Conflicts of Interest in Educational Settings Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) has established a standard outlining the requirement of a medical school to ensure students have the opportunity to obtain academic counseling and advising from individuals who have no role in decisions regarding their assessment or advancement, including individuals who prepare the MSPE. The VCU SOM has established this policy to ensure compliance with this standard, outlining the responsibility of both the student and the individual acting as an advisor in identifying when a conflict exists, and defining a process that ensures these individuals will not be involved in the academic assessment or promotion of the learner.

Stakeholders

The faculty, staff, students, and other professionals at the VCU School of Medicine are responsible for knowing this standard operating procedure, its contents, and provisions.

Definitions

Academic Advising: The process between the medical student and an academic advisor of reviewing the services and policies of the institution, discussing educational and career plans, and making appropriate course selections.

Academic Advisors: Academic Advisors are individuals responsible for providing academic advising as defined in this policy. Academic Advisors may include, but are not limited to: VCU SOM Office of Student Outreach staff, Specialty Advisors, Course/Clerkship Directors, Society faculty leaders, Entrustable Professional Activity (EPA) Coaches, and Curricular Deans.

Academic Counseling: The process between the medical student and an academic counselor to discuss academic difficulties and to help the medical student acquire more effective and efficient abilities in areas such as study skills, reading skills, and/or test-taking skills.

Academic Counselors: Academic Counselors are individuals responsible for providing academic counseling as defined in this policy. Academic Counselors may include, but are not limited to: Division for Academic Success staff, and Student Affairs Deans in the Office of Medical Education.

ADSA: Assistant/Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

CD: Course/Clerkship Director.

COI: Conflict of Interest.

Curricular Deans: Assistant/Associate Deans overseeing the curriculum within the OME.

LCME: Liaison Committee on Medical Education. The group with authority to accredit medical education programs leading to the MD degree in the United States and Canada.

MSPE: Medical Student Performance Evaluation.

OME: Office of Medical Education.

VCU SOM: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

Responsibilities

Students: Students have a responsibility to notify the CD and Course/Clerkship Coordinator or relevant program leader in the event that a potential conflict of interest is identified.

Faculty: Faculty who act as Course/Clerkship Directors or who serve on the Promotion and Advancement Committee or Promotion and Advancement Appeals Committee should refrain from acting as counselors for students.

Procedures

Defining a Conflict of Interest

- Conflicts of interest in educational settings occur when an individual's primary responsibility to a student is compromised, influenced, or could be perceived to be influenced, by prior or current actions or relationships involving the student. These COI's have the potential to bias professional judgement and objectivity.
    - COI's may include, but are not limited to, individuals:
        - Involved in decisions regarding the promotion, advancement, or any adverse action of the student
        - Related or having a close, personal relationship with the student
        - Who have provided personal counseling or healthcare services to the student
        - Who have provided academic counseling to the student
        - Who have a financial relationship with the student

Identification of a Conflict of Interest

Student Identification

- Students who identify a COI with a faculty, resident, or staff member should immediately notify the CD or Course/Clerkship Coordinator, program leader, or the OME
    - The notified party will create a plan to manage or resolve the conflict

- In instances where the COI exists with the CD, or the conflict is not part of a course or clerkship, the student should notify the ADSA in the OME
    - The ADSA will create a plan to manage or resolve the conflict

Faculty, Resident, or Staff Member Identification

- Individuals who identify a COI with a student should immediately notify the ADSA in the OME.
    - The ADSA will create a plan to manage or resolve the conflict

MSPE Preparation

- MSPE's are prepared by the Registrar and signed by the ADSA(s) as outlined in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) Policy
    - These individuals have no role in the assessment or promotion of students

Related Policies

Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) Policy
Non-Involvement of Healthcare Providers in Student Assessment and Promotion Policy

Review Cycle and Revision History

The policy is reviewed and may be revised by the Curriculum Council as necessary, but at least every three years.

Currently Approved Version: 06.25.2026

Previously Approved Versions: 06.08.2023

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

LCME Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the MD Degree:

- LCME Standard 11, Element 1
- LCME Standard 11, Element 2
- LCME Standard 11, Element 4
- LCME Standard 10, Element 9