

Student Appeal and Academic Grievance Process

Purpose

The Pritzker School of Medicine has in place rules and regulations that outline satisfactory academic progress for all medical students. Additionally, this policy summarizes the process for a student to request a grade clarification and details the grievance procedures for courses, clerkships and clinical electives.

Overview

The academic requirements for the MD degree include the satisfactory completion of the curriculum designated by the faculty (See Student Advancement, Promotion and Graduation policy). The progress of each student working toward a MD degree is monitored carefully and the determination for satisfactory academic progress (SAP) for financial aid eligibility is made annually after the Summer Quarter of the Committee on Academic Promotions (CAP).

Three Academic Progress Committees for Phase 1, 2 and 3 are responsible for monitoring student progress throughout the academic year. The committees are composed of course or clerkship directors for that year. The committees are chaired by Associate Dean for Medical Student Advising and Advancement. The committees provide formative feedback and advice for students about their academic performance and progress as students proceed through the curriculum. The Academic Progress Committees report to Committee on Academic Promotions and may make recommendations to that committee for monitoring, remediation, referral to learning specialists, Extended Curriculum Option, or other interventions to facilitate student success at Pritzker. The Academic Progress Committees meet quarterly.

Students who believe their final grade does not properly align with their performance in a course, elective or clerkship should request a grade clarification from the course director. If the results of the clarification are unsatisfactory, the student has the right to file a grievance. Grievances, by their nature, are intended to be individual and categorized as departmental grievances or Committee on Academic Promotions grievances.

Related LCME Standards:

- 9.9 Student Advancement and Appeal Process
- 11.6 Student Access to Educational Records

Principles

1. It is the department's responsibility to notify the student of their poor performance (Incomplete/Fail) in a timely manner. Summative evaluations will be provided within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of a course and within six (6) weeks of a clinical clerkship or clinical elective.
2. The Committee on Academic Promotions (CAP) is responsible for overall evaluation of student performance, determination of appropriate remediation for academic difficulty, and oversight of academic issues related to student retention and progress.(See Policy on Student Advancement and Promotion Process)
3. Federal law and regulations require that all students receiving financial assistance from Federal Title IV funds maintain satisfactory academic progress.
4. Pritzker School of Medicine will provide timely communication to students about any potential or actual changes to their financial aid eligibility or disbursements.
5. Pritzker School of Medicine students may review their academic record and have the right to ask for a grade clarification in any course, clerkship or elective. Students are also afforded the right to a timely response from the course, clerkship or elective director in regards to a grade clarification.
6. Pritzker School of Medicine students may appeal a grade after a grade clarification by the course, clerkship or elective director. A final grade appeal is considered an academic grievance.
7. Academic grievances trigger a chain of review process that may ultimately end with a decision by the Dean of the Division of Biological Sciences.

Policy

1. Final grades are expected to be submitted no more than two weeks after the end of a course or six weeks after the end of a clerkship or clinical elective.
2. Passing grades in individual courses are necessary but not sufficient for attainment of the MD degree from the Pritzker School of Medicine. Failure to demonstrate appropriate ethical or professional behavior may in itself be a cause for dismissal from the Pritzker School of Medicine despite passing academic performance. The Pritzker School of Medicine utilizes a Pass (P)/Fail (F) grading system, with the exception of the core clinical clerkships.. Clerkship grades Honors (H), High Pass (HP), Pass (P), Failure (F) are included on the official University of Chicago transcript. In addition, a narrative summary is submitted to the Pritzker School of Medicine that supports the rationale for the designator grade assigned to the students. The material supplied by each department serves as the basis for the Medical Student Performance Evaluation Letter, which is sent to postgraduate programs for residency selection purposes.

Students having difficulty will be counseled by course/clerkship or elective directors about ways to improve and may be advised by the Academic Progress Committee or the Committee on Academic Promotions to seek assistance from a learning specialist or other counselor. A designator of Incomplete (I) or Withdraw (W) in a previously failed course equals a grade of Failure. A grade of Failure (F) followed by a second grade of Failure (F to F) may result in dismissal. All elective courses (including senior electives and selectives) utilize the Pass/Fail grading system.

3. The appeal of a grade or designator is considered a grievance. Grievances should first be brought for resolution to the relevant course or clerkship director from the course/clerkship that issued the grade or designator. Should a student have reason to appeal further, the procedure is described in detail below.
 - a. Appeal or request for revision of the clerkship grade narrative is only allowed in the instance of factual inaccuracies or grammatical errors exist. These requests will not be considered after the grade is finalized.
4. Students must present the written grievance to the department chairperson or Dean for Medical Education within four weeks (20 working days) of the incident or receipt of the course, clerkship or elective grade..
5. The department should strive to reach a decision within three weeks (15 working days) of receipt of the student's written grievance. If the issue cannot be resolved at the departmental level, the Dean for Medical Education will review the department's decision.

Procedure

1. Ultimately, it is the Committee on Academic Promotions' responsibility to ensure that students graduating from the Pritzker School of Medicine meet the academic, ethical, and professional standards to enter the medical profession. The Committee is appointed by the Dean for Medical Education and consists of senior faculty members who are experienced with medical student education. The Associate Dean for Medical Student Advising and Advancement serves as chair. The Director of Medical School Education staffs the Committee. The committee reports to the Dean for Medical Education. The Committee on Academic Promotions reviews all medical students for promotion to the next year or for graduation. The Committee reviews concerns brought to its attention by the Academic Progress Committees for each year; in some cases, the committee may request that a member of an Academic Progress Committee report directly to the committee regarding a particular issue. The Committee evaluates the success of the academic remediation; reviews the progress of students on Extended Curriculum Option; and reviews petitions from students for changes in the academic timeline; for academic credit outside the standard curriculum; or for re-entry into medical school from a leave of absence. At times, and especially for disciplinary concerns not covered by University of Chicago Policy, the Committee on Academic Promotion may function as a disciplinary committee. The

deliberations of the Committee on Academic Promotions are constructive in approach and directed toward helping students succeed. Ultimately, however, the student must be able to meet the minimum academic performance standards of the competency-based curriculum outlined in this document. When evaluating student performance, the Committee considers such matters as fund of knowledge, ability to organize and logically present information, test-taking skills, understanding, judgment, and professional behavior. When a student is not performing adequately, the Committee will consider all relevant information.

2. Students may be brought to the attention of the Committee on Academic Promotions through the Academic Progress Committees or through the Dean for Medical Education and their designees. Ultimately, it is within the Committee's discretion to determine whether the student is permitted to continue at the school and whether any remediation of course work should be permitted or required. The Committee on Academic Promotions may consider the status of any student at any time, even if the academic record is satisfactory. The Committee may, for reasons including but not limited to improper conduct, recommend to the Dean for Medical Education that a student be dismissed from the Pritzker School of Medicine.
3. In the event of academic deficiencies, CAP may place a student on an academic status. The two academic statuses assigned by CAP are Monitored Academic Status (MAS) and Academic Probation:
 - a. Monitored Academic Status (MAS):

A student may be placed on Monitored Academic Status by the Committee on Academic Promotions if the student, in its sole judgment and discretion:

- Fails two exams within a six-month period
- Is at risk for failing to achieve satisfactory academic progress
- Has received ongoing Incomplete designations in courses or clerkships
- Demonstrates persistent professionalism concerns

The nature of Monitored Academic Status is one of indicating to the student that their studies must come first and that every effort should be expended in assuring success. Extracurricular activities and scholarly pursuits should be minimized, with a primary focus on academic achievement. The Committee has the discretion to impose additional requirements as part of Monitored Academic Status, (e.g. counseling or evaluation by a learning specialist). Students placed on Monitored Academic Status are required to relinquish all extracurricular leadership positions and are not eligible for PSOM funding for extracurricular events or conferences.

Monitored Academic Status is an internal designator only; it is not reflected in students' MSPE, nor is it indicated in a Letter of Good Standing if requested by a student.

Continued issues could lead to the Committee recommending the student be placed on academic probation.

b. Academic Probation (AP):

A student may be placed on Academic Probation by the Committee on Academic Promotions if the student, in its sole judgment and discretion:

- i. Is at risk for failing to achieve successful completion of the program
- ii. Has failed one or more courses or clerkships
- iii. Has failed to address concerns that led to being placed on Monitored Academic Status
- iv. Has received one or more Professionalism Concern Reports
- v. Has engaged in unprofessional behavior that, in the committee's judgment, calls into question the student's suitability to become a physician

The nature of the Academic Probation status is one of indicating significant risk of failure to complete the medical education program of the medical school. In addition to the need to focus fully on academic issues, as in the case of Monitored Academic Status, the student must meet regularly with the Associate Dean for Medical Student Advising and Advancement to ensure that appropriate progress is being made toward remediation of outstanding academic issues and requirements. Students on Academic Probation are required to relinquish all extracurricular activities and are not eligible for PSOM funding for extracurricular events or conferences.

A student who fails to pass a course or clerkship while on Academic Probation (including a designation of Incomplete) will be considered for dismissal from medical school. Failure of an assessment, whether within a course or clerkship, while on Academic Probation may also result in the student's dismissal from medical school. Failure of an assessment while on academic probation may not result in an automatic remediation attempt, irrespective if attempts remain for the assessment. Opportunities for remediation of failed assessment while on academic probation is at the sole discretion of the Committee on Academic Promotions. Ongoing professionalism issues while on Academic Probation may also be grounds for dismissal from the medical school.

Current or prior academic probation will be reported on the MSPE letter. Professionalism concerns may also be noted on the MSPE letter, in accordance with the Committee's recommendations and policies outlined in the *Guiding Principles of Professionalism* section.

The designation of Academic Probation does not require a prior designation of Monitored Academic Status. In addition, the Committee on Academic Promotions may recommend dismissal from medical school without a period of Monitored Academic Status or Academic Probation.

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5. The Committee on Academic Promotions reviews and monitors the qualitative and quantitative assessment of performance for each student given by the faculty in all courses for which the student has enrolled. A student who does not satisfactorily complete all course requirements may be permitted to remediate. In this case, a student is assigned a plan and schedule by the Committee on Academic Promotions. This plan deviates from the norm and will require the student to achieve a satisfactory qualitative assessment in all enrolled courses for one academic year. A student in this status must achieve remediation on the schedule outlined by the Committee on Academic Promotions.
6. The normal timeframe for completion of required course work for the MD degree is four (4) academic years. Due to academic or personal difficulties, a student may require additional time. In such situations a schedule may be established for the student that departs from the norm and that may require repeating a year of study. To be considered to be making Satisfactory Academic Progress for financial aid eligibility, the student must complete the first two years of the curriculum by the end of the third year after initial enrollment. The maximum time permitted for financial aid eligibility for the MD completion is six (6) years.
7. Departmental Grievances: Grades, Evaluations, Departmental Remediation Requirements: Grievances of an academic nature should first be brought to the attention of the appropriate course, clerkship or elective director. The course, clerkship or elective director and student may work to resolve the grievance at this point. If the grievance involves the course, clerkship or elective director personally or if the student remains dissatisfied, the complaint should be brought, in writing, to the department chairman. If the course, clerkship or elective director and the department chairman are the same person, or if the student remains dissatisfied, the grievance should be brought, in writing, to the Dean for Medical Education. The student must present the written grievance to the department or Dean for Medical Education, within four weeks (20 working days) of the incident or receipt of the course grade or evaluation. In the departmental grievance, the

department chairman conducts the review, consulting as appropriate with other faculty and staff, and informs the student and the Dean's Office, in writing, of the department's decision regarding the grievance. The department should strive to reach a decision within three weeks (15 working days) of receipt of the written grievance. If the issue cannot be resolved at the departmental level, the Dean for Medical Education will review the department's decision, and if considered to be appropriate, may institute a review mechanism through the appointment of an Ad Hoc Committee. This committee will function in the same manner as an Academic Appeal Committee, below.

8. Committee on Academic Promotions Grievances: Appeal of Decision of Committee on Academic Promotions: For those grievances that relate to decisions of an academic nature or relate to decisions of the Committee on Academic Promotions, the following procedural guidelines pertain:
 1. A student appealing any academic decision beyond the departmental level, including decisions of the Committee on Academic Promotions must make the request, in writing, to the Dean for Medical Education within three (3) weeks of the receipt of the written notification of the decision. The request should include the basis for the appeal, as well as any relevant new information. Upon receipt of the written request, the Dean will be required to constitute an Academic Appeal Committee which consists of the following:
 - a. A minimum of five (5) senior faculty members including department chairs, committee chairs or section chiefs, and/or other senior faculty, preferably none of whom have been directly involved in the student's educational program.
 - b. The medical student initiating the appeal may request that another medical student be added to the Committee; however, that student member must be an upperclassman (Phase 3). The Pritzker Chief(s) may be asked to serve this function at the request of the student filing the appeal. The individual will be chosen to serve by the Dean for Medical Education.
 - c. The Dean for Medical Education (non-voting) and/or their designee.
 2. The Academic Appeal Committee shall consider all pertinent materials, including any new information, and determine whether the Committee on Academic Promotions has rendered the appropriate decision. The appeal committee is not a legal proceeding and does not follow the procedures of a court of law.
 3. The Academic Appeal Committee may request that the student appear before the committee to answer questions or to present any new relevant information. The student may also request to appear before the committee to present new information in person, although it is the prerogative of the committee to grant or deny such a request by the student. When and if the student appears before the Academic Appeal Committee, the student shall be allowed to select an advisor for assistance. If an advisor is to be present, the student must notify the

Dean for Medical Education at the time a request for appeal is made. The advisor may not participate in the presentation or discussion.

4. The Dean for Medical Education shall convene the Academic Appeal Committee and commence the procedure. The Committee will provide a report with its recommendations to the Dean of the Division.

5. The Academic Appeal Committee will review all pertinent material in the academic file of the student, including the letter of review and any additional supporting documentation that has been procured for the purpose of the hearing. The student shall have the right to inspect these documents. The procedure to be followed for the hearing will be:

a. The Dean for Medical Education or their designee will review the guidelines around which the Committee is to function and to clarify any aspects that are unclear to members of the Committee, including the directive that the Committee on Academic Promotions' decision is entitled to deference.

b. The Dean for Medical Education or their designee will present information from the Committee on Academic Promotions that led to the decision being contested by the student.

c. New information from the student may be considered, at the discretion of the Academic Appeal Committee, but not if it could have been presented to the Committee on Academic Promotions at the time of its decision.

d. If so decided by the Academic Appeal Committee, the student may be requested or permitted to appear before the committee. The student will leave the meeting at the conclusion of their presentation and after the committee's questions, if any, have been answered.

e. The Academic Appeal Committee will be free to discuss the case in closed session.

f. The Committee shall communicate a summary report of the proceedings, including the recommendation(s) of the Academic Appeal Committee to the Dean for Medical Education, who in turn will forward a final recommendation to the Dean of the Biological Sciences Division for approval.

g. The Dean of the Division of Biological Sciences will review the recommendations, make a final decision, and communicate with the student in question following the hearing. In the case of a dismissal, the Dean decides whether to uphold the recommendation or to select another alternative; either a notation of the dismissal is entered on the student's official University transcript, or a letter detailing the conditions of retention is sent to the student. The decision of the Dean is final.

Accountable Dean(s) or Director(s): Associate Dean for Medical Student Advising and Advancement

Related Policies: Appeal Policy for Summary Evaluation or Course Grade

Approval Date: June 6, 2024

Reviewed August 2026

Approval Body: PSOM Curriculum & Education Policy Committee