

Policy on Academic Progress and Promotion

I. PURPOSE

The Committee on Student Promotions (CSP) is a standing faculty committee of University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (UPSOM) tasked to monitor student academic and professional standards with the goal of promoting on-time graduation, overall success of our students, and early identification of those unlikely to succeed. It makes decisions regarding the management of unsatisfactory academic performance and may dismiss students from the School of Medicine. The Committee is comprised of both elected and appointed faculty members. For the Committee to take action, the quorum is determined to be 51% of the total number of elected and appointed members and must be in place at the start of any meeting.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Medical students (Specifically, all students enrolled in courses, clerkships, or electives necessary to complete the requirements for the MD degree, all dual degree and special programs at UPSOM. This policy also applies to a student when they are on an approved leave of absence.)

III. POLICY

The CSP is charged to review academic performance at appropriate times, including after each grading period and upon receipt of scores on all required national/departmental exams, and determines each student's academic standing. The CSP has the responsibility for monitoring the academic progress of all medical students while enrolled in courses or adherence to other school policies such as those on a leave of absence.

Additionally, the Executive Vice Dean may request the CSP perform a special review of any student's assessments and/or professional behaviors and outstanding assessments, including but not limited to upholding the UPSOM Code of Professionalism.

Students in good standing who have completed all requirements and achieved passing grades and evaluation reports may advance to the next unit (Keystones, Organ Systems, Clerkship, Bridges Courses) of instruction. Each year the CSP is responsible for endorsing the graduation of all students who have successfully completed all graduation requirements.

6-year rule

Ideally, students complete the MD curriculum within the standard four-year period. On-time completion maximizes student success by ensuring that coursework is undertaken in a cohesive and sequential manner. This approach maintains the relevance of foundational science knowledge, aligning it with the current state of medical science at the time of graduation. Timely progression through the curriculum also supports optimal preparation for residency and future clinical practice.

Students enrolled in the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) will have additional time (expectation is four years) appended to the 6-year requirement as needed to complete the PhD degree.

Students may take up to 6 years, inclusive of all leaves of absence, to complete the MD degree.

Academic Progress and Promotions

Periodically the committee will receive updates/data on each student to ensure the students making satisfactory progress towards the MD degree on an ongoing basis in the domains of academic, and professional standards. The committee has prerogative to stipulate the conditions for continued enrollment at any time.

Leaves of Absence

Because this committee monitors each student's progression, any leave longer than 3 months, needs to be approved by the committee.

Withdrawal (Voluntary or Administrative)

A student may voluntarily withdraw at any time. The request to withdraw is normally initiated by the student. Requests for withdrawal must be presented in writing to the Executive Vice Dean. If, at the time of a request for withdrawal, the student is not in good standing, the opportunity to withdraw must follow procedures outlined by CSP. If the student is notified of a pending administrative withdrawal, an appeal of that decision will follow the appeal pathway for a student who has been dismissed. Any withdrawal is a permanent and irreversible decision. Students who are withdrawn (voluntarily or administratively) may not re-apply for admission to the MD program at UPSOM.

Dismissal

The CSP may consider dismissal in certain situations as outlined in the Guide to Expected outcomes and as described in section 7 of the Procedures. The student may not reapply to UPSOM in the MD program.

Conflicts of Interest

Any committee member must recuse themselves from the interview, discussion, and vote regarding a student's case if they are either:

- the faculty member of record for the academic deficiency being discussed, or
- were directly involved in the adverse action under review.

This policy ensures impartiality and prevents conflicts of interest in committee proceedings.

Other reasons for recusal include if a faculty member is a current or past healthcare provider, advisor/mentor/coach, and/or family member or friend of the student. Recusal requires that the committee member be absent from the entire committee proceeding addressing the student and returns only after an approved motion is completed. Prior to recusal, the CSP may ask the faculty member clarifying questions about the student's academic progress or other facts related to the adverse action. All participants of either CSP or the Appeals Committee must annually sign a "Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement," which outlines these requirements.

Expected Outcomes

Each year, the CSP reviews and sets the Guide of Expected Outcomes, and recommendations for committee decisions. That document reflects usual outcomes to guide committee action. Hence, it is a set of guidelines only and the final decision may vary depending on case-specific circumstances.

Sanctions

Dismissal or withdrawal may temporarily or permanently impact a student's enrollment status at UPSOM.

Appeals of the Decisions of the Committee

A student may appeal the decision of the committee within seven (7) calendar days of written notification of the decision. The student must formally submit their appeal in writing and the reason for appeal must be based on a student's belief that the decision did not follow the appropriate procedures or that the decision occurred as a result of arbitrary, capricious, or biased/discriminatory approaches as set forth by UPSOM academic policies.

IV. POLICY AUTHORS

- Vice Dean for Education

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Policy on USMLE Examinations
- Policy on Academic Remediation, Observation, and Warning
- Policy on Leaves of Absence
- Policy on NBME Subject Make-Up Exams
- Code of Professionalism

VI. REFERENCES

- LCME Standard 9.9: Student Advancement and Appeal
- LCME Standard 10.3 Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and Their Dissemination

VII. APPROVALS

Approved by the UPSOM Curriculum Committee, July 7, 2025.

VIII. PROCEDURES

1. **Satisfactory Academic Progress** – Students are expected to complete their medical school training within the following guidelines. Failure to do so will result in review by the CSP.
 - a. Students not participating in an approved combined degree program or other approved graduate study or formal academic program leave of absence (e.g., MSTP, PSTP, CSTP) must complete graduation requirements within 6 years of matriculation (all other leaves of absence are inclusive).
 - b. Students may not take more leave than designated in the Leave of Absence Policy, while not violating the 6-year rule.
 - c. Students must complete all requirements of the Foundation Phase in no longer than 3 years, including Step 1, and including leaves of absence.
 - d. Students must complete all requirements of the Clerkships Phase which is limited to 2 years inclusive of leaves of absence.
 - e. Students must complete all graduation requirements within 6 years.
 - f. Students who take a leave of absence must meet all agreed-upon terms of the approved leave.
 - g. Students must take all required school and national examinations by the date set by the school, which may change from time to time as determined by the school at its discretion.
 - h. Students must meet the terms of a corrective action plan and conditions for continued enrollment/progression as outlined by the school's Committee on Student Promotions.
 - i. Students must meet the terms of all approved extended USMLE Step 1 and Step 2CK study plan agreements.
2. **Good Academic Standing** – Students in good standing:
 - a. Have met the committee's guidelines for satisfactory progress.

Students are not in good standing if they have **NOT**:

- a. Successfully completed and passed all courses, clerkships, and other experiences in the periods offered -OR-
- b. Met all Longitudinal Research Project requirements -OR-
- c. Met all national examination requirements as outlined in the USMLE Policy

Students are also noted to not be in good standing if they have a major lapse in professional behavior as adjudicated by the Professionalism Subcommittee of the Committee on Student Promotions as outlined in the UPSOM Code of Professionalism.

3. **Academic Observation**– The Committee has the prerogative to place a student on Academic Observation. It will consult the Guide of Expected Outcomes to assist in that

determination but has the latitude to assign this status even if not on the Guide of Expected Outcomes. Students may be placed on Academic Warning without first being on Academic Observation status, see below. Academic Observation is an internal designation and will not appear on a student's MSPE. Students who take a Leave of Absence for Academic Difficulty will be placed on Academic Observation upon return.

Students who are currently on Academic Observation and subsequently have an additional deficiency will be required to meet with the Committee for further action.

Students who meet with the Committee may be allowed to continue their education, may be required to complete additional remediation prior to returning to their education, or may face dismissal.

4. **Academic Warning** - The Committee has the prerogative to place a student on Academic Warning. It will consult the Guide of Expected Outcomes to assist in that determination, but has the latitude to assign this status even if not on the Guide of Expected Outcomes. The student's MSPE will include notation of any history of Academic Warning.

Failing to maintain acceptable academic standards, violations of the University's academic or personal conduct codes and policies; violations of the UPSOM Code of Professionalism, or other cited professional behavior may result in a student being placed on Academic Warning without first being on Academic Observation. Students may be dismissed from UPSOM without first being on either Academic Observation or Academic Warning, see section 7 related to Dismissal.

Students who are currently on Academic Warning and subsequently have an additional deficiency will be required to meet with the Committee for further action.

5. Provisions for Continued Enrollment

The Committee may require students to adhere to a series of requirements for continued enrollment in the program including but not limited to approaches to remediation, reporting to school officials, and use of support services, meeting with health care providers or mental health providers, limiting participation in extra-curricular activities /leadership, and other provisions.

Failure to comply with any additional requirement stipulated by the Committee may lead to dismissal or other actions by the Committee.

6. Removal of Academic Observation

The committee must review the academic record of any student who appeared before the committee related to current academic deficiency or deficiencies to ensure the student has met the required remediation and to determine if the student may be reinstated to good standing.

7. **Dismissal** – The Committee will consult the Guide of Expected Outcomes when reviewing each student's case.

Some reasons for dismissal include but are not limited to:

- Receives an Unsatisfactory grade on 3 or more benchmark assessments in the Foundations Phase
- Receives an Unsatisfactory grade in 2 or more clerkships or rotations in the Clerkships or Bridges Phases
- Receives an Unsatisfactory grade in a course they have previously failed (in which they have previously received an Unsatisfactory grade)
- Failure to meet the criteria for remediation within the timeframe specified by CSP
- Receives an Unsatisfactory grade in a course, clerkship, or rotation while on Academic Observation or Warning
- Failure of a national exam while on Academic Observation or Warning
- Failure to pass Step 1, Step 2 CK within the timeframe specified in the Policy on USMLE Examinations
- Fails a licensing exam 3 times
- Being cited for lack of acceptable academic standards, violations of the School's academic or personal conduct policies, violations of the School's Code of Professionalism or University of Pittsburgh professionalism standards
- A student's failure to attend required meetings and/or comply with Committee on Student Promotions directives for remediation, or meet Committee on Student Promotions deadlines may preclude remediation and result in immediate dismissal from the MD Degree Program.

A decision to dismiss will prevent the student from continuing to attend any new course, clerkship, or rotation unless the Committee determines otherwise. A vote for dismissal may occur with or without the student previously being placed on Academic Warning or Academic Observation. A dismissal action by the Committee requires a decision of 60% or greater of the voting members being present at the meeting for which there is a quorum. Students who are dismissed or withdraw may not re-apply for admission to UPSOM.

8. **Appealing Decisions of the Committee on Student Promotions**

Level 1 Appeal

The student must formally submit their appeal for any adverse decision of the CSP in writing to the Vice Dean of Education, who chairs the Appeals Committee of CSP decisions (ACCD). The letter must include reason for appeal and must be based on a student's belief that the decision did not follow the appropriate procedures or that the decision occurred as a result of arbitrary, capricious, or biased/discriminatory approaches as set forth by UPSOM academic policies. If the student does not appeal within seven (7) calendar days of written notification of the decision of the CSP, the decision is final.

Within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving the written appeal request, the ACCD must meet synchronously with the student to discuss the appeal. The ACCD then has seven (7) calendar days to determine whether to grant the appeal or not; they must notify the student in writing within seven (7) calendar days of their meeting.

Level 2 Appeal

If a student wishes to dispute the Level 1 Appeal decision, the student must submit in writing the desire to appeal and rationale. The letter (no more than 2 pages) must be submitted to the Executive Vice Dean within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the level 1 decision. The Executive Vice Dean has fourteen (14) calendar days from the date of receipt of all required information to review the appeal, render a decision, and respond in writing to the student. The decision of the Executive Vice Dean is the final decision within the School of Medicine. See section 11 regarding the option to withdraw.

*Students may continue in the Foundations phase of the curriculum while appealing (Level 1 or 2) a decision of CSP, including remediation attempts.

9. Appeals Committee of CSP Decisions (ACCD) and Hearing – For the Level 1

Appeal, the student meets with the ACCD whose purpose and responsibility is to provide a review of decision made by CSP. The ACCD is a standing committee consisting of 5 members with 2 alternates as selected by the Vice Dean for Education. A quorum of 3 is required and a simple majority is needed for a decision. The ACCD members shall not be current members of the CSP. The Chair of the ACCD is the Vice Dean for Education.

10. Withdrawal – A student who has been dismissed by CSP or on notice for administrative withdrawal may request the opportunity to instead withdraw from the school voluntarily at any point prior to the Executive Vice Dean's final decision. The Executive Vice Dean will consider the opportunity to withdraw in all student appeals in meetings with the Executive Vice Dean. In any case involving violations of the School's academic or personal conduct policies, violations of the School's Code of Professionalism, or other cited professional behaviors the Executive Vice Dean's approval of the withdrawal is required. An approved withdrawal (voluntary or administrative) is considered permanent and irreversible. Students who complete the Foundations phase may be eligible for the Master of Science in Medical Science.

11. Support of Students going before CSP – The School recommends, but does not obligate, all students meet with their Advisory Dean or other trusted faculty member when preparing for an appearance before the CSP. The student's Advisory Dean or other trusted faculty member may attend the CSP meeting with the student and respond to questions based on the student's permission and/or to assist them during their presentation. The Advisory Dean or other trusted faculty member leaves the meeting at the same time the student does; they are not present during the committee's deliberation. Advisory Deans do not attend meetings when a student meets with the Appeals Committee or the Executive Vice Dean.

12. Additional Representation – A student is encouraged to seek the assistance of an advisor, including legal counsel, at any point in the process based on their best interest. The advisor's (or legal counsel's) role is limited to advising the student, external to any of the formal encounters with UPSOM committees or leadership. The advisor cannot attend meetings held by CSP, the Appeals Committee, or with the Executive Vice Dean.