



Continuation – Academic Progress Policy and Procedures

Policy Owner	Student Engagement, Conduct, Complaints and Appeals	Approval date and body	3 June 2021, Academic Council Executive Committee
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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To ensure that students are eligible to continue with their studies the University requires satisfactory academic progress to be maintained. This requirement is set out in Academic Regulations¹. The University recognises that there are many factors which may affect a student's academic progress. The Continuation – Academic Progress Policy describes the University's approach to supporting students to maintain progress and to identify those who may need additional support. It also provides procedures to be followed in instances where a student's academic performance and progression falls below the required standards.
- 1.2 Governing Boards are responsible for monitoring the overall performance of students registered to each programme under their remit. Academic Regulations for taught programmes state that a Governing Board shall review the performance of a student where the student fails to remediate a failed module after three attempts or where a student fails to achieve any additional standards for acceptable performance. Where a student's performance is deemed academically unacceptable, they may be referred to the Governing Board will review their performance as a continuation case. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance about roles and responsibilities, and to set out the procedures that will be followed, in such cases.
- 1.3 The objectives of this Policy are to:
 - a) ensure that the *Academic Regulations* concerning continuation and readmission are applied in a fair and transparent manner.
 - b) provide a suitable framework for the effective, consistent and timely identification and management of continuation issues that may arise.
 - c) provide the procedures to be followed where a student's academic performance and progression within their programme is deemed unacceptable.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Discontinued**
The registration status of a student who is deemed ineligible to continue in a UCD programme under the continuation process will be 'discontinued'.
- 2.2 **Governing Board**
All programmes in the University are overseen by a Programme Board, *Graduate Research Board*, Board of Studies, or Joint Academic Programme Board (hereafter referred to as a Governing Board) which is responsible for monitoring the overall performance and progression of students

¹ *Academic Regulations 5.9 and 5.10*

registered to its programmes and ensuring their academic welfare. Governing Boards are established by Academic Council.

2.3 Return to Study

Return to study within the context of this policy, refers to the a former student wishing to return to study at UCD, who was previously deemed ineligible to continue in a UCD programme under this policy and who has a registration status of 'discontinued'.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to

- students registered to taught and research programmes.
- former students seeking to return to study whose registration has previously been discontinued under this policy.

3.2 This policy relates to satisfactory academic progress as described in Academic Regulations. If a student's eligibility or capacity to continue with their studies is being impacted by:

- a) their health, wellbeing or conduct the University's Fitness to Continue in Study Policy or the Student Discipline Procedure should be considered by Governing Boards, as appropriate.
- b) their failure to adhere to the professional practice standards and requirements specified in Programme Fitness to Practise Statements, the University's Student Fitness to Practise Policy and procedure should be considered by Governing Boards².
- c) their persistent failure attend or engage with the programme at all, the University's Withdrawal Procedure should be considered by Governing Boards.

4. Principles

4.1 This policy should be applied in a manner that:

- a) Is fair and consistent
- b) is supportive to students
- c) respects the dignity of all persons involved.

4.2 Where an issue arises in relation to a student who is known to have a disability, and where the disability is relevant to the issue, then in the first instance consideration shall be given to the level and types of support put in place for the student in conjunction with UCD Access and Lifelong Learning.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The responsibilities of Governing Boards for Taught Programmes include:

- a) Determining the standards for acceptable and unacceptable academic performance and progression for their programmes, and approving as part of the programme specification, and reviewing as necessary, any consequent continuation and / or progression requirements.
- b) Determining whether an individual student's performance and progression within one of the board's programmes is academically unacceptable.
- c) Reviewing the academic performance of a student where:
 - i. the student fails to remediate a failed module after three attempts (including in-module resit for the full module, but excluding in-module repeats for assessment components and grades of I and IX), or
 - ii. the student fails to achieve any additional standards for acceptable performance and progression for the programme as defined in the programme specification³.
- d) Making a decision to discontinue a student's registration where a determination is made that a student's academic performance and progression is unacceptable.

² The Student Fitness to Practise Policy applies only to programmes with approved student fitness to practise statements.

³ Academic Regulations, Regulation 5.9

- e) Notifying the student of the decision and their right to appeal the decision on specified grounds and the related timeline for submitting such an appeal.
- f) Notifying the decision to discontinue a student to ACCSCC, UCD Registry (Administrative Services).
- g) Making decisions on whether a former student who was discontinued should be readmitted to the programme.
- h) Governing Boards should consider whether other university processes may be more appropriate for responding to a student's poor performance, such as Fitness to Continue in Study or Student Fitness to Practise.
- i) In accordance with Academic Regulations, Governing Boards may assign specific activities to individuals, units or establish such and so many sub committees as it thinks necessary to ensure the effective delivery of the programmes within its remit. The Governing Board retains responsibility for any such assigned activities.

5.2 The Graduate Research Board responsibilities include:

- a) Consideration of recommendations and supporting evidence from schools, where a student's progression is deemed unacceptable, and the school has recommended that a student should not progress to the next stage of the doctoral programme and that their registration should be discontinued.
- b) Notifying the student of the decision to discontinue their registration from their research programme.
- c) Notifying ACCSCC, UCD Registry (Administrative Services).

5.3 ACCSCC responsibilities include:

- a) Receiving notification of decisions to discontinue student registrations from Governing Boards.
- b) Providing reports to and advising Academic Council on matters relating to Continuation.

5.4 The Student Appeals Committee is responsible for hearing appeals to a decision of a Governing Board to discontinue a student's registration under this policy.

6. Continuation procedure for taught programmes

6.1 Due to the varying size and nature of taught programmes, programme areas may use different approaches for ensuring that students at risk of failing to meet the required academic standards are identified and communicated with in a timely manner. Any programme specific continuation procedures should be published and made easily accessible.

A series of incremental steps are commonly used by programmes, which are designed to support students at risk of failing to meet required standards of progression. These steps provide students with a number of opportunities to engage with their programme in order to remedy their situation.

Typical actions taken by programme areas and schools include:

- Email alerts notifying students about failed modules.
- Written requests for students to attend meetings to discuss their academic performance and progress.
- The development of an academic plan. Progress against the plan will be monitored and there may be the need for subsequent meetings.

6.2 Where a student fails to meet the requirements set out in Academic Regulations and/or the programme specification or has failed to respond to attempts by the programme to engage with the student about their performance, a recommendation for discontinuation of registration can be made to the Governing Board. The student should be given the opportunity to withdraw voluntarily, or to avail of an exit award where appropriate and subject to compliance with the University's regulations and policies.

6.3 In making a recommendation for discontinuation of registration, Governing Boards shall be provided with evidence that the student has been given sufficient opportunity to remediate their situation, and

that they have been provided with all reasonable supports to assist them in any difficulties they may have, including academic and pastoral supports. This may include:

- a) a summary of communications and meetings held with the student, including copies of correspondence with the student regarding their academic performance/progression and minutes or agreed actions or academic plans.
- b) the student's academic record, including Programme Exam Board Reports, Supervisor or Transfer Assessment Reports where relevant.
- c) In the case of a non-engaging student, an account should be provided of efforts made to offer supports and communicate with the student about their academic performance.

6.4 The Chair of the Governing Board shall notify the student in writing that the Governing Board is considering discontinuing a student's registration to their programme.

- a) The student should again be given the opportunity to withdraw voluntarily.
- b) The student should also be given the opportunity to avail of an exit award, where appropriate and subject to compliance with the University's regulations and policy.
- c) The student shall be given the opportunity to respond in writing within 10 working days of notification, should they wish to do so. If a student does not make a written submission the Governing Board will proceed to consider the case in its absence.

6.5 The Governing Board shall make one of the following decisions:

- a) **Discontinue:** To discontinue the student's registration to their programme.
- b) **Permit to Continue:** To permit the student to continue in their programme. The Governing Board may specify that certain actions be undertaken by the student.

6.6 The Chair of the Governing Board shall communicate the decision to the student in writing within five working days of the Governing Board meeting. The letter should include reference to the Student Appeals Procedure and information about the timeline for submitting such appeals.

6.7 Where a decision is made to discontinue a student, ACCSCC and UCD Registry (Administrative Services) shall also be notified in writing and '*discontinued*' should be recorded as the registration status on the student's record.

7. Continuation procedure for research programmes

7.1 In accordance with Academic Regulations, a Research Studies Panel is appointed within the first trimester of a research student's registration. The role of the Research Studies Panel is to provide advice, monitor the progress of the student and support the supervisor student relationship.

7.2 The Graduate Research Board shall consider school recommendations to discontinue a student's registration. Such recommendations will be accompanied by supporting evidence which demonstrates that the student has been offered appropriate supports (academic and pastoral) in order to meet the progression requirements of the programme. Such evidence may include records/minutes of meetings; email communications between the student and Principal Supervisor / Co Supervisor and meetings with the Research Studies Panel.

7.3 The Graduate Research Board will either approve the recommendation, request that a school reconsider their recommendations or, following consultation with the school, make a decision, which differs from the recommendation.

7.4 Where the Graduate Research Board has approved a recommendation that a student's registration be discontinued, a communication to the student will be issued within five working days of the date of the meeting. The letter should include reference to the Student Appeals Procedure and information about the timeline for submitting such appeals.

7.5 Notification of decisions to discontinue a student's registration should be sent to ACCSCC and UCD Registry.

8. Appeals

- 8.1 An appeal may be made to the University's Student Appeals Committee within 10 working days from the date of issue of the decision of the Governing Board. Details of the appeal procedure can be found in the [Student Appeals Procedure](#).
- 8.2 Appeals may be made on the following grounds:
- New evidence:** Information directly relevant to the decision, which for good reason was not available to the Governing Board.
 - Procedural irregularity:** There is evidence that the procedures relating to a decision were not followed properly, which may have impacted on the Governing Board's decision.
- 8.3 Decisions of the Student Appeals Committee. The Committee may:
- Uphold the Appeal, in full or in part
 - Not uphold the appeal
- 8.4 On upholding an appeal, a Student Appeal Committee may require the appellant to meet specified conditions.

9. Return to Study

- 9.1 Should an application to a UCD programme be made by a former student who was discontinued from that programme, the Governing Board will review the application and may seek additional information from the applicant, which may include evidence to demonstrate that the reasons the student was discontinued have been satisfactorily addressed. The Governing Board shall decide whether or not the student should be re-admitted to the programme.
- 9.2 Where an application to a UCD programme is made by a former student, who was discontinued from another programme, the Governing Board to which the applicant has applied should consult with the Governing Board that discontinued the student's registration, before making a decision whether to admit the student. The Governing Board, where the application is under consideration, may seek additional information from the applicant, which may include evidence to demonstrate that the reasons the student's registration was discontinued have been satisfactorily addressed.
- 9.3 The decision will be communicated in writing to the applicant by the relevant Governing Board and to ACCSCC.

10. Related Documents

- Student Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure
- Fitness to Continue in Study Policy and Procedure
- Academic Regulations
- Student Appeals Procedure
- Leave of Absence Policy
- Policy on Progression in Doctoral Programmes
- Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes
- Protocol for Programme Transfer
- UCD Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures
- Withdrawal Procedure

11. Version History

Version	Approval Date	Summary of Changes	Approved By
1	27 April 2017	First Version	Academic Council
2	25 April 2019	The proposed changes reflect section 5.9 (Continuation and Readmission), of the Academic Regulations 2019-20.	Academic Council
3	17 September 2019	Amendments to section 11.1 and 11.2 (Readmission)	Academic Council Executive Committee
4	16 April 2020	Draft updated to reflect establishment of a new student appeals procedure and AC's decision that Governing Boards may make final decisions to discontinue student registrations.	Academic Council Executive Committee
5	25 June 2020	Amendment of text relating to grounds for appeal to align with the provisions of the new Student Appeals Procedure.	Academic Council Executive Committee
6	3 June 2021	Policy title and content updates to remove reference to readmission following consultation with Admissions, UCD Registry.	Academic Council Executive Committee