



C8. Academic Progress Monitoring and Support

The Academic Progress Monitoring and Support process outlined below is intended to be followed in cases where a student is not fulfilling their academic obligations or otherwise failing to make the academic progress expected of them including being in “good academic standing” as defined above. The purpose of all procedures of academic progress monitoring and support is to identify as early as possible when a student is not progressing satisfactorily, to help the student to do so and to conclude their course successfully. It is important to be clear that it is in every student’s best interests to be fully aware of their academic position and to be given every help and encouragement to achieve their academic potential. The academic progress monitoring and support system is not designed solely to help students whose progress is unsatisfactory due to insufficient effort on their part. It should serve to support students that are not progressing academically as they should, whatever the cause for the deficit.

Matters of academic progress monitoring and support will be kept separate from disciplinary action for other forms of misbehaviour, which will not be referred to in any document or discussion dealing with unsatisfactory academic progress. The steps of the academic progress monitoring and support procedures are explained below and are designed to be transparent and to give every opportunity for students to explain any special circumstances that should be taken into account in reviewing their situation. All tutors wish to ensure that their students make the best use of their time at Somerville and obtain a qualification that was worth the time invested in it by the student; so long as students do this and work to the best of their ability, they will not be subject to the formal stages of the academic progress monitoring and support process.

Academic Dishonesty

The use of dishonest means in any examination or in fulfilling any academic obligation is a serious disciplinary offence. If a student is alleged or is suspected to have committed such an offence, the procedures set out under D1 Deans’ Regulations shall apply.

Informal Monitoring

If in the opinion of any of their tutors a student is not, or is at risk of not being, in good academic standing as described in section C1 (for example, if they perform poorly in exams/Collections or tutorials, or if attendance is poor), their Personal or Organising Tutor will normally in the first instance remind them informally of these obligations and will normally give an informal warning to the student. The tutor should normally discuss the matter with subject colleagues and/or the Senior Tutor prior to giving the informal warning.

This will normally take place at an individual, face to face meeting at which the Personal or Organising Tutor will clarify that an informal warning is being given to the student, specify the breaches of academic obligations which have prompted it, give the student an opportunity to comment, and set out the actions needed to improve performance, preferably, but not necessarily, with the agreement of the student. As a matter of good practice in tuition, this should not normally be the first time that the tutor has discussed their concerns with the

student. It is anticipated that shortcomings in any student's work are normally discussed outside the scope even of this informal stage in the first instance. The Personal or Organising Tutor will make a note of the date and contents of the informal warning and it will usually be considered spent within one year after it has been issued, provided there has been no further breach of academic obligations, unless the Personal or Organising Tutor specifies otherwise.

There is no obligation for an informal warning to be given, and, in a serious case, the College may move directly to Step 1 of the academic progress monitoring and support process. The informal warning will be reported to Education Committee. A wide range of remedial actions are available to help a student in this situation. The most common of these is requiring the student to meet regularly with the Senior Tutor to monitor and support their academic progress. The student may also be referred to academic skills support available through the Margaret Thatcher Scholarships Trust Development Programme or to other sources of skills support. Depending on the situation, the tutor may make engagement with skills support advisory or mandatory.

Step 1 – Report

If, following the issue of an informal warning (or where there is a serious breach of conditions of good academic standing whether or not an informal warning has been issued), a student is not meeting the conditions of good academic standing described in section C1 (for example, if they perform poorly in exams/Collections or tutorials, or if attendance is poor), their Personal or Organising Tutor will report their concerns to Education Committee, a college committee that meets at least twice a term that is normally chaired by the Principal. The committee members will discuss the student's case and decide whether the student should be put 'on report' and any conditions that should be attached to this status.

The student will have the opportunity to put their case to the Education Committee in writing and to draw attention to any mitigating circumstances that may apply. Mitigating circumstances are significantly disruptive and/or unexpected events which are beyond the student's control (such as illness or bereavement) but which might affect academic performance when submitting work or sitting examinations. Circumstances or events that would not normally merit consideration include consequences of paid employment and sporting, social or other leisure commitments. The College may require independent confirmation of mitigating circumstances, for example a medical certificate from the College Doctor in cases of illness or equivalent proof in other circumstances.

It is not in the student's interests to be unaware of their academic position or to fail to address such aspects of their academic situation as are within their power to change, regardless of the circumstances that give rise to any difficulties. Where mitigating circumstances are known, Education Committee may still decide to place a student on report where changes that are within the student's capability are needed to make whatever academic progress the student is able to achieve.

Being on report is a formal warning about academic progress and is intended both to demonstrate the College's concerns that the student may not be working as well as they could

or have other difficulties which they should be addressing, and to help the student improve their academic performance. The student will be sent a letter clearly explaining what improvements or changes are expected, either in terms of rules to be observed or of levels of performance and/or targets to be achieved. The letter will also warn the student that failure to make the requisite improvements or changes may result in the next step of the Academic Progress Monitoring and Support Procedure (Probation) and that a breach of the terms of probation could, after reference to an Academic Review Hearing, lead to severe penalties including expulsion from the College. This letter will be kept on the student's file. They will be given a timeframe to make these changes/improvements and a meeting will be arranged for them with the Principal in order to discuss their general situation.

Following receipt of the letter, a student should immediately arrange to discuss the case with their Personal or Organising Tutor to make sure they are clear about the circumstances. If any mitigating circumstances have not been revealed at this point, they should tell their tutor or the Senior Tutor without delay. If any come to light, they will be placed on record and the requirements of their status may be modified. Tutors will be able to offer the student advice, and may refer them to the College Doctor or the Counselling Service for further help.

Their progress will be closely monitored and reported to each meeting of Education Committee. If the standard of their work improves sufficiently and they meet the conditions they have been set within the relevant timescale, they will be taken off report and a letter confirming this will be sent to them and placed on their file. If they show some improvement but not all conditions have been met, their tutors may request that they remain on report, either with the same or different conditions. If they do not meet the conditions set within the specified timeframe, it is likely that they would be moved to step two of the Academic Progress Monitoring and Support process.

Save in exceptional circumstances, a student may not remain on report for longer than the equivalent of one full term, before either being taken off report successfully or moving to Step 2 of the Academic Progress Monitoring and Support process, Probation.

There is no obligation for a student to have been on report prior to being placed on probation. In a sufficiently serious case (as outlined below), the College may move directly to Step 2 of the Academic Progress Monitoring and Support process.

Step 2 – Probation

If a student on report does not meet the conditions set for them, Education Committee is likely to decide to issue a formal warning by placing a student 'on probation' for their place: that is, the question of whether they should remain on course now comes into consideration. A student who has been given a verbal warning by their tutors without yet having been placed on report by Education Committee may also be placed directly on probation by the Committee, if circumstances warrant: for example, if the student's default is sufficiently serious, or if considerations of timing make it desirable to reach a final decision about a student's future.

The student will have the opportunity to put their case to the Education Committee in writing and to draw attention to any mitigating circumstances that may apply. Mitigating circumstances are significantly disruptive and/or unexpected events which are beyond the student's control (such as illness or bereavement) but which might affect academic performance when submitting work or sitting examinations. Circumstances or events that would not normally merit consideration as mitigating circumstances include consequences of paid employment and sporting commitments. The College may require independent confirmation of mitigating circumstances, for example a medical certificate from the College Doctor in cases of illness or equivalent proof in other circumstances.

To be placed on probation signals that there are serious problems with a student's performance, but it should be noted that there are examples of students who spend a period on probation, and yet improve their performance and successfully complete their degrees. The conditions of probation will be conveyed to the student in a letter. The student will be told clearly what is expected of them in the future, and given a timetable for achieving these expectations.

The letter will also explain that if the conditions of probation are not met, then it is likely that Education Committee would recommend referring the student to an Academic Progress Hearing (APH), the third and final step in the College's Academic Progress Monitoring and Support process (see below). If the conditions set in the probation letter are met, Education Committee may decide either to take the student off probation and require no further report on their progress, or to place the student on 'report' status (see step 1 above). If they show some improvement but not all conditions have been met, their tutors may request that they remain on probation, either with the same or different conditions. Where the conditions of probation include achieving a set mark in collections this will be double blind-marked by external assessors, and in cases where they disagree, the more favourable mark will be used. A meeting will be arranged for the student with the Principal in order to discuss their general situation and to make sure that the student understands the situation and has the opportunity to make all material circumstances known.

If a student has been on probation for at least four weeks before the start of their First Public Examination and a condition of the probation (notified to the student in writing at least four weeks before the start of the first exam) is that some or all of these exams are passed at the first attempt, and that condition is not met, the student's course of study will be terminated. This is also explained in the University's Policy and Guidance on Undergraduate Learning and Teaching, point 7.50:

<https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/academic/documents/media/pguglearn ingandteaching.pdf>

Step 3 - Referral to an Academic Progress Hearing

If a student on probation does not meet the conditions set for them, Education Committee is likely to agree that an Academic Progress Hearing should be convened. Given that the student will only reach this stage if they have failed to meet conditions set to retain their place, if nothing emerges from the hearing that sets the matter in a different light, the outcome will be that a student is sent down but, in the light of evidence presented at the hearing, the panel

may make a different set of recommendations. The recommendations of the Panel may include banning, temporary suspension or expulsion from the College. The Panel may attach such conditions as it sees fit to any such recommendation.

The Academic Progress Panel may regulate its proceedings as it sees fit including (without limitation) setting time limits on the evidence to be called and the representations to be made by the student, their Personal or Organising Tutor, or the Senior Tutor consistent with providing a fair opportunity for each of them to present relevant evidence whilst ensuring that the matter is heard and determined expeditiously. The panel is chaired by the Vice-Principal, unless they are unavailable, or have a close connection with the student that is likely to, or likely to be perceived to, impair in any way their ability to reach a judgement unaffected by matters extraneous to the case (such as if they are the student's Personal Tutor). In this case the next most senior Fellow available and without a close connection to the student will act as Chair. The panel also consists of two Fellows, neither of whom should be the student's tutor, nor have any close connection with the student. The student's Personal Tutor and the Senior Tutor will also be in attendance. The student may choose to be accompanied to the hearing by one or two supporters (if two, one must be a JCR officer).

- a. The Senior Tutor shall send to the chairman of the Academic Progress Hearing a written statement ("the Charge Sheet") setting out the conditions of probation, the report of the Personal Tutor, any correspondence with the undergraduate in relation to the probation and any warning leading to the probation, and any other information which the Senior Tutor deems relevant, including their recommendations as to penalty.
- b. The Charge Sheet and these regulations shall be copied to the undergraduate.
- c. The Chair of the Academic Progress Panel shall convene an Academic Progress Hearing, giving the undergraduate at least five days' notice (not including Saturday and Sunday) unless the undergraduate agrees to shorter notice being given. The undergraduate shall be told in writing the time of the meeting and that they may submit written material up to 48 hours before the Academic Progress Panel meets.
- d. Without prejudice to the APH's right to regulate its own proceedings, the following procedure shall normally be adopted. The undergraduate and the Personal Tutor shall attend the meeting and may be interviewed by the panel provided that if the undergraduate fails or refuses to attend the panel may proceed in their absence. The undergraduate may be accompanied by a current member of the University or an Oxford SU sabbatical officer as an advisor. In addition to the others present, the APH should be attended by a note-taker who is not party to the proceedings. The note-taker will produce a record of the APH as soon as is practical after the event and the Chair and the undergraduate will be consulted to reach an agreed record of the APH.
- e. The Personal Tutor shall explain the undergraduate's breach of the conditions of probation. The undergraduate shall be given an opportunity to respond, or to say anything that they consider relevant.
- f. The Panel shall then decide whether the undergraduate has breached the terms of probation and, if they have, inform them of this fact and of the Senior Tutor's recommendation as to penalty and invite the undergraduate to make a plea in mitigation. The Panel shall then consider the appropriate penalty. The penalty may include: banning, suspension or expulsion from the College. The Panel may attach such conditions as it sees fit to any penalty. The

undergraduate shall be told in writing of the Panel's decision and its reasons. They shall also be advised of their right of appeal to the Conference of Colleges Appeals Tribunal.

- g. The Chairman of the Panel shall at once report the Panel's decision to the Dean, and to the Senior Tutor who shall report it to the Education Committee, and shall inform the Proctors if appropriate and any College staff affected by the decision. The full communication to the undergraduate shall not normally be circulated, but shall be held in the Principal's office. In the event of any appeal, it shall be available to members of the Conference of Colleges Appeals Tribunal.
- h. The words "banning", "rustication" and "expulsion" shall bear the meanings given to them in Part A of Statute XI of the University's Statutes and Regulations (substituting "the College" for "the University" in such definitions).
- i. **Banning** means that for a specific period of time the undergraduate ceases to be provided with tuition by the College or to have the use of College facilities. The undergraduate remains a member of the University of Oxford and may still enter their name for its examinations as an individual, and may appear in the Class List, provided that statutable residence has been kept.
- j. **Rustication** means that the undergraduate's right of access to the facilities of the College and/or the University are withdrawn, usually for a specified period or until certain conditions have been fulfilled. The undergraduate remains a member of the University but ceases to be formally in residence and so cannot complete the required number of statutable terms. The Vice-Chancellor and Proctors have the power to excuse from part of statutable residence any member of the University who has been prevented by illness or other reasonable cause from keeping such residence, every application for such dispensation being made through the College. 'Reasonable cause' will be considered to include having been rusticated.
- k. **Expulsion** means that an undergraduate is deprived of membership both of the College and of the University and therefore loses the right to enter for University examination or take its degrees.
- l. If the undergraduate is alleged to have committed any disciplinary offences as well as breaches of probationary conditions, the Senior Tutor may propose, in the interests of dealing fairly and expeditiously with the matters concerning the undergraduate, that the matters should be referred solely to the Disciplinary Committee. The Disciplinary Committee in such a case shall include at least three tutors. The Disciplinary Committee shall, with regard to the alleged breaches of probationary conditions, comply with the procedures set out in this Rule and be treated as the Academic Progress Panel for the purposes of this Rule.