



GRADUATE SCHOOL GUIDELINES

Violations of the Student Conduct Code and Academic Performance/Progress Under Graduate School Policy 3.7

This document outlines the distinction between academic alert statuses and student conduct code decisions, establishes guidelines on when a matter must first proceed through a formal conduct code investigation before being considered as part of an academic performance or progress process, and clarifies the appropriate use of sanctions, academic consequences, and other actions in cases involving graduate students.

A. Unsatisfactory Academic Performance and Progress vs. Student Conduct Violations

An **unsatisfactory performance and progress document (Academic Alert or Drop)** refers to guidance and potential consequences based on a student's failure to meet a program's academic performance or progress expectations. Per UW Graduate School [Policy 3.7](#), the goal is to establish clear expectations and outline a path to return to satisfactory academic progress. A student may be placed on a status of Notification, Academic Alert, or Final Academic Alert. If the student fails to follow the terms outlined in the Final Academic Alert phase, this may result in a "drop" from a graduate program. In some cases, a student can be dropped immediately without being placed on Academic Alert or Final Academic Alert based on documented program standards and with concurrence and approval from the Graduate School.

In contrast, a **decision under the student conduct code**—referred to as a "**final order**"—results from a **violation** of the Student Conduct Code, Washington Administrative Code (WAC) [Chapter 478-121](#), not merely a failure to meet academic standards. The Student Conduct Code process involves a formal investigation and a brief or full adjudicative process and, if the student is held responsible for violating the code, one or more of the seven specific sanctions set out under WAC 478-121-210(1) (Disciplinary reprimand, Disciplinary probation, Restitution, Loss of Privileges, Suspension, or Dismissal).

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Where there is a concern regarding a student's conduct, and that conduct both:

- (a) Fails to meet a program's academic performance or progress expectations, either directly through expectations described in the program handbook or graduate school policy or indirectly due to a grade below 2.7 in a course; *and*
- (b) If true, would violate the student conduct code; *then*

The conduct code process MUST be followed first AND a final order issued before there can be a Policy 3.7 process *based on that conduct*.

NB: This does not mean that there can never be a Policy 3.7 process for a student engaged in conduct that might also violate the student conduct code. For example, there might be a mixture of conduct that fails to meet academic performance or progress expectations, some of which (if true) would violate the conduct code, and some of which would not. A Policy 3.7 process may proceed with respect to conduct that would *not* violate the student conduct code, regardless of whether a student conduct code process is or is not commenced. In other words, a Policy 3.7 process may proceed in parallel with a related student conduct code process *if* the Policy 3.7 process is based *only* on conduct that would not violate the student conduct code.

B. “Drop” from a Graduate Program vs. “Dismissal” from the University

An **academic drop** from a graduate program refers to an *academic decision* made by the graduate program, with concurrence and approval by the Graduate School, that a graduate student is failing to adequately progress in the program or to meet the program's academic or professional standards. While a student who has been dropped from a program may not continue in that program, they can nonetheless apply to and potentially be admitted to a different University program.

A **dismissal** from the University, in contrast, means that the student can no longer attend the University and, absent very unusual circumstances, may never again apply to attend the University. The consequence of dismissal from the University is thus substantially more severe than a drop from a program.

Neither a program nor the Graduate School has the authority to dismiss students. Their authority is limited to decisions regarding the student's academic progress, up to, potentially, a decision to drop a student from the program for failing to adequately progress or meet the program's academic requirements.

SUMMARY:

- **Academic Drops** from a graduate program are based on the program's academic and professional standards.
- **Dismissals** from the University are formal and final separations imposed as a sanction for violating the student conduct code.

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C. What Information Can and Cannot Be Considered for an “Academic Drop” Decision

Programs **may consider** the following types of information when evaluating a **drop** decision:

- **Academic performance:** Grades, coursework quality, failure to meet established competencies.
- **Professional standards:** Compliance with the ethical, professional, and behavioral standards specific to, and communicated by, the program (where that behavior would not amount to a student conduct code violation, even if true).
- **Conduct outcomes:** Findings and conclusions from a *final order* in student conduct code case where those findings or conclusions are relevant to the student's ability to meet a program's documented academic performance or professional standards or expectations.

Graduate programs **should not** consider:

- **Pending conduct reports or investigations:** Pending allegations or reports of misconduct under the student conduct code should not be considered in a Policy 3.7 proceeding and may not form the basis for any Policy 3.7 decision, whether Notification, Academic Alert, Final Academic Alert, or drop. Where conduct has been reported or alleged that, if true, would violate the student conduct code, only the findings and conclusions in a final order issued at the conclusion of the conduct code process may be considered or weighed in a Policy 3.7 proceeding.

D. Guidelines

- When programs are considering Academic Notifications or Academic Alerts (GSP 3.7.3) based on professional standards violations, but there is a question whether that behavior might also violate the University's student conduct code, they should consult with the student conduct office, Community Standards & Student Conduct (CSSC) at cssc@uw.edu for a preliminary assessment of whether the behavior needs to be investigated and adjudicated through the conduct code process. Such inquiries will not require that the program submit a misconduct report. However, any behavior that is identified during this consultation as a potential violation of the conduct code may not be included in an Alert or Notification until a formal conduct code investigation and adjudication has been conducted, and a final order has been issued.
- Conduct outcomes (e.g., disciplinary reprimand or probation, or University (as opposed to program) suspension or dismissal) must follow the University's conduct process and are required when, via a final order, a student has been held responsible for violating the student conduct code.
- Once the conduct investigation is resolved, the final order's factual findings and conclusions as to

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conduct code violations must be treated as established facts for purposes of a program's policies or any pending or subsequent Policy 3.7 process. That is, those established facts cannot be reexamined, reassessed, or contradicted. For example:

- If a course's or program's policies provide that the consequence of academic misconduct under the student conduct code is a failing grade in a required course or the lowering of a student's GPA below the 3.0 minimum, then, for the purpose of applying such policies, it must be taken as an established fact that the student committed academic misconduct under the student conduct code.
- Similarly, if certain behavioral misconduct under the conduct code would also violate a program's documented professional standards, the final order's holding that relevant behavioral misconduct occurred may then be weighed by the program to determine whether there has also been a failure to meet the program's professional standards. If so, the program may then proceed to whatever academic consequence it determines is appropriate, such as, e.g., Academic Alert or an Academic Drop. The program's handbook must describe the process by which this determination will be made.

This memorandum serves as a guide to ensure clarity, consistency, and fairness in handling matters related to academic status and conduct outcomes. Please consult with the [Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct](#) and/or submit [an inquiry form at this page](#) if there are any uncertainties or if specific situations arise that may require additional guidance.

E. Academic Alerts and Student Conduct

