

# Medical Student Academic Progress Review Policy

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Effective Date: 7/11/2018

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

Contacts: [Craig Hoesley, MD](#), 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.

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## 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:

### **Standard 10: Medical Student Selection, Assignment, and Progress**

“A medical school establishes and publishes admission requirements for potential applicants to the medical education program and uses effective policies and procedures for medical student selection, enrollment, and assignment.”

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## 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.

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## 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 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.

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

The Associate Dean for Students or designee represents students at SASC meetings. Students meet with the Associate Dean prior to SASC meetings to discuss factors that may have contributed to their academic difficulty and to identify ways to address those factors. The Associate Dean discusses 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 repeating an academic year or dismissal when extenuating factors influenced academic performance. The Associate Dean for Students guides students through development of written requests to the SASC to consider an alternative to these actions. Written requests are shared with SASC members in advance of SASC meetings during which the student's case will be discussed. During SASC meetings, requests are summarized by the Associate Dean for Students who also serves as students' advocate during SASC deliberations.

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, 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. 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.

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## 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:

- 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. 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 adverse decision is upheld, the student will be informed that a final appeal may be made to the Dean of the School of Medicine in certain circumstances. The Dean will not reconsider the facts and statements on which the original decision was based. The Dean will consider appeals only where 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:

- 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.

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## DECISIONS STUDENTS MAY NOT APPEAL

Students who fail a course are required to remediate the failed course and cannot request or appeal an alternative to remediation.

Students who fail a remediation cannot request or appeal to retake a remediation.

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

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

<b>Decision</b>	<b>Adverse Action*</b>	<b>Academic Record</b>	<b>MSPE</b>	<b>Appeal Option</b>
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.

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**HISTORY**

**Created: 7/11/2018**

**Approved: 5/20/2024 by UA System Office**

**Revised: 5/20/2024**

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.