

Annual Graduate Student Evaluations – Policies and Procedures

Established by the Chemistry Department on January 28, 2009

Preamble

The Graduate School expects each department to develop a mechanism for evaluating graduate student performance and for providing constructive feedback to graduate students annually. Annual Evaluations help students to understand what is expected of them, to analyze their development, and to meet higher performance targets. Evaluations also facilitate the dismissal of underperforming students.

General Policies and Procedures

1. Each academic year, each chemistry graduate student is responsible to arrange a meeting of his or her Advisory Committee for the purpose of conducting the Annual Evaluation. Failure of a student's Advisory Committee to conduct the Annual Evaluation and submit its report to the Graduate Program Director will result in an "Unsatisfactory" rating for that student for that academic year.
2. Whenever possible, the Annual Evaluation meeting should be attached to a "milestone" event in the student's program, such as the Preliminary Examination, the Original Research Proposal (ORP) Oral Exam, the Internal Seminar, or an MS Final Exam. Ideally, these meetings should be conducted in the Spring Semester, on or before Reading Day. This deadline allows the Graduate Education Committee to process all the evaluations and report them to the Graduate School by June 1. Holding an Annual Evaluation meeting outside the Spring term must be approved by the Graduate Program Director.
3. Each annual Evaluation meeting will require up to 30 minutes of the Advisory Committee's time. When scheduling an event (such as the Prelim Exam), the student must ensure that the Advisory Committee members have allowed for the additional time in their schedules. In consultation with their Advisory Committees, students may schedule either a 90-minute exam (which means the professors must commit to 2.0 hours) or a 120-minute exam (which means the professors must commit to 2.5 hours). Additional guidelines for Prelim Oral Exam, ORP Oral Exam, and Final Examinations are provided on the Graduate Program web pages.
4. Each first-year student must have an Annual Evaluation by the end of their second semester. First-year evaluations should be completed by the student's Research Director, not the whole Advisory Committee. However if a student is co-advised, both advisors should contribute to the preparation of the evaluation. Students who entered the program in a Spring term should consult the Graduate Program Director for advice on scheduling the initial Annual Evaluation.
5. Each student must prepare (1) a Student (Self) Evaluation Form, (2) a Student Activities Report (SAR) summarizing progress in course work, research, teaching, and listing key achievements, and (3) a one-page Research Update. The completed forms (signed only by the student) must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator (staff) no less than two weeks prior to the Evaluation Meeting. The Coordinator will scan the documents and distribute them electronically to the Advisory Committee.

6. Before each Evaluation Meeting, students should also review their Plans of Study and, if needed, deliver the "Change of Plan" form to their Research Director, so that it can be signed by the assembled Advisory Committee at the Evaluation Meeting. At the same time, students should inspect their transcripts and notify the Graduate Program Director of any irregularities or errors.
7. During the Evaluation Meeting, the student's Advisory Committee will prepare a written evaluation of each student *using the same one-page Student Evaluation Form that the students used for their self-evaluation*. This evaluation must be signed by the committee members and the student and submitted to the Graduate (staff) Coordinator before the end of Exam Week in the Spring semester.
8. Members of the Graduate Education Committee (GEC) will read the SARs and the Committees' evaluation reports. The GEC will meet (typically in mid-May) to assign a rating to each student (see below) and to prepare student feedback (likely excerpting some comments from the Advisory Committee reports and possibly adding comments of their own).
9. The Graduate Education Committee (or the Graduate Program Director acting on behalf of the Committee) may adjust a student's deadlines for Evaluation Meetings and other milestones to accommodate special circumstances. Such a student may be asked to agree to a plan for getting him or her caught up with his or her peers (for example, in a situation where the student failed the prelim and needs to re-take it the following term).
10. Evaluations will be available to the student, the Advisory Committee, the Graduate Program Director, the Graduate Coordinator, the Department Head, and the Graduate School Dean's Office.

Rating System to be Used in Annual Graduate Student Evaluations

- Ratings of Excellent, Satisfactory Plus, Satisfactory, Satisfactory Minus, or Unsatisfactory will be assigned each student by the Graduate Education Committee, based in part on Advisory Committee Evaluation reports. (Note that a different set of rating terms was used intentionally on the Evaluation Form to emphasize the policy that the student's Advisory Committee does not assign the student his or her final rating.)
- Excellent ratings are expected to be rare (a few students each year in the whole department).
- Satisfactory Plus ratings must be supported by clearly demonstrable and extra-departmentally visible achievement such as publishing a paper or winning an award.
- Satisfactory is the normal rating for a student who is meeting the basic milestones and making acceptable progress in research.
- Satisfactory Minus is intended for cases where the student is meeting the basic programmatic and academic milestones but is not meeting expectations in a subjectively evaluated area such as research progress or teaching quality.
- Unsatisfactory ratings are given when the student has not reached the milestones expected (see below), or when the student has been placed on Academic Probation, or when the student is not meeting minimal expectations in research, etc.
- Failure to submit the SAR or to get an evaluation from the Advisory Committee results in an automatic Unsatisfactory rating. It is the student's responsibility to see that these things happen.
- A rating of either "Satisfactory Minus" or "Unsatisfactory" triggers a mandatory mid-year Review in the next cycle (within the next six months).
- An "Unsatisfactory" rating in two sequential Evaluations is sufficient grounds to dismiss that student. Dismissal on the basis of sequential "Unsatisfactory" ratings is not automatic but must be formally recommended by the Advisory Committee and approved by both the Graduate Program Director and the Department Head.

Basic Milestones Required for Satisfactory Ratings

- A satisfactory first year review requires that the student has selected a Research Director and an Advisory Committee, and that he or she has an *approved* Plan of Study on file at the Graduate School. Approval can sometimes take up to three weeks, so first-year students should submit their Plans of Study on or before March 15.
- A satisfactory second year review requires the student to have completed the Literature Review and passed the oral preliminary exam.
- A satisfactory third year review requires the student to have completed the Research Proposal and the corresponding oral defense.
- A satisfactory fourth year review requires the student to have completed at least one seminar, whether internal or external.
- A satisfactory fifth year review requires the student to have defended the dissertation and submitted the ETD to the Graduate School. Circumstances justifying a satisfactory rating for a student who has not defended by the end of his or her fifth academic year of study would require explicit written documentation.
- The Graduate Program Director can consider adjustments to these requirements, but the reasons for justifying an accommodation will be held to high standards.
- Students who entered the program prior to the Fall of 2008 should understand that these policies and procedures do apply, effective immediately, to every student in the program. Although some allowances will be made for the fact that “the rules were changed in the middle of the game,” students who find themselves “behind schedule” in their programs should try to work with their Advisory Committees to establish a plan for catching up. Questions about how these policies might apply to a student’s individual situation should be directed to the Graduate Program Director.

Masters’ Degree Candidates

All of the above general guidelines apply to students on MS Plans of Study, except that they are not expected to have completed requirements that are specific to the PhD program. In addition it is expected that a student who changes from the PhD program to the MS student should have completed the internal seminar within one year.