

Guidelines for Probation and Disqualification in the Undergraduate Major

(revised 9/30/10 to reflect replacement of University Policy F96-11 with University Policy S10-6)

Preamble

These guidelines provide additional guidance for the implementation of University Policy S10-6. They are intended to serve two purposes. First, they will help departments develop criteria for probation and disqualification policies for their own degree programs. Second, they will provide continuity, fairness, grounds for oversight review, and an institutional memory for the Academic Disqualification and Reinstatement Review Committee (ADRRC). The ADRRC is charged with reviewing departmental guidelines and hearing the appeals of students placed on probation or disqualified under those guidelines.

Supporting Student Success

Although it may seem harsh to disqualify students from the majors of their choice, in many instances, students will be well served by such departmental policies. For example, there are many students who barely progress through their major degree programs, only to discover when they are high unit seniors that they are unable to complete key upper-division or capstone courses, or they have major GPAs well below 2.0 even though their SJSU GPAs are above 2.0. It is better for students to discover early in their degree program work that either they need to demonstrate improvement in courses leading to the major, or they should find another major more suited to their talents and interests. All policies developed to be consistent with these guidelines will still require advising and student support structures (tutoring, counseling, etc) to function as intended. Probation and disqualification in the major, at its best, can provide a mechanism to compel struggling students to recognize areas for improvement, successfully negotiate hurdles, and get back on track. Alternatively, such policies can help students realize early in their academic careers that they should be exploring other majors and possible careers prior to spending a great deal of time and money pursuing a major that is a poor fit. -In summary, well-designed and well-implemented policies for probation and disqualification in the major will be beneficial as an early warning system for students and enhance retention and graduation efforts more generally.

The Basic Principles

University Policy S10-6 provides the framework and foundation for these guidelines. The relevant section (I.F. for undergraduates) is reproduced here in *italics* for convenience.

Probation In the Major and Disqualification From the Major

Despite maintaining a SJSU cumulative GPA of 2.0 or better, students' academic performance in the major may fall below the minimum standards for those majors. In these cases, while students remain in overall good standing with the University, they are subject to probation and disqualification from the major. Each college, school, department, and program (hereafter referred to as "program") may employ a policy of probation and disqualification from the major.

Programs may use program-specific criteria for determining probation in the major, disqualification from the major, and reinstatement into the major. Such criteria and procedures will be reviewed and approved by the ADRRC.

Programs employing a policy for disqualification from the major must ensure that all students within the concerned majors are advised of this policy.

1. Probation in the Major

Students are subject to probation in the major when their GPA in the major falls below 2.0. The GPA in the major is defined on the major form but may also include support courses as specified in the program-specific plan for probation approved by the ADRRC.

The student must be notified in writing by the program, providing them with the conditions for release from probation and the circumstances that would lead to disqualification, should probation not be discharged. Students must be advised to meet with an advisor in the major to design a study plan to raise their GPA in the major to 2.0 in the next semester of enrollment.

2. Disqualification in the Major

If students on probation in the major fail to achieve a minimum GPA of 2.0 in the major during that semester, they may be disqualified from the major.

Students disqualified under this policy will be notified by the program that they are no longer eligible to continue in the major and that their major will be changed to undeclared unless another major for which they are qualified is selected. Notification will include a referral of the students to their advisors for consultation.

3. Reinstatement to the Major

Programs employing a policy for disqualification from the major may have a procedure or set of conditions for reinstatement of those students to the major. A critical step in achieving reinstatement to the major following disqualification from the major is consultation by students with their advisors to design a study plan that addresses scholastic deficiencies and demonstrates that they are ready to resume rigorous academic work.

Students will be reinstated to the major upon successful completion of the study plan.

4. Petitions

In cases of error or extenuating circumstances, students, upon receiving notice of probation or disqualification, may petition to an appropriate faculty committee at the program level to appeal such action. In the case of a negative decision in response to the petition, students may appeal to the ADRRC. After review of the petition, the ADRRC will make a recommendation to the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies to confirm or rescind the action.

5. Exceptions

In most cases, a direct reassignment from good standing in the major to disqualification from the major is prohibited. Exceptions will be made in the cases of clinical courses, laboratory courses, or other types of programmatic requirements where there may be such serious concerns about the safety or well being of the student, other students, clients, patients, etc., that repetition of the courses is not reasonable. These courses must be approved in advance by the ADRRC and adhere to guidelines for probation and disqualification in the major established by the ADRRC.

Additional Guidelines

As noted above, University Policy S10-6 provides an excellent framework, but there are many other Title 5 rules and regulations, CSU Executive Orders and coded memoranda, and University policies that need to be adhered to as well. Some of these are enumerated below. This list of guidelines is not meant to be exclusionary; a department may propose others that the ADRRC will consider based on compliance with University policies and practice and student fairness considerations. These guidelines may be thought of as a set of tools to improve student success and establish good educational practice.

- (1) Good Standing —> Probation —> Disqualification: In general, it is not possible to go directly from good standing in the major to disqualification from the major. In other words, at least one semester of probation in the major is required prior to disqualification from the major. The underlying philosophical premise is that students should be placed on notice prior to disqualification. Exceptions to this general guideline include the following:
 - In clinical courses, laboratory courses, or other types of programmatic requirements, there may be such serious concerns about the safety or well-being of the student or other students, clients, patients, etc., that repetition of the course is not reasonable. For such courses or programmatic experiences, departments may establish “no repeat” policies, *i.e.*, a course may not be repeated if not passed on the first attempt. The course catalog description, greensheet, and programmatic information must all clearly provide this information. In clinical or lab settings in which safety or well-being are severely compromised, an instructor may disenroll a student from the course, which may lead to disqualification from the major. In general, the immediate move from good standing to disqualification (without a term of probation in between) should be associated with the inability to satisfy a specific course requirement on the first and only allowable attempt, not with a less specific programmatic requirement.
 - Conditional acceptance to a program is, in effect, acceptance with probation in the major. Typically, a specified set of courses or requirements must be passed prior to attaining good standing in the program. There may even be time limits or unit limits established to satisfy the conditions, which, if not met, may lead to disqualification from the major degree program without an intervening term on probation. Cohort Programs must provide in their policies a reasonable accommodation for students who must stop out for legitimate reasons. Undergraduate “special admits” are considered to be conditionally accepted until fully qualified as students in good standing.
- (2) Multiple attempts to pass a course: With the exceptions given in (1), students should be given the opportunity to repeat any course at least once. However, major programs may restrict a student to two attempts of any course offered by the department. The course catalog description, greensheet, and programmatic information should all clearly provide this information. The basic guideline is that the University rules for repeating courses should be followed unless the major chooses to be more lenient than the University. Special situations include the following:
 - Approved course drops or semester withdrawals (W or WB grades on the unofficial transcript) are considered to be without prejudice and should not be counted as an attempt at a course if the major program restricts the number of attempts for a course (see University Policy S09-7).
 - If grade forgiveness is allowed, then the repeat grade must be considered without prejudice (as implicit in University Policy F08-2).

- If grade forgiveness is not possible when a course is attempted multiple times, the university will use grade averaging in computing the SJSU GPA (per F08-2). A degree program may also do this or may consider the final attempt at the course or the highest grade in the course for the purposes of the major GPA (on the major form) or to satisfy any requirements prior to completion of the major.
- If the course in question is offered by another department, the major program may consider only the first two attempts in determining probation or disqualification status. Clearly, the major department cannot restrict the number of times a student enrolls for a course offered by another department, but it is permitted, for instance, to ignore the grade from a third attempt to pass a class with a C or better.

(3) Maximum course grade or GPA requirements: Programs may not require individual course grades to be higher than “C or better” for undergraduates. At the most, a department may require that each and every course required for the degree program be passed at these standards. The obvious corollary is that the maximum GPA that can be required for any set of courses cannot be higher than 2.0 for undergraduates. Notes related to these general guidelines include the following:

- *Admission requirements* and *degree requirements* are different. Admission to an impacted degree program may include supplemental criteria such as a GPA greater than the 2.0 threshold. However, once a student is admitted to a major, the degree requirements must be limited to “C or better” for undergraduates (Title 5).
- Following a disqualification from the major, reinstatement to the major may include course grades or GPA requirements higher than the standard thresholds. In effect, students seeking such reinstatements are being admitted to the major again and may be held to higher standards than are required to complete a degree. This is especially appropriate for impacted majors that already apply supplemental criteria for admission of new students to the major.

(4) Restrictions on course or unit load taken in a semester or term: These sorts of criteria may be set as a minimum or maximum. For example, cohort programs may require that a minimum number of courses/units be taken each semester in order to best utilize resources or to ensure that the program is completed while student knowledge is still current. Alternatively, setting a maximum number of units may make sense for students on probation.

(5) A department may consider University Probation or Disqualification as a factor in determining Probation or Disqualification in the major.

(6) Conditions for return to good standing from probation or to reinstatement from disqualification should be clearly communicated to students at the time they are placed on probation or are disqualified from a major. There should be a mechanism to permit return to good standing from probation. If it is not possible to be reinstated from a departmental disqualification (that is a departmental option), then that too must be communicated by the department. It is recommended that conditions for reinstatement from probation be stringent enough that students return to the major in good standing (as opposed to being reinstated on probation).

Approved by the Academic Disqualification & Reinstatement Review Committee: 10-0-1 (4/5/2010)

Present: Emily Allen, Stephen Branz, Barbara Conry, Joseph Giglierano, Elna Green, Cindy Kato, Dennis Lopez, Mary McVey, Deanna L Peck, Marian Sofish, George Vasquez

Absent: David Bruck, Herb Silber

Framing Questions to Accompany the
“Guidelines for Probation and Disqualification in the Undergraduate Major”

1. How do students move from good standing in the major to probation in the major?
2. Are there any conditions or restrictions associated with being on probation in the major (e.g., mandatory advising or inability to enroll in a departmental capstone course)?
3. How do students return from probation in the major to good standing in the major?
4. How do students move from probation in the major to disqualification in the major? [NOTE: The Guidelines for Probation and Disqualification in the Major do not, in general, permit a disqualification from good standing. Situations permitting exceptions to this general guideline are described.]
5. If reinstatement to the major is possible following a disqualification, what must students do in order to earn this reinstatement? [NOTE: a department is not obligated to reinstate to the major, but whatever is done with respect to policy should be communicated clearly and applied fairly to all students.]
6. For each step (above) how will students be notified about (a) their academic standing in the major, and (b) what, if anything, will allow them to return to good standing in the major?
7. What is the process for student appeal of a departmental probation or disqualification? [NOTE: the incentive to draft extremely clear and fair sets of answers to questions 1-6 is that the time spent resolving possible appeals will be greatly reduced.]