Department of Psychology Policy on the Evaluation and/or Dismissal of Students

We are dedicated to graduating students of the highest caliber professional training and preparation. It is our hope that students can complete our degree programs in a timely fashion and flourish as professionals in the psychology fields of their choice. In order to provide feedback and monitoring, we have a regular and predictable set of reviews. This process also allows us to identify those students who might not be progressing as they should. All students are evaluated at least once per year and usually more often by the faculty of the program(s) with which they are affiliated. The evaluation of students in psychology is based on a number of objective and subjective criteria associated with the standards of the Department of Psychology and the specifics of the program in which the student is enrolled. This policy applies to all programs and they are consistent with our approach to the evaluation of students for admission. In addition, each program has a written policy that is the basis for evaluation that falls under these general guidelines. Consideration for dismissal may occur as a result of this evaluation process or as a consequence of student behaviors or issues as they arise and as noted below. This document sets forth the due process for evaluation and dismissal within the Department of Psychology. The student handbook and the academic bulletins set forth the university policies.

Undergraduate status is governed by the fine print of the student handbook. In addition to meeting the fundamental requirements of the training program in which a student is enrolled, all graduate students in psychology must maintain adequate progress toward the degree and show evidence of acquisition of high level professional skills required by the profession. The Institute is committed to graduating professionals of the highest caliber and we reserve the right to undertake assessments and render judgments focused on the suitability of students to be psychology professionals. The determination of grounds for dismissal is made by the faculty of the program in which the student is enrolled and the Department Academic Standing Committee. Graduate students may appeal to the Graduate College; undergraduate dismissals occur with the involvement of the Office of Undergraduate Affairs and/or Dean of Students and appeal processes are set forth in the student bulletin. In most cases, determination of dismissal occurs in the context of a pattern of issues in which the student has been provided feedback and an opportunity for remediation. However, there are some situations that may result in summary dismissal as noted below. Examples of the evaluation domains and causes for consideration of dismissal include, but are not limited to the following:

(1) Failure to make adequate academic progress in course work. This domain is relevant for graduate students. Undergraduate academic status provides for more flexibility. Graduate students must
recognize that in graduate courses, a grade of “C” is technically passing but is considered to reflect poor performance. Thus, the presence of grades of “C” or lower signals problems in graduate level academic performance. Additionally, each program has articulated a sequence of courses that must be completed in a timely fashion as determined by the program of study (401). Grades of “C” or lower would not constitute the sole basis for a decision to terminate a student unless there is overall academic failure but would be weighed in the overall assessment of performance. Dismissal solely on the basis of poor academic performance is defined in the graduate bulletin.

(2) Failure to make adequate progress in the acquisition of independent research skills. This domain is most relevant to doctoral graduate students but we expect that undergraduates will complete a capstone project that involves research under the supervision of a psychology faculty member. The Department of Psychology is committed to scientific psychology and evidence based practice. As part of this we expect all our students to have a firm grasp of research and demonstrated skill in design, analysis, interpretation of findings, collection and manipulation of data, statistics, and understanding of literature at the level relevant to the training program and degree. Students not showing adequate development of research acumen will receive notice of these concerns via feedback from the advising faculty and/or program faculty.

(3) Failure to demonstrate development of, or participate in, an appropriate level of group based research activities. Research activity requirements as part of a lab or team, are defined and governed by individual programs and faculty. If relevant, work in this domain is one of the many elements reviewed as part of the overall evaluation of student progress and performance. Undergraduates involved in lab based faculty research are expected to conduct themselves in a reliable fashion as part of the research team, whether within psychology or in a research based IPRO. Students in masters programs requiring a thesis also must complete research; students in non-thesis programs may or may not participate in research. All graduate doctoral programs require participation in research, frequently within faculty labs or teams. In all cases, students must adhere to the expectations and standards of the lab or team in which they are a member. In broad brush, students are expected to conduct themselves professionally, attend meetings unless excused, participate fully, and follow through on responsibilities assigned.

(4) Failure to make adequate progress in the acquisition of professional applied skills. This area of assessment is relevant to graduate students. All graduate programs have requirements for internships and/or practica that must be completed successfully. The Institute cannot guarantee placement of students even if required by the degree program and or licensing boards because these decisions are made by the agencies, not by IIT. We will make every effort to assist students to obtain placements but given the competitive nature of placements we cannot guarantee these, particularly for students in the lower third of their peer group. Students unable to complete these requirements may be subject to
dismissal or, if appropriate, they may be granted a degree different from the one in which they originally enrolled.

(5) Failure to follow the terms of an academic probation requirement. Probation for undergraduates is defined by the office of undergraduate affairs as set forth in the student handbook. Graduate students may be placed on probation for cause based on the criteria set forth herein by recommendation of the Department of Psychology Academic Standing committee and faculty of the degree program in which the student is enrolled. Any student placed on probation will receive a written statement of needed actions. If the terms of probation are not completed in the time specified, a student may be terminated from the degree program with a right to appeal to the Graduate College.

(6) Professional unsuitability. This area is relevant primarily to graduate students. Psychology is a profession that requires a high level of professional comportment and conduct. Interpersonal conduct that represents a significant impediment to working effectively and ethically with current or future clients, students, faculty, other colleagues, or other possible consumers may be the basis for termination on the grounds of professional unsuitability. If an issue arises under this domain that is of sufficient seriousness, this could be the grounds for dismissal, in and of itself.

(7) Violation of policy on academic honesty or ethics. As specified in the student handbook and graduate bulletin, violations of academic honesty or ethical standards as set forth by the APA may result in termination. All Psychology students are bound by standards of professional conduct as specified by the American Psychological Association (see Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct).

(8) Felony conviction. Conviction of a felony may be considered adequate cause for dismissal; other convictions of lesser offenses may be considered as evidence of problematic behavior falling under item 6 above. Students should be aware that anything falling into this category may also affect licensing, job placement, and potential employment.

Accepted and approved by the faculty 9/29/09