. The graduate program coordinator reviews the reports and meets with students and/or their advisors when progress appears slow.

Low Scholarship/Unsatisfactory Progress

Formal action may be taken at the Graduate School sanctioned levels in the absence of satisfactory progress, and after all informal approaches have been unsuccessful.
The lowest level of formal action is “Warn”. This has no long-term consequences yet, and is not reported officially to the Graduate School.

The second formal level is “Probation”. This is reported to the Graduate school and usually comes with a schedule for completion of various requirements.

The third level is “Final Probation”. This is also reported to the Graduate school. This can come only after “Probation,” and leads to termination of enrollment if the requirements are not met by the end of the quarter. If a student is placed on “Probation”, a definite timetable for remedying the situation is required. Only “Final Probation” can lead directly to termination from the program.

For a complete PDF version of Physics Ph.D. Program Information, Policies, and Procedures.

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Source URL: https://phys.washington.edu/general-policies-satisfactory-progress