

## Student Academic Progress and Promotion Policy and Procedures

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### **Purpose:**

To provide a policy that details how the governing body of the COM confers the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree upon those students who have satisfactorily completed the requirements for graduation and have been recommended for graduation by the COM's faculty. This document also establishes the procedures the Student Academic Progress and Promotion committee (SAPP) shall use to assess the academic progress of students and make recommendations about the students' future pathway in the program.

### **Scope:**

This policy shall apply to Duquesne University College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) students.

### **Responsibility:**

The responsibility to review and revise this Policy is established by the COM leadership and approved by the COM Dean and Duquesne University Provost. It is effective as of the date noted and shall remain effective until amended or terminated by the COM Dean or University Provost.

### **Policy:**

#### **1. Student Academic Progress and Promotion Committee (SAPP) Duties**

The Student Academic Progress and Promotion Committee (the "SAPP Committee" or the "Committee") oversees student academic progress, as more fully discussed below, including the process for student academic promotion and graduation. The Committee also meets regularly to review individual student progress and address concerns related to student academic performance.

The COM's Associate Dean for Academic Affairs serves as the chair of the SAPP Committee and the Associate Deans for Clinical Affairs and Biomedical Affairs serve on the Committee with duties as outlined below. Other Committee members include the COM's Medical Registrar, the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and Assessment, the Director of Medical Education, the Director of Clinical Rotations, and representatives from the clinical and biomedical faculty as determined by the COM Faculty Association. Additional members of the SAPP Committee may be appointed by the COM Dean.

The proceedings and deliberations of the SAPP Committee are confidential and members are not permitted to discuss the proceedings outside the SAPP Committee other than with the Associate Deans, Dean, and other appropriate University administrators with a need to know.

#### **2. Academic Year Promotions and Graduation**

##### **a. The MS1 and MS2 Promotion Process**

The SAPP Committee oversees promotion from the MS1 to MS2 year and MS2 to MS3 year. The Associate Dean for Biomedical Affairs will review all student grades at the end of each block, from Blocks 1 through 8, to determine eligibility for progression to the next block and/or promotion to the next academic year. The Associate Dean for Biomedical Affairs will present students who have successfully completed/passed

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all requirements for the academic year to the SAPP Committee for approval and promotion to the next academic year and will refer any student who was not able to successfully pass a course(s) or other requirement within Blocks 1 through 8 to the SAPP Committee, which generally occurs at the end of the block in which the failure(s) occurred.

Note that MS2 students must sit for COMLEX Level 1 to be promoted to MS3. As more fully articulated in the COMLEX Policy, in some cases a student who has not taken COMLEX Level 1 may be granted permission to take the MS3 Simulation Block but the student is not eligible for full promotion to MS3 and/or to begin clinical rotations until they sit for the COMLEX Level 1 examination.

### **b. The MS3 Promotion Process**

The SAPP Committee oversees promotion from the MS3 year to the MS4 year. The Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs will review all components of the MS3 year and ensure that all such components have been successfully completed/passed. This includes a review of the clinical rotations for the MS3 year, end-of-rotation exams, comprehensive exams, and a review of whether all COMLEX exam requirements have been met (see the COMLEX Policy for additional details regarding COMLEX exam requirements).

Note that MS3 students must site for the COMLEX Level 2 CE examination to be promoted to MS4. As more fully articulated in the COMLEX Policy, in some cases a student who has not taken COMLEX Level 2CE may be granted permission to begin MS4 rotations but the student is not eligible for full promotion to MS4 until they sit for the COMLEX Level 2 CE examination.

The Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs will present students who have successfully completed/passed all requirements for the MS3 academic year to the SAPP Committee for approval and promotion to MS4, and will refer any student who is unable to successfully pass a rotation or other requirement within the MS3 year to the SAPP Committee, which generally occurs at the end of the rotation in which the failure occurred.

### **c. The MS4 Promotion Process and Recommendation for Graduation**

The SAPP Committee recommends MS4 students for graduation. The Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs will review all components of the MS4 year and ensure that all such components have been successfully completed/passed. This includes a review of the required MS4 clinical rotations and comprehensive exams, and a review of whether all COMLEX exam requirements and all other graduation requirements have been met. The Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs will refer any student who is unable to successfully pass a rotation or other requirement within the MS4 year to the SAPP Committee for review, which generally occurs at the end of the rotation in which the failure occurred.

The Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs will present a list of MS4 students who are eligible for graduation to the SAPP Committee who will then approve and recommend the potential graduates to the COM Faculty Council. The COM Faculty Council will review and recommend those students who have met all academic and graduation requirements to the Dean and the governing body for graduation and conferral of the degree.

To be eligible for graduation, a student must meet all of the following criteria:

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1. Successfully complete (pass) each required course in the COM curriculum.
2. Achieve a passing score on the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) COMLEX-USA Level 1 and COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE licensing examinations within allowable attempts and timelines.
3. As of the date of this Policy, the NBOME and the COCA have temporarily waived the passing of the COMLEX-USA Level 2 Performance Examination (PE) as a graduation requirement. As such, to be eligible to graduate, each student must pass a summative Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) developed and proctored by the COM.
4. Meet all academic requirements and professional and ethical conduct expectations as outlined in the Student Handbook.
5. Complete all program requirements within 6 calendar years from the date of matriculation inclusive of any program extensions for any reason.
6. Complete all exit paperwork that is required by the COM and University.
7. Satisfy all financial obligations with the COM and University.

### 3. Regular Assessment of Academic Progress

In addition to the SAPP Committee's responsibilities with respect to academic year promotion and graduation, the SAPP Committee is also responsible for assessing and making recommendations to the Dean regarding the academic progress of individual students toward the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree. The SAPP Committee will meet at least four times per year, to identify students who may be at risk for academic difficulty or failure based upon multiple course grades below 77, a GPA of 2.75 or lower and/or the failure of a student to remediate any curricular component of a course. These students may be required to engage in a remedial program and to meet with the SAPP Committee if their grades and GPA do not improve.

### 4. Ad Hoc SAPP Committee Meetings

The SAPP Committee will also meet as needed throughout the academic year to address any student concerns as presented by the Associate Deans and to address COMLEX exam issues.

- a. Reasons to Call an Ad Hoc SAPP Committee Meeting for Student Concerns

Students who have any of the following concerns will be referred to the SAPP Committee:

1. Course Failure.
2. Failure of an end-of-rotation remediation exam.
3. Failure of more than one end-of-rotation exam.
4. Failure to successfully remediate a Standardized Patient Exam.
5. Failure to successfully remediate a course failure.
6. Demonstrated inability to perform a minimum level of competency. An area of competency that is repeatedly marked low on competency-based assessments or across clinical rotations

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may also be a sign of inability to make academic progress.

When the student scores low or repeatedly low in the competency of professionalism or has concerns related to ethical behaviors, this may be a reason for calling a Professional and Ethical Conduct Committee (PECC) meeting rather than a SAPP Committee meeting at the discretion of the respective Associate Dean.

7. Placement in the curriculum of a student who has been suspended or on leave for an extended period or readmitted after withdrawal to determine appropriate placement in the curriculum.
8. Continued course grades below 77 or a GPA below 2.75 despite remedial programming.
9. Other referrals by the Dean or Associate Deans.

### b. Reasons to Call a SAPP Meeting for COMLEX Issues

Students who have any of the following COMLEX concerns will be referred to the SAPP Committee.

1. Failure of any level of COMLEX examination.
2. Failure to follow a Modified Course of Study plan for COMLEX.
3. Failure to successfully pass any level or attempt of COMLEX within the required time frame.
4. Failure to sit for COMLEX Level 1 by the first day of the MS3 year without prior approval by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.
5. Failure to sit for COMLEX Level 2 CE by the first day of the MS4 year without prior approval by the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs.
6. Failure to successfully pass COMLEX Level 2 CE by the time of graduation.

## 5. SAPP Committee Procedures

The following procedures apply when a student is required to meet with the SAPP Committee:

- a. Students will be given at least a 24-hour written notice including the reason for the referral prior to meeting with the SAPP Committee.
- b. Such notice will be sent by the Secretary of the SAPP Committee, and will include information about the SAPP Committee procedures and the student's responsibilities. This includes making the student aware that:
  1. Prior to the SAPP Committee meeting, each student coming before the Committee may submit a letter presenting any issues or considerations that may have contributed to the reason they are being brought before the SAPP Committee.
  2. The student's physical attendance at the SAPP Committee meeting is required. MS3 or MS4 students at distant clinical sites (more than a 4-hour drive) may attend via video conference.
  3. The student will be allowed a ten-minute presentation of any issues or considerations they may wish to make known to the SAPP Committee. Following the student's presentation, the members of the SAPP Committee may address the student and ask questions.
  4. Students are not permitted legal representation or other representation at SAPP Committee meetings and they must attend without the accompaniment of guests. Additionally, the student

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is not permitted to record the meeting, and the student must leave all backpacks, coats, phones, electronics, etc. outside of the room.

- c. The Office of Academic Affairs, including the COM's Medical Registrar, will report on the student's academic record including GPA, any prior failures or repeated courses, and any other information relevant to the student's academic progress during the SAPP Committee meeting.
- d. Following the meeting with the student, the SAPP Committee will deliberate based on the information presented to them. Following a discussion of the options available, as outlined by this policy, the SAPP Committee will present a decision based on a majority vote.

### 6. SAPP Committee Decisions

- a. F Course Grades or failure of a repeat end-of-rotation examination

In the event of an F course grade or failure of a repeat end-of-rotation examination, the SAPP Committee will make one of the following decisions:

1. Require the student to remediate the failed course. Students who fail a remediated course will be required to meet again with the SAPP Committee with the likelihood of being dismissed.
2. Dismiss the student from their current curricular year and recommend the student be permitted to repeat the academic year with a learning contract. If a student fails a course during a repeat year, they will most likely be dismissed.
3. Dismiss the student from the program. The SAPP Committee will recommend dismissal if the student's overall performance shows a failure to make academic progress, as evidenced by factors including but not limited to low GPA below 2.75, multiple failures including courses and board exams since matriculation, poor clinical competency evaluations, concerns related to progress in a previously assigned performance improvement plan. It should be noted that students who fail more than two courses in one academic year or more than 3 courses across all academic years will generally be dismissed.

- b. COMLEX Exam Failures

In addition to passing all required coursework in the curriculum, all students must achieve a passing score on the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) COMLEX-USA Level 1 and COMLEX-USA Level 2 CE licensing examinations within allowable attempts and timelines in order to be considered eligible for graduation. Students must follow the COMLEX Policy.

If a student does not qualify to sit for the COMLEX examination and is assigned a Modified Course of Study Plan as outlined in the COMLEX Policy, they must follow the plan according to all requirements and deadlines. If a student fails to follow a Modified Course of Study Plan for a

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COMLEX exam by the assigned deadline, the SAPP Committee may make one of the following decisions:

1. The SAPP Committee may give the student additional time to sit for the exam while continuing to follow a Modified Course of Study plan with or without additional elements incorporated into the plan.
2. The SAPP Committee may dismiss the student due to failure to progress in the curriculum.

In the event of a COMLEX exam failure, the SAPP Committee will make the following decisions:

1. The SAPP Committee may recommend that students who fail to achieve a passing score on a COMLEX exam on their first attempt be permitted to complete their current rotation prior to being removed from clinical rotations. All students who fail to achieve a passing score on a COMLEX exam will be placed on a Modified Course of Study which will require participation in a COMLEX preparation program, selected by the COM, which will be at the student's expense. Students may return to clinical rotations while awaiting the score.
2. The SAPP Committee may recommend that students who fail to achieve a passing score on a COMLEX exam on the second attempt be permitted to complete their current rotation prior to being removed from clinical rotations. As above, all students who fail to achieve a passing score on a COMLEX exam will be placed on a Modified Course of Study and required to participate in a COMLEX preparation program, selected by the COM, which will be at the student's expense. Students must successfully pass COMLEX on the third attempt to be eligible to resume rotations and begin MS3 on a modified schedule as determined by the Office of Clinical Rotations.
3. Students with three COMLEX examination failures or 2 COMLEX failures and one or more course failures since matriculation will generally be dismissed.

### C. Additional Recommendations

Where a student is referred to the SAPP Committee for a reason listed above or a reason other than those listed above, the SAPP Committee may make one or more of the following decisions or recommendations:

1. Specify a timeline or manner in which any remediation or testing must occur.
2. Require assessment of any student, including but not limited to: psychological evaluations, drug or alcohol screening/testing, or other evaluations required by the SAPP Committee that allow them to make appropriate recommendations. Such testing, if required, will be at the student's expense. The SAPP Committee will require a written evaluation from the party of the referral to determine if the student presents a risk to themselves, the institution, students, or patient care. Where there is a concern that the student presents a risk of harm to themselves or others, the student will be referred to the University's Campus Community Risk Team (CCRT).
3. Require evaluation by a drug and alcohol addiction specialist chosen by the COM following but not limited to a positive drug and alcohol screen or DUI and may require participation in a drug

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- and alcohol treatment program if recommended by the addiction specialist, all at the student's expense.
4. Suspend a student with requirements for reinstatement.
  5. Suspend a student from academic activity and delay decision pending further evaluation and treatment.
  6. Require participation in an academic assistance program or a formal performance improvement plan.
  7. Limit extracurricular activities.
  8. Identify other sanctions for the student as deemed appropriate by the SAPP.

### **7. SAPP Committee Decision Notification and Appeals Process**

The chair of the SAPP Committee will meet with the student to discuss the Committee's decisions, provide the information in writing, and mail the decision to the student. Appropriate COM and University administrators including the Dean will also be notified.

If a student seeks to appeal the SAPP Committee's decision, the appeal must be made in writing to the COM Dean's Office within 5 business days of being notified. Requests for appeal are only permitted based upon 1) significant procedural error that affected the outcome and 2) new and significant information that was not reasonably available to the SAPP Committee at the time of the SAPP Committee meeting that could affect the outcome.

The Dean will consider the request for appeal and will notify the student, in writing, of his/her decision within 10 business days of receiving the written appeal or will specify a later date for the determination should further investigation be required. The Dean may deny the appeal or grant the appeal. If the Dean grants the appeal, he/she may require further sanctions or requirements for the student, including but not limited to a learning contract/consent agreement. The decision of the Dean on the appeal is final.

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Revised: Revision: 0