

College of Physicians and Surgeons
POLICY ON SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS
FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FSA) RECIPIENTS

June 18, 2013

1. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

CFR SOURCE:

Compilation of Federal Regulations (CFR):

34 CFR 668.34 – Student Assistance General Provisions

34 CFR 668.16(e) – Administrative Capability

34 CFR 668.32(f) – Student Eligibility - General

1.1 “AT LEAST AS STRICT...”

This SAP policy applies to all MD students regardless of whether they are FSA recipients. All MD students are held to the same academic standards regardless of whether they apply for federal Title IV financial aid.

1.2 CONSISTENT APPLICATION

The Satisfactory Academic Progress of each MD student in the College of Physicians and Surgeons is assessed at the end of each term on the basis of academic performance. Students must pass all requirements of the MD curriculum. In addition to successfully complete all course requirements in each phase of the curriculum, students are required to pass USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge exams, and to have taken the Step 2 Clinical Skills exam to be eligible for graduation from P&S.

Two faculty committees are appointed by the Dean to review and evaluate the academic progress of each student. Each committee meets several times a year, approximately every two months, to review the academic progress of students in their segment of the curriculum who are having academic difficulty, and recommend measures to assist the student in addressing the difficulty.

- The Fundamentals Faculty Committee evaluates the progress of students in the Fundamentals curriculum.
- The Clinical Faculty Committee evaluates the progress of students in the Major Clinical Year (MCY) and Differentiation & Integration (D&I) curricula and is responsible for the certification of students for the Doctor of Medicine degree.

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1.3 REGULAR EVALUATIONS

The Satisfactory Academic Progress of each MD student in the College of Physicians and Surgeons is assessed at the end of each term on the basis of academic performance.

In evaluating the progress of students in the curriculum, the overriding concerns of the Committees are ultimately the welfare and lives of patients. Decisions on repetition of a course, repetition of a year or portion of a year, or delay in graduation are made only after thorough review of a student's record and appraisal of a student's professional behavior and potential for satisfactory performance.

Following the evaluations at the end of each term, notification will be transmitted in writing from the Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs, on behalf of the appropriate faculty committee, to all students who have not met the standards for SAP, with copies to the Office of Student Financial Planning. The notification shall indicate the nature of the deficiency, any methods that may be available for correcting the deficiency, and any consequences that have resulted or may result, such as financial aid probation, administrative leave of absence or dismissal.

The Faculty Committees encourage course directors to provide students with clear statements of objectives and performance expectations in each course. Students should be advised in a clear and timely fashion of their performance, including any deficiencies in performance in any course or portion of the curriculum. Mid-course feedback is required for clerkships, excluding one week ones and selectives, with signed acknowledgement by the student. Where necessary, faculty and administration should recommend the steps needed to strengthen performance and should assist students in the achievement of performance expectations. If a student fails to appreciate the seriousness of his/her academic problems and fails to take the recommended steps to correct performance, the course director may elect to send the student an official warning letter.

1.4 GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

Courses in the P&S Fundamentals curriculum are graded Pass and Fail only.

Courses in the Major Clinical Year (MCY) curriculum which include MCY & electives are graded Honors, High Pass, Pass and Fail, except for one week clerkships, selectives, MCY Foundations, Mechanisms and Practice, and Back to the Classroom, which are graded Pass and Fail.

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Courses in the Differentiation and Integration (D&I) section area receive two grade ranges:

- Scholarly Projects are graded pass/fail only.
- Away electives are recorded on the University transcript as Pass and Fail only but certain other electives can receive a grade of honors, high pass, pass, low pass, and fail.

Grades may be appealed by a student, as described in the policy on Grade Appeals.

1.5 MAXIMUM TIME FRAME AND PACE OF COMPLETION

There are three sections of the curriculum: Fundamentals, Major Clinical Year (MCY) & Differentiation and Integration (D&I). Each section may be repeated one time. Therefore the maximum timeframe for students to complete the degree is 200% of the published length of the educational program, excluding time away from the regular curriculum when pursuing another degree or full-time research, or if on an approved leave of absence.

D&I includes 1 month to study for Step 1 & 2. Students who fail either part are allowed to attempt the exam 3 times in order to pass. Students in this part of D&I may be granted up to 29 additional weeks (roughly 7 months).

At the end of each academic year, students must have good academic standing and be making progress consistent with P&S's curricular and graduation requirements in order to advance to the next segment of the curriculum.

In addition to successfully completing all course requirements in each phase of the curriculum, students are required to pass USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge, and to have taken Step 2 Clinical Skills to be eligible for graduation from P&S.

Before certifying students for the Doctor of Medicine degree, the Clinical Faculty Committee must be assured that students have acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for the safe assumption of responsibility for patient care in postgraduate education. The Committee will not certify for graduation any student whom it believes to be unsuited for the practice of medicine.

Students are strongly encouraged to attend all lectures and required to attend small groups.

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Exams are scheduled by the Fundamentals Faculty Course Directors in the summer preceeding the academic year. Personal events should not be scheduled at the time of exams. Make-up exams for exams missed due to acute student illness, family emergency, or extenuating circumstances may be given at the discretion of the Course Director at any time during the academic year without the approval of the Fundamentals Faculty Committee. Observance of religious holidays is permitted without question in accordance with the Columbia University Regulation on Religious Holidays. Arrangements for makeups are at the discretion of the Course Director.

Students are expected to be present every weekday of each clerkship and when designated to be on call. For electives, students must be present from the first to the last day of the calendar month, with more variable hours expected (including possible weekend and overnight work) and flexibility for away elective scheduling at the discretion of the Course Director.

If a clinical student is ill or unable to attend a clerkship or elective for any reason, he/she should promptly notify the Clerkship or Course Director and the Office of Education at psmcy@columbia.edu (for clerkships) or pselectives@columbia.edu (for electives). Requests for approval of an anticipated absence must be made in advance to the Course Director (for electives) or NYPH Clerkship Director (for clerkships) and copied to the Office of Education (see above). Where applicable, students should also advise site directors, attendings, preceptors, and house staff of the dates of anticipated absences well in advance and promptly when otherwise absent so that appropriate arrangements for on-call scheduling, patient care, and makeups can be made.

Approval for all absences is at the discretion of the Clerkship or Course Director. Students are expected to make requests for absences only in the cases of personal illness, family emergency or religious observances. Any students who wish to observe the latter are free to do so without question. Some Clerkship or Course Directors will also allow a brief absence for a wedding in which the student plays a significant role or for presentations of original research at a conference, but they are not obligated to do so. Requests for absences for most other reasons are considered unprofessional and repeated absences will be recorded in the MSPE (Dean's Letter). Arrangements for makeups or repetition of the clerkship or elective will be at the discretion of the Clerkship or Course Director. If students miss 20% or more of a clerkship (e.g., five or more days for five-week clerkships, one or more days for one-week clerkships) or four or more days of an elective, they will receive an incomplete for the clerkship or elective and will be required to make up the missed time or, possibly, the entire course.

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Vacations are those listed on the P&S Academic Calendar. They are generally considered free periods for all clinical students. However, some clerkships may include optional call, and some electives may require coverage by students on the holidays listed. Students completing electives should expect variable hours even on holidays and all clinical students must abide by the clerkship or elective call schedule during the weekends leading up to holidays. Holidays that do not appear in the P&S Academic Calendar are not considered vacation unless indicated in advance by the clerkship, site, or Course Director. Affiliated hospitals' holidays may vary.

1.6 EFFECT/TREATMENT OF “ATYPICAL” COURSES/SITUATIONS

1.6.1 EFFECT OF WITHDRAWALS

Students are not allowed withdrawals from any part of the curriculum unless taking a leave of absence.

Students are not allowed incompletes from any part of the curriculum. At the College of Physicians and Surgeons: UW= unofficial withdrawal, indicating significant attempted coursework which the student does not have the opportunity to complete as listed due to required repetition or withdrawal.

It is our policy to represent all attempted coursework on P&S students' permanent record and thus all such courses are recorded twice, even when successfully passed in subsequent years. We use UW as a standard practice to indicate attempted coursework in these instances.

1.6.2 EFFECT OF COURSE REPETITIONS:

A failing grade of F remains on the student's official transcript and on the academic record whether or not the student repeats the course and passes it after the second attempt.

1.6.3 EFFECT OF DUAL DEGREES:

Ph.D.-M.D. students are only required to complete the Major Clinical Year and one sub-internship. All other dual-degrees must complete medical school requirements. Students completed either research years or dual degrees are exempt from the Scholarly Project portion of the Differentiation and Integration curriculum.

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1.6.4 EFFECT OF ADVANCED STANDING:

Students who attended Harvard Dental School will only complete Major Clinical Year and Differentiation & Integration periods. They will also receive Scholarly Project credit. Students who did not attend Harvard Dental School will have to complete 2 semesters of Fundamentals. Ph.D.-M.D. students will only complete 3 years of the medical school curriculum.

1.6.5 EFFECT OF TRANSFERS OF CREDIT FROM OTHER SCHOOLS OR INSTITUTIONS

Students are allowed to transfer credits under extremely rare circumstances. Transfers are at the discretion of the Office of Admissions

STATUS DEFINITIONS

Monitored Academic Status (MAS) is an internal designation made by the Fundamentals and Clinical Faculty Committees for students who are having significant academic difficulty. Per federal guidelines, because the College of Physicians and Surgeons evaluates progress each term, students in a first time of Monitored Academic Status receive a written financial aid warning notice.

Under federal guidelines, **Financial Aid Warning** status is available to programs that evaluate progress each term. A Financial Aid Warning informs the student that if satisfactory academic progress is not met, they may become ineligible to receive federal financial aid.

Financial Aid Probation, under federal guidelines, is assigned one term after a student previously on Financial Aid Warning, if the student has not met satisfactory academic progress and has appealed successfully due to extreme circumstances. Financial Aid Probation means the student is ineligible to receive federal financial aid.

In compliance with federal regulations, the College of Physicians and Surgeons places students on financial aid warning after one term of failing to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress. If a student fails to meet SAP a second consecutive term, they are no longer eligible for financial aid and must appeal in order to have eligibility reinstated. However, if a student fails to meet SAP for one term (placed on financial aid warning) but is able to make Satisfactory Academic Progress the following term, then fails SAP again – they may be placed on financial aid warning for a second time.

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1.7 PROVISION FOR A FINANCIAL AID WARNING STATUS:

Any student placed on Monitored Academic Status is sent a letter, which includes the requirements for returning to good standing. Included in this letter is the statement: *If you are a federal Title IV aid recipient your aid may be affected. You may receive a letter from student financial planning.*

1.8 APPEALS

The student has the right to appeal a decision made by the Fundamentals or Clinical Faculty Committee.

The appeal must be made in writing within seven days of the time the student is notified of the decision, and it must clearly state the grounds for appeal.

Such appeal should be sent to the Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs at P&S 3-401. A hearing then takes place with the student, who may be accompanied by his/her Advisory Dean, and another member of the Faculty of the College as advocate, before the Faculty Committee.

Students who wish to contest a final grade in a clerkship are encouraged to meet with the Clerkship Director first. If this meeting does not resolve the issue, the student should notify the Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs and a subcommittee of Clerkship Directors will be convened to hear the student's concern. The department chair or designee of the discipline where the grade dispute is will sit on the subcommittee ex-officio. The decision of this committee is final.

1.8.1 ACADEMIC PLANS

Students with this designation are notified by the Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs when it begins and ends. MAS designation means that the appropriate Faculty Committee will review the student's academic performance at their regular meetings to further identify any difficulties early. Course directors may then intercede with tutors, guidance and other support systems to improve the student's learning experience and ensure success. This designation is not recorded in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation or in the permanent record.

1.9 RESTORING ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is restored when a student achieves satisfactory academic progress per the SAP guidelines or the guidelines within a student-specific academic plan.

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Ineligible students may restore eligibility for FSA funds by returning to good academic standing.

1.10 NOTIFICATIONS

Included in the Senior Associate Dean's letter to any student on monitored academic status is the statement: *if you are a federal Title IV recipient your aid may be affected; you may receive a letter from Student Financial Planning.* The Office for Student Financial Planning is notified when this change occurs.