

GUIDELINES FOR SATISFACTORY PROGRESS IN ASTRONOMY

The following guidelines define the minimum performance necessary for satisfactory progress towards the doctorate in Astronomy. Of course, these criteria are minimal; the Department ordinarily expects students to perform well above the level of minimum satisfactory progress. A student failing to meet these minimum standards for satisfactory progress is given a status of Conditional Continuation. A student is deemed to be making unsatisfactory progress as a graduate student after one semester of being on Conditional Continuation, and is not eligible for financial aid. The graduate career is terminated after two semesters of Conditional Continuation. ***The student is subject to the Minimum Degree Requirements and all policies of the Graduate School (GSCH) and is responsible for meeting them (e.g. exam deadline; time constraints...).***

Throughout this document, the summer session is not counted as a semester. The "core courses" referred to are Astronomy 500, 700, 710, 715, 720, 730, and 735.

The student is assigned an adviser upon entering the Department, but may request reassignment at any time. The request is granted automatically if the new major professor agrees.

I. Students who enter the Department directly after receiving the Bachelor's degree must have, by the end of the first academic year:

- a) Received at least 8 credits each semester, and 16 credits for the year, chosen from courses approved by the student's adviser.
- b) Received no more than 3 credits of a C (or below) grade. However, the Graduate School requires a 3.0 GPA for graduate students. Note that the Graduate School considers grades of BC and below unsatisfactory, which may result in probation.
- c) Submit a plan for course work in the minor during the first semester. This plan will be discussed with the Graduate Minor Committee, which has the authority to approve it. ***External subject minors are under the control of that department.***
Failure to meet the above criteria results in Conditional Continuation, which can be removed by earning 6 graduate credits with grades of B or above during the next semester.
- c) A grade of C (or lower) in a core course results in Conditional Continuation, which is removed after the next grade of A or B in a core course.
- d) Grades of C (or below) in 2 or more core courses results in the student's termination in the Ph.D. program.

II. At the end of the second academic year a student must have:

- a) Completed at least 32 credits of course work (including all core courses), chosen with the major professor's approval;
- b) Received grades of C (or below) in no more than 3 credits' work;
- c) Received a GPA of at least 3.0 in the core courses taken;
- d) Satisfactorily completed at least 3 credits or equivalent of Astronomy 990, Research and Thesis. ***A grade of S in Astronomy 990 is necessary before the preliminary examination can be taken.***
- f) An approved minor must be completed normally within 2 years of entry into the program (***see Minor Requirements Astronomy Department Graduate Students.***)

III. By one academic month (i.e., excluding the summer session) after completing the second academic year (unless extended as described below) the student must have taken the Preliminary Examination. The Chairman may extend the deadline for taking the exam one year if the student has taken an approved leave-of-absence of two semesters or more -- in the course of her/his graduate career **or if the following conditions are met.**

- a) **The student agrees to an accelerated schedule for the thesis proposal, to be presented before the end of semester 5. The thesis should be structured in such a way that it can be done by the end of 5 years after starting the program.**

The proposal defense will be conducted in the usual way, i.e. not including 'prelim-type' questions beyond what we'd usually do with a student who had followed the usual sequence. This means, the student needs to line up both a project and an advisor; if no faculty member is willing to take the student on, he or she agrees to leave the Ph.D. program at the end of semester 5.

If the student does not achieve a 'high pass' in Prelims, the proposal becomes a terminal Master's thesis.

- b) **The student needs to convince the faculty that he or she is genuinely unprepared. Students entering with a Master's degree, or with 5 or more years as undergraduates, would find it hard to make this case.**
- c) **The student must also convince the faculty that he or she is making real progress in coming up to speed: e.g. showing improvement in course grades, or good progress in a research project.**
- d) **If the student does not get a 'high pass' on the first try at Prelims, he or she has the option to retake them within 3 months (instead of the usual 6 months), or before the start of the following semester if that comes earlier.**

The potential thesis advisor (item a) should bring the case up to the whole faculty, who will decide whether the student qualifies for this option. This option should not attract procrastinators, because the student gives up pay at the 'dissertator' rate for a year.

The Chairman sets the date of the Preliminary Examination after consultation with the faculty and with the students who will take it. The examination will normally be given only once for all of the students who complete their second academic year at the same time. The student will be informed at least a month before the date of the Preliminary Exam if the exam will be of a substantially different form (in the distribution and nature of the written and oral parts) from the previous exam.

There are three scores possible on the Preliminary Exam: High pass, low pass, and fail. The high pass allows the student to continue towards the Ph.D. The low pass allows the student to receive the M.S. degree. Either low pass or fail results in Conditional Continuation.

IV. Students entering the Department after having earned 15 or more graduate credits elsewhere shall meet with faculty members, designated by the chair within one month after entering.

At this meeting the faculty members shall decide which core courses are accepted from the requirements of sections I and II above, and how much previous research credit is applicable towards the requirements of II (E) above. They shall also decide if the Preliminary Examination shall be required after a shorter period than two academic years. The student may appeal any of the above rulings to the entire faculty if desired, and a special faculty meeting shall be held for the purpose of settling the student's status.

V. A student may repeat the Preliminary Examination once, within one semester after completing the second academic year. The condition of Conditional Continuation is lifted if the repeat examination is passed at the high level. If not, the graduate career in the department is terminated.

VI. During the second academic year, or earlier, the student should be exploring thesis topics. Within 9 calendar months after passing the Preliminary Examination the student must pick a major professor, submit a written thesis proposal, and have it accepted by the faculty following an oral presentation. [Students who do not pass the Preliminary Examination on the first try should aim to present a thesis proposal within 6 months of passing, to avoid falling behind in their work].

The written document should, in about 10 pages, contain at least the following: scientific background and context, the scientific plan for the thesis, a schedule for completion of the work, and a list of any special resources, such as observing or super computer time. Presentation of the proposal will normally involve a 30-45 minute talk by the student, who may invite anyone to be present, followed by a closed meeting of the student with the faculty to discuss the proposal. The faculty will then meet in closed session; the advisor decides, in consultation with the faculty, whether to approve the thesis proposal.

A student who, for reasons beyond his or her control cannot meet these deadlines should request, and may receive, a written extension for a specific time period from the department chair.

If these conditions are not met, the student is placed on Conditional Continuation. The Conditional Continuation status will be removed after a thesis research proposal is presented and approved as specified above. If the Conditional Continuation status is not lifted by the end of the semester or summer session in which it was imposed, the student's graduate career in the Department of Astronomy at the UW-Madison is terminated.

Students are expected to complete their thesis as quickly as possible, typically after a total residence of about five years. Financial support beyond that stated in the initial offer letter requires special approval from the Department. The Graduate School (GSCH) requires that the degree be completed within 5 years after taking the Preliminary Examination. ***Students are advised to check GSCH requirements. A candidate for a Ph.D. degree who fails to take***

the final oral examination and deposit the dissertation within five years after passing the preliminary examination is required to take another preliminary examination and to be admitted to candidacy a second time.

Approval of the thesis proposal implies some preferred access to department facilities, such as the WIYN telescope, conditional on continued satisfactory progress. The guideline for WIYN is now that preferred access will be considered for a maximum of 6 nights throughout the thesis: see <http://www.astro.wisc.edu/wiyn/wiynsched/uwwiynschedproc.txt>

VII. In order to facilitate the publication of the Ph.D. thesis, the Department of Astronomy requires that each Ph.D. thesis contain either (a) a manuscript of a research paper, written in a style acceptable by a professional journal, on the subject of the thesis, or (b) reprints of papers already published on the subject. The required journal manuscript may be the main body of the thesis, with additional material included as Appendices. Alternatively, the manuscript itself may be an Appendix. There is no objection to the thesis consisting only of reprinted papers, although the document must comply with the rules of the Graduate School as regards to page formats, etc.