

# Student Academic Standing Committee (SASC) Bylaws

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Effective Date: September 12, 2022

Responsible Party: University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine's Dean and Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education

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## PURPOSE

To uphold uniform standards, the University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine will utilize a single committee, the Student Academic Standing Committee (SASC). This committee will review pertinent information including student academic and professional performance throughout the academic years at UAB Heersink School of Medicine and make decisions about academic status, progression, remediation, and dismissal. Professional ethics and conduct are as essential to the practice of medicine as academic excellence and may be considered by the Committee.

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## COMMITTEE COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE

The composition of the Student Academic Standing Committee will consist of a chair and 23 members, all appointed by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education. To assure that the committee has broad faculty representation, the membership will include faculty that are in course and/or clerkship directorship positions as well as diverse representation from all campuses of the UAB Heersink School of Medicine. Faculty members with decanal positions are not eligible.

### Subcommittees

- Faculty Appeal Panel (FAP): The Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (SADME) will appoint three faculty members, who have served at least one year on the main committee, to serve on this subcommittee. FAP members will serve a 2-year term. FAP members will not attend the regular SASC meetings. The FAP will consider student requests to appeal SASC decisions involving academic status (i.e. academic probation) or SASC decisions impacting academic progression through medical school (e.g. recycling academic terms or dismissal from the school).
- Faculty Review Panel (FRP): The SADME may appoint a subcommittee on an ad hoc basis to deal with issues that arise between regular SASC meetings. The FRP will be composed of at least three SASC faculty members and the composition may vary. The Faculty Review Panel acts on behalf of the SASC and its decisions are final, subject to UAB Heersink School of Medicine policies for appeal.

## Committee Membership

1. Committee chair
  - a. Must be a SOM faculty member
  - b. Three-year term, renewable
  - c. Must have served one full term on the SASC prior to appointment
2. Members
  - a. Joint Health Science Departments (Seven members total)
    - i. Must be SOM faculty members
    - ii. Three-year term, renewable
  - b. Clinical Science Departments (Fourteen members total)
    - i. Must be SOM faculty members
    - ii. Three-year term, renewable
    - iii. One to three members from each regional campus
    - iv. Up to 11 members from the Birmingham campus
  - c. Students (2 members total)
    - i. Must have completed the first two years of medical school, passed the USMLE Step 1 examination and be Active in Good Standing
    - ii. May be assigned to any campus
    - iii. Two-year term
3. Ex-officio members and guests
  - a. Ex-officio members include the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education, the Associate and Assistant Deans for Undergraduate Medical Education, Associate and Assistant Deans for Students, Associate Dean for Admissions/Enrollment Management, and the SOM Registrar. Other school administrative officials with relevant knowledge or information as well as course directors and clerkship directors whose courses are being reviewed will be invited guests to SASC meetings. Course and clerkship directors' recommendations will be presented by that individual or the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education.

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## VOTING PRIVILEGES

The chair and each member will have equal voting privileges for a maximum of twenty-four votes for regular SASC meeting and three votes for FAP meeting. For a regular SASC meeting, the chair will vote in the case of a tie. Any member who is a course or clerkship director will abstain from voting on recommendations made for the course or clerkship for which that committee member is a director. Members will abstain from discussion and voting when they have a conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest may include but are not limited to course director for course under consideration, provision of health services (i.e., psychiatric care, psychological counseling, physical healthcare), relationship to student outside of clinical course work (i.e., research mentor, letter of recommendation writer, friend of family, previous employer, etc.), or any other reason deemed by the faculty member as a potential conflict. Any member may raise a conflict-of-interest concern and the committee chair will make a final determination

regarding whether the SASC member should recuse themselves from involvement in discussion and voting. The process for reporting a potential conflict of interest is described below.

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## COMMITTEE AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The SASC is charged with the review of student academic and professional progression, with individual consideration of students with difficulty such as course failures, failures of medical licensing examinations, and/or lapses of professionalism. Final actions may include decisions for changes to academic standing including active with deficiency and academic probation, academic and/or professionalism remediation, repeating the academic year in its entirety (“recycle”), promotion, and dismissal from the School of Medicine. SASC actions are final, subject to School of Medicine appeal procedures.

While the committee may consider known extenuating circumstances as presented by the Associate Dean for Students, it is not the responsibility of the committee to investigate actively whether such circumstances exist. The SASC does not meet with or interview students before or during deliberation. The Associate Dean for Students will meet with students under consideration by the committee, discuss any extenuating circumstances, and support the student’s effort to prepare written communication to the SASC if desired.

Non-academic matters affecting progression through medical school, such as extenuating circumstances (e.g., health problems, financial difficulties) or possible disciplinary action for academic or non-academic misconduct, will be referred to the appropriate parties for further investigation and action. Results of such disciplinary action may be shared with the committee when deemed appropriate by the SADME.

Periodically, the SASC (including the FAP) will receive updates from the medical education leadership team on matters that are important to its work and matters that the SASC and FAP have a legitimate need to know in order to perform their work. This includes, but is not limited to, annual updates on the entering class, USMLE performance metrics, Medical Education Committee decisions regarding the curriculum and information about the learning environment.

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## COMMITTEE ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIP TO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The SASC will report its activities, actions, and final decisions to the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education. The SADME will forward all actions and decisions of the SASC to the Associate Dean for Students and the Registrar and will inform all affected students of the decision and appeal process.

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## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. Timing and Frequency
  - a. The committee will meet monthly. Ad hoc meetings may be conducted at the chair's discretion.
2. Quorum
  - a. At least 12 voting members of the SASC, including the chair and representation from at least 3 of the school's 4 campuses constitute a quorum. Members who abstain are counted as part of the quorum. For a Faculty Review Panel, at least 3 SASC voting members must be present. For Faculty Appeal Panel all three members must be present.
3. Voting Decisions and Actions
  - a. Final decisions of the SASC, SASC Faculty Review Panel, and Faculty Appeal Panel are determined by a simple majority vote of those present and eligible to vote on a particular action item. In some limited circumstances, votes may be solicited electronically after the conclusion of the meeting.
4. Confidentiality
  - a. All SASC deliberations, proceedings and related discussions will be considered strictly confidential. Confidentiality guidelines are posted on the website and reviewed with members at the beginning of each meeting. All members sign a Confidentiality Agreement annually.
5. Conflict of Interest
  - a. SASC members sign a conflict-of-interest recusal agreement annually. At the beginning of each SASC meeting, the SASC chair reminds committee members to recuse themselves from any case where there is a true or perceived conflict of interest. In such cases, prior to initiation of discussion of a student's case, the committee member will state that there is a true or perceived conflict and will refrain from discussion or voting on the student's case.

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## APPEALS PROCESS

Students may appeal SASC decisions that change academic status (e.g., academic probation) or impede or terminate academic progression (e.g., recycling academic terms, dismissal from school) in the Heersink School of Medicine. Immediately following SASC meetings, decisions are communicated to impacted students by the Associate Dean for Students who shares the decision, explains the student's right to appeal and the process for appeal. A written letter follows and includes notification of the student's right to appeal and specific instructions for the student to appeal. These include:

- Written notification of the student's intent to appeal submitted to the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (email is acceptable)
- Deadline for notification specified by date and time
- Consequences of missing the deadline (SASC decision becomes final with no further possible appeal)

The SASC Faculty Appeal Panel (FAP) considers appeal requests. This subcommittee of the SASC is composed of three experienced faculty SASC members who do not attend the regular SASC meetings. The Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education chairs the FAP and provides instruction and guidance regarding the deliberation process. The panel selects a chair from the group who presides at the meeting. Students may submit written documents and meet in person with the FAP to review extenuating circumstances that may have impacted their academic performance or support their appeal. The panel may vote to uphold the original decision of the SASC, modify it, or grant the student's appeal. The outcome is communicated to the student via email and letter from the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education on behalf of the chair of the appeal panel.

If the original adverse decision is upheld, the student will be informed that a final appeal may be made to the Dean of the School of Medicine. Specific written instructions for the student to appeal to the Dean will include:

- Written notification of intent to appeal submitted to the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (email is acceptable)
- Deadline for notification specified by date and time
- Consequences of missing the deadline (the adverse event becomes final with no further possible appeal)

The Dean will not reconsider the facts and statements on which the original decision was based. The Dean will consider appeals only where there is evidence that the committee acted in an arbitrary or capricious manner, evidence of discrimination, a material procedural error in SASC's review that prejudiced the student's ability to receive a fair hearing/decision, or where new information that was unavailable has been discovered.

The outcome will be communicated to the student via email and letter from the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education on behalf of the Dean. The Dean's decision is final.

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## HISTORY

**Approved: September 12, 2022**

**Revised: N/A**

University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine policies shall be reviewed periodically to determine whether revisions are appropriate to address the needs of the medical school community.