

Division of Physician Assistant Studies

Deceleration Policy

Deceleration is defined by the ARC-PA as “the loss of a student from the cohort, who remains matriculated in the physician assistant program.”

Deceleration may occur as a result of academic failure or following a voluntary Leave of Absence (see Leave of Absence Policy below). **Deceleration is a mechanism for allowing students in the PA program an opportunity to complete the 28-month curriculum through required repetition of a portion of the curriculum as a result of failure to meet the program’s standards for progression.** A student who is decelerated will be required to repeat all or part of the didactic and/or clinical portion of the curriculum after a period of suspension (see *Definition of Academic Sanctions Policy* for more information on suspension).

The Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (CAPS) has been established by the Division of Physician Assistant Studies for the purpose of evaluating students who are at risk for failing to meet performance standards or who have failed to meet performance standards in any of the following areas:

- Academics (didactic and clinical education)
- Academic integrity
- Professional behavior

The Committee on Academic and Professional Standards is comprised of the medical director for the physician assistant studies program, the director of clinical education for the physician assistant studies program, and principal faculty in the Division of Physician Assistant Studies, with a chair appointed by the physician assistant studies program director. A quorum of three is required to make a recommendation. In cases where a student fails to meet academic or professional behavior standards during a clinical rotation, the director of clinical education (or his or her designee) must be present at the CAPS meeting in which the student’s case is considered. In all cases, the program director will review the recommendations of the committee and make a final decision regarding a student’s disposition.

The Committee on Academic and Professional Standards will meet regularly (at a minimum, prior to the end of the semester) and as needed to closely monitor each student’s progress, with the goal of promptly identifying deficiencies in knowledge, skills, or professional behavior. Referral of a student to the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards may be made by any physician assistant studies program faculty with concerns about a student’s academic performance, academic integrity, conduct, or professional behavior. Program faculty includes the program director, medical director, principal faculty, and instructional faculty (including preceptors for supervised clinical practice experiences).

A student identified by program faculty as having a significant deficit in knowledge, skills, or professional behaviors at any point in the program may be subject upon CAPS review to sanctions which include remediation, **deceleration**, or dismissal from the program.

Deceleration

may occur following failure of a course or following a requested Leave of Absence.

A student with a failing grade (F) in any course during the didactic or clinical phase of the program (including the PA Summative Evaluation) will be referred to the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards, which will review the student's performance in the course and the student's entire record in the program. The Committee will make a recommendation regarding academic sanction to the program director, who will make a final decision about the student's disposition. Possible sanctions include required repetition of a portion of the curriculum as described above (deceleration) and dismissal from the program (see *Dismissal Policy*).

A student may fail a didactic course or clinical course for failure to meet academic performance standards, academic dishonesty, or unprofessional behavior. Failure of a course may occur *with or without* the prior implementation of a formal remediation plan. When a student receives a failing grade in a didactic or clinical course, the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards will meet to review the student's performance in course and his or her prior performance in the program. If, after careful review, the Committee feels that the student's record warrants continuation in the program, the failed course must be repeated. During the didactic phase of the program, the entire semester in which the failed course occurs must be repeated. During the clinical phase of the program, a student may be required to repeat one or more rotations or the entire clinical year at the discretion of CAPS. A student who is decelerated will also be required to complete a formal remediation plan. *Deceleration occurring in either the didactic or the clinical phase of the program will result in a delay in graduation.*

Plan for Deceleration and Follow-up of Decelerated Students

When a student is decelerated, CAPS will provide a detailed *Plan for Deceleration* which will include all courses to be completed, a plan of remediation, and the timeframe for completion of all components of the program. The Plan for Deceleration will be signed by the student and the program director and will be maintained in the student's permanent program record.

Students repeating any portion of the curriculum will be closely monitored by program faculty upon resuming their coursework. The Committee on Academic and Professional Standards will evaluate all decelerated students upon completion of the course(s) within the Plan for Deceleration. If a student fails to meet academic or professional standards while decelerated, the Committee on Academic and Professional Standards will review the student's entire record in the program and make a recommendation to the program director regarding disposition. Failure to meet academic and/or professional standards while decelerated may result in dismissal from the program.

Appeal of an Academic Sanction

Students in the physician assistant studies program have the right to appeal an academic sanction, in accordance with West Virginia University policy. Further information about the process for appealing an academic sanction (including suspension and dismissal from the program) for failure to meet academic requirements/standards or academic dishonesty can be found in the “Student Grievance and Grade Appeals Policies” folder of the Physician Assistant Student Handbook in SOLE. The appeals process is outlined in the *Academic and Professional Standards* section of the WVU Graduate/Professional Academic Catalog at <http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/enrollmentandregistration/#appealstext>.

Applicable ARC-PA 5th Edition Standards

A3.02 The program must define, publish, make readily available and consistently apply its policies and practices to all students.

A3.15 The program must define, publish, consistently apply and make readily available to students upon admission:

- a) any required academic standards,
- b) requirements and deadlines for progression in and completion of the program,
- c) policies and procedures for remediation and deceleration,
- d) policies and procedures for withdrawal and dismissal,
- e) policy for student employment while enrolled in the program,
- f) policies and procedures for allegations of student mistreatment, and
- g) policies and procedures for student grievances and appeals.

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