

**Policy Number: 110.1006.105**

Policy Revision Date: 5/25/2021

**Policy Category: General Administrative**

**Policy Owner: Vice Dean for Medical Education**

**LCME Accreditation Standard Reference:**

**Standard 9: Teaching, Supervision, Assessment, and Student and Patient Safety**  
**Element 9.9 Single Standard for Promotion, Graduation and Appeal Process**

**Policy Audience: Student Council, Faculty Council, Academic Leadership,  
Vice Dean for Medical Education, Diversity Office**

## 1. Definitions:

**Promotion Standards** – Academic requirements and professional and technical standards that students must achieve, with or without reasonable accommodations, in order to progress to the next educational level. (See *Promotion Standards*)

**Academic Requirements** – Coursework and/or other academic requirements that students must achieve in each Phase of the curriculum. (See *Academic Requirements*)

**Technical Standards** – The essential academic and non-academic abilities, attributes and characteristics a medical school applicant or enrolled student must possess or be able to acquire, with or without reasonable accommodation, to be admitted to, to be retained in and to graduate from the medical education program of Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine (GCSOM). (See *Technical Standards*)

**Student Code of Academic and Professional Integrity** – Academic and professional integrity standards students must maintain to be retained and graduate from the medical education program of GCSOM. (See *Student Code of Academic and Professional Integrity*)

**Student Status** – Refers to the rights and privileges that apply to all students that include attending classes, using campus facilities, participating in student activities or being a member of student clubs.

**Fitness for Learning** - A comprehensive evaluation that includes medical, psychological, drug and alcohol, and psycho-educational testing.

**Student Advocate** – A current student, faculty member or staff member of GCSOM who may help prepare the student for, and accompany the student to, the meeting with the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards. The advocate may not speak on behalf of the responding student during the meeting.

## 2. Review:

Date of last review: May 25, 2021

## 3. Introduction / Purpose:

GCSOM has an obligation to patients, its students, the institution, the medical profession and society to ensure that each graduate of the MD program meets all requirements of the GCSOM curriculum including the MD program objectives of patient care, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, and systems-based practice.

This document provides the policy and procedures for faculty and administrators to assess and approve the status of students as they progress through the curriculum. Promotion to sequential years requires that students meet promotion standards for each step (See *Promotions Standards*)

## 4. Governance and Enforcement:

Vice Dean for Medical Education

## 5. Policy:

The Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (CAPS) is charged with the responsibility to ensure that students meet all academic, professional and technical requirements of the medical education program (See *Academic Requirements, the Student Code for Academic and Professional Integrity and Technical Standards*).

As such, CAPS is responsible for recommending students to the GCSOM faculty for promotion and graduation. In addition, CAPS has the authority to monitor academic and professional performance and sanction students who fail to meet the Promotion Standards (See *Promotion Standards*).

In the event of any inconsistency between one or more provisions of this policy and one or more provisions of any other policies related to academic, professional and technical standards of the MD program, the provisions of this policy shall take precedence.

## **Section 1. Composition of the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards Governing the MD Program:**

CAPS is a faculty standing committee of GCSOM, with membership jointly comprised of appointments made by the Dean and those elected by Faculty Council. The membership of CAPS totals seven (7) including the Chair who is appointed by the Dean. The Chair does not vote except to break a tie.

Faculty serving on CAPS cannot be an MD academic advisor, course/clerkship director or faculty serving on a grading committee.

*Ex-officio* members of CAPS include the Associate Dean for Education Administration, the Associate Dean for Equity and Inclusion, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the Assistant Dean of Students and the Director of Academic Success. *Ex-officio* members participate in deliberations but do not vote.

If a Committee member has a conflict of interest, that member must recuse themselves from deliberations and voting on a student's case. Conflict of interest includes the following:

- Having provided health services, including psychiatric/psychological counseling, to the student involved in a CAPS action;
- Having a family or business relationship with the student involved in a CAPS action;
- Having been involved in a previous official adverse action outside the purview of CAPS with the student involved in the current CAPS deliberation;
- Having any other interaction with the student involved in the CAPS action that results in a conflict or the appearance thereof.

## **Section 2. Confidentiality:**

All proceedings and documents associated with CAPS meetings are confidential and adhere to FERPA requirements. All members of CAPS are required to sign a "Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement" at the first meeting of each academic year. Student advocates will sign the confidentiality agreement prior to participating in the student case.

Any documents that a student receives related to a CAPS meeting are considered confidential and must not be shared other than with the student's advocate, who is also required to maintain confidentiality.

## **Section 3. Monitoring Actions Related to Academic, Professional and Technical Performance of Students:**

Students who meet expected academic, professional and technical requirements for each Phase of the curriculum are promoted to the next academic year or, at the conclusion of the fourth year, are recommended for graduation by CAPS.

Students who have demonstrated marginal performance across the curriculum (Refer Policy on Grading), even if that performance has not triggered a failure, can also be reviewed by CAPS. Specific requirements to enhance academic or professional performance may be made by CAPS.

Students who fail to meet and maintain academic and professional requirements may be reviewed by CAPS at any time and may be subject to the following sanctions.

### **Warning:**

Students are often placed on Warning upon their initial failure to meet academic requirements or maintain professionalism requirements, however, other sanctions can be imposed depending on the severity of the offense.

A student on Warning may require remediation and /or close monitoring. Failure to meet the terms of the warning outlined by CAPS will result in the student returning to the Committee. Warning is not reportable and will not be noted on the student's transcript.

### **Probation:**

A student may be placed on probation when they fail to meet the terms of Warning and continue to fail to meet/maintain academic and professional requirements, or for a serious first-time violation. Probation means that the student is on notice that if academic requirements and/or professionalism standards are not met, further action may be recommended by CAPS including but not limited to dismissal from GCSOM. The terms and duration of probation will be defined by CAPS and communicated to the student.

While on probation, students cannot participate in, hold or run for elected office in student organizations, or represent GCSOM at external meetings. The student cannot participate in activities that would entail absence from required curricular activities.

Probation is reportable and will be included as part of the permanent transcript and reported on the student's Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE). An addendum to the MSPE will be included if a student is placed on probation after the initial MSPE is released.

### **Suspension:**

Suspension is the withdrawal of Student Status and immediate removal from the curriculum. Suspension may be for specific periods of time not to exceed the full academic year following the academic year in which the suspension was imposed.

A student may be suspended for failure to meet the terms of academic warning and/or probation, for new failures to meet/maintain academic, professional or technical requirements, or for any egregious violation of the above-mentioned requirements. The length and terms of the suspension will be determined at the time of the sanction and communicated to the student by CAPS. Suspended students may be readmitted after the suspension period by submitting a written request for readmission to the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards.

Suspension is reportable and will be included as part of the permanent transcript and reported on the student's Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE). An addendum to the MSPE will be included if a student is placed on suspension after the initial MSPE is released.

### **Administrative Suspension:**

A student may be placed on administrative suspension by the Vice Dean for allegations of personal misconduct or observed behavior that threatens the well-being of self or others. An administrative suspension is immediate and does not require approval by CAPS but is brought to CAPS for review and additional recommendations. Administrative suspension is also reportable as noted above. (*See Leave of Absence Policy for further information*).

### **Dismissal:**

Dismissal is the permanent termination of Student Status, including the loss of all instructional credit toward the MD degree and removal from the curriculum. A student may be dismissed for failure to meet the terms of probation or suspension or continued failure to meet the academic or professional requirements, or failure to meet technical standards with or without reasonable accommodations, or for any egregious violation of the above-mentioned requirements.

### **Revocation or Withholding of Diploma and Degree:**

If a student has graduated, or otherwise satisfied the requirements for graduation from GCSOM before violations of academic or professional standards are discovered, or before a determination of violations is complete, GCSOM reserves the right to revoke the diploma and/or degree conferred, or to withhold the conferring of a degree or diploma otherwise earned for a specified period of time or indefinitely.

### **Fitness for Learning:**

CAPS may require an evaluation for "Fitness for Learning" prior to ongoing enrollment and/or promotion which can be included as a part of any of the above-mentioned sanctions (except for Dismissal). This is a comprehensive evaluation that includes medical, psychological, drug and alcohol, and psycho-educational testing.

## **Section 4. Obligations to Students Referred to CAPS:**

A student referred to CAPS is entitled to the following:

- Notice of the referral to CAPS, including the nature of the referral and the evidence on which the referral is based, and of the CAPS meeting date;
- The opportunity to have a non-participating advocate support the student through the referral and hearing process. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs' office may assist the responding student in identifying an advocate, if requested;
- The opportunity to respond to the concern(s) raised by the referral to CAPS; and
- The opportunity to meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or designee) to review the CAPS decision.

Students are expected to attend their hearings when scheduled. If a student fails to attend a hearing for any reason other than a legitimate emergency, the hearing may be held in the absence of the student. Students can request to have a hearing rescheduled. Requests to reschedule must be submitted in writing to the CAPS chair at least two business days prior to the hearing, except in situations of exigency preventing adequate notice. Requests must come directly from the student receiving a notice letter. Rescheduling is at the discretion of the Chair of the Committee and can be denied.

If a student requires accommodations for a disability during the hearing process, they must inform the CAPS Chair no later than two business days after receiving notice of a hearing.

## **Section 5. CAPS Meeting Procedures**

During CAPS meetings, Committee members will have access to all referral information as well as the student's academic record and prior CAPS records.

With the written consent of students appearing before CAPS, the student's presentation will be audio recorded. The audio recording is created exclusively for the following two purposes: a) for reference by CAPS during deliberations; and, b) for reference by appropriate persons during an appeal. No other recordings of proceedings are allowed and no other access to the recording is permitted. The audio recording is destroyed following the conclusion of the proceedings and exhaustion of the student's appeal, if applicable.

Following the student's presentation, and any questioning of the student after their presentation, all individuals other than CAPS members will be dismissed from the room so that CAPS may deliberate in closed session. CAPS will determine, based upon the available information, whether the allegations considered should be sustained.

The standard of proof is whether, based on the information available to CAPS, it is reasonable to conclude that it is more likely than not that the violation(s) took place. If it is determined that a violation(s) has occurred for which the responding student is responsible, CAPS will initiate sanctions consistent with this Policy, considering the totality of the responding party's record including any previous disciplinary actions.

The result of the hearing and any sanctions imposed will be communicated to the student in writing by the CAPS Chair, generally within ten (10) business days from the date of the hearing. If found responsible of certain specified violations where the law so requires, appropriate notification will be made.

Because the goals and objectives of GCSOM's policies differ from those of the civil and criminal justice systems, in situations which give rise to both violations of the GCSOM policies as well as violations of any local, state or federal law, student conduct proceedings may move forward without regard to pending civil litigation, criminal arrest, and/or prosecution.

Proceedings under GCSOM's policies may be carried out prior to, simultaneously with, or following civil or criminal proceedings off-campus. CAPS reserves the right to postpone hearings and/or deliberations until the conclusion of legal proceedings

## **Section 6. Appeals:**

All decisions of CAPS are final, except for adverse decisions affecting advancement, graduation or dismissal. A student may appeal such adverse decisions to the Dean in writing within ten business days of the date of student notification.

The appeal may be based only on one or more of the following grounds:

- Procedures set forth in the Policy on Academic and Professional Standards Governing the MD Program were not followed;
- New and relevant information, not available at the time of the hearing, has arisen. If new information comes to light, a student's case will be sent back to CAPS for re-adjudication

A student who is appealing a dismissal decision must remain out of the curriculum during the appeals process and student status is suspended pending the Dean's decision. The student, Chair of CAPS, and the Associate Dean of Student Affairs will be notified of the Dean's appeal decision by letter, generally within ten (10) business days.

The Dean's decisions are final, and the student has no further appeal rights.

## **6. Key Stakeholders:**

Students, faculty, and administration of GCSOM.