

Academic Standards and Achievement Committee Operating Procedures

The Academic Standards and Achievement Committee (ASAC) of the University of Virginia School of Medicine (UVA SOM) is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that each student in the School of Medicine masters the education program objectives. These objectives include assuring that each student demonstrate the required level of academic accomplishment and the required level of professionalism as set forth in the Twelve Competencies Required of the Contemporary Physician (<http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/education/medical-students/UMEd/curriculum/competencies-page>) in order to be promoted and to graduate with the degree of Doctor of Medicine. As part of these Competencies, students must develop the ability to understand the nature of and demonstrate professional and ethical behavior in the act of medical care. Among the attributes that go into making up these Competencies are respect, responsibility and accountability, excellence and scholarship, honor and integrity, altruism, leadership, cultural competency, caring and compassion, and confidentiality. The UVA SOM Curriculum Committee establishes these educational and professionalism standards. The ASAC oversees, monitors and enforces these standards. Comprised of faculty in the school of medicine who do not assign final grades to students as well as student representatives, the role of the ASAC is to promote students who meet these required standards, to recommend remedial action for those who do not meet the standards, and to suspend or to recommend dismissal of those students who are incapable or who choose not to meet the required standards of achievement within the time frame allotted for completion of the M.D. degree.

It is the policy of the School of Medicine to give every qualified and committed student the opportunity to graduate; however, the School reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to make judgments about who has or has not demonstrated the necessary qualifications to earn a degree and to practice medicine competently.

I. Name and Mission

This committee of the Faculty and students shall be called the Academic Standards and Achievement Committee (ASAC). The mission of the ASAC is twofold. The first is to review the UVA SOM transcripts of students who have failed one or more required activities. Depending on the circumstance, the committee can recommend review, remediation or repeating the activity. The second is to review evidence of unprofessional, unethical or illegal activities or behaviors by the students. Recommendations, based on the severity and persistence of these activities or behaviors, can result in a broad range of actions from remediation to dismissal from the university. The committee shall follow the guidance of the Policy on Academic and Professional Advancement and the Policy on Technical Standards Required for Matriculation, Progression and Graduation.

The ASAC will meet monthly and as often as necessary to carry out these missions assuming an agenda to be discussed.

II. Composition

The Committee shall consist of several groups of voting members and non-voting members.

Voting members:

The Senior Associate Dean for Education solicits nominations from department chairs and the faculty at large and recommends potential members to the UVA SOM Dean for appointment. A minimum of 15 voting members are appointed with a maximum of 21 voting members. Two fourth-year medical students shall serve as *ex officio* voting members of the ASAC. These shall be the President of the Mulholland Society and the fourth-year class President. Generally, the term will be three years with the possibility of one consecutive reappointment; former members may return for a new appointment after a two-year hiatus. Student members will serve for one year. The Chair is appointed by the Dean of the School of Medicine. A vice-chair is elected by a majority vote of the ASAC. The vice chair may call and chair an ASAC meeting in the event that the chair is unavailable.

Members who fail to attend the majority of meetings during a given calendar year without cause shall be excused from the Committee. Members who cannot attend the majority of the meetings due to illness or sabbatical, etc. may request that the ASAC Chair, in consultation with the Senior Associate Dean and subject to the approval of the Dean, appoint a substitute for them for the duration of their absence.

Non-voting members:

The Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, Associate Dean for Diversity and Medical Education, the Director of Academic Enhancement, and the Assistant Dean for Medical Education shall be non-voting *ex officio* members of the ASAC. The Assistant Dean for Records and Student Affairs shall staff the committee and keep minutes as described below.

III. General policies

- A. Official votes may be taken when a quorum (greater than 50% of voting members) is present. All motions, except for a motion for dismissal, shall pass by majority of voting members present. A motion for dismissal requires a two-thirds majority of voting members. Voting members will be recused from participating and shall not be counted in the quorum if they have (or have had) a personal, mentoring or advising relationship with the student beyond that of usual student-faculty contact in class or clinical environment. This restriction includes faculty mentors on research projects, family members, anyone with a physician-patient relationship with the student or other personal relationship.

- B. All members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement at the beginning of each academic year.
- C. The Assistant Dean for Records and Student Affairs, shall take minutes of each meeting with special emphasis being applied to recording every official motion, and the numerical vote taken on that motion. Official letters sent to students also will constitute part of the minutes of each meeting, as they summarize the decisions of the Committee. Minutes of all meetings will be kept in the Office of the Assistant Dean for Records and Student Affairs and be made available to the Dean. Letters from the chair to individual students shall be kept in the students' academic file in the Office of the Assistant Dean for Records and Student Affairs. A notice is sent to the Dean after each meeting indicating that a meeting was held and that the confidential minutes are available for review in the Office of Student Affairs.
- D. When there are severe professional transgressions or the Committee is to consider serious actions such as suspension or dismissal of a student, a final vote should be taken by the Committee only after the student has been offered an opportunity to address the Committee in person, and to respond to questions from members of the Committee. Also, the student should be notified by the Committee in writing before the meeting as to what the major concerns of the Committee are likely to be during the coming meeting. Assistant Deans for Student Affairs (College Deans) as well as relevant teaching faculty may also be invited to attend committee meetings to provide information.
- E. Consistent with the requirements of law, decisions made by the Committee may be revealed to authorized university personnel, to the student, and in appropriate circumstances, to the student's parents or guardians (especially when the personal safety of the student is a concern). Other individuals may be notified as appropriate.
- F. Official notification of Committee actions shall be made by the Assistant Dean for Records and Student Affairs as soon as possible after the action is taken by the ASAC (and after the student has been notified of the action, as in III.C above, III.I below). All individuals and departments with a need to know will be so notified.
- G. The official medical school transcript shall accurately reflect the actual academic record of the student, and important decisions reached by the Committee about each student's academic performance or misconduct (for example, reflecting change in student status, systems failed, grades changed through re-examination, suspensions, etc.).
- H. When a student addresses the Committee, the student will act as his or her own advocate. In some sensitive situations, the student may be accompanied by a current member of the medical school community (e.g. classmate, faculty member, etc.) for support or advice. Such a guest must be approved by the committee chair prior to the meeting. Since these are not formal legal proceedings, but internal meetings of an official school committee, no counsel representing a student shall be allowed.

- I. The formal decisions of the ASAC shall be communicated by the Chair to the student in a timely fashion, usually on the night of the meeting or the next day. Copies of this communication will be placed in the student's academic record, and into the minutes of the ASAC. In some situations, such as when news of a decision is given verbally to the student, the Chair may invite one of the college deans to be present.
- J. Guidelines and policies written in advance cannot cover all possible scenarios. When in doubt, the Committee should be guided by several important general principles, including: fairness to students; following due process; promptness of action and notification; maintaining confidentiality when possible; and, balancing the best interests of each student with its obligations to the Faculty, patients and to society to train graduates who demonstrate the highest standards of academic performance and conduct.
- K. Administrative support to the Committee will be provided by the Assistant Dean for Records and Student Affairs who will work with the Chair to set the agenda; inform members of meeting dates and times; take and maintain the minutes; maintain official student folders; maintain copies of all letters sent by the Chair; invite guests, e.g. system or clerkship directors when necessary, etc.
- L. These policies concerning the ASAC, and various types of student status changes, must be updated as needed. The updated version must be posted in the online Student Handbook. The incoming first year class must receive a URL link to the latest version at the time of matriculation.
- M. No student will be formally dismissed or suspended prior to an appropriate hearing by the ASAC, as outlined in other sections. However, on rare occasions an emergency may arise in which the health of a student, faculty member, patient, or other member of the community is placed at risk by the presence of a student. In such an unusual situation, the Chair of the ASAC may recommend to the Dean or Senior Associate Dean for Education that a student be suspended provisionally, pending formal consideration of the relevant issues by the full Committee at the earliest possible opportunity. It is anticipated that this action will be required only under very rare circumstances.
- N. When a student wishes to contest a decision of the ASAC, the student must follow the process as outlined in the Policy on Academic and Professional Advancement.
- If the ASAC requires a student to be dismissed from the School of Medicine or to repeat an academic period, the notification to the student will provide the option of an appeal and a description of the appeals process. This option will not be granted to those students failing to pass Steps 1 or 2CK of the USMLE within three attempts. The student may formally request that the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs appoint an ad hoc Appeals Committee to review the decision of the ASAC. The student must file his or her appeal no later than 14 days from receipt of notification or lose the right to appeal.
 - The three-person ad hoc Appeals Committee is drawn from a pool of 10 faculty members named by the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, none of whom is a current member of the ASAC. The student selects one member, the Senior Associate Dean for Education selects one member, and the Dean selects the third member (who chairs the ad

hoc Appeals Committee). The Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs serves as staff liaison, ex officio, without vote.

- The student is permitted to inspect his/her entire medical school file including any material upon which the decision of the ASAC was based.
- The student is permitted to have counsel, to submit affidavits and exhibits, and to summon witnesses at the Appeals Committee hearing. Legal counsel may be present to provide advice but legal counsel will not be permitted to participate actively in presentation of testimony, examination/cross examination of witnesses or oral arguments.
- The Appeals Committee is to conduct a hearing as soon as possible (ordinarily within 14 days) and will uphold, modify or reverse the decision(s) of the ASAC.
- The Appeals Committee will provide the student with all the evidence against him/her, including the academic grades and written evaluations, and will base its recommendations upon the evidence presented at the hearing.
- The Appeals Committee will send its decision, along with a written record of its proceedings, to the Dean of the School of Medicine.
- The decision of the Appeals Committee will be final.