

# PA HANDBOOK: ACADEMIC POLICIES

## II. Academic Policies

### A. Overall Evaluation of Student Performance

The faculty of the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Physician Assistant Program are charged with the responsibility to determine the clinical, academic, and professional capacity of every student. Throughout the Program, formative and summative evaluations are performed to measure the student's competence, identify areas of deficiency and recommend whether or not the student should progress in the Program. Evaluations for academic progression will include a combination of the following:

- Written exams (multiple choice, short answer, essay, etc.)
- Computer based examinations (multiple choice, short answer, matching, etc.)
- Clinical clerkship End of Rotation exams (EOR exams)
- Practical exams (exams involving the cadavers and diagnostic and therapeutic equipment)
- Oral presentations
- Group projects
- Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) (students are assessed in their ability to perform diagnostic examination techniques by an observer and the simulated patient)
- A Capstone Project
- Evaluations by preceptors in the clinical phase
- Evaluation of patient encounter/procedure logs from the clinical phase
- Medical record documentation submitted to faculty for evaluation and assessment (History and Physical exam records and Subjective/Objective/Assessment/Plan (SOAP) notes)
- Student self-evaluation
- Student professionalism evaluation by faculty
- Other forms of assessment not listed above

The faculty, as represented by the Progress and Promotion Committee, identify any student's failure to comply with published Program policies and requirements deemed necessary for Program competency, in consultation with the Program Director.

### B. Evaluation of Student Academic Work & Standards of Academic Progress

Every student must meet the following standards of academic progress in each semester and/or enrollment period in order to be designated as making satisfactory academic progress in the Program and be considered "in good standing" in the Program. Failure to meet all standards in any semester will result in consequences as outlined in Section III.D and III.E.

#### 1. Letter Graded Evaluation

A final grade of "C" or better must be earned in all courses to meet requirements for a Master's in Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS)

degree. All courses taken by students will be evaluated by a letter grade according to the approved standard University grading scale. The course syllabus will be the determinate of the final course grade. Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) is the ratio expressed by the sum of the quality points divided by the sum of credits attempted.

Definition:

Every student must achieve a "Pass" or "Satisfactory" evaluation on all non-letter graded assignments and projects designated as "required."

Each Clinical Clerkship is an individual PHAS course in the PA Program curriculum and follow all standards related to courses. Clinical Clerkship locations are assigned by the Program; students should expect to travel and be responsible for all costs associated with the travel and course requirements. Any student refusal to attend a Clinical Clerkship without an approved Leave of Absence will receive a grade of F for the course.

#### 1.a. Standard I: Letter Graded Evaluation

Every student must attain a final letter grade of C or higher in each individual course. Any grade below C (i.e., C-, D+, D, D- and F) will be considered unsatisfactory and thus designated as a failure of that course. Any incomplete may be considered unsatisfactory and thus designated as a failure of that course. A withdrawal from any course will be considered unsatisfactory and thus designated as a failure of that course, and the withdrawal will result in program withdrawal or dismissal.

Every student must maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.50 (on a 4.00 scale) for all courses while enrolled in the Program.

#### 1.b. Consequences of Substandard Performance Standard I: Letter Graded Evaluation

Any student who receives one course grade below C for any course included on the program curriculum may be placed on a required academic leave of absence until the next semester in which that course is offered in the PA curriculum. Upon returning to the Program, the student will be on Academic Probation for that semester and will be required to repeat the failed course and achieve a grade of C or higher. No more than one year may lapse before returning from a required academic leave of absence.

Every student must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.50 (on a

4.00 scale) in the UNMC PA Program curriculum. Failure to maintain a minimum UNMC PA Program curriculum cumulative GPA of 2.50 will result in a review by the Division Program Director and/or referral to the Progress and Promotion Committee for potential further action, including possible referral based on the CAHP Student Policies (<https://catalog.unmc.edu/allied-health-professions/cahppolicies/>) and possible dismissal from the Program.

### 2. Professionalism Evaluation

Each student will be held to professionalism standards outlined in the UNMC Student Code of Conduct and academic professionalism standards of the Program in all educational settings, including but not limited to, the classroom, labs, off campus activities, and clinical settings.

Professionalism concerns depending upon the nature of the concern may result in disciplinary and/or academic consequences, including dismissal. Professionalism Standards are provided to all PA students upon matriculation in the Program via Canvas and/or email.

Each student is assessed on professionalism by the Program on a continuing basis throughout their enrollment in the Program. An evaluation is completed at designated times throughout the program as well as when deemed necessary. The Professionalism Evaluation ratings include “Skill Demonstrated,” “Skill Developing,” “Skill Underdeveloped,” or “Unsatisfactory.” Additional assessment of professionalism may occur in individual courses and will follow the academic grading criteria outlined in the syllabus.

### **2.a. Standard II: Professionalism Evaluation**

Every student must achieve a “Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing” rating in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation on a continuing basis throughout the student’s enrollment in the Program. Every student must earn and maintain a “Skill Demonstrated” rating in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation by the time of graduation.

Excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, would be considered “Unsatisfactory” for this standard and follow procedures outlined in the section below (Section III.C.2.b.). See Attendance Policy for definitions and guidelines (Sections IV.B.1 & IV.C.2).

All course, guest lecture, faculty and program evaluations are mandatory within the program. Failure to complete all evaluations by the provided due date would be considered “Unsatisfactory” for this standard and follow procedures outlined in the section below (Section III.C.2.b.). See Program Evaluation Policy for definitions and guidelines (Section IV.A.7).

### **2.b. Consequences of Substandard Performance Standard II: Professionalism Evaluation**

If a student receives a rating of “Skill Developing” in any category, the student’s advisor will meet with the student to discuss the rating and offer guidance. The student will be re-evaluated on all parameters on a continuing basis to measure progress toward earning a rating of “Skill Demonstrated” for each parameter.

If, on any occasion, a student is given a “Skill Underdeveloped” rating, the student will meet with their advisor for guidance, followed by a 30-day period to make necessary corrections. After 30 days, the student will be re-evaluated and must show improvement as reflected by a rating of “Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing” as determined by the Program Director and/or faculty. If the student fails to achieve a “Skill Demonstrated” or “Skill Developing” rating after 30 days, an “Unsatisfactory” rating will be assigned and follow the consequences below.

Any action, behavior, or incident at any time during a student’s enrollment that results in a student receiving a rating of “Unsatisfactory” in one or more categories of the Professionalism Evaluation, due to excessive absences, or any alleged violations of the UNMC Student Code of Conduct will result in a review by the Division Program Director and/or referral to the Progress and Promotion Committee for potential further action, which could result in referral based on the CAHP Student Policies (<https://catalog.unmc.edu/allied-health-professions/cahppolicies/>) or UNMC Student Code of Conduct policy, and possible dismissal from the Program.

If a student has not earned a “Skill Demonstrated” rating in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation at the time of graduation, they will be referred to the Progress and Promotion Committee for consideration of remediation or possible dismissal. Graduation will be delayed until the student earns a “Skill

Demonstrated” rating in all categories of the Professionalism Evaluation.

Serious breaches of professionalism by a student (i.e., causing harm to others, academic dishonesty, committing a felony, or other applicable Code of Conduct violations) will result in a recommendation by the Division Program Director and/or Progress and Promotion Committee for immediate termination of enrollment.

## **3. Summative Evaluation**

The summative evaluation is an assessment of the student conducted by the program to ensure that the student has the medical knowledge, interpersonal, clinical and technical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities required for entry-level practice in the PA profession, as defined by the ARC-PA. Each student will complete and must satisfactorily pass all summative evaluations in the Program to progress to the next semester, phase, and/or graduation.

### **3.a. Standard III: Summative Evaluation**

Every student must achieve a “Pass” or “Satisfactory” evaluation on all Summative Evaluations both within designated courses and within the clinical phase of the program.

### **3.b. Consequences of Substandard Performance Standard III: Summative Evaluation**

Any student who does not pass or satisfactorily complete any Summative Evaluation will be reviewed by the Division Program Director and/or referred to the Progress and Promotion Committee for further action, including possible remediation, referral based on the CAHP Student Policies (<https://catalog.unmc.edu/allied-health-professions/cahppolicies/>), and/or possible dismissal from the Program. The student should expect a possible delay in starting clinical clerkships and/or a delay in graduation.

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## **C. Failing to Meet Standards of Academic Progress**

If a student fails to meet any of the relevant Standards of Academic Progress outlined in Section III.C at any point during the Program, the Division Program Director and/or Progress and Promotion Committee, in accordance with the College of Allied Health (CAHP) Student Policies and the University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct policy, will take action(s) or make the recommendation(s) of Academic Warning, Formal Remediation, Academic Probation, Required Leave of Absence, Deceleration, Academic Suspension, Academic Dismissal, and/or Referral for UNMC Student Code of Conduct investigation.

- CAHP Student Policies (<https://catalog.unmc.edu/allied-health-professions/cahppolicies/>)
- UNMC Student Code of Conduct Policy (<https://catalog.unmc.edu/general-information/student-policies-procedures/>)

If a student is placed on probation and successfully completes all of the requirements for the probationary period, the student will be returned to “in good standing” status in the Program.

The student may be assigned required remediation activities by the Program Director, Progress and Promotion Committee, CAHP Conduct Officer, and/or faculty. Failure to successfully complete the remediation activities assigned will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the Program.

The student must agree to complete all conditions presented to them through this process. Failure to agree to conditions offered will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the Program.

An Academic Suspension may initiate an immediate removal from academic and/or clinical activities, which may result in a delay in progression and/or graduation. The length of the delay will vary and is dependent on the circumstances involved.

### 1. Remediation

Remediation is the program-defined process for addressing deficiencies in a student's knowledge and skills, such that the correction of these deficiencies is measurable and can be documented. Students may be assigned remediation if they are deficient in any of the Standards of Academic Progress outlined in Section III.C but do not meet the criteria for program dismissal outlined in Section III.E. The Program supports all students in their academic journey and uses remediation as a tool to help them achieve program competencies and move toward successful graduation. More detailed information about remediation procedures can be found in the policies above. Not all students will be offered remediation; if deficiencies meet criteria for dismissal, a recommendation for dismissal will be made without remediation.

### 2. Deceleration

Deceleration is defined as the loss of a student from their entering cohort while the student remains matriculated in the PA program. Students may be considered for deceleration if they are deficient in any of the Standards of Academic Progress outlined in Section III.C but do not meet the criteria for program dismissal outlined in Section III.E. The Program supports all students and may use deceleration as a means to provide additional time and resources to help students achieve required competencies and progress toward successful graduation. More detailed information about deceleration procedures can be found in the policies above. Not all students will be offered deceleration; those meeting criteria for dismissal will be recommended directly for dismissal.

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## D. Program Dismissal

Program dismissal is the permanent removal of the student from enrollment in the PA Program.

### 1. Academic Dismissal

If a student receives the recommendation of Academic Dismissal from the Division Program Director and/or Progress and Promotion Committee, the student will follow the procedure outlined in the College of Allied Health (CAHP) Student Policies.

#### 1.a. Academic Criteria for Program Dismissal

If any one or more of the following occur at any point during the course of study in the Program, the student will be recommended for Academic Dismissal from the Program:

- Failure to pass two or more courses (including clerkships) with a final grade of C or higher. Courses may or may not be within the same semester. (Standard I)
- Failure to pass a single course with a grade of C or higher on the second attempt. (Standard I)
- Receiving a rating of "Unsatisfactory" in one or more categories of the Professionalism Evaluation AND failing to progress towards a higher rating in all of those categories following the assigned remediation plan. The Division Program Director and/or Progress and Promotion

Committee will make the determination of progress as outlined in the remediation plan. (Standard II).

- Failure to pass or satisfactorily complete any Summative Evaluation AND failing to progress towards passing or satisfactorily completing the evaluation following the assigned remediation plan. The Division Program Director and/or Progress and Promotion Committee will make the determination of progress as outlined in the remediation plan. (Standard III).
- The student may be assigned required remediation activities by the Program Director, Progress and Promotion Committee, CAHP Conduct Officer, and/or faculty. Failure to successfully complete the remediation activities assigned will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the Program.
- The student must agree to complete all conditions presented to them through the process outlined in Section III.D. Failure to agree to conditions offered will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the Program.
- A withdrawal from any course will result in program withdrawal or dismissal.

Serious breaches of professionalism by a student (i.e., causing harm to others, academic dishonesty, committing a felony, or other applicable Code of Conduct violations) may result in a recommendation by the Division Program Director and/or Progress and Promotion Committee for immediate termination of enrollment. (Standard II).

### 2. Student Code of Conduct

If a student receives the recommendation of Referral for UNMC Student Code of Conduct investigation from the Division Program Director and/or Progress and Promotion Committee, the student will follow the procedure outlined in the University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct policy. The result may be dismissal from the Program and possibly university.

Following the Student Code of Conduct investigation, a student may be additionally reviewed academically under Section III.C and III.D, which may include a recommendation for Academic Dismissal despite the outcome of the Student Code of Conduct investigation.

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## E. Appeals & Grievances

Students may have circumstances that impact their success within the Program. The criteria outlined directly above in Section III.E.1.a will be recommended as written despite individual circumstances.

The Division of Physician Assistant Education policy on appeals for academic and disciplinary actions conforms to the policies and procedures designated by UNMC and the College of Allied Health Professions. Students are referred to the following website pages for policies and detailed information related to appeals and grievances.

- CAHP Student Policies (<https://catalog.unmc.edu/allied-health-professions/cahppolicies/>)
  - UNMC Student Code of Conduct Policy (<https://catalog.unmc.edu/general-information/student-policies-procedures/>)
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## **F. Withdrawal**

### **1. Program Withdrawal** *(Adopted from CAHP Student Policies)*

The student must consult with the Program Director regarding the decision to withdraw prior to submitting a written Request for Withdrawal. The student must request a withdrawal in writing to the Program Director and the CAHP Director of Enrollment Management. Withdrawn is a final status. Notation of Withdrawn will appear on the student's academic transcript with the date that the withdrawal is effective. In the case of a student-initiated withdrawal, the student is eligible to reapply to the program.

### **2. Course Withdrawal**

The PA Program curriculum is a cohort curriculum. A student may not withdraw from any course in the program. Any course withdrawal will be considered unsatisfactory and thus designated as a failure of that course. A withdrawal from a course(s) will be considered a withdrawal from all courses and the program. Students will be directed to the policy on Program Withdrawal (Section III.G.1) or be recommended for Academic Dismissal.

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