UW Physics Major Continuation Policy

While the University has general regulations governing scholastic eligibility for continuation, the Department of Physics has adopted additional requirements in order to provide reasonable assurance of academic success for our majors and to make the best use of departmental resources. The following criteria and procedures will be applied to all undergraduate students majoring in Physics for determining continuance in the major program. Students are encouraged to frequently review their academic progress, and may seek advising from Physics Student Services at any time.

Criteria for Satisfactory Progress:

1. Students must take physics courses, courses from the menu of math classes, or electives in other departments that meet a requirement for the physics major, such that they are able to graduate with a physics degree within the limits dictated by the University's Satisfactory Progress Policy. Specifically, most students should take one or more courses in each quarter that they are registered that meet a requirement for the physics major. Exceptions include students doing double majors and students who have already completed or nearly completed all the requirements. Excessive course repeats, excessive course drops and excessive University withdrawals may also demonstrate a lack of satisfactory progress.

2. Students in all of the Physics B.S. tracks are required to maintain a cumulative average GPA of at least 2.0 in all physics classes. This average includes the grades from all times each course is taken.

3. Students must earn a numerical grade of at least a 2.0 in each course used to satisfy the requirements of the physics major. Courses used to satisfy majors requirements must be taken on a graded basis, except if the course is only offered CR/NC. Courses taken as satisfactory/non-satisfactory (S/NS) cannot be used towards major requirements and thus violate this policy.

All new majors who do not have a Physics Student Services approved graduation plan on file by the end of the quarter in which they are accepted will have a hold placed on their registration until their Graduation Plan is approved by Physics Student Services.

Review and Notification of Progress

Physics Student Services will review the progress of all majors each quarter. If a student's performance fails to meet the standards outlined above in any quarter during their tenure as a major in the Department of Physics, the student will be first placed on Warning status, then on Probation status, and lastly on Dismissal status for each subsequent quarter that they violate the policy, unless the status has been removed as described below.

Warning

Students who are not on Warning or Probation status will be issued a warning letter via email from the Department subsequent to a quarter in which they do not meet the departmental satisfactory progress criteria, and will have a registration hold placed on their student account. The warning letter will explain in what way the student is failing to make satisfactory progress. Students receiving a warning letter must acknowledge receipt of the warning letter in order to have the registration hold removed, and will remain on Warning Status until either it is removed or they progress to Probation Status. If a student thinks that the warning has been issued in error, they should contact Physics Student Services and explain the issue.

Although it is not required, students receiving a warning letter are encouraged to meet with an advisor in Physics Student Services. The advisor will assist by recommending campus resources, by helping plan a course load that is manageable, and by assisting the student with choosing the correct pathway within the major as well as discussing other majors at the University. Students are
encouraged to discuss all circumstances leading to a lack of satisfactory progress, including extenuating circumstances and situations outside of academic life that may impact student success. Warning status will be removed if the student makes satisfactory progress toward the degree in each of the next two quarters in which the student is enrolled after receiving the warning letter. Warning status will also be removed if the warning was issued in error.

Probation

A student on Warning status who has an additional quarter in which they do not make satisfactory progress will be placed on Probation, and will have a registration hold put on their student account. Students will be issued a probation letter via email, explaining the reason for the probation. Students must meet with an advisor in Physics Student Services to have the registration hold removed. Students can expect the same support during their appointments as outlined in the “Warning” section. Students who do not meet with an advisor will not be able to register for future quarters. Students placed on Probation are also strongly encouraged to meet with an Undergraduate Academic Affairs advisor in order to come up with a backup plan in case they are dismissed from the Physics major. Students must meet with a Physics Student Services Advisor at least once each quarter while they are on Probation. A student will be returned to Warning status following two consecutive quarters in which the student makes satisfactory progress toward the degree.

Dismissal from Major

Students on Probation status who fail to meet satisfactory progress criteria in a subsequent quarter will be placed on Dismissal status from the major. Students will be notified via email and given instructions on how they can appeal dismissal from the major. This will include the requirement of a detailed plan of courses leading to graduation. There will be a deadline for the appeal clearly stated in the letter. Students have only one opportunity to appeal dismissal. If the student does not appeal, or if the appeal is not approved, the student will be assigned a premajor or extended premajor degree code (i.e., they are dismissed from the physics major). The Department retains the right to drop dismissed students from physics courses for which it is required to be a declared major to be enrolled.

If the appeal is approved, the student must make satisfactory progress as outlined in the agreed-upon plan, and as well be explained in the approval notification. If they fail to make satisfactory progress in a quarter after their appeal, they will be dismissed from the major. This final dismissal cannot be appealed.

Removing Warning, Probation or Dismissal Status

Other than the reset option described above (i.e., two consecutive quarters of satisfactory progress will return a student to the previous stage), the three statuses can only be removed either with a Hardship Withdrawal from the course in question or if the grade in question changes to a 2.0 or above. Students who are seeking Hardship Withdrawals should be in contact with an advisor. It is the student's responsibility to let Physics Student Services know if their Hardship Withdrawal has been approved.

Academic Honesty

Student conduct at the University of Washington is governed by the Student Conduct Code. Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. For further information, see here.

The UW Physics Department expects students to not cheat on tests or plagiarize assignments. Cheating/plagiarism is generally defined as taking credit for someone else's work, whether the source is a fellow student, book, or online resource. Cheating/plagiarism on assignments and tests hurts both your fellow physics majors and you. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct, especially repeated offenses, may have severe consequences. Imposition of disciplinary sanctions by the Student Conduct Office will be considered equivalent to a student not making satisfactory progress during that quarter.

Tips for avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty
1. Sit as far from other students as possible during tests. Do not sit near your regular study partners, so any unusually similar methods you may have learned together won’t suggest copying occurred.

2. Pay close attention to the rules regarding academic honesty for the particular course and instructor, as they may vary.

3. Keep phones and other electronics devices put away. If the test is closed book, keep papers put away as well.

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