

Medical Student Academic Progress Review Policy

Effective Date: 7/11/2018

Responsible Party: University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education

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POLICY ABSTRACT

The Medical Student Academic Progress Review Policy details the authority of the Student Academic Standing Committee (SASC) to review and make decisions regarding medical student academic remediation, progression, academic status, and dismissal. It also outlines a student's right to respond before any SASC decision is made regarding advancement or academic status and a student's right to appeal any decision made by the SASC.

REASON FOR POLICY

This policy sets the standards for academic remediation, progress, status, and dismissal for medical students. It also meets the requirements set forth by the Liaison Committee for Medical Education (LCME) accreditation requirements as follows:

9.9 Student Advancement and Appeal Process

"A medical school ensures that the medical education program has a single set of core standards for the advancement and graduation of all medical students across all locations. A subset of medical students may have academic requirements in addition to the core standards if they are enrolled in a parallel curriculum. A medical school ensures that there is a fair and formal process for taking any action that may affect the status of a medical student, including timely notice of the impending action, disclosure of the evidence on which the action would be based, an opportunity for the medical student to respond, and an opportunity to appeal any adverse decision related to advancement, graduation, or dismissal."

SCOPE

This policy outlines the procedures by which the SASC reviews student performance and makes decisions regarding medical student remediation, progression, academic status, and dismissal. The procedure outlines the appeals process and provides a summary of actions the SASC may take. The policy applies to the academic and professional performance of all students participating in medical school coursework. Grade appeals fall outside the scope of this policy. Grade appeals are handled by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education in accordance with the Medical Student Grading Policy.

POLICY

To uphold uniform standards, the School of Medicine utilizes the Student Academic Standing Committee (SASC). This committee reviews student academic and professional performance throughout all academic years at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine and makes decisions about academic status, remediation, progression, and dismissal. Professional ethics and conduct are as essential to the practice of medicine as academic excellence and may be considered by the Committee. Students are notified that they are under review by SASC, potential impending actions, and the evidence on which the action would be based. Students under review by the SASC have the opportunity to respond, either in writing or in person, before the SASC makes any decision regarding that student's advancement or academic status. Students also have the right to appeal any decision made by the SASC.

PROCEDURE

The SASC is composed of faculty members from Joint Health Sciences and Clinical Departments with representatives from all four UAB Heersink School of Medicine campuses, as well as three medical students who have completed preclinical coursework. The committee meets monthly. The Committee reviews pertinent information, approves grades, and makes decisions about student academic status, remediation, and progression. SASC actions are final, but subject to appeal as described below. All SASC deliberations, proceedings and related discussions are considered strictly confidential. SASC members are required to recuse themselves from voting when a true or perceived conflict of interest exists. SASC members sign confidentiality and conflict of interest statements annually.

The SASC does not adjudicate grade appeals. Grade appeals are addressed by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education in accordance with the Medical Student Grading Policy. For more information about the SASC, refer to University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine Student Academic Standing Committee Bylaws.

Matters that require attention between regular SASC meetings may be considered by a Faculty Review Panel (FRP) appointed by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education.

Medical students receive timely notice of any impending SASC action and disclosure of the evidence on which the action would be based. Medical students under consideration for any action that will affect the student's status or advancement have an opportunity to respond, either in writing or in person, before the SASC makes any decision regarding that student's status or advancement. Students meet with the Associate Dean for Students prior to SASC meetings to discuss factors that may have contributed to their academic difficulty and to identify ways to address those factors. They discuss school policy related to academic progression and academic status, and the role of the SASC in

decisions related to academic progression and status change. The Associate Dean also discusses the student's right to request an alternative to impending changes in academic status and progression. The Associate Dean for Students guides students through development of written or in-person requests to the SASC to consider an alternative to these actions. During SASC meetings, written requests are reviewed by the SASC and summarized by the Associate Dean for Students. Students who choose to meet with the committee are given time to present their response. Students who choose to meet with the SASC may also provide a written statement.

The SASC will take into consideration extenuating circumstances (such as personal events, financial problems, health concerns) that may interfere with a student's optimal performance. In cases where the extenuating circumstances are determined to be confidential and sensitive, only information approved by the student will be included in the committee's deliberative process. If the student chooses to share personal health information (and it is not shared in their written statement), they must give written permission to the Associate Dean for Students to share this information. While the Committee may consider known extenuating circumstances as presented by the Associate Dean for Students or the student, it is not the responsibility of the Committee to investigate whether such circumstances exist.

Non-academic matters affecting progression through medical school, such as possible disciplinary action for academic or non-academic misconduct, will be referred to the appropriate parties (UAB Office of Conduct, Title IX office, Honor Council) for further investigation and action. Each party provides mechanisms for students to respond to non-academic matters prior to the party's decision. Results of such disciplinary action may be shared with the SASC when deemed appropriate by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education. The Committee may consider unethical and/or inappropriate professional behavior by medical students in its deliberations and decisions.

SASC actions may include decisions related to changes to student academic status (i.e., active with deficiency, academic probation), academic and/or professionalism remediation, repeating an academic year in its entirety ("recycling"), promotion, and dismissal from the School of Medicine.

The Associate Dean for Students or designee will notify students of SASC decisions, typically by phone or email immediately after the meeting. The Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education then notifies students of the SASC's decision with an emailed letter on behalf of the Committee within 10 business days of the SASC meeting.

APPEALS PROCESS

Students may appeal SASC decisions that change academic status (e.g., academic probation) or impact academic progression (e.g., repeating academic terms, dismissal from school) in the Heersink School of Medicine. Immediately following SASC meetings,

the committee's decision is communicated to the student by the Associate Dean for Students. The Associate Dean for Students will discuss the student's right to appeal SASC decisions and will explain the process for appeal. The student is also given instructions in writing to request an appeal in the letter emailed to the student by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education with the SASC decision. These instructions include:

- Need for written notification of the student's intent to appeal submitted to the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (email is acceptable).
- Deadline for notification (typically within 48 business hours of receipt of the letter).
- Consequences of missing the deadline (SASC decision becomes final with no further possible appeal).

The SASC Faculty Appeal Panel (FAP) considers appeal requests. This panel of the SASC is composed of three experienced SASC faculty members who do not attend the regular SASC meetings. The Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education charges the FAP and provides instruction and guidance regarding the deliberation process. The panel selects a chair from the group who presides at the meeting. Students may submit written documents and meet with the FAP to review extenuating circumstances that may have impacted their academic performance or support their appeal prior to FAP decisions. The panel may vote to uphold the original decision of the SASC, modify it, or grant the student's appeal. The outcome is communicated to the student via email and letter from the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education on behalf of the chair of the appeal panel.

If the original SASC decision is upheld, the student will be informed of the circumstances under which they may request an appeal to the Dean of the School of Medicine. The student may make the request for appeal to the Dean, if they believe there is evidence that the committee acted in an arbitrary or capricious manner, evidence of a material procedural error in the SASC's review that prejudiced the student's ability to receive a fair hearing/decision, or where new information that was unavailable at the time of the SASC review has been discovered.

Specific instructions for the student to appeal to the Dean include:

- Need for written notification of intent to appeal submitted to the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (email is acceptable) including a detailed rationale for requesting to appeal to the Dean.
- Deadline for notification (typically within 48 business hours of receipt of the letter).
- Consequences of missing the deadline (the FAP decision becomes final with no further possible appeal).

The Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education will share requests for appeal with the

Dean. The Dean will determine whether the request meets appeal criteria. When a request meets the criteria for appeal, the Dean will investigate the appeal. When the request does not meet criteria for appeal, the student will be notified that their request for appeal has been denied.

Notification that the appeal request is denied or granted typically occurs within five business days of the student's appeal request. In cases where the request meets criteria, the student may be asked to provide further documentation and/or meet with the Dean to discuss the appeal. The appeal outcome will be communicated to the student via email and letter from the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education on behalf of the Dean within 10 business days of the notification that the student's appeal will be reviewed by the Dean. The Dean's decision is final.

DECISIONS STUDENTS MAY NOT APPEAL

Students may not appeal SASC decisions in the following cases:

1. Students who fail a course and are required to remediate the failed course
2. Students who fail a remediation.

Decisions students may not appeal are communicated to students in written form by the SASC.

**SUMMARY OF SASC DECISIONS, REPORTING OF ACTIONS ON
TRANSCRIPTS AND THE MEDICAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE
EVALUATION, AND OPPORTUNITY FOR APPEAL**

Decision	Adverse Action*	Academic Record	MSPE	Appeal Option
Letter of professionalism concern	Possible	Possible	Possible	Yes
Active with Deficiency	No	No	No	No**
Academic probation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Remediation	No	Yes	Yes	No**
Recycle (repeat year)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dismissal	Possible	Yes	Yes, if decision overturned on appeal, otherwise N/A	Yes

*Adverse actions are defined as formal reprimands for unprofessional behavior and suspension for egregious unprofessional behavior.

**Students with concern for a grade may appeal to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education. See Policy, Medical Student Grading. Students with a failing grade in any course must successfully remediate to the satisfaction of the Course Director and the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education.

HISTORY

Created: 7/11/2018

Approved: 7/11/2018 by UA System Office

Revised: 7/1/2025

University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine policies shall be reviewed periodically to determine whether revisions are appropriate to address the needs of the medical school community.