

UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE AND DISMISSAL FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL MPI AND MHI PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

After completing their didactic course requirements, students will register for research hours. Performance in the “research” course is graded as satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) by the student’s mentor for fall, spring and summer semester.

Receiving 3 unsatisfactory (U) grades will result in dismissal from the Graduate School. Moreover, no course credits are given when a “U” is awarded.

A student is required to meet with their advisory committee at least once every six months. During the meeting the student will update the committee on their progress and receive advice. Following the meeting, the committee chair will submit a report and an overall evaluation of the student’s progress as assessed by the committee members.

If a student receives a “U” grade for research hours, receives an unsatisfactory (U) overall performance evaluation by their advisory committee, or if performance issues are reported to the Director of Graduate Studies by the mentor, a formal review of performance will be initiated.

What to expect on behalf of the mentor:

- A student in danger of receiving a “U” in their research should be informed of poor performance during the semester and given a chance to improve their performance. “Satisfactory” performance is that which the committee determines represents adequate progress toward the Ph.D. degree during the six-month evaluation period. While this is by nature subjective, it involves substantial effort from the student and full involvement in the expected activities of the laboratory, including presentations at group meetings, participation in seminars and conferences, preparation of manuscripts, study of the literature, and regular meetings with the mentor. Students are expected to schedule their committee meetings on time and meet the program’s deadlines. A Satisfactory can be awarded in periods in which no publishable results are obtained if the committee determines that the student’s research efforts and involvement during that period were appropriate. An Unsatisfactory grade can be awarded when students show a pattern of insufficient effort, inadequate preparation, inadequate poor attendance in lab, or unwillingness to cooperate with the mentor.
- At any point, if a mentor deems that a student is performing below expectations, they should initiate a discussion with the student regarding how to improve performance. If the student continues to perform below expectation, the mentor should notify the Director of Graduate Studies.

The Director of Graduate Studies will independently discuss performance issues with the student, the mentor, and the student’s Thesis Advisory Committee. Following this, the Director of Graduate Studies will arrange a meeting, attended by the Director of Graduate Studies, the student, the mentor, and, if necessary, the Thesis Advisory Committee. This group will discuss and document any performance issues and agree upon steps to be taken to remediate performance issues. A memo summarizing the meeting will be provided to all who attend the meeting and copied to the Graduate School. The summary will clearly outline how the student will remediate performance issues and will provide a reasonable timeline for completing the remediation. If the student repeatedly fails to meet the clearly stated deadlines, resulting in two more consecutive “U”s, the student’s graduate program (Molecular Pathology and Immunology

or Microbe Host Interactions) may submit the documentation of failure to the Graduate School and recommend that the student be dismissed from the Graduate School.

If the Director of Graduate Studies or the Molecular Pathogenesis Division Chief has a conflict of interest which would prevent them from being impartial in examining performance issues and help devise remediation plans, the corresponding Graduate Education Committee will designate a faculty member to oversee discussions and planning. If the student feels that the graduate program has not been fair in assessing their progress and their attempts at providing adequate guidance to remediate performance issues, the student may appeal to the Associate Dean for BRET for mediating resolution. All students may also seek a success planning meeting with the Graduate School's Senior Academic Life Coach (https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/bret/wellness_resources_student_faculty/), for advice and perspective on their situation.