ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Office of Graduate Studies
Office of International Programs
1. *Case Studies of Unexpected Challenges*
2. Grades and “grade-point average”: GPA
3. Academic Probation
   - What it is
   - What it means
   - Your next steps
4. Resources to help you
5. *Case Studies of Unexpected Challenges – Successful Outcomes*
6. Plan of Action
Hi, my name is Anna. I started my master’s in spring 2015 and was doing really well. I received two B+ in the first semester and was doing well until the middle of the second semester, when I was rear-ended by some guy texting while driving. Although it was a minor accident, my car was pretty damaged, and needed to get repaired. This took a lot of time: dealing with the insurance claims adjustors, taking the car to the shop etc. Plus, I lost the car, so to get to school I had to take the bus or get friends to drive me. I ended up missing class a few times. Unfortunately, just as things were returning to normal, I learned that my father was ill. Although I returned to classes, it was pretty hard to concentrate. I couldn’t help but worry about my father. Since he lives out of the state, I couldn’t help but feel guilty for not going home to check on him. I knew the visit would take too much time, which I didn’t have, but thinking about him kept me worried and preoccupied. This distracted me, and kept me from completing my assignments. Next thing I knew, I owed my professor several assignments, and had to try my best to complete all my work before the end of the semester. Unfortunately, I ended up rushing through my assignments, and ended up with a C and a D.
CASE STUDIES OF UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES

Hi, my name is David, I’m an international student in Computer Science. And, it is really great to be studying in the U.S. at Cal State Fullerton. I didn’t get to the U.S. until just before the semester started, so I had trouble getting classes. I got into one class that is really interesting to me, but the other class is not really in my specialty and I did not have the right background for the subject. I thought that if I just studied hard, I would be able to do well in the class. It was difficult to make friends and also to get into study groups. Everyone in my classes seemed to know each other, especially that second class, which was a 400-level class and had senior undergrads in the class. and I felt very alone and have been a little homesick. The professors are good, even though their accents are not like mine, and sometimes I have trouble understanding them. I didn’t want to bother my professors because they seem so busy, so I just tried to learn on my own. I even got sick during finals week, and did not think to inform my professors. Because of my difficulties, I earned a C- and a B- in my classes.
Grades and Grade-Point Average

- Grades are used as a ranking system to assess your knowledge and skills

- Each test and homework you do is graded

- Course grades are based on your...
  - Tests & quizzes
  - Homework & assignments
  - Class participation
  - Special projects
  - Final Exam, paper or project

- Alphabetical scale where an ‘A’ is the best and an ‘F’ is the worst

- Each teacher sets their own standard for what constitutes work deserving of each letter grade
  - Simply showing up to class does NOT constitute the entire basis of your grade
GRADES

- Letter grades: A, B, C, D, F

- Other grades are:
  - CR: “credit”
  - NC: “no-credit”
  - RP: “Work in progress”
  - W: “Withdrawal”
  - WU: “Unauthorized Withdrawal”
  - I: “Incomplete”
  - IC: “Incomplete Charged”

- Grades to Avoid – Negative Effect on GPA:
  - C = 2.00 grade points
  - D = 1.00 grade points
  - F = 0.00 grade points
  - WU = 0.00 grade points
  - IC = 0.00 grade points
- GPA stands for Grade Point Average
- Each letter grade has a designated number of grade points:

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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.30</td>
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- Each course is assigned a numeric unit value: 3 units
- The Grade-Point Average is determined using the total grade points and the unit value
GPA CALCULATOR

- Use Resources Tab on the Graduate Studies Website
  - [http://www.fullerton.edu/graduate/resource/](http://www.fullerton.edu/graduate/resource/)
• Grade-point Average: GPA
• Each semester: Minimum of 3.00
• Courses 100, 200, 300 not included in GPA
• Maintain a minimum 3.00 GPA in two areas
  • Study Plan courses
  • All Graduate courses
STUDY PLAN GPA

- Required minimum of 3.00
  - Includes only those courses required for the degree
  - Does **not** include prerequisite or deficiency courses
GRADUATE GPA

- required minimum of 3.00
- includes all courses taken with a traditional grade that are applicable toward a graduate degree
  - 500-level (graduate)
  - 400-level where additional coursework is required for graduate students.
- Transfer work
- Does not include 300-level or below
## TRANSCRIPT

### Spring Semester 2015 (Graduate)

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Enrollment Dates: Aug 21, 2012 to Dec 10, 2012

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Grad GPA 6.00 6.00 6.00 15.90 2.65

Graduate Probation May 28, 2015
### Fall Semester 2014 (Graduate)

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Grad GPA: 12.00 12.00 12.00 35.10 **2.93**

Graduate Probation Jan 07, 2015

### Spring Semester 2015 (Graduate)

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**Enrollment Dates:** Jan 17, 2015 to May 08, 2015

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Grad GPA: 24.00 21.00 24.00 54.90 **2.29**

Graduate Probation May 28, 2015

### Fall Semester 2014 (Graduate)

**Admitted To:**
- Master of Science
- Major: Electrical Engineering

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Grad GPA: 6.00 6.00 6.00 15.90 **2.65**

Graduate Probation Jan 07, 2015

### Spring Semester 2015 (Graduate)

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**Enrollment Dates:** Jan 17, 2015 to May 08, 2015

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Grad GPA: 18.00 18.00 18.00 47.70 **2.65**

Graduate Probation May 28, 2015
WHAT IS ACADEMIC PROBATION?

- Your Graduate GPA is below 3.00
- Negative influences on GPA:
  - Course grades are B- or lower
  - WU grade
  - I grade that changes to IC (after 1 year)
- Student allowed 2 more regular semesters
GRAD STUDENTS ≠ UNDERGRADS

- Policies stricter for Grad Students
- Course Repetition
  - Must repeat a course if you earn less than the minimum grade required (normally a C is the minimum)
- No “grade forgiveness” for graduate students
  - Retaking a course earning a better grade will NOT remove the first grade from the grade-point average calculation
  - Both grades are included in the grade-point average as separate grades
- Can only repeat a course once
How Can You Remove Yourself from Probation?

- Raise your GPA to 3.00
- Meet with Graduate Adviser to determine a plan of action
  - Choosing appropriate classes
  - Rearranging classes by changing when you will take certain classes
  - Limiting the number of units in which you enroll
  - Tutoring
  - Create a Study Schedule Plan
PROBATION LEADS TO ONE OF TWO OUTCOMES

- The student will return to a 3.0 within two semesters of having dropped below a B average.

- The student will not return to a 3.0 within 2 semesters and the student will be disqualified from the program.
What Can I Do?

- Take control of your **studies** and **your life**!
  - Develop an action plan! Today!
  - Examine your work:
    - What could be contributing to your low GPA?

Take five minutes to complete the self-reflective worksheet.
DEVELOP A STUDY SCHEDULE?

- It is an organized schedule that outlines study times and learning goals.
- A student blocks off days and times in their calendar dedicated to studying.
- It helps you become more organized.
- It holds you accountable for your own learning outcomes.
A study schedule is even more important to your success in college

- You need to have self-discipline and determination to complete your studies.
- There is no instructor to remind you of assignments and tests.
THINGS TO CONSIDER

- It is an effective way to help you navigate through your college education in an organized way.
- You will need to evaluate your current schedule and time management strategies.
- Find days when you have fewer personal commitments when you can squeeze some study time.
- Each student studies differently, so the amount of time you need to study will differ from the time your classmates need.
- Some students find that studying nightly for thirty minutes is more realistic than studying a few times a week for a longer period of time.
THINGS TO IDENTIFY

- Identify your learning goals for each study session in order to maximize these scheduled study times.

- Determine why you are studying:
  - Develop a plan that can help you achieve those goals.
  - Take into consideration upcoming tests,
  - Your average in certain courses,
  - Projects that you anticipate will take more time than others
THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Develop a study schedule that is reasonable.
- Set aside enough time in your schedule dedicated to your studies
  - Blocking off five hours with no break will set you up for failure.
  - You can spend less time studying if you do it correctly.
FOUR STEPS TO CREATING YOUR STUDY SCHEDULE

Step #1: Create a time chart of your current activities.

- Create a time chart so you can see how you spend your time from day to day.
  - For a one-week period, take notes about your daily activities.
  - Record things like when you are at work, school, or home with family.
  - Even note when you eat and sleep.
- Once you charted your activities
  - Look for times that you can slip in an hour or two of dedicated studying.
  - This chart can be helpful for determining days and times that are consistent each week that you can devote to studying.
FOUR STEPS TO CREATING YOUR STUDY SCHEDULE

Step #2: Develop a schedule
- Now that you have determined available days and times for studying,
  - Put that time into your calendar or planner.
- Use detailed notes to block out times on your calendar
  - This is will remind you what you need to do every time you look at it.
- It is best to have a schedule written down so you don’t forget.
  - Seeing it written down can make it seem more important, like a doctor’s appointment you cannot miss.
- Write down the specific subject, test, readings or projects you need to work on for that specific time.
  - Be sure to devote enough time to each of your classes.
    - For example, Mondays and Thursdays can be set aside for studying math, while Tuesdays and Fridays can be devoted to English.
FOUR STEPS TO CREATING YOUR STUDY SCHEDULE

Step #3: Determine your study goals

- At the beginning of each week, determine why you need to study and what you plan to accomplish in each class.
  - Do you want to raise your average in a particular class in order to maintain a certain GPA?
  - Are you preparing for a big exam?
    - For example, if you are studying for an important midterm exam, alter your study plan two weeks prior to the test to incorporate review of old tests and notes in your sessions.
  - When you don’t have an upcoming test, use your study time to read ahead one chapter in order to grasp the next lecture.
  - Tailor your study schedule depending on your weekly goals.
    - Be sure to analyze what you plan to get out of each study session.
  - Don’t skip your study sessions just because there is no test coming up.
    - Staying on track will reduce your future test preparation time by reading ahead and preparing for lectures.
FOUR STEPS TO CREATING YOUR STUDY SCHEDULE

Step #4: Stick to your schedule

- A study schedule works best if it is followed on a consistent basis.
- You should try to develop a study schedule that you can follow for the length of each semester.
- You will need to reevaluate your study schedule each semester and fine-tune it each term.
- Remember, the most important thing is sticking to your schedule.
HELPFUL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Schedule time for fun activities.
- Make sure your schedule is balanced
  - Your mind will be more receptive if you don’t feel overwhelmed or discouraged by your schedule.
  - Don’t schedule several long days in a row of studying, will be tempted to give up.
  - It is acceptable, and even recommended, that you schedule time for nonacademic activities:
    - Exercise, Hobbies, and Socializing with other students.
  - When you are studying, remember to take breaks in order to prevent feeling overwhelmed.
- Find a study partner.
  - Studying with a classmate allows for collaboration and discussion.
  - When creating your study schedule, check with other students in your class to determine if you can coordinate study sessions with you.
  - However, if you tend to socialize more than study when you are around others, stick to an independent study plan.
  - If you do choose to study with a partner, choose someone with whom you are likely to stay on task.
TOOLS FOR CREATING A SCHEDULE

- If keeping a paper and pen schedule is not helpful try an app
- There are many study planner apps available
  - Study Cal - Student Planner and Organizer by Nicholas Doherty
    https://appsto.re/us/-H7FO.i
  - My Study Life by My Study Life, Ltd.
    https://appsto.re/us/Rd0r2.i
  - ClassManager - Student School Schedule Planner Tracker & Assignment List Homework Organizer App by www.TutorsOnNet.com
    https://appsto.re/us/ioUJF.i
  - Pocket Schedule - Class Schedule, Homework Planner & School Organizer by Appxy
    https://appsto.re/us/epygz.i
Developing Strategies for Thriving in Grad School Culture

- Discipline requirements and protocols
- Personal responsibility and personal investment
- Get involved in on-campus groups
- Take advantage of campus resources like the Graduate Learning Specialists
- Use professors’ office hours
- Graduate studies office networking and leadership opportunities
- Get to know classmates to select a good study team-appoint a leader
- Stay organized with calendars & task lists & set deadlines and milestones along the way
- Don’t procrastinate! Start your projects early
Developing New Ways to Interact with Course Content

- Graduate level work requires a great deal more devotion and detail than undergrad work. Coupled with the other obligations you have, some skills that could be valuable include:
  - More efficient consumption of assigned and supplementary material.
  - Re-conceptualizing and organizing your approach to time management.

- Identifying the types of assignments that seemed to be pulling your grade down will help you determine what weaknesses you might need to address, and who can help you do so.
**Asking the Right Questions**

- Why am I doing this?
- **What am I meant to learn?**
- What comments do I receive or mistakes do I keep getting on my work? What can I do to address these patterns?
- **What do my professors say? My grad adviser? My Study Plan?**
- What is the purpose of this class to my studies? To my field? To my professional life?
- **Where can I go to get more information?**
Anna:
You’ll remember that in my second semester my car was damaged by someone who hit me, which meant that I missed some classes because I had trouble getting to school, and then my father got really sick, and because he lives far away, I was worried for him and couldn’t concentrate. You’ll remember that I said I earned a C and a D.

Actually, I would have earned a C and a D, but instead I got help before the semester ended. I talked with my professors and my graduate advisor. They helped me consider my options, including taking incompletes, withdrawing from the semester, and/or continuing with my classes as usual. Having honest conversations with them helped me understand the time it would take to catch up in all my classes, and that I might not do well if I continued with my all my classes. Therefore, I decided to withdraw from one class, and focus on just two courses. My graduate advisor also helped visit the Counseling Services on campus, where I learned various coping strategies to help me cope with my father’s illness. So, I received a W, a B, and an A-, with a resulting graduate GPA of 3.5, and study plan GPA of 3.7, as only his A- and W course were included in his study plan.
David:

You’ll remember that I’m an international student in Computer Science and that in my first semester I had to take a class is not really in my specialty and I did not have the right background for the subject. And that I had trouble meeting friends to study with. I even got sick during finals week, and did not think to inform my professors.

Well, actually, when I realized that I was not prepared for one of the classes I was taking, I got up the courage to begin visiting my professor during office hours. Through these visits, I gained a better understanding of the course material, but I continued to struggle with the class. So, I also spoke to the graduate program advisor about the problem. He agreed that perhaps that course should not go on my study plan. He would write my study plan soon, so it would not be part of my study plan GPA. I also got the courage to make friends so I was in a study group, and I met with a Grad Learning Specialist about study techniques and writing term papers. Also, I visited the advisor at the International Students & Scholars Office, and met with an International Student Advisor, to learn about my options. I felt more confident and earned a B and a B+.
RESOURCES

- Department resources
  - Graduate Program Adviser
  - Program tutoring
  - Social clubs

- Office of Graduate Studies
  - Advising
  - Tutoring
    - Graduate Learning Specialist (GLS)
    - learningspecialists@fullerton.edu
    - Workshops

- International Programs Adviser

- Specific cultural clubs
  - [https://apps.fullerton.edu/studentclubs/clubsearch/clublist.aspx](https://apps.fullerton.edu/studentclubs/clubsearch/clublist.aspx)
Resources (Cont’)

- Academic support from
  - Peers
  - Study Groups
  - Social Activities
  - Social media sites

- Counseling (CAPS)
  - Free and confidential counseling/support
    http://www.fullerton.edu/shcc/caps/about_caps.asp
  - Be your own advocate. No one can fix this but you.
FORM A PLAN OF ACTION
CRITICAL BEHAVIORS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Communicate with your professors!
  - As soon as any challenges arise
  - To strengthen your understanding of difficult topics
  - Inform them when you cannot attend class

- Communicate with your graduate adviser
  - Form a relationship with your graduate advisor and ask for help on your academic journey

- Form Study Groups
  - In every class to help each other succeed
  - Schedule a regular meeting every week or every other week
FORM A PLAN OF ACTION
CRITICAL BEHAVIORS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

○ Utilize Campus Resources
  • Schedule appointments with the Graduate Learning Specialists as needed
  • Meet with the International Student & Scholars Office
  • Visit student resource centers on campus
  • Utilize Counseling and Psychological Services to help ease transition and learn ways to manage stress
  • Join student organizations

○ Plan your study schedule
  • Utilize the steps provided to day to create a study schedule that can be easily integrated into your routine.