

## **Policy on Graduate Academic and Professional Performance**

### **Policy Number:**

**Policy Category:** General Administrative

**Policy Owner:** Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education

**Policy Audience:** Student Council, Faculty Council, Academic Leadership, Vice President/Vice Dean, Diversity Officer

### **1. Definitions:**

### **2. Board Committee Review:**

### **3. Purpose:**

Academic and professional performance of all graduate students must be conducted on a regular basis to assure progress and achievement of all requirements and standards.

### **4. Governance and Enforcement:**

Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education

### **5. Policy:**

Section 1. General Overview:

#### *Academic Performance:*

Academic performance is evaluated by written and/or oral examination and through observation in lectures, examinations, and all academic settings. Course directors must provide appropriate early formative opportunities for students to receive feedback on performance. Grades issued by the faculty are based on all requirements for the graduate degree program. These evaluations and grades, therefore, reflect the faculty's judgment about the student's performance.

Performance in courses is described by:

- Grades (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F or I or W) are entered on the official grade transcript. Grades are part of the student's permanent record maintained in the Office of the Registrar.
- The assignment of the grade Incomplete (I) is at the discretion of the course director. If an incomplete grade is not changed to a permanent grade by the course director within one year of the end of the semester in which the course is offered, the incomplete grade (I) lapses to a failing grade (F).
- A grade of W represents official withdrawal from the course. Any tuition refund will be in accordance with the refund schedule for that semester.

Requirements for Graduation:

Graduate degrees will be conferred by Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education on students who have complied with the following requirements:

- Completion of the required credit hours of coursework with a minimum average GPA of 2.25;

- Attain a level of judgment and skills that warrants the Faculty's confidence in the student's ability to perform in an independent manner compliant with the Graduate Student Code of Conduct;
- Discharge all financial obligations to Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine.

*Academic Good Standing:*

Academic and professional performance of all graduate degree candidates is reviewed at the close of each term by the Committee on Graduate Academic and Professional Performance. All degree candidates are required to maintain a minimum average GPA of 2.25 to remain in good academic standing and progress to the next academic term.

*Professional Performance:*

Professional performance is evaluated by through observation in lectures, examinations, and all academic settings. Students must comply with the professional standards outlined in the Graduate Student Code of Conduct. Program Directors, Faculty, and Academic Advisors must provide appropriate early formative opportunities for students to receive feedback on professional performance.

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education requires that all enrolled students:

- Fulfill the criteria and requirements for satisfactory academic and professional performance and successful completion of the curriculum as stated in Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education Student Handbook and in the syllabus of each course;
- Follow the standards set forth in the Graduate Student Code of Conduct;
- By enrolling in Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education, the student accepts these academic requirements, professional standards, and criteria for successful completion of the curriculum. It is the student's responsibility to know and meet these standards, requirements, and criteria and promptly to inform the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs of any serious impediment to satisfactory academic or professional progress. Failure to meet the requirements listed above may lead to penalties and/or remedial actions up to and including dismissal.

## Section 2. The Committee on Academic and Professional Performance

*Purpose:*

The Committee on Academic and Professional Performance reviews the academic and professional performance of every student enrolled in Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education at least once a semester. The review typically takes place at the end of each semester. When necessary, the Committee may hold hearings pursuant to pertinent sections described elsewhere in this policy. Additional meetings will be called at the discretion of the Committee Chair to review student performance and progress as the need dictates.

*Committee Membership:*

The Committee on Academic and Professional Performance consists of the following voting members:

- 2 Faculty members appointed by the Vice Dean for Graduate Education
- 3 Faculty members elected by Faculty Council

The Chair of the Committee will be selected by the Vice Dean for Graduate Education from the 5 voting faculty members of the Committee.

*Ex officio*, non-voting members include the Director of Career Engagement.

*Recusal from Voting:*

If a Committee member has a conflict of interest, for example a personal or academic advising relationship, that member must recuse him/herself from final determination of the student's case. All recusals will be documented in the meeting minutes.

*Confidentiality:*

All members of the Committee will be required to sign a "Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement" at the first meeting of the academic year.

For its review, the Committee has access to each student's file including, but not limited to:

- 1) All course grades;
- 2) Written reports about academic performance and professional behavior;
- 3) Interim reports from course directors solicited by the Chair of the Committee.

The Committee will, after a review, deem that a student meets the requirements for ongoing enrollment and/or promotion to the next academic term, or recommend further action be taken, which may include probation, leave of absence, repeat of the semester, suspension, or dismissal.

Section 3. Failure to Meet Academic and Professional Requirements:

Every effort should be made to rectify academic and professional difficulties in their early stages so that deficiencies can be remediated to ensure satisfactory academic and professional progress. However, students who do not meet expected academic and professional standards could be subject to repeat of an academic course, semester or year; probation; leave of absence; suspension; or dismissal.

A Failing (F) interim or final grade may be imposed by the course director. The imposition of penalties by the Faculty responsible for the course grade does not preclude further penalties by Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education through the Committee on Academic and Professional Performance.

If a student's cumulative grade point average is below 2.25 at the end of a term, the student will be referred directly to the Committee.

The Committee reserves the right to review a student's progress if the student has an interim failing grade posted and a cumulative grade point average that is below a 2.25.

The Committee also reserves the right to review a student's progress and recommend potential sanctions to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs if the student demonstrated consistent marginal performance across the curriculum even if that performance has not triggered a previous referral.

*Sanctions:*

**Probation:** Probation occurs when a student has not met academic and/or professional standards. Probation means that the student is on notice if academic and/or professional standards are not met. Further action may be recommended by the Committee including, but not limited, to dismissal from Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education. The imposition of probation will require satisfactory completion of all requirements defining the terms of the probation. If the Committee review is completed and recommendations are forwarded to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs, the terms of the probation will be defined by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs. Regardless of how the sanction of probation is initiated, all periods of probation must be accompanied by a description of the actions that will result if the requirements of probation are not met. Probation is reportable and will be included as a permanent part of the student's academic record.

All students placed on probation will be followed by the Committee. With successful completion of the requirements of probation, the student will be reviewed by the Committee and a recommendation will be forwarded to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs regarding the academic status of the student. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs will determine final action regarding the status of the probation. The length of time for academic probationary status is at the discretion of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs.

While on academic probation, students cannot participate in, hold, or run for elected office in student organizations or represent Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education at external meetings. The student may not participate in activities that would entail absence from required classes.

**Suspension:** Students may be suspended for academic or professionalism reasons with specific terms and conditions set forth by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs subsequent to Committee review and recommendation. Suspension may be for specific periods of time not to exceed one academic year and may be imposed without previous academic warning or probation. In general, suspension is considered when the Committee concludes, for example, that temporary, personal problems or other extenuating circumstances are the reasons for deficiencies and/or violations. When suspended, a student is not permitted to participate in Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education courses or in any School-related programs. Upon expiration of the period of suspension, the student must petition the Committee for reinstatement by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs. The Committee will review the petition, make a determination as to whether the terms and conditions of the suspension have been met and recommend whether the student should be reinstated with or without further conditions. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs will review and may either approve or amend the recommendation of the Committee.

**Dismissal from Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education:** Students may be dismissed for academic or professionalism reasons. This penalty is imposed by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs, subsequent to Committee review as a result of academic or professional deficiencies sufficient to render a student's continuation as a Geisinger Commonwealth graduate student inconsistent with requirements of this and other School of Graduate Studies' policies. Circumstances for which the Committee may recommend dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- A Failing (F) grade in a course if the student's performance is also generally lacking and deemed irremediable;
- A specific academic deficiency, e.g. an important professional skill has not been mastered;
- Violations of the Student Code of Conduct and the Policy on Alcohol and Drug Free Environment.

Even without a failing grade, a poorly performing student may be placed on probation, suspension or incur a recommendation for dismissal for failure to meet these requirements and standards.

Readmission to Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education:

A student who has been dismissed for academic and or professionalism reasons may reapply for admission to Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education. Readmission of a dismissed student is the prerogative of the Admissions Committee. In the course of considering the application, the Admissions Committee will consult with the Committee and the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs, which will include a detailed review of the student's previous academic performance and professional conduct including the reasons for dismissal.

Section 4. Violations of the Student Code of Conduct:

The following procedures apply to violations of the Graduate Student Code of Conduct.

*Summary of Requirements in the Graduate Student Code of Conduct:*

By enrolling in Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education, a student accepts the standards contained in the Graduate Student Code of Conduct as prerequisites for continued enrollment in the School and graduation. It is the student's responsibility to know and meet these standards. Each student must demonstrate appropriate standards of professional and ethical conduct, attitudes, and personal attributes.

These behavior traits include but are not limited to: honesty; integrity; willingness to assume responsibility; strong interpersonal skills; compassion; logical thinking; good judgment; the absence of chemical dependency or abuse; and appropriate social, ethical, and personal behavior.

Failure to meet these standards may cause Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education to impose sanctions that may include, but are not limited to probation, leave of absence, suspension, or dismissal.

Students will face disciplinary action by Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education if they abuse alcohol or drugs, consume illegal drugs, or possess, distribute or sell illegal drugs. Students involved in criminal matters before local, state, or federal courts may be dismissed by Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education or face lesser disciplinary sanctions.

*Reporting of alleged violations of the Student Code of Conduct:*

Any member of the Geisinger Commonwealth community may report incidents in which they suspect or witness academic or professional integrity violations of the Student of Conduct or The Policy on Alcohol and Drug Free Environment to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs or their designee. The report must be in writing or be reported to the ethics violation hotline (844-600-0042).

*Review of Alleged Violations:*

The Assistant Dean for Graduate Education or their designee shall review and investigate any and all reports of alleged violations of the Graduate Student Code of Conduct and the Policy on Alcohol and Drug Free Environment to determine whether the student may have committed a violation. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Education or her designee will investigate the violations and determine whether a submission for review by the Committee on Academic and Professional Performance is necessary.

Upon referral to the Committee, Chair of the Committee will inform the accused student of the charges in writing specifying which standard was allegedly violated and describing the actions and circumstances on which the charges are based, generally within ten (10) business days of completion of the review.

**Administrative Suspension:** At any point during the review of alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct and/or Policy on Alcohol and Drug Free Environment, the Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education may place a student on interim administrative suspension for any behavior that, in his/her judgment, poses an ongoing risk of harm to the safety or well-being of the individual or student in question or other members of the Geisinger Commonwealth community. Whenever an interim administrative suspension is imposed, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education will make reasonable efforts to complete the hearing, generally within two weeks of the effective date of the interim administrative suspension.

**Other Interim Measures:** The Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs may impose conditions, with monitoring by the Committee, on students deemed necessary to maintain order, preserve the integrity of the hearing process and the learning environment, and provide for the safety and well-being of individuals and Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education.

**Section 5. Committee Hearing Process:**

Students involved in the Committee hearing process are entitled to the following:

- Notice of concerns to be discussed during the hearing;
- The opportunity to have a non-participating advocate present during the hearing;
- The opportunity to respond to the concern(s); and,
- The opportunity to submit a qualifying appeal to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs' decision, following the hearing.

The responding student may be assisted by an advocate. This person may help prepare the student for the hearing and may accompany the student that he/she is assisting to the hearing. An advocate must be a current student, faculty member, or staff member of Geisinger Commonwealth. This advocate cannot speak on behalf of the responding student during the hearing. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Education may assist the responding student in identifying an advocate, if requested.

Generally, the following individuals from the Geisinger Commonwealth community may appear at a hearing: the Geisinger Commonwealth representative(s) presenting the charges; the responding student; advocate (as described above); witnesses; and Committee members. All participating in the hearing process must maintain strict confidentiality regarding the proceedings. Any documents a student receives related to a hearing are confidential and must not be shared other than with an advocate, who is also required to maintain confidentiality. If a student requires accommodations for

a disability during the hearing process, he she must inform the Committee Chair no later than 24 hours after receiving notice of a hearing.

The Committee will listen to and consider all relevant information presented at the hearing. Information supporting the charges and violations alleged may be offered in the form of documents or oral information from the Geisinger Commonwealth representative(s) and other individuals. The responding student shall be provided with an opportunity to respond to the allegations and present any information available to support his/her position regarding the alleged violation(s). Parties and other individuals who offer information at a hearing are expected to respond to questions presented via the Committee Chair and/or by the Committee members themselves. With the written consent of all students appearing before the Committee, hearings may be audio-recorded. The audio recording is created exclusively for the following two limited purposes: a) for reference by the Committee during deliberations; and b) for review by the appropriate persons during an appeal. No other recordings of proceedings are allowed and no other access to the recordings is permitted. The audio recording is destroyed following the conclusion of the proceedings and exhaustion of all appeals. The hearing will conclude once all the information has been presented. All individuals other than Committee members will be dismissed from the hearing room so that the Committee may deliberate in confidential session.

The Committee 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 the Committee, 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, the Committee will recommend appropriate sanctions to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs consistent with this Policy, taking into account the totality of the responding party's record including any previous disciplinary actions. The result of the hearing and any recommended sanction to be imposed will be communicated to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs. Generally, this will occur within ten (10) business days from the date of the hearing. If found responsible of certain specified violations where the law so requires, the complainant in that action will also receive notice of the hearing outcome. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs will review and either approve or amend the recommendation of the Committee and inform the student in writing, generally within 10 business days.

Students who are alleged to have committed professional integrity violations are expected to attend 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 Committee 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. Because the goals and objectives of Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education's policies differ from those of the civil and criminal justice systems, in situations which give rise to both violations of the Geisinger Commonwealth 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 Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education policies may be carried out prior to, simultaneously with, or following civil or criminal proceedings off-campus. Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education's adjudication does not preclude or limit a student's access to the state and federal justice systems. The Committee reserves

the right to postpone hearings and/or deliberations until the conclusion of criminal proceedings if the circumstances prevent the responding party's effective participation in the Committee hearing.

#### Section 6. Disciplinary Consequences Imposed for Violations of the Graduate Student Code of Conduct:

Action by Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education will be commensurate with the behavior(s), record, and academic and professional integrity code violation(s). Sanctions will be imposed by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs following his/her review of the recommendation of the Committee. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

**Probation:** Students may be placed on probation when it is deemed that evidence of maintenance of exemplary conduct is required. Any additional violations during this time may result in more serious sanctions including suspension and/or dismissal. Probation will include conditions and/

Probation occurs when a student has not met academic and/or professional standards. Probation means that the student is on notice that if academic and/or professional standards are not met, further action may be recommended by the Committee including, but not limited, to dismissal from Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education. The imposition of probation will require satisfactory completion of all requirements defining the terms of the probation. If the Committee review is completed and recommendations are forwarded to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs, the terms of the probation will be defined by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs. Regardless of how the sanction of probation is initiated, all periods of probation must be accompanied by a description of the actions that will result if the requirements of probation are not met. Probation is reportable and will be included as a permanent part of the student's academic record.

All students placed on probation will be followed by the Committee. With successful completion of the requirements of probation, the student will be reviewed by the Committee and a recommendation will be forwarded to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs regarding the academic status of the student. The Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs will determine final action regarding the status of the probation. The length of time for academic probationary status is at the discretion of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs.

While on academic probation, students cannot participate in, hold, or run for elected office in student organizations or represent Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education at external meetings. The student may not participate in activities that would entail absence from required classes.

**Suspension:** A student suspended for academic or professional integrity violations may not participate in any classes or other Geisinger Commonwealth activities and may not be on Geisinger Commonwealth or affiliate property (except by appointment, arranged in advance with Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs or his/her designee) for the period of time specified in the notice of suspension and subject to the completion of any conditions for return. Suspension extending beyond the semester in which action is taken shall consist of units of full semesters, and/or summer sessions. In no case shall the suspension terminate prior to the end of a semester. Courses taken at another institution during this period of suspension will not be accepted for transfer at Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education. Conditions for resuming active status on campus following suspension may be imposed by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs.

**Dismissal:** Dismissal is the permanent termination of all student status; including the loss of any right to continue in the graduate curriculum, the loss of all instructional credit toward the graduate degree, exclusion from any Geisinger Commonwealth property, Geisinger Commonwealth-sponsored or -affiliated events. A person expelled from Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education is denied the rights and privileges of inclusion in the Geisinger Commonwealth community both as a student and as an alumnus.

**Revocation or Withholding of Diploma and Degree:** If a student has graduated, or otherwise satisfied the requirements for earning a degree from Geisinger Commonwealth before violations of the academic and professional Standards are discovered, or before a determination of violations is complete, Geisinger Commonwealth 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.

**Other Sanctions:** Such other sanctions or conditions, including but not limited to those outlined above, as may be appropriate in the judgment of Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education.

#### Section 7. Appeals Process:

A student may appeal an adverse Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs' decision to the Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education within ten business days of the date of student notification of the decision reached by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs. The appeal may be based only on one or more of the following grounds:

- Procedures set forth in this policy were not followed;
- The sanctions imposed were excessively harsh for the violation;
- New and relevant information, not available at the time of the hearing, has arisen.

Appeals must be in writing and submitted to the Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education. The appeal shall consist of a plain, concise, and complete statement in writing with specific delineations of the grounds for the appeal and supporting facts. The Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education shall determine whether one or more bases for the statement of appeal have been met. If the Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education determines that one or more grounds for an appeal have been met, he/she will consider the merits of an appeal on the review of the record, which may include:

- a) the information provided in the written request for appeal;
- b) the record of the original hearing(s) including any audio recordings part of the record.

At the discretion of the Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education on a case-by-case basis, the Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education may hear additional evidence not part of the record. The Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education may request to meet with or obtain information from the Committee and/or Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs, student and/or an administration representative who presented the charges, to seek clarification of the hearing record. The Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education must be persuaded by clear and convincing reasons that the sanctions imposed by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs are inappropriate in order to change the decision of the Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs. All appeal decisions are final.

The student and Geisinger Commonwealth representative who presented the charges will be notified of the appeal decision by letter, generally within ten (10) business days.

**Student Records and Confidentiality:** All proceedings described in this policy are conducted in compliance with the requirements of FERPA and Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education policy. No information shall be released from such proceedings except as required or permitted by law and Geisinger Commonwealth policy. It is generally the policy of Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education to obtain consent from a student before releasing information from a student's education record, including the disciplinary proceedings. However, where in the judgment of Geisinger Commonwealth, the release of such information is appropriate and is not otherwise prohibited by FERPA or other applicable laws, Geisinger Commonwealth reserves the right to release information without student consent.

The complete Geisinger Commonwealth FERPA policy may be found in the Geisinger Commonwealth School of Graduate Education Policy Handbook. Affirmative findings of responsibility in matters resolved by the proceedings described herein are part of a student's conduct record. Once a student has been found responsible for violating the academic or conduct standards by the proceedings described in this policy, all records of matters addressed by informal resolution shall be transferred to and become a part of a student's conduct record. Such records shall be used in reviewing any further conduct, developing sanctions, and shall remain a part of a student's conduct record for all purposes. Generally, probation, suspension, dismissal, and withdrawal pending disciplinary action are permanently noted on a student's transcript. The conduct files of students who have been suspended or dismissed from Geisinger Commonwealth are maintained in the Registrar's office permanently after their departure from Geisinger Commonwealth. In most cases, conduct files of students who have not been on probation, suspended or dismissed, are destroyed upon their graduation or after twelve months' time, whichever is later.

#### **6. Key Stakeholders:**

Student Council, Faculty Council, Academic Leadership, Assistant Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs, Vice President/Vice Dean for Graduate Education, Diversity Officer