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Student Promotion and Advancement Committee Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy establishes the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine's (VCU SOM) process for taking actions that may affect the status of a medical student, in accordance with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education's (LCME) requirements to provide a defined, fair process that includes timely notice of action(s), and disclosure of evidence on which the action(s) would be based. This includes defining a process for impacted students to respond and appeal any adverse action related to their personal advancement, graduation, or dismissal from a program or the institution. The purpose of this policy is to define the committee—including its membership and official charge—responsible for executing these formal processes at the VCU SOM, as well as outline the different remediation requirements that apply to different parts of the curriculum.

Stakeholders

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

Definitions

VCU SOM: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine

ADSA: Assistant/Associate Dean of Student Affairs

ADME: Assistant/Associate Dean of Medical Education

ADPME: Assistant/Associate Dean of Pre-Clinical Medical Education

Dean: The Chief Academic Officer for the VCU SOM

OME: Office of Medical Education.

ECN: Early Concern Note.

MSPE: Medical Student Performance Evaluation

SADMESA: Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs

CD: Course/Clerkship Director. Includes all Co-Directors, Associate Directors, and Assistant Directors

PAC: Promotion and Advancement Committee



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SCAI: Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

Academic Warning: A designation that reflects initial indications of sub-optimal performance, and prompts the OME to deploy additional resources to support the student

Academic Probation: A designation that indicates a student's performance has fallen below acceptable standards, and is at risk for adverse action

Good Academic Standing: A designation that indicates a student making adequate progress toward completion of requirements for the MD program and is not on Academic Probation

Responsibilities

ADSA: The ADSA(s) is responsible for providing guidance and assistance to students whose status as a medical student is under review by the PAC

Students: Students who are notified they will be reviewed by the PAC are responsible for complying with requests for information or documentation by the PAC. Students have the right to submit a letter to the PAC in advance of a scheduled review to describe extenuating circumstances or provide supporting documentation.

OME: The OME is responsible for compiling student data for PAC review

Procedures

Promotions and Advancement Committee

Membership

The PAC is comprised of both voting and non-voting members, who are either appointed or elected as indicated below:

Voting Members

The PAC is comprised of thirteen (13) voting members, including:

- Three (3) Course Directors who will be appointed by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs to serve three (3) year terms
 - One (1) CD must direct a course in the M1 curriculum
 - One (1) CD must direct a course in the M2 curriculum
 - One (1) CD must direct a longitudinal course and may be from any year of the curriculum
- Three (3) Clerkship Directors who will be appointed by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs to serve three (3) year terms



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- Members must direct one of the required core clinical clerkships, including:
 - Ambulatory
 - Family Medicine
 - Internal Medicine
 - Neurology
 - OB/GYN
 - Pediatrics
 - Psychiatry
 - Surgery
- Six (6) elected faculty members who will serve three (3) year terms
 - Elected faculty members on the PAC cannot be Course or Clerkship Directors
 - Elected faculty members may serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms
 - Faculty who have served two (2) consecutive terms are eligible to be elected to subsequent terms only after a break in service to the committee
- One (1) faculty member, appointed by the Dean of the School of Medicine, to act as the Chair of the PAC and who will serve a three (3) year term
 - The Chair of the PAC may not be a Course or Clerkship Director

Non-Voting Members:

- Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs
- Assistant/Associate Dean(s) of Student Affairs
 - The ADSA(s) serve as student advocates and will not participate in making or voting on motions involving individual students. However, they will participate in PAC meetings to ensure that the committee follows proper administrative procedures
- Assistant/Associate Dean for Medical Education
- Assistant/Associate Dean for Pre-Clinical Medical Education
- Assistant/Associate Dean for Clinical Medical Education
- One (1) representative from the Admissions Office

Charge

- The PAC is charged with reviewing the academic performance, including professional performance, of students in the VCU SOM MD curriculum. This committee will review student performance and, using this data in combination with established policies and procedures, will consider the totality of all individual circumstances of a student to inform their decisions. The PAC is ultimately responsible for advancing students who demonstrate they have met competency requirements, or rendering remediation requirements or sanctions for students who have failed to demonstrate these competencies. The PAC is responsible for authorizing students to graduate who have demonstrated competency and achievement of all requirements of the MD program.

Meetings



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Schedule

- The PAC will meet regularly, generally once (1) per month
 - Regular meetings will include a review of any student who is not meeting the established competencies of the VCU SOM as evidenced by:
 - Grades of Competencies Not Achieved in:
 - Scientific Foundations of Medicine and Applied Medical Sciences
 - Practice of Clinical Medicine Course
 - Patient, Physician, and Society Course
 - Population Health and Evidence-Based Medicine Course
 - Ultrasound Course
 - A failing grade or failure to complete any required educational experience throughout the curriculum
 - Three failed attempts to pass a single USMLE Step exam
 - A referral from the ADSA(s) as a result of a pattern of behavior or isolated egregious episode, for example, as captured by an early concern note
 - Violation of the Student Code of Conduct
 - Students who have failed to comply with directives of the PAC, including failing to uphold conditions of any sanctioned probation
 - Regular meetings at the end of an academic year will include a review of all students for successful completion of requirements and competency achievement
 - Students who demonstrate the required competencies and have met all requirements will be advanced to the next year of the curriculum
 - Students who are in the final year of the curriculum will be reviewed to ensure all competencies and graduation requirements have been satisfied prior to being approved for graduation
- In instances where a decision by the PAC is time sensitive, the PAC may call an *ad hoc* meeting.

Quorum

- The PAC may not act without a quorum
 - A quorum is defined as a majority of voting members

Voting Procedures

- Decisions are determined by a majority vote of the voting members at the meeting.
- The Chair may determine the method of meeting including voting
 - Meeting methods may include in-person, virtual, telephonic, or email
- Because the information discussed in the PAC meeting is confidential, the meeting is closed to the University community and public
 - If a party not listed above wishes to attend, they must acquire prior written approval from the PAC Chair



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Recusal from Voting

- PAC members who may have a conflict of interest regarding a specific student(s) under review are responsible for notifying the PAC Chair of any potential conflict of interest. The PAC Chair will notify the Director of Curricular Initiatives and Quality, who will determine if a conflict of interest exists and if the individual is required to recuse themselves from voting on any motions which may concern the student(s), and absenting themselves from any discussion concerning the student(s)
 - Conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to, instances where the individual:
 - Chairs a department in which a course director has assigned a failing grade to the student
 - Chairs a department in which a professionalism concern for the student was submitted which resulted in an adverse action
 - Currently is or has previously been a healthcare provider for the student
 - Is a family member of or has some personal relation to the student
 - Has evaluated the performance of the student in a course/clerkship where the student did not achieve a grade of pass/competency achieved
 - Has self-identified a conflict regarding the student
 - Is determined by the PAC chair or VCU SOM Dean to have a conflict of interest, for example, upon notice from the student of a potential conflict

Student Procedures

- The OME will notify a student in writing at least seven (7) calendar days in advance of a PAC meeting, or as soon as practicable thereafter
- Students do not appear before the PAC, but may submit a written statement regarding their individual case
 - Written statements must be submitted at least three (3) calendar days in advance of the scheduled PAC meeting or as otherwise instructed in the written notice
 - These statements should be submitted to vcuome@vcuhealth.org and the ADSA supporting the student or as otherwise instructed in the written notice

Remediation for Inadequate Student Performance

Pre-Clinical Courses

Remediation Requirements



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- Students who do not pass one (1) course within the pre-clinical curriculum in a single semester are required to complete a remediation examination
 - The remediation examination will:
 - Be prepared by the CD for the course in which the failure occurred in collaboration with the ADPME
 - Be a comprehensive examination covering the entirety of the course
 - May consist of different question types
 - Should be similar in form and scope to the failed examination or as otherwise determined by the relevant academic authority
 - A minimum score of seventy percent (70%) is required for successful remediation
 - Students who do not pass the re-examination are required to repeat the semester, including taking and passing all courses previously taken
 - All re-taken courses must be passed on the student's first attempt at a re-take
 - Any failure of a re-taken course will result in the student being referred to the PAC for dismissal from the program
- Students who do not pass a longitudinal course in the M1 or M2 year are required to complete a remediation plan
 - The CD will develop an individualized remediation plan for all students who are referred for review. Each plan will include the following components:
 - Pertinent academic performance background information
 - Required remediation
 - Recommendations for assistance
 - Consequences for failure of the required remediation
 - Remediation plans and established threshold for successful completion will be reviewed and approved by the PAC
 - The PAC may revise a proposed plan based on its knowledge of the totality of the student's performance and overall remediation needs
 - Remediation plans may involve components such as:
 - Repeating a portion of up to the entirety of the educational experience
 - Self-directed learning opportunities
 - Other assignments as deemed appropriate by the CD and the PAC
 - Students who do not pass the remediation are required to repeat the semester, including taking and passing all courses previously taken
 - All re-taken courses must be passed on the student's first attempt at a re-take
 - Any failure of a re-taken course will result in the student being referred to the PAC for dismissal from the program
- Students must successfully complete any remediations prior to taking USMLE Step 1 exam

Grade Assignment



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- Non-passing grades will remain on a student's transcript
 - If successfully remediated, the student's transcript will reflect both the original non-passing grade, as well as the remediated grade

Multiple Failures

- Any student who fails two (2) or more courses in a pre-clinical semester, including longitudinal courses, will be required to repeat the semester, even if a failed course has already been remediated at the time of the second failure
 - All re-taken courses must be passed on the student's first attempt at a re-take
 - Any failure of a re-taken course will result in the student being referred to the PAC for dismissal from the program

M3 Curriculum

Remediation Requirements

- Students receiving a grade of Fail in a clerkship, elective, or course in the M3 year will be referred to the PAC
 - The CD will develop an individualized remediation plan for all students who are referred for review. Each plan will include the following components:
 - Pertinent academic performance background information
 - Required remediation
 - Recommendations for assistance
 - Consequences for failure of the required remediation
 - Remediation plans and established threshold for successful completion will be reviewed and approved by the PAC
 - The PAC may revise a proposed plan based on its knowledge of the totality of the student's performance and overall remediation needs
 - Remediation plans may involve components such as:
 - Retaking the NBME Shelf Exam
 - Repeating a portion of up to the entirety of the clinical experience
 - Self-directed learning opportunities
 - Other assignments as deemed appropriate by the CD and the PAC
 - Students who do not pass the remediation of a clerkship, elective, or course will be referred to the PAC for dismissal



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Grade Assignment

- The original grade received for the clerkship, elective, or course will remain on the transcript and if successfully remediated, the new grade for the clerkship, elective, or course will be listed in addition to the original grade on the transcript.
- The original grade received for the clerkship, elective, or course will remain on the transcript and if successfully remediated, the new grade for the clerkship will be listed next to the original grade on the transcript if the clerkship requirements are completed within the same academic year
 - In instances where the successful remediation of the clerkship, elective, or course occurs in a different academic year than the failure, the original grade will appear on the transcript for the academic year in which the failure occurred, and the remediated passing grade will be listed in the academic year in which the remediation attempt was successful

Multiple Failures

- Any student who receives two (2) failing grades in clerkship, elective, or course in the M3 year will be required to remediate as outlined in the Remediation Requirements for the M3 Curriculum section
- Any student who receives three (3) failing grades in a clerkship, elective, or course in the M3 year will be referred to the PAC for dismissal

Advanced Clinical Concentrations

- Advanced Clinical Concentrations include Acting Internships (AI's), longitudinal courses, and M4 elective experiences
- Students receiving a grade of Fail in an Advanced Clinical Concentration are required to remediate the experience
 - The CD/Elective Director will develop an individualized remediation plan for all students who are referred for review. Each plan will include the following components:
 - Pertinent academic performance background information
 - Required remediation
 - Recommendations for assistance
 - Consequences for failure of the required remediation
 - Remediation plans and established threshold for successful completion will be reviewed and approved by the PAC
 - The PAC may revise a proposed plan based on its knowledge of the totality of the student's performance and overall remediation needs
 - Remediation plans may involve components such as:
 - Repeating a portion of up to the entirety of the educational experience
 - Self-directed learning opportunities



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- Other assignments as deemed appropriate by the CD and the PAC
 - Students who do not pass the Advanced Clinical Concentration on their second attempt will be referred to the PAC for dismissal

Multiple Failures

- Any student who receives two (2) failing grades in an Advanced Clinical Concentration will be required to remediate as outlined in the Remediation Requirements for the Advanced Clinical Concentration section
- Any student who receives three (3) failing grades in an Advanced Clinical Concentration will be referred to the PAC for dismissal

Patterns of Concerning Performance

- Patterns of concerning performance across multiple years may result in referral to the PAC
 - This may include, but are not limited to failures in multiple courses or clinical experiences, across multiple years, that do not trigger an adverse action in a single year, but raise concerns about a student's ability to demonstrate competency

Discretionary Referral

- Deans within the OME have the discretion to refer students to the PAC for any reasonable basis

Time to Completion of Requirements

- Remediation of any elements of the M3 curriculum and/or the Advanced Clinical Concentration may delay graduation
- Up to eight (8) weeks of non-clinical elective time may be used for remediation
 - This time will count toward the maximum amount of non-clinical elective time available in the Advanced Clinical Concentration phase of the curriculum
 - This time will not count toward clinical elective time in the Advanced Clinical Concentration phase of the curriculum
- Students must complete all required components to advance to graduation within six (6) academic years of initial matriculation, including any leaves of absence (LOA's)
- At a point when it is no longer feasible for a student to complete all required components of the MD program within six (6) academic years, the student will be referred to the PAC for dismissal



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Outcomes and Follow Up Procedures

Decisions by the PAC

- The PAC, acting to fulfil its charge, will render decisions on each individual student reviewed
 - These decisions may include—but are not limited to—the following:
 - Continuing in the curriculum without any changes
 - Placing the student on warning or probation
 - Recommending minimizing or re-prioritizing extra-curricular activities
 - Remediation of part or all of an educational experience with an individualized plan
 - Alteration of the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE)
 - Recommending a leave of absence with defined conditions for returning to the curriculum as an alternative to suspension or dismissal based on inadequate performance
 - Upon a determination that the student’s participation in clinical activity presents an unreasonable risk to any individual, temporarily suspend the student from clinical coursework pending complete review and resolution by the PAC of any performance concerns, including any subsequent appeals
 - Recommend or require other actions to appropriately address the issue(s) for which the student was referred to the PAC
 - Dismissal from the program
 - Some decisions by the PAC are subject to notation in the student’s MSPE
 - For a full list of all actions that are recorded in the MSPE, please refer to the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) Policy

Student Notification

- Students who are discussed by the PAC will be notified of the decision of the committee within fourteen (14) calendar days of the conclusion of the meeting
 - Official notification will be sent via email to the student’s VCU email address
 - Students must sign to acknowledge they have received the official notification and return the document within seven (7) calendar days

Academic Warning

- To support student success and ensure appropriate resources are provided to support the student, the PAC may decide to place a student on academic warning, for example, in the following instances:
 - Receiving one (1) failing course grade within a single semester in the pre-clinical phase
 - Receiving one (1) failing grade in a component of the M3 curriculum, or two (2) failing grades over the entirety of the M3 curriculum and the Advanced Clinical Concentrations phase of the curriculum



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- Failure to successfully pass the USMLE Step 1 exam on the first attempt
- Failure to successfully pass the USMLE Step 2 CK exam on the first attempt
- Demonstrating either a pattern of professionalism concerns, or a single egregious professionalism concern, depending upon the severity of the concern
- A designation of Academic Warning will not be recorded on a student's official transcript

Academic Probation

- The PAC may decide to place a student on academic probation, for example, for any of the following reasons:
 - Receiving two (2) failing course grades within a single semester in the pre-clinical phase
 - Receiving two (2) failing grades in a component of the M3 curriculum, or three (3) failing grades over the entirety of the M3 curriculum and the Advanced Clinical Concentrations phase of the curriculum
 - Receiving one (1) or more failing grades within two contiguous semesters within the pre-clinical curriculum where they must successfully pass a remediation in order to be promoted
 - Failure to successfully pass the USMLE Step 1 exam on the second attempt
 - Failure to successfully pass the USMLE Step 2 CK exam on the second attempt
 - Demonstrating either a pattern of professionalism concerns, or a single egregious professionalism concern, depending upon the severity of the concern
- Students who are placed on academic probation must meet with the financial aid office to determine the potential impact to any financial aid or scholarships the student may be receiving
- An academic status change to academic probation will be tracked internally by the OME
 - This status will not appear on the MSPE unless the PAC renders a decision that requires the status to be noted there
 - A designation of Academic Probation will not be recorded on a student's official transcript
- The PAC will remove a student from academic probation status once the conditions for the action as outlined by the PAC have been resolved

Violation of VCU Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct

- Students who are suspected of a potential violation of the VCU Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct will be referred to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SCAI) in the Division of Student Affairs
 - If the OME determines the potential violation would pose a risk to patient care or safety if found to be substantiated, they may suspend the student from any or all patient contact pending the outcome of the referral to the SCAI



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- The SCAI will notify the OME of the completion of their review and any sanctions imposed upon the student
 - If the suspected violation is substantiated by the SCAI, the PAC will meet to consider the student's violation in light of the VCU SOM standards for academic performance and determine if it warrants any sanctions according to these procedures
 - The purpose of the review by the PAC is not intended as a student appeal of the rendered decision by the SCAI, rather it is to determine if there are any additional sanctions that should be imposed, up to and including notation on the MSPE and dismissal from the SOM

Documentation on the MSPE

- Decisions rendered from PAC proceedings and appeals committees may be noted on a student's MSPE

Appeal of PAC Decisions

- Students who wish to appeal a decision rendered by the PAC should follow the process and established timelines in the Student Appeal Procedures for Promotion and Advancement Committee Decisions Policy

Related Policies

Technical standards for the MD program

Degree Requirements for the Doctor of Medicine (MD) Program

Student Appeal Procedures for Promotion and Advancement Committee Decisions Policy

USMLE Step Examinations Policy

VCU Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct 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.

Current Revision Approved: 09.28.2023

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

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

- LCME Standard 9, Element 9



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