

## **Student Review and Appeals Policy for Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs at the Health Sciences Center**

*This policy only applies to students enrolled in the following Graduate Programs:*

<b>Graduate Program</b>	
Undifferentiated	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Biomedical Sciences
Masters	Health Sciences Biomedical Sciences Clinical and Translational Science
Doctoral	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Cancer Cell Biology Cellular and Integrative Physiology Clinical and Translational Science Exercise Physiology Immunology & Microbial Pathogenesis Neuroscience Pharmaceutical & Pharmacological Sciences Pathway <sup>1</sup>
Combined	M.D./Ph.D. Scholars Training Program <sup>2</sup>

Each graduate program is responsible for monitoring the progress of its own students, identifying deficiencies, and recommending paths for remediation. Students receive evaluations on a semester basis through coursework and research grades, and at least annually via program review and for Ph.D. students, meetings of his/her dissertation advisory committee. Whereas individual programs may have unique expectations of their students, many requirements are common to all programs. The following review process is designed to encourage high standards of scholarship, integrity, professionalism, ensure due process, and provide opportunities for remediation. This process also recognizes and affirms the unique aspects of discipline-specific research training that is embraced by individual graduate programs.

<sup>1</sup>PPS degree is awarded by the WVU School of Pharmacy

<sup>2</sup>only applies during the Ph.D. phase of the M.D./Ph.D. training program

## Definitions

Candidacy exam: This is also called the defense of the dissertation proposal. This exam involves the preparation of a written document outlining the plans for the student's dissertation research. The document is written in the style of a fellowship application. The student presents a seminar to the faculty describing his/her plans and then meets separately with his/her dissertation advisory committee to defend his/her ideas. The student can retake this exam one time without consequence (probation, demotion to MS or dismissal). For Ph.D. students, the exam must be completed prior to the first day of class of the Fall Semester of their fourth year in graduate school; individual programs may impose an earlier deadline and this deadline is binding. For M.D./Ph.D. students, the exam must be completed by the end of the fall semester of the second year after beginning the research phase of their curriculum.

Dissertation mentor: This is the faculty member that is the advisor for the student's dissertation research. This individual must be a full member of the Graduate faculty and is either the principal investigator of the laboratory in which the research is conducted or is a collaborator of the scientist in whose laboratory the research is conducted.

Dissertation advisory committee: This is a group of at least 5 graduate faculty that oversee the progress of the student during his/her dissertation research. At least 3 members must be faculty from the student's graduate program. The student, in consultation with his/her dissertation mentor, selects the committee members. The committee meets at least annually. During these meetings, the student presents his/her research progress and plans for completion of degree requirements and post graduation plans. The committee provides feedback on this and reviews the student's progress on the Plan of Study and his/her academic achievement. The results of this meeting are recorded on an evaluation form that becomes part of the student's file.

Graduate Programs-Committee on Academic and Professional Standards (GP-CAPS): is composed of biomedical sciences faculty from the HSC who hold regular membership on the graduate faculty and includes representatives from both the Schools of Medicine and Pharmacy. The Vice-President for Health Sciences Research and Graduate Education appoints the faculty to serve on GP-CAPS. The primary role of this committee is to ensure that student performance concerns are managed equitably and consistently across the graduate programs served by this policy.

Graduate program director: this is the faculty member responsible for coordinating the activities of the graduate program. The biomedical graduate programs have interdepartmental faculty membership; therefore the Assistant VP for Graduate Education provides administrative oversight of all the graduate programs, rather than a department chair.

Student's file: The student's file contains his/her application, transcripts, graduate forms, correspondence, and other relevant communications or notifications. The file is kept in duplicate with one copy residing with the graduate program and the second copy in the Office of Research and Graduate Education. Students are instructed to provide copies of all forms required for graduation.

Undifferentiated first year students: The 7 biomedical Ph.D. programs recruit students via an undifferentiated admissions process. Applicants are screened and admitted by an admission's committee made up of representatives of all 7 programs. The students take a common first semester curriculum and do research rotations to choose a dissertation mentor. Once a dissertation mentor is selected, the student requests admission to one of the 7 biomedical graduate programs and from that point the student is governed by the handbook for the specific graduate program. Choice of mentor and graduate program occurs by the end of the fall semester or during the spring semester.

Probation, suspension and dismissal: Definitions of these terms can be found in the University Graduate Catalog. The exception to this is that the GPA requirement for the graduate programs governed by this policy is 3.0.

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/enrollmentandregistration/#probationsuspensiontext>

## Review of Graduate Student Performance

### 1. Documentation of Student Performance

- Student performance in graduate education is rated using the following measures:
  - Grades in classes.
  - Maintenance of a GPA of 3.0 or high
  - Performance on the Qualifying examination and the Candidacy examination
  - Performance in the conduct of research as evaluated by the dissertation/thesis mentor and the dissertation/thesis advisory committee
  - Performance in other curricular activities as evaluated by a faculty member, the mentor, or faculty/University committee overseeing that activity
  - Congruence of actions and behaviors both on and off campus to the WVU Student Code of Conduct (<http://campuslife.wvu.edu/r/download/180235>) or of professionalism (see relevant handbook for graduate program)
- Student performance in research is evaluated at the end of each semester and summer session and reflected in the grade in research provided by his/her mentor.
- Student's overall performance is reviewed at least once per year annually by his/her dissertation/thesis advisory committee and by his/her graduate program. Performance of students in the first year of the 7 biomedical PhD programs, the MS in Health Sciences and the MS in Biomedical Sciences is reviewed semi-annually by GP-CAPS.
- Deficiencies in student performance can result in recommendations for remediation, disciplinary action, or both.

### 2. Performance That May be Subject to Disciplinary Action

- Unsatisfactory performance by a graduate student includes, but is not limited to:
  - inability to maintain a GPA of 3.0, or achieve minimum grades of "B" in required courses
  - inadequate research progress, as judged by the mentor, dissertation committee or a grade of "U" in research (a combination of two "U" grades in research (*subject code 797*) or dissertation (*subject code 798*) is grounds for dismissal)
  - failure to complete benchmarks in a timely manner (i.e., qualifying exam, proposal defense)
  - reaching the limit on time to degree (5 years post the candidacy exam for Ph.D. students and 8 years total in the program for M.S. students)
  - poor attendance/participation as specified by graduate program handbooks or course syllabi at required program activities (i.e., journal clubs and seminars)
  - unapproved extended or multiple absences
  - violations of the WVU Student Code of Conduct (<http://campuslife.wvu.edu/r/download/180235>) or of professionalism (see relevant handbook or for Biomedical Science Students: <http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/resoff/graduate-education/phd-programs/biomedical-sciences/1st-year-handbook/#ProfessionalStandards>)
- Problem(s) must be brought to the attention of the graduate program director and documented in the student's file. Documentation can include:
  - an unsatisfactory grade on the transcript,
  - a letter from the student's dissertation mentor or another faculty member,
  - the evaluation report of the student's dissertation advisory committee meeting

### 3. Graduate Program Response to Unsatisfactory Student Performance

- Student notification: Within 5 calendar days of notification of the problem, the program director notifies the student in writing describing the unsatisfactory performance, measures necessary to correct the deficiency, and a timeline for correction. Note: This and all subsequent communication with the student are sent via email and the student must sign and return a copy of the letter to document his or her understanding of the concern/s and, if applicable, acceptance of conditions for remediation.
- Ascertaining student's side of the story: The program director meets with the student to ascertain his/her viewpoint on the problem and ability to correct the deficiencies. Any mitigating circumstances are noted and a written summary of this meeting, co-signed by the student, is placed in the student's personnel files.
- Determining the need for additional courses of action: The program director discusses the student's situation with the mentor and dissertation advisory committee, if formed, to determine if any additional courses of action are necessary. The student can be present at all or part of this meeting by the request of the program director, mentor or dissertation advisory committee. The student is informed in writing (via email) of the results of this meeting and is given the opportunity to provide more information or rebut the recommendation either in writing or in person. If the problem does not involve a gross infraction of University policy as defined by the WVU Student Conduct Code or the Office of Academic Integrity, the case generally does not proceed beyond the Graduate Program level. Likewise, sanctions excluding dismissal are handled at the Graduate Program level so long as the student accepts the remediation.
- Deficiencies that are not corrected within the timeline established in the remediation letter, and cases that result in recommendations for probation, suspension or dismissal are referred to the graduate faculty of the specific graduate program or subcommittee thereof.
  - Once a student has had his/her first meeting with his/her dissertation advisory committee, recommendations to dismiss the student should originate from this committee.
  - A minimum of three members of the student's dissertation advisory committee, including the mentor, and a representative from the HSC Office of Research and Graduate Education must attend the faculty meeting to assist in determining a course of action. Student may be asked to submit a written explanation, and/or to appear before the graduate faculty subcommittee.
- Potential outcomes of the Graduate Program Level Review are:
  - a penalty may be imposed, such as receiving a grade of zero for an examination
  - the student may be placed on probation, with requirements set forth in writing for the student to remediate deficiencies and remove probationary status
  - the student may be suspended from the program with specific directions on how to be reinstated
  - a Ph.D. student may be demoted to the Master's in Biomedical Sciences program
  - the student may be recommended for dismissal from the training laboratory and/or graduate program
- The program director reports all major infractions of institutional research procedures, and all recommendations for probation, suspension, or dismissal resulting from the Program Level Review, in writing, to the chairperson of the GP-CAPS. The report indicates the concern, the program faculty findings and actions/recommendations, and the student's response, if any. The student is provided a copy of this report and is given the opportunity to provide a written rebuttal of the letter and/or appear before GP-CAPS to explain his/her position.

**Note:** Plagiarism and other forms of academic/research dishonesty, including but not limited to falsifying data or academic credentials, are also referred to the West Virginia University Office of Student Conduct and/or the Office of Academic Integrity (<http://oric.research.wvu.edu/academic-integrity>).

#### 4. GP-CAPS Review

- GP-CAPS meets at the end of each semester to review the academic and professional performance of first year-undifferentiated students, M.S. Students in Biomedical sciences and Health Sciences, and others brought to his/her attention by a graduate program. Special meetings can be called to handle significant problems that occur outside of this meeting time.
- In the case of reports originating from graduate programs, GP-CAPS may request to meet with the student prior to rendering their decision. If the student is asked to appear before the GP-CAPS, s/he may be accompanied by a peer or faculty member of his/her choosing that is affiliated with the Health Sciences Center. This individual may confer with the student, but may neither speak for the student nor participate in the proceedings directly, unless requested to do so by the GP-CAPS.
- The Assistant VP for Graduate Education and the graduate program director participate in the GP-CAPS meeting, but are *ex-officio*, non-voting members.
- GP-CAPS may:
  - concur with the graduate program's findings and actions/recommendations
  - impose different actions or penalties based on the same findings or on additional findings
  - determine if a student recommended for dismissal from a graduate program can switch to a different program, and establish conditions associated with this change, if any.
- For M.S. students and students in the first year of the biomedical Ph.D. program, progress reviews as well as all recommendations will originate with GP-CAPS. For these students, GP-CAPS may:
  - determine that the student has met standard and advances to the next semester of the curriculum
  - impose remediation, probation, suspension, or dismissal based on their findings
- The GP-CAPS chairperson reports the Committee's findings and decisions, in writing, to the student, the program director and in the case of recommendations for dismissal, the Vice Dean for Education and Academic Affairs (dean designee for School of Medicine) or, for students in the Pharmaceutical & Pharmacological Sciences pathway, the Dean of Pharmacy. The Vice Dean for Education and Academic Affairs (dean designee for School of Medicine) adjudicates all matters pertaining to M.D./Ph.D. students, regardless of the graduate program.

## Appeals Policy

### 1. Appeals Process: General Information

- Students may appeal any academic penalty or sanction imposed by an instructor, the institution or its constituent academic units, as prescribed in the *“Academic Rights, Penalties and Appeal Procedures”* section of the WVU Graduate Catalog. This document uses much of the same language but refines the WVU catalog procedure to reflect the unique nature of the HSC graduate programs listed on page 1 of this document, in particular our programs do not directly answer to a department chair and we use a shorter time period for appeals. In place of the department chair level, we utilize GP-CAPS with the exception of appeals related to grades in courses. Formal appeals of grades are directed to the chairperson of the department defined by the subject code of the course. If the course uses a subject code not connected with a department, e.g., BMS, CCB, CCMD, the appeal goes to the chairperson of the department of the course coordinator.
- The school or college dean (or his/her designee) is the final level of appeal for final grade penalties or exclusion from class. The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at the Health Sciences Center is the final level of appeal for academic probation or suspension from a program or school. The Office of the Provost is the final level of appeal for dismissal from the program or university.
- When a penalty is imposed for academic dishonesty, the University’s Academic Dishonesty procedure is followed, as prescribed under WVU Board of Governors Policy 31, concurrent with Policy 15.

### 2. Appeals of grades or written notices of exclusion from class

**Note:** For appeal of grades in schools outside of the Health Science Center, the student should follow the procedures in the graduate catalog.

#### A. Informal appeal (Level 1)

- If the student is dissatisfied with a posted grade or written notice of exclusion from class, the student meets informally with the course instructor within 30 calendar days of the posting or delivery of the written notice to determine if the issue can be resolved.
- Any evidence provided by the student is reviewed, and the instructor upholds or overturns the original grade or penalty. The student is informed of the instructor’s decision within 21 calendar days of the meeting between the student and the instructor.
- If the student is satisfied, the case is closed. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the instructor the student can appeal to the course coordinator (if they are not the same person). The student meets informally with the course coordinator within 30 calendar days of the instructor’s decision to determine if the issue can be resolved.
- Any evidence provided by the student is reviewed, and the course coordinator upholds or overturns the original grade or penalty. The student is informed of the course coordinator’s decision in writing within 21 calendar days following receipt of the request by the course coordinator.
- If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the course coordinator’s decision, s/he must file a formal appeal (Level 2).

#### B. Formal appeal to department chair (Level 2)

- Appeals of grades or exclusion from class are directed to the chair of the department that offers the class as defined by the subject code or to the chair of the course coordinator for courses that are not offered by a single department (e.g., CCMD, CCB, or BMS courses).

- Within 5 calendar days of the decision by the course coordinator at Level 1, the student formally appeals in writing to the chair of the course instructor's department as outlined in the note above. The student must provide all documentation and evidence forming the basis of the appeal. When a student appeals a final grade, the course instructor must provide all criteria for determining grades to the department chair or school dean.
- The department chair reviews the appeal, makes a decision to uphold or rescind the penalty, and informs the student and course coordinator of the decision within 21 calendar days of receipt of the written appeal. In cases where the instructor is from one department and the course coordinator is from another department, the instructor's chair may choose to include the coordinator's chair in this decision.
- If the appeal is resolved, the case is closed. If the student is dissatisfied, the student must file a Level 3 appeal.

### **C. Formal appeal of decisions rendered by department chairs (Level 3)**

- Students may appeal determinations rendered by department chairs provided the student makes the appeal in writing, to the dean (School of Pharmacy – PPS program only) or the Vice Dean for Education and Academic Affairs (dean designee for School of Medicine) within 14 calendar days of receipt of the chairperson's letter.
- The dean reviews the report from the department chair and may choose to accept, reject, or modify the decision. The dean may choose to appoint an ad hoc representative committee that consists of three or more faculty members, including at least one member from outside of the instructor's department to make a recommendation to the dean concern the appeal.
- The dean informs the student, program director or department chair, and the Assistant VP for Graduate Education of the outcome of the appeal within 21 calendar days of receipt of the written appeal or the ad hoc committee's recommendation. If the dean decides to uphold final grade or exclusion from class, the case is closed.

## **3. Appeals of Academic Penalties, excluding those related to Academic Dishonesty**

### **A. Informal appeal (Level 1)**

- If the student is dissatisfied with a written notice of failure of a program requirement, or probation, or suspension from a program, the student meets informally with the program director or chair of the student advisory committee that imposed the penalty within 30 calendar days of delivery of the written notice to determine if the issue can be solved. When the chair of the student advisory committee is the student's dissertation advisor, the meeting should include the program director.
- Any evidence provided by the student is reviewed, and the program director upholds or overturns the original grade or penalty. The student is informed within 21 calendar days of the outcome of his/her appeal.
- If the program director is not available, or the nature of the problem makes the discussion with the program director uncomfortable, the student may file his/her appeal directly with the Assistant VP for Graduate Education.
- If the student is satisfied, the case is closed. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, s/he must file a formal appeal (Level 2).

**Note:** Program level penalties for students in the first semester or undifferentiated portion of the PhD in Biomedical Sciences, in the MS in Health Sciences, and in the MS in Biomedical Sciences are imposed by GP-CAPS and must use the formal appeal mechanism.

## **B. Formal appeal to GP-CAPS, or school dean (Level 2)**

**Note:** Graduate programs can only make recommendations to dismiss a student. The final decision on dismissal is made by GP-CAPS (see section D below).

### **Appeals of decisions rendered by graduate programs:**

- If the student is dissatisfied with a decision rendered by a graduate program, the student formally appeals in writing to the chair of GP-CAPS, within 14 calendar days of the decision at Level 1.
- GP-CAPS reviews the appeal, makes a decision to uphold or rescind the penalty, and informs the student and the graduate program of the decision in writing within 21 calendar days of receipt of the written appeal.
- If the appeal is resolved, the case is closed. If the student is dissatisfied, the student must file a Level 3 appeal.
- The student has the right to request a meeting with GP-CAPS prior to appealing to the Dean (Level 3). This request must be made in writing within 10 calendar days of receipt of the GP-CAPS chairperson's letter. GP-CAPS will hold a special meeting to hear the student's request/point of view at the earliest time that a quorum can be met. The GP-CAPS chairpersons will inform the student and the graduate program in writing within 10 calendar days of this meeting. If the appeal is resolved, the case is closed. If the student is dissatisfied, the student must file a Level 3 appeal.

## **C. Formal appeal of decisions rendered by the GP-CAPS (Level 3)**

- Student appeals of decisions made by GP-CAPS must be made, in writing, to the dean (School of Pharmacy – PPS program only) or the Vice Dean for Education and Academic Affairs (dean designee for School of Medicine) within 14 calendar days of receipt of the GP-CAPS chairperson's letter.
- The dean reviews the report from GP-CAPS and may choose to accept, reject, or modify the decision. The dean may choose to appoint an ad hoc representative committee that consists of three or more faculty members, including at least one member from outside of the instructor's department to make a recommendation to the dean concerning the appeal.
- The dean informs the student, program director, and the Assistant VP for Graduate Education of the outcome of the appeal within 21 calendar days of receipt of the written appeal or the ad hoc committee's recommendation. The Assistant VP for Graduate Education will communicate this to GP-CAPS. If the appeal is resolved, the case is closed. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in Health Sciences.

## **D. Formal appeal to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in Health Sciences (Level 4, non-dismissal)**

- Within 14 calendar days of the decision at Level 3, the student formally appeals in writing to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in Health Sciences.
- The Associate Vice President reviews the case, makes a final decision, and informs the student and individuals or committees involved with the appeal in writing within 30 calendar days of his/her receipt of the appeal, except when adherence to such time period is impracticable, in which case the time period may be extended as warranted by particular circumstances.
- If the appeal concerns a failure of a program requirement, program probation, or suspension, the case is closed. If the Associate Vice President decides to uphold dismissal from a graduate program or the school, the student may file an appeal in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs.



**E. Formal appeal of dismissal (Level 4):**

- The student formally appeals in writing to the Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs within 14 calendar days of receiving the decision from the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs in Health Sciences. The student will be required to supply all prior documentation and any additional evidence available concerning the case to clearly state the grounds for the appeal.
- The Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs reviews the case, makes a final decision, and informs the student and individual or committees involved with the Level 3 and Associate Vice President appeals in writing within 30 days of his/her receipt of the appeal, except when adherence to such time period is impracticable, in which case the time period may be extended as warranted by particular circumstances.