

# **Ponce Health Sciences University**

## **School of Medicine**

### **Student Policies Manual**

#### **2020-2021**



Tamdiu Discendum Est. Quamdiu Vivas

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## INTRODUCTION

### GENERAL INFORMATION

The Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine is an institution of academic excellence located in Ponce, a city on the southern coast of the tropical island of Puerto Rico. The institution was founded in 1977. Ponce School of Medicine graduated its first class of 23 students in 1981. Since then, it has operated uninterrupted and has graduated more than 2,000 physicians, biomedical scientists, and master's in medical sciences.

### SCHOOL OF MEDICINE MISSION

To educate bilingual ethical professionals who provide compassionate, culturally competent health care and generate high impact research to reduce health disparities in the populations we serve in Puerto Rico and the US, through high-quality education in a diverse environment.

### PROGRAMMATIC ACCREDITATION

The Medicine Doctoral (MD) Program is accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME).

### Contact Information

#### ***Liaison Committee on Medical Education***

American Medical Association  
330 North Wabash Avenue Suite 39300  
Chicago, IL 60611—5885  
Phone: (312) 464-4933

#### ***Liaison Committee on Medical Education***

Association of American Medical Colleges  
655 K Street, NW Suite 100  
Washington, DC 20001-2399  
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Web: [www.lcme.org](http://www.lcme.org)

### SCHOOL OF MEDICINE STUDENT POLICIES MANUAL

This is the Student Policies Manual of the Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine. It contains the policies that apply only to the students of the academic programs of the School of Medicine: Doctor in Medicine, PhD in Biomedical Sciences and the Master of Science in Medical Sciences (MSMS).

For the policies that apply for all PHSU students including the students of the School of Medicine please refer to Ponce Health Sciences University Catalog ([https://www.psm.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CATALOG\\_Ponce-Health-Sciences-University-Catalog-2017-2020.pdf](https://www.psm.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/CATALOG_Ponce-Health-Sciences-University-Catalog-2017-2020.pdf)) and Student Policy Manual (<https://www.psm.edu/doc/media-manager/PONCE%20HEALTH%20SCIENCES%20UNIVERSITY%20STUDENT%20POLICY%20MANUAL.pdf>)

## SCHOOL POLICIES

(Academic/Student Policies)

### BLOOD BORNE PATHOGEN EXPOSURE POLICY

#### Purpose

To establish a uniform system to report and manage persons sustaining exposure to blood or other body fluids via needle stick, or percutaneous injury, mucous membrane or contact with non-intact skin while involved in a scheduled clinical clerkship, research activity or during any curricular or extracurricular activities sponsored by Ponce Health Sciences University (PHSU)

#### Policy

Student(s) sustaining exposures should immediately flush the exposed area with water.

If at an Affiliated Hospital, immediate evaluation must be requested through the corresponding **Emergency Room (ER)**. If at a community clinic or extra-curricular activity sponsored by PHSU, the student must request immediate evaluation at **Ponce Health Sciences University Outpatient Clinics** during regular hours or an Affiliated Hospital ER during after hours, indicating his/her status as a medical student. Immediate prophylaxis (within two hours of exposure) is absolutely necessary at the time of occurrence, following the CDC guidelines.

The student must report the incident to the **immediate supervisor** as soon as possible. In case of an Affiliated Hospital, the student will notify the Clerkship Coordinator or Attending Physician. Attending Physicians must be notified in case of exposure during a community clinic rotation or extra-curricular activity sponsored by PHSU. The Clerkship Coordinator and/or the Attending Physician are responsible for notifying the Office of Student Affairs so that the student is provided appropriate care and follow-up. The notification must be immediate or within the next 24 hours after the incident.

Students who have been exposed to a potentially infectious body fluid during extracurricular activities are responsible for obtaining **demographic data of the source** such a complete name, physical address, phone number and related illnesses, and submitting an incident report with the patient's information to the Office of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Affairs will handle this information confidentially.

In case of exposure in an affiliated hospital, the student will fill out the appropriate **incident report** as required by the hospital. This will BE done after the student has received emergency care. The name and medical record number of the patient involved in the exposure must be documented in the incident report. A copy of the incident report must be filed at the Student Affairs Office by the next working day.

The **Office of Student Affairs** will coordinate the follow up on the incident through the PHSU Outpatient Clinic or Medical Facility/affiliate Hospital to assure that the student receives the appropriate evaluation, treatment and follow up services and for identification of other possible needs such as counseling and health insurance coordination.

The student and/or his/her medical insurance are responsible for all payments and co-payments related to the medical care of the incident.

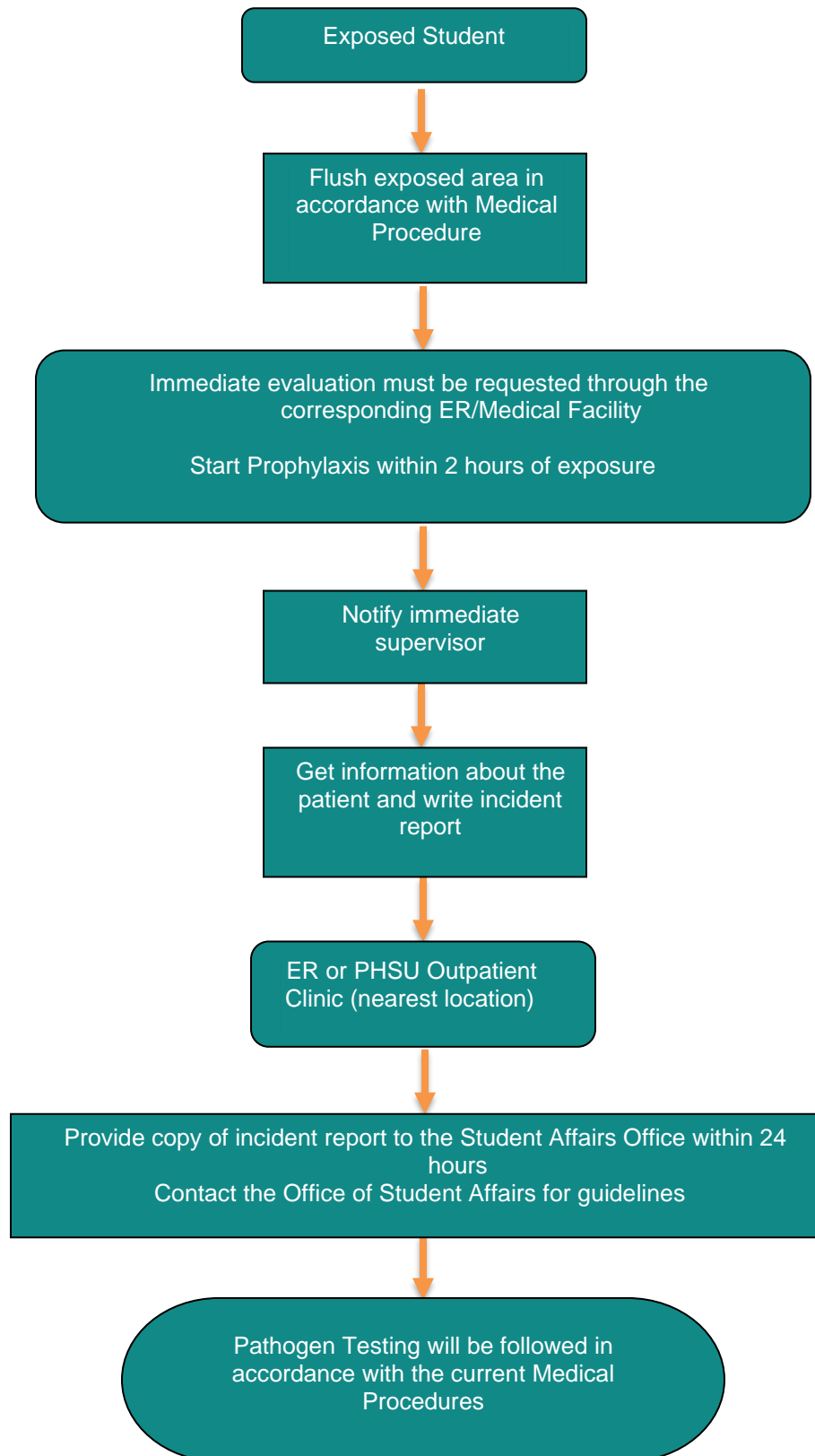
All HIV testing and information processing will adhere to applicable Federal law regarding **Confidentiality of HIV-related Information**.

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The student will continue regular clinical activities unless excused from patient contact by the health care provider. The student will be responsible to complete the time lost by coordinating with the Chair of the Department where the exposure occurred.

PHSU is committed to offer students ample information and education regarding methods of prevention of infections.

**Ponce Health Sciences University  
Procedures in Case of Needle Stick Injury**



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## CLASS RANKING POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines on how to consider the medical student grades in remedial courses for calculating student's ranking.

### Policy

When a student is retaking a course that previous failed (repeating a course during summer or the regular academic year or part of the year) and passes the course, the numerical score used to determine class rank will be 70%, the minimum passing grade for the course. The Registrar's Office will use this procedure for the ranking of the medical students. The Registrar's Office will provide the class rank to the PHSU officials, as requested, for the following purposes: Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE), determination of academic graduation honors, Alpha-Omega-Alpha nomination, scholarships selection committees or another legitimate purpose.

The student's academic transcript will record all the grades of the courses the students have taken for the first time and the grades of the courses the students have repeated, as reported by the professors to the Registrar, thus the minimum passing grade for the course will only be used for ranking purposes.

Medical students accepted on transfer from other institutions will not be ranked.

This policy will be effective for class MD2021, academic year 2020- 2021.

## CLINICAL PRACTICE EXAMINATION

All medical students are required to take and pass a Clinical Practice Examination (CPX) to be given at the end of their first clinical academic year.

Written feedback concerning individual performance will be provided to each student.

Students not meeting the acceptable level of performance will receive guided learning to overcome areas of low performance during one or more of the fourth year required clinical rotations. A modified version of the exam will be given after completion of the guided learning experience.

Satisfactory completion of this additional guided learning fulfills the requirement to pass this examination.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN THE STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONSHIP

### Policy Statement

The health professionals and faculty/staff who provide psychiatric/psychological/personal counseling or other sensitive medical and healthcare services to University (PHSU) students will have no involvement in the academic, professionalism, or disciplinary evaluation, promotion, or dismissal of students receiving those services.



## Purpose of Policy

It is essential to have a separation of roles to assure confidentiality in the provision of health and counseling services to PHSU students and absence of conflict of interest in PHSU student evaluation, promotion, and dismissal.

## Procedure

Members of the PHSU faculty assigned to evaluate students or to make decisions regarding the promotion or possible disciplinary action of students for whom they have provided psychiatric/psychological/personal counseling or other sensitive health services are obliged to report the conflict of interest to the block or clerkship director so that the student or faculty/staff can be reassigned to preclude any conflict of interest, real, perceived, or potential.

Students who have been assigned to a course, preclinical experience or clinical clerkship rotation in which they would be evaluated by a member of the faculty or staff who has provided them with psychiatric/psychological counseling or other sensitive medical or health services, should report the real, perceived, or potential conflict of interest to the block or clerkship director as soon as they receive the assignment so that there will be no involvement of said faculty/staff in the academic evaluation or promotion of the student. Students that do not report such conflict of interest by 2 days after the initial contact with the faculty member resign to their right to be assigned a different evaluator.

In the event that the student or faculty has not been re-assigned after reporting of the conflict, the student should report the matter to the Executive Director of Students Affairs for resolution. Similarly, if faculty or students are involved in a hearing for a possible adverse action related to academic, professionalism, or disciplinary matters, they should notify the Chairperson of the Student Promotion Committee or the Executive Director of Students Affairs if one or more members of the hearing committee has provided a student with any psychiatric/psychological counseling or other sensitive medical or health services, so that the faculty can be excused from the committee.

Evaluation instruments shall include a disclaimer in which faculty members attests that they have not had a professional relationship with students that could affect their judgment upon evaluation of the students.

## COURSE OR CLERKSHIP FINAL GRADE/NARRATIVE ASSESSMENTS APPEAL POLICY

Upon completion of a course or clerkship, a student may initiate an appeal process for a final grade or narrative assessment if he or she understands the grade was not assigned according to the evaluation criteria stated at the beginning of the course or the narrative assessment is inaccurate. According to the *Change of Grade Policy* in the Student Catalog 2017-2020, the student may initiate an informal conversation with the course/clerkship coordinator within 30 days (calendar) of receiving the final grade. This procedure should be the initial step the student should follow as part of the appeal process. During the conversation the faculty member should incorporate a detailed explanation of the evaluation components and the student's performance in each of them.

If the student is not satisfied with the explanation, he or she may submit a written appeal to the Department Chairperson within one week after the meeting with the coordinator. The letter must include the main reason why the student is not satisfied with the final grade or narrative assessment. After receiving the student's written claim, the Department Chairperson will have up to one week to respond to the student's claim and include a copy to the Associate Dean of Medical Education.

The student will have one calendar week after receiving the chairperson's decision to appeal it in writing to the Associate Dean of Medical Education. After receiving the student appeal, the Associate Dean of Medical Education will have up to one calendar week to issue a written decision to the student and copy the Department Chairperson. The Associate Dean for Medical Education may appoint an ad-hoc committee to evaluate the appeal and submit recommendations. The decision made by the Associate Dean for Medical Education is final.

Effective January 8, 2020  
Approved by SOM Executive and Policy Committee December 17, 2019

## DIVERSITY POLICY

The mission of School of Medicine of Ponce Health Sciences University is to provide high quality education in medicine to the population we serve, through an innovative curriculum, while preparing students to be ethical practitioners. Our institution strives to provide students and faculty an exposure to a diverse population, so they can succeed in an increasingly diverse workplace and global communication culture.

In the publication of the Association of American Medical Colleges, Roadmap to Diversity, in its second edition of 2014, it is exposed that a key driver for high-quality health care in this time of unequal access to health care, is to educate a culturally competent, inclusive physician. They state: *“A shared objective of the majority of U.S. medical schools is to arrive at a destination where a diverse class—including a racially and ethnically diverse class—enhances teaching and learning for all students and contributes to graduates’ capacity to provide comprehensive, high-quality medical care in all communities.”* An academic environment that fosters the interaction among a diverse student and faculty body will significantly contribute to prepare our graduates to provide the high-quality care all communities deserved.

Several racial and ethnic minority groups as well as people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly underrepresented among health professionals in the United States. Underrepresented minority groups have traditionally included African-Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and mainland Puerto Ricans. Numerous public and private programs aim to remedy this underrepresentation by promoting the preparedness and resources available to minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged health professions candidates, and the admissions and retention of these candidates in the health professions pipeline and workforce.

Being Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine a medical school in Puerto Rico, in accordance to the mission “to provide high quality education to the population we serve” our students and faculty members are mainly Puerto Ricans and Hispanics for which one of the groups we define as diverse for our academic community of students, faculty and administrators is Non-Hispanic group. Anyone who is not from Hispanic or Latino origin/ethnicity adds diversity to our academic environment.

The MD Students Admission Committee had already identified diversity as a desirable characteristic in the student body in its policy: *The school values having a diverse student population from all areas of the country and therefore accepts candidates from the mainland; nontraditional academic background; etc. When completing the medical career, our students are better equipped to care for patients in a diverse society.*

Two other groups that will add diversity in our student body and eventually to the physicians’ workforce are low socioeconomic status and first-generation university students. We strongly believe that having these groups represented among our students will help prepared our graduates to better address the issues related to health disparities in our communities. The *Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico* defines low socioeconomic status when individual or family income is under \$19,000.00 annually. First generation university students are those whose parent neither have nor attained a college degree.

All administrative and academic units of the medical education program will develop programs, partnerships and make ongoing systematic efforts for to enhance the recruitment and retention of the diverse groups identified in this policy to our student body, faculty and senior administrative staff. They also should document and monitor these efforts and its effectiveness in achieving representation of these groups in our academic community.

## INFECTIOUS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS EXPOSURE POLICY

### Purpose

To establish procedures and strategies to reduce risks and complications associated with exposure to infectious and environmental hazards involving direct contact with contaminated tissues, fluids, surfaces or objects, or to places with some risk of physical injury, of medical students participating in courses and clerkships. This policy will complement PHSU SOM current policy on Blood Borne Pathogen Exposure and will also assure compliance with LCME element 12.8 Student Exposure Policies/Procedures.

### Policy

#### Prevention Education

During the orientation period, students must receive information on strategies to minimize exposure to infectious and environmental hazards during courses or laboratories in campus, community health fairs, clerkships, and other academic activities. They must be oriented of the process in place for removing used gloves, redirect people needing health assistance in the field, reporting incidents of exposure and financial responsibility in such cases, among other topics.

Before beginning third-year clerkships and during the Introduction to Clinical Practice course, students should receive training about personal equipment needed to protect themselves from potential contamination in a clinical workplace, including how to avoid exposure to infectious and environmental hazards. Occupational Safety and Health Administration training certification is required before beginning the clinical rotations.

During any clinical academic activity, students must also follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Standard Precautions for all Patient Care described below.

1. Perform hand hygiene.
2. Use personal protective equipment (PPE) whenever there is an expectation of possible exposure to infectious material.
3. Follow respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette principles
4. Properly handle, clean and disinfect patient care equipment and instruments/devices.
5. Handle textiles and laundry carefully
6. Follow safe injection practices.
7. Follow healthcare worker safety regulations including proper handling of needles and other sharps .
8. Is aware of the potential for transmission of infectious agents of patient-placement setting (isolation, single-patient room, etc.)

#### Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards

Medical students are expected to be exposed to pathogens and environmental hazards during their medical education program-related activities in clinical and community sites. They should demonstrate knowledge about the recommended precautions to avoid contamination with pathogens in body fluids, mucous

membranes, or contaminated materials. Students must also know the preventive measures to avoid suffering slips or falls in different academic sites and control measures to handle these incidents. Slips and falls are on the top three work-related injuries keeping workers out of work and cuts, lacerations and punctures are the most common work-related injuries. Medical students are exposed to these types of injuries while visiting different settings.

### **Reporting Incidents with Infectious and Environmental Hazards**

If medical students are exposed to infectious agents or in some way injured in a clinical or community setting, they must report the incident to their immediate supervisor and receive medical assistance as soon as possible as established in the PHSU Emergency Preparedness Plan. Students who were exposed via needlestick, percutaneous injury, mucous membrane or contact with non-intact skin with a potentially contaminated fluid must follow the procedures in place described in the PHSU SOM *Blood-borne Pathogen Exposure Policy* included in the Student Policies Manual. In case of accidental spill of material considered hazardous faculty must notify Safety Officer to determine following steps.

### **Financial Responsibility**

Students' medical insurance is responsible for all payments and co-payments related to incident care. The Office of Student Affairs will collaborate in the coordination of follow-up services and insurance as established in the PHSU SOM Blood-borne Pathogen Exposure Policy included in the Student Policies Manual.

### **References**

Standard Precautions for all Patient Care. (2016). *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved October 24, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/basics/standard-precautions.html>

Workplace Injuries. (2019). *National Safety Council*. Retrieved October 24, 2019, from <https://www.nsc.org/work-safety/tools-resources/infographics/workplace-injuries>

Approved by SOM Executive and Policy Committee December 17, 2019

## **MEDICAL PROGRAM ELECTIVES POLICY**

The medical program curriculum of Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine required fourth year medical students to complete five elective courses or clerkships, and one selective, of four weeks' duration each. The electives give the student the opportunity to gain exposure to careers of their interest and widen the students' career options.

1. At the third-year mid-clerkship feedback session in each clerkship, career counseling must be offered to help students be aware of the diversity of career options and the electives offer under each clinical department.
2. The PHSU-SOM Electives Manual must contain a description of all elective clerkships and courses offer under the auspices of PHSU-SOM departments at the affiliated clinical sites or develop by the Basic Sciences Department. The Manual must be available to the student when selecting his/her electives.
3. Other elective preceptorships may be authorized by directors of the departments, if the student provides clear objectives for the elective and the CV and specialty board certification of the elective supervising physician, for evaluation. Students are not allowed to do any required or elective rotation with a family member. (See Conflict of Interest in Student-Faculty Relationship Policy)
4. Students must be oriented about the resources available to apply for electives at other LCME-accredited institutions (AAMC Visiting Student Application Service (VSAS) website).

5. Students are not allowed to do more than one elective rotation under the supervision of the same physician, unless the student presents a rationale such as ongoing research participation.
6. Students are encouraged to use the five elective periods in the 4th year to gain experience in more than one specialty which allow them to diversify their options and explore other fields in addition to their chosen specialty.
7. Credit for a past experience (research, clinics participation, etc.) is not allowed.
8. Students must complete a 4-week selective in one of the following primary care specialties: Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics or Ob-Gyn.

## MINIMUM PASSING SCORES IN CLINICAL SUBJECT EXAMINATIONS

As recommended by the Clinical Curriculum Subcommittee and approved by the Medicine Program Curriculum Committee on July 28, 2020, a minimum score is required in the National Board of Medical Examiners- clinical subject examinations (shelves) to pass the third-year clerkships.

Each academic department will determine the required minimum score on the shelf of each clerkship based on the PHSU students' performance in previous years and NBME guidelines for each discipline.

If the student does not obtain the minimum passing score, an incomplete grade will be reported. The student will be offered a second opportunity to take and pass the shelf with the same minimum score. If the student does not obtain the minimum passing score the second time, the student fails the clerkship. If the student passes the shelf in the second attempt, the first and second attempts will be average to calculate the final grade.

The remedial examination will be offered the first day after returning from the Christmas holidays and the week after finishing their last third-year rotation, to prevent any conflict with other clinical rotations.

Academic departments must inform the students of the minimum passing scores on the shelf required to pass the clerkships, how their final grades will be calculated if they need to repeat it.

Effective July 28, 2020

## OPT-OUT MASTER'S DEGREE FOR MD STUDENTS (MSMS)

PHSU students enrolled in the medical education program who cannot continue or complete medical studies and comply with the requirements of the MSMS program could apply in the Registrar's Office for the Master of Science in Medical Sciences degree. The following are the requirements for MD students to qualify for the MSMS degree:

### Requirements

1. Time Frame for completion of the Academic Program

A medical student will be allowed a maximum of three years after the satisfactory completion of the last course or clerkship of the medical education program to apply for the MSMS degree.

The total number of credits for completion of the MSMS degree include the courses of the first year of the medical program; the students will have a maximum time frame of two years to pass all first-year medical courses in order to be eligible to the MSMS opt-out option.

## 2. Completion of Program Requirements

### a. Course Requirement

Students must pass all courses of the first year of the medical program within the established time frame.

### b. Comprehensive Qualifying Examination Requirement (CQX)

A CQX or USMLE Step 1 must be passed to qualify for the MSMS degree. The medical student who has not passed the USMLE Step 1 should apply for the MSMS degree to be eligible to take the CQX. The students will be allowed a maximum of three attempts to take and pass one of these examinations. The students will have one year after taking the last medical course or clerkship to complete this requirement.

### c. Professional Behavior Requirement

The students must conduct themselves in accordance with the norms for professional conduct set forth by the Ponce Health Sciences University and the corresponding accreditation agencies.

Effective January 8, 2019

Approved by SOM Executive and Policy Committee October 30, 2018

## PATIENT AND STUDENT SAFETY AT CLINICAL TEACHING SITES

The Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine and its affiliated sites are committed with the well-being of medical students and welfare and safety of the patients.

To ensure that medical students are appropriately supervised during required clinical clerkships and other required clinical experiences and to safeguard student and patient safety:

1. All patient care will be supervised by qualified faculty members.
2. The level of responsibility delegated to the student must be appropriate to his or her level of training according to each clerkship or elective educational objectives.
3. The activities supervised must be within the scope of practice of the supervising health professional.
4. Students must be oriented of the expectations for their participation at each clerkship or elective. Faculty and residents must be informed of these expectations.
5. The clinical departments will monitor that appropriate supervision of medical students are in place at all times.
6. Students will be provided with rapid, reliable systems for communicating with the supervising faculty.
7. Faculty and student's schedules will be structured to provide students with continuous supervision and easy access for faculty consultation.
8. All students must comply with the academic, health and legal requirements and regulations set by Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine and the clinical sites they are assigned.
9. Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine policy related to the management of a student who has blood and/or body fluids exposure must be followed at all clinical sites and affiliated hospitals. Immediate evaluation at the affiliated hospital Emergency Room must be provided in cases of hazardous exposure.
10. Before authorizing students' elective rotations, the chairs of the clinical departments must review the credentials of the health professionals who will supervise the student and review with the student the potential risks to the health and safety of patients and themselves.
11. Students must participate in each of the required educational activities of the *Introduction to Clinical Practice* course (Patient Safety conference, CPR certification, Universal Precautions-Risk Management

during accidents (OSHA) training, Wound Healing Workshop, etc.), before they are allowed to be enrolled in the required clerkships and clinical electives.

12. To minimize the possibility of medical errors students must follow all the policies of the affiliated clinical sites related to patient safety.
13. To regulate students working hours and avoid fatigue that can result in medical errors, department chairs and/or clerkship coordinators must ensure compliance with the Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine On-Duty Hours Policy.

This policy must be distributed to the students in the course syllabus and in the School Policies Manual. It must also be distributed to supervising faculty. Department chairs and/or clerkship coordinators must oversee the compliance with this policy. Students must inform department chairs and/or clerkship coordinators any concern about the adequacy and availability of supervision. If no action is taken, the concern should be informed to the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs for the corresponding investigation and appropriate action.

### PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS TO REQUEST CHANGES IN EXAMINATION DATES

Sometimes students request changes in the examination dates. The Medicine Program Curriculum Committee (MPCC) approved a procedure to be followed when students request these changes.

1. The MPCC representatives of the medicine class requesting the change in the examination dates contact the course director for the initial authorization. If course director denies the request, no further action is needed. If the course director has the resources for proctoring, verifies available classroom space and support of the technological education staff for the examination, and authorizes the initial request, the course director notifies the chair of the department.
2. The medical students should submit the authorization of the course director and a written request with the signatures of at least 90% of the students who are scheduled to take the examination (including MSMS and Ph.D. students in cases it applies) to the Dean of Curriculum and Academic Affairs. If the students do not submit the written request with the required signatures, the change will not proceed, and no further action is needed.
3. The Dean of Curriculum and Academic Affairs verifies there is no conflict in the academic schedule for the proposed change, the availability of classrooms and support of technological education staff. If the Dean of Curriculum and Academic Affairs denies the request, no further action is needed. If the change is authorized, the Associate Dean for Medical Education will be informed.
4. The Associate Dean for Medical Education will inform the final decision to the course director and chair of the department involved.
5. The administrative assistant responsible for supporting the corresponding course will notify all the students that the change was approved and will provide the details of the change: date, time, classrooms and any other relevant information.

Effective January 1st, 2019  
Approved by the MPCC on October 29, 2018  
Academic Policy #29 School of Medicine



## PROCEDURE TO REQUEST AN ALTERNATE CLINICAL SITE ASSIGNMENT

### Policy

The Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine allows medical students with an appropriate rationale to request an alternative clinical assignment when circumstances allow for it.

### Purpose

This procedure was developed to provide the guidelines about how students must proceed to formally request an alternate educational site or clinical assignment.

### Procedure

The procedure for students to formally request an alternate educational site or assignment during the clinical years is as follows:

1. Students who believe that they have circumstances that would warrant a particular clerkship sequence of the ten available for the first clinical year (third year), or the nine in the last clinical year (fourth year), can make a request directly to the Vice-President of Student Affairs or the Clinical Coordinator, in advance of the student group assignments, or fourth year student academic schedule.
2. Once assigned to a clinical clerkship site (e.g., a hospital), for a justified reason, the student can request an alternate site assignment to the chair of the department. Changes may only be made to sites students are routinely assigned in this clerkship. Students are requested to inform about any potential conflict as soon as they are informed of the faculty and site assigned.
3. For students with extenuating circumstances that justifies the request for a particular clerkship sequence or particular clerkship site assignment, the request must be provided in writing to the Office of Clinical Affairs with the specific details and explanations for the request.
4. All requests are reviewed by the Executive Director of Students Affairs and the Clinical Coordinator who make a recommendation to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Clinical Affairs (ADFCA) as a collective, with the final determination being made by the ADFCA.
5. Requests are accepted, and schedule assignments given based upon:
  - a. whether the reason for the request is deemed valid; and
  - b. whether there will be adequate comparable sites to support the students' request.
  - c. Reported conflict of interest in the student-teacher relationship is a mayor reason to accept a change.
6. Notification of this procedure is provided to the students via:
  - a. e-mail distribution messages to the entire class
  - b. orientation conducted by the Vice President of Student Affairs or the Clinical Coordinator.
  - c. This policy will also be available at the Outlook Public Folders and in the Student Policies Handbook.
7. Notification of this procedure is provided to the faculty via e-mail distribution by the clinical department chairs.



## PUNCTUALITY AND TOTAL TIME ALLOCATED FOR EXAMINATIONS

It is the responsibility of all students to arrive on time for all educational activities, especially the examinations. To ensure fair procedures when exams are offered, the following rules will be enforced:

1. Instructions for examinations shall be given at the time the examination is scheduled.
2. The faculty member in charge of the examination will inform the students the maximum time allocated to answer all the questions, which is usually one to one and half minute per question. Students will have adjusted time limits according approved accommodations.
3. As soon as technical issues are addressed for computer-based exams, examinations must begin and the exam start time noted by exam proctors.
4. To minimize disturbances to other students, no student will be admitted to an examination room more than 30 minutes after the time the examination is scheduled.
5. Students arriving less than 30 minutes late to the examination room will be permitted to take the examination.
6. For students arriving late, but within the 30 minutes window, only the time remaining since the exam start time (point 3 above) will be allowed to complete the exam, no additional working time will be allowed.
7. The faculty in charge of the examination will indicate to the student who arrives late, the time she/he has lost and the time remaining.
8. When the time assigned to the student is over, the student must upload the examination, at the request of the faculty. Failure to do so will be considered a violation of professional conduct, may result in a score of 0 in the examination and will be reported to Student Affairs Office.

Students with a personal, health or family emergency must report the situation and submit relevant documentation to the Office of Academic Affairs.

*This academic policy of the School of Medicine was approved by the Medicine Program Curriculum Committee on October 3, 2016 and is effective immediately.*

## SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY

### Medical Education (MD)

A Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy has been established to ensure that medical students complete the academic program within the acceptable time frame and the minimally accepted quality of performance. This policy also ensures that the Student Financial Aid requirements set forth by federal regulations have been met. The SAP applies to all medical students enrolled in the Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine. Student's academic progress is evaluated twice each academic year by the SOM Students Promotion Committee, who determines students comply with promotion and graduation requirements.

### General Requirements

1. Time Frame for completion of the Academic Program  
A medical student will be allowed a maximum time frame of two years of enrollment beyond the standard required to complete the program. Summer enrollment is considered part of the academic year for the purpose of this measure.

The total years for completion of a degree include those years accredited on admission to MD Program for transfer students.

Program	Standard	Maximum
Doctor of Medicine – Four Year Program	4 years	6 years

## 2. Completion of Program Requirements

### a. Course Requirement

Students must complete ***all courses*** within the established time frame.

### b. Performance Requirement

A student must pass each course. Any student failing to meet this standard of performance will be referred to the Students Promotion Committee to determine the action to be taken.

### c. Medical Licensure Exam Requirement

A passing score for USMLE Step 1 is required to enroll for the second semester of the first clinical year. A passing score for USMLE Step 2 CK is required for graduation.

### d. Professional Behavior Requirement

The students must conduct themselves in accordance with the norms for professional conduct set forth by the Ponce Health Sciences University and the corresponding accreditation agencies.

### e. Clinical Practice Examination (CPX)

All medical students are required to take and pass a Clinical Practice Examination (CPX) at the end of their first clinical academic year.

## **Grade Requirement**

The Ponce Health Sciences University Medical Program does not measure academic progress by cumulative grade point average. In order to graduate, the student should pass all required and elective courses. Satisfactory Academic Progress will be reviewed each semester.

An “I” (Incomplete) grade will only be allowed under very special circumstances as determined by the professor. The student must complete the “I” (Incomplete) by the following semester, or an - “F” will be recorded for that course. The “I” (Incomplete) grades are part of the academic record, as are the final grades.

## **Academic Probation**

Any student failing to meet Ponce Health Sciences University medical program performance requirement will be referred to the School of Medicine Students Promotion Committee and placed on academic and financial aid probation. The following guidelines will be applied:

1. If the student fails one course, he/she should remediate the deficiency during the summertime.
2. If the student fails two or more courses or fails a course a second time, he/she may be considered for either repetition of courses or dismissal.
3. If the Students Promotion Committee determines that the student must repeat one or more courses during the summer or the next academic year, the student is considered on academic probation.
4. If the Students Promotion Committee determines to dismiss the student from the medical program, the student must be informed about his/her right to appeal.
5. If the dismissal decision is reversed by due process, the student will be considered on academic probation.

## **Appeal Process**

Students referred to the Student Promotions Committee must receive a copy of the referral, stating the reasons for the referral. Course or clerkship directors shall recuse themselves if the student being considered had an unsuccessful outcome in their course. Any Committee member who has a conflict of interest as having personal relations or providing health care to the students must recuse themselves as well.

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Students referred to the Student Promotions Committee will be notified of the referral, stating the reasons for the referral. Course or clerkship directors shall recuse themselves if the student being considered had an unsuccessful outcome in their course. Any Committee member who has a conflict of interest as having personal relations or providing health care to the students must recuse themselves as well.

Students who are notified by the Associate Dean for Medical Education a decision of the Committee that he/she must repeat an entire year of study or is dismissed from the medical program have the right to request a reconsideration of the decision to the Committee within five working days after receiving the notification.

The appeal or due process presented below must be followed.

The student will request in writing a reconsideration of the decision to the School of Medicine Students Promotion Committee (SPC) and include all relevant documentation to support the request. The student has the right to participate in and provide the information requested by the Committee during their meetings. The Committee will evaluate the reasons and evidence submitted to determine if they change their initial decision. The SPC has 48 hours to submit its decision to the Associate Dean for Medical Education, who will notify the decision to the student.

If the SPC sustains the adverse decision, the student has the right to appeal to the Dean of Medicine. The appeal must be submitted in writing within five working days after receiving the notification. The Dean of Medicine will evaluate the appeal and the student's academic record. The Dean can appoint a three-member Ad-Hoc Committee to re-evaluate all evidence. Rejection of the appeal by the Dean is final.

If an Ad-Hoc Committee is appointed, the Ad-Hoc Committee has forty-eight (48) hours to submit a recommendation to the Dean of Medicine. The Ad Hoc committee will notify the student of the date and time when the case will be heard, so the student can provide any additional information. The Dean of Medicine will consider the Ad-Hoc Committee recommendation and make the final decision within forty-eight (48) hours.

Any decision will be reported to the student in writing. The decision made by the Dean of Medicine is final. During the appeal process, the student has the right to withdraw from the School at any time up to the point when the Dean makes the final decision.

The same process described above will be followed in the case that the adverse decision made by the Committee is for non-academic reasons, such as unacceptable professional behavior. The Department Chairperson, the Associate Dean for Medical Education, or the Executive Director for Student Affairs, will refer the case to the SPC. If the recommendation of the SPC is to dismiss the student, the appeal process described above may be activated.

In the event that an adverse decision is made due to non-academic reasons and the Dean of Medicine sustains the decision after the appeal process, the student may appeal to the Chancellor and then to the President.

### **Financial Aid Eligibility**

Financial Aid eligibility is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress. Please refer to the institutional policy on Satisfactory Academic Progress published by the Office of Financial Aid.

### **Enforcement**

The Office of the Executive Director of Student Affairs shall have primary responsibility for overseeing this

policy and will provide all medical students a copy of this document upon admission to the Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine.

The President, the Chancellor, and the Executive Director Student Affairs, as well as the Dean of Medicine, Associate Dean for Medical Education, Registrar, and Financial Aid Director will receive all pertinent data to ensure proper enforcement of the policy here set forth.

Rev. November 30, 2020 and February 16, 2021 by the Executive and Policy Committee of the School of Medicine

## Doctoral of Philosophy in Biomedical Sciences (PhD)

A Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy has been established to ensure that Biomedical Sciences students complete the academic program within the acceptable time frame and the minimally accepted quality of performance. This policy also ensures that the Student Financial Aid requirements set forth by federal regulations have been met. The SAP applies to all PhD Biomedical students enrolled in Ponce Health Sciences University. Student's academic progress is evaluated annually at the end of each academic year.

### General Requirements

#### 1. Time Frame for Completion of the Academic Program

A student will be allowed a maximum time frame of three (3) years of enrollment beyond the standard of five (5) years required for the completion of the Program. Summer enrollment is considered part of the academic year for the purpose of this measure.

The total credits for completion of a degree include those graduate courses accredited on admission to the Program.

Program	Standard	Maximum
Doctoral Program in Biomedical Sciences	5 years	8 years

#### a. Definition of Full Time

Students with an academic load of six credits or more per semester will be considered Full Time doctoral students. A student solely enrolled in Thesis Research or Doctoral Dissertation will also be considered a Full Time student.

#### b. Definition of Half Time

Students with an academic load of three to five credits per semester will be considered Half Time doctoral students.

#### c. Definition of Part Time or Less Than Half Time

Students with an academic load less than three credits per semester will be considered Part Time doctoral students or Less Than Half Time student.

#### 2. Completion of Program Requirements

##### a. Course requirement

Students must complete all courses within the established time frame. The PhD in Biomedical Sciences requires a minimum of 70 credits.

##### b. Performance requirement

- A student must complete the first academic year (including summer term) with a minimum grade point average of 3.0.
- Any student failing to meet this standard performance will be referred to the Students Promotion Committee to be placed on academic probation.
- Students on academic probation who do not increase the GPA to 3.0 by the end of the following semester will be referred to the Students Promotion Committee for consideration of dismissal from the Program.
- Prior to the qualifying examination, the student must have a minimum GPA of 3.0.

c. Qualifying examination requirement

Upon completion of all core courses, students take a Qualifying Examination. The Qualifying Exam is composed of a written and an oral component that must be completed by the end of the first semester of the student's third year in the Program.

In the written part, the student must develop a research proposal (by April 15th, second year), which will be evaluated by a Qualifying Exam Committee composed of the student's dissertation advisor and two faculty members whose interests are related to the student's research. The committee will evaluate and score (scores 1-9) the written document based on the clarity of writing and scientific merit (significance, innovation, and approach). The student requires a score of  $\leq 3$  to pass the written exam. First-time takers receiving a score  $>3$  will need to revise the proposal and re-submit for review.

The student who passes the written exam will progress to the second part of the Qualifying Exam, which is an oral proposal defense (by October 15th, third year). The student will defend the thesis proposal in the presence of the Thesis Committee. The Thesis Committee consists of the student's dissertation advisor, three PHSU faculty members whose interests are related to the student's research, and a member from another institution (usually from the continental U.S.) with expertise in the field. Immediately following the oral proposal defense, the Thesis Committee will assign a grade of Pass or Fail. Students that pass the proposal defense become Ph.D. candidates.

The student has a maximum of two attempts each to pass the written and oral component of the Qualifying Exam. After two attempts for either part, the student who fails will be referred to the Student Promotion Committee for dismissal from the PhD Program, and reclassification as candidates for a Master's in Biomedical Sciences.

d. Doctoral Dissertation Requirement

A Doctoral Dissertation according to the established guidelines with oral defense is required for graduation.

e. Professional Behavior Requirement

Students must conduct themselves in accordance with the norms for professional conduct set forth by Ponce Health Sciences University and the corresponding accreditation agencies.

### Grade Requirement

In order to obtain a PhD in Biomedical Sciences, the student must complete all requirements and maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0. Satisfactory Academic Progress is required for financial aid eligibility and will be reviewed at the end of each semester.

1. A grade of "F" in any course will be referred to the Students Promotion Committee (SPC).
  - a. A student may have one opportunity to retake a failed or withdrawn ("W") course and obtain a "C" or better grade. Failure to pass a given course on the second opportunity is grounds for dismissal from the Program.

- b. A student with more than two “F” grades or “W” on record is grounds for dismissal from the Program.
2. Repeated courses with “C” or lower grades will remain on record, but the new grade will be used to compute the grade point average.
3. Graduate courses not offered at PHSU may be taken at other institutions with permission and approval from the Associate Dean of Biomedical Sciences and Research and the Chancellor.
4. Grades of “P” (Pass) or “NP” (Not Pass) are applicable to thesis research/dissertation and graduate seminars. When the research/dissertation activity requires more than one semester for its completion, the student receives a notation of “In Progress” (IP) for each semester and until the research/dissertation is completed.
5. A grade of “I” (Incomplete) will only be allowed under special circumstances. The student must remove the incomplete by the following semester or it will be replaced by the grade of “F”. The “I” (Incomplete) grades are part of the academic record as are the final grades.
6. A student with a reversed dismissal is not in satisfactory academic progress and is considered both on academic and financial aid probation.

### **Academic Probation and Financial Aid Eligibility**

A student failing to meet the grade requirements will be placed on academic probation for one semester but will be eligible for financial aid. Students that fail to comply with grade requirements after the prescribed probation time will be referred to the School of Medicine Students Promotion Committee (SPC) and may result in dismissal from the Program.

### **Appeal Process for Academic**

Students who are notified by the Associate Dean of Medical Education a decision of the SPC that he/she must repeat failed courses during the next academic year or to be dismissed from Program, have the right to appeal the decision within five working days after receiving the notification.

The appeal or due process presented below must be followed.

The student will request in writing a reconsideration to SPC and include all relevant documentation to support the petition. The Committee will evaluate the reasons and evidence submitted to determine if they change their initial decision. The SPC has 48 hours to submit its decision to the Associate Dean for Medical Education, who will notify the student of the decision.

If the SPC sustains the adverse decision, the student has the right to appeal to the Dean of Medicine. The appeal must be submitted in writing within five working days after receiving the notification. The Dean of Medicine will evaluate the appeal and the student’s academic record. The Dean can appoint a three-member Ad-Hoc Committee to re-evaluate all evidence. Rejection of the appeal by the Dean is final.

If an Ad-Hoc Committee is appointed, they will notify the student in writing of the date and the time when the appeal will be evaluated. The Ad-Hoc Committee has forty-eight (48) hours to submit a recommendation to the Dean of Medicine. The Dean of Medicine will consider the Ad-Hoc Committee recommendation and make the final decision within forty-eight (48) hours.

Any decision will be reported to the student in writing. The decision made by the Dean of Medicine is final.

The same process described above will be followed in the case that the adverse decision made by the Committee is for non-academic reasons, such as unacceptable professional behavior. The Associate Dean of Biomedical Sciences and Research, the Associate Dean for Medical Education or the VP for Student Affairs

will refer the case to the SPC. If the recommendation of the SPC is to dismiss the student, the appeal process described above may be activated.

In the event that an adverse decision is made due to non-academic reasons and the Dean of Medicine sustains the decision after the appeal process, the student may appeal to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and then to the President.

### **Financial Aid Eligibility**

Financial Aid eligibility is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress. Please refer to the institutional policy on Satisfactory Academic Progress published by the Office of Financial Aid.

### **Enforcement**

The Office of the Executive Director of Student Affairs shall have primary responsibility for overseeing this policy and will provide all students a copy of this document upon admission to Ponce Health Sciences University-School of Medicine.

The President, Chancellor and the Vice President for Student Affairs, as well as the Dean of Medicine, Associate Dean for Medical Education, Registrar and Financial Aid Director will receive all pertinent data to ensure proper enforcement of the policy here set forth.

*Revised by the Executive and Policy Committee of the School of Medicine, December 17, 2019*

## **Master of Sciences in Medical Sciences (MSMS)**

A Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy has been established to ensure that student of Master of Sciences in Medical Sciences complete the academic program within the acceptable time frame and the minimally accepted quality of performance. Student's academic progress is evaluated at the end of each semester.

### **General Requirements**

#### 1. Time Frame for completion of the Academic Program

A student of Master of Sciences in Medical Sciences will be allowed a maximum time frame of two semesters of enrollment beyond the standard required for the completion of the program. Summer enrollment is considered part of the academic year for the purpose of this measure.

Program	Standard	Maximum
Master of Sciences in Medical Sciences	1 year	2 years

#### a. Definition of Full Time

Students with an academic load of six credits or more per semester will be considered Full Time Masters students.

#### b. Definition of Half Time

Students with an academic load of three to five credits per semester will be considered Half Time Masters students.

#### c. Definition of Part Time or Less than Half Time

Students with an academic load less than three credits per semester will be considered Part Time Masters students or Less Than Half Time student.



## 2. Completion of Program Requirements

### a. Course Requirement

Students must complete *all courses* within the established time frame. The Program requires a minimum of 40 credits for graduation.

### b. Performance Requirement

A student must maintain a minimum 3.00 grade point average (GPA) in a scale of 4.00 by the end of each semester. Any student failing to meet 3.00 GPA standard of performance or failing any course will be referred to the Student Promotion Committee (SPC).

### c. Comprehensive Qualifying Examination Requirement (CQX)

A CQX must be taken at the end of the academic year. The maximum time allowed to take this examination is three attempts within one year according to the program time frame. A passing score for CQX is required for graduation.

### d. Professional Behavior Requirement

The students must conduct themselves in accordance with the norms for professional conduct set forth by the Ponce Health Sciences University and the corresponding accreditation agencies.

### Grade Requirement

In order to graduate, the student should complete all requirements and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00 in a scale of 4.00 by the end of the year and pass the CQX. Satisfactory Academic Progress will be reviewed at the end of each semester.

1. A grade of “F” in any course or student with less than 3.00 GPA will be referred to the Student Promotion Committee (SPC).
2. A grade of “F” in any of the courses or a cumulative GPA less than 3.00 is not allowed. Any F grade must be repeated. No more than 2 failures are allowed in the Master Program.
3. A student repeating a course or with a GPA less than 3.00 is considered in academic probation.
4. If the student fails to obtain a 3.00 GPA or better after repeating course(s), he/she will be considered for dismissal from the academic program.
5. Courses with “F” grades will remain on record after they are successfully repeated, but the new grade (s) will be used to compute the GPA.
6. Grade of “P” (Pass) or “NP” (No Pass) is applicable to the CQX. A grade of “NP” requires repetition. The maximum time allowed to take this examination is three attempts. In case of a third “NP” grade, the student will be considered for dismissal from the academic program.
7. An “I” (Incomplete) grade will only be allowed under very special circumstances as determined by the faculty member. The student must remove the “I” (Incomplete) by the end of the following semester or an administrative “F” will replace it.
8. A student with less than 3.00 GPA or has No-Pass grade in the CQX is not in satisfactory academic progress and is considered in academic probation.
9. If the dismissal decision is reversed by due process, the student will not be considered in SAP and will be placed on academic probation for one semester.

### Appeal Process

Students who are notified by the Associate Dean of Medical Education a decision of the Students Promotion Committee (SPC) that he/she must repeat failed courses during the next academic year or to be dismissed from the master’s program, have the right to appeal the decision within five days after receiving



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the notification.

The appeal or due process presented below must be followed.

The student will request reconsideration in writing to the School of Medicine SPC and include all relevant documentation to support the request. The Committee will evaluate the reasons and evidence submitted to determine if they change their initial decision. The SPC has 48 hours to submit its decision to the Associate Dean for Medical Education, who will notify the decision to the student.

If the SPC sustains the adverse decision, the student has the right to appeal to the Dean of Medicine. The appeal must be submitted in writing within five working days after receiving the notification. The Dean of Medicine will evaluate the appeal and the student's academic record. The Dean can appoint a three-member Ad-Hoc Committee to re-evaluate all evidence. Rejection of the appeal by the Dean is final.

If an Ad-Hoc Committee is appointed, the Ad-Hoc Committee has forty-eight (48) hours to submit a recommendation to the Dean of Medicine. The Dean of Medicine will consider the Ad-Hoc Committee recommendation and make the final decision within forty-eight (48) hours.

Any decision will be reported to the student in writing. The decision made by the Dean of Medicine is final.

The same process described above will be followed in the case that the adverse decision made by the Committee is for non-academic reasons, such as unacceptable professional behavior. The Department Chairperson, the Associate Dean for Medical Education or the VP for Student Affairs will refer the case to the SPC. If the recommendation of the SPC is to dismiss the student, the appeal process described above may be activated.

In the event that an adverse decision is made due to non-academic reasons and the Dean of Medicine sustains the decision after the appeal process, the student may appeal to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and then to the President.

### **Financial Aid Eligibility**

Financial Aid eligibility is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress. Please refer to the institutional policy on Satisfactory Academic Progress published by the Office of Financial Aid.

### **Enforcement**

The Office of the Executive Director of Student Affairs shall have primary responsibility for overseeing this policy and will provide all medical students a copy of this document upon admission to Ponce Health Sciences University-School of Medicine.

The President, Chancellor and the Executive Director for Student Affairs, as well as the Dean of Medicine, Associate Dean for Medical Education, Registrar and Financial Aid Director will receive all pertinent data to ensure proper enforcement of the policy here set forth.

*Revised by the Executive and Policy Committee of the School of Medicine, December 17, 2019.*

## STUDENT MISTREATMENT PREVENTION: STANDARDS OF CONDUCT IN THE TEACHER-LEARNER RELATIONSHIP

Ponce Health Sciences University adapts and incorporates the AAMC model of Standards of Conduct in the Teacher- Learner Relationship, and encourages faculty and students to familiarize themselves and pledge adherence to this policy statement:

Preparation for a career in the health care professions demands the acquisition of a large fund of knowledge and a host of special skills. It also demands the strengthening of those virtues that are expected in the health provider/patient relationship and that sustain the health profession as a moral enterprise. This policy statement serves both as a pledge and as a reminder to teachers and learners that their conduct in fulfilling their mutual obligations is the medium through which the profession inculcates its ethical values.

### Guiding Principles

#### Duty

Ponce Health Sciences University faculty has a duty, not only to convey the knowledge and skills required for delivering the profession's contemporary standard of care, but also to inculcate the values and attitudes required for preserving the profession's social contract across generations.

#### Integrity

The learning environments conducive to conveying professional values must be suffused with integrity. Students learn enduring lessons of professionalism by observing and emulating role models who epitomize authentic professional values and attitudes.

#### Respect

Respect for every individual is fundamental to the ethics of the health professional. Essential for nurturing that ethics is the mutual respect for every individual by students, novice members of the profession, as well as by their teachers, as experienced and esteemed professionals. Given the inherently hierarchical nature of the teacher/learner relationship, teachers have a special obligation to ensure that students, interns and residents are always treated respectfully.

### Commitments of Faculty

1. We pledge our utmost effort to ensure that all components of the educational program for students, interns and residents are of high quality.
2. As mentors for our students, interns and resident colleagues, we maintain high professional standards in all of our interactions with patients, colleagues, and staff.
3. We respect all students, interns and residents as individuals, without regard to gender, race, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation; we will not tolerate anyone who manifests disrespect or who expresses biased attitudes towards any student, intern or resident.
4. We pledge that students, interns and residents will have sufficient time to fulfill personal and family obligations, to enjoy recreational activities, and to obtain adequate rest. We monitor and, when necessary, reduce the time required to fulfill educational objectives, including time required for "call" on clinical rotations, to ensure student's, intern's and resident's wellbeing.
5. In nurturing both the intellectual and the personal development of students, interns and residents, we celebrate expressions of professional attitudes and behaviors, as well as achievement of academic excellence.
6. We do not tolerate any abuse or exploitation of students, interns or residents. We encourage any student, intern or resident who experiences mistreatment or who witnesses

unprofessional behavior to report the facts immediately to appropriate faculty or staff; we treat all such reports as confidential and do not tolerate reprisals or retaliations of any kind.

### **Commitments of Students, Interns, and Residents**

1. We pledge our utmost effort to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to fulfill all educational objectives established by the faculty.
2. We cherish the professional virtues of honesty, compassion, integrity, loyalty and dependability.
3. We pledge to respect all faculty members and all students, interns and residents as individuals, without regard to gender, race, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation.
4. As health professionals in training, we embrace the highest standards of the profession and pledge to conduct ourselves accordingly in all of our interactions with patients, faculty colleagues, and staff.
5. As well as fulfilling our own obligations as professionals, we pledge to assist our fellow students, interns and residents in meeting their professional obligations.

### **STUDENTS DUTY HOURS POLICY FOR CLINICAL ROTATIONS**

The Ponce Health Sciences University School of Medicine (PHSU-SOM) abides by the recommendations of the ACGME, AMA and the Puerto Rico Legislature related to Residents Duty Hours and is committed to regulate and monitor students' working hours. This will result in less fatigue, more effective healthcare delivery, an enhancement of patient safety, minimizing the possibility of medical errors, and providing adequate time for self-study and relaxation.

### **Duty Hours**

#### **Definition**

Duty hours are defined as all clinical and academic activities related to the clinical clerkship or clinical rotation, i.e., patient care (both inpatient and outpatient), administrative duties related to patient care, the provision for transfer of patient care, time spent in-house during call activities, and scheduled academic activities such as conferences, small group sessions, seminars, ward rounds, quizzes and other assessment and evaluation exercises. Duty hours do not include time spent reading, studying and preparing presentations away from the duty site.

#### **General policies that apply to all medical students**

1. Duty hours are limited to 80 hours per week, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of all in-house call activities for fourth year medical students and 60 hours per week for the third-year medical students.
2. All students will be provided with at least one 24 hours period per calendar week, free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a 4-week period.
3. Adequate time for rest and personal activities will be provided. The students must have at least 14 hours free of clinical work and education after 24 hours of an in-house call.

#### **Duty Hours for Third Year Medical Students**

1. Students in the third-year clinical clerkships are expected to abide by the working hours as specified in the clerkship syllabus and the policies of the teaching site to which they are assigned.
2. These working hours should be no more than 10 hours per day, usually from 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. until 5:00-6 p.m. Students not assigned to “in-house on-call” activities that already have been in the hospital for 10 hours should be discharged at 6 PM.

3. Students may be “on-call” no later than 12:00 Midnight. Exceptions to allow continuity of care are acceptable if they fall within the following regulations:
  - Students will be “on call” no more than two (2) times per week and no more often than every third (3) night.

### On-Call Activities-Fourth Year Medical Student

On-call activities are scheduled to provide fourth-year students with continuity of patient care experiences throughout a 24-hour period. In-house call is defined as those duty hours beyond the regular workday when students, with adequate supervision (-residents or faculty), are required to be immediately available in the assigned institution.

1. In-house call must occur no more frequently than every third night, averaged over a four-week period.
2. Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, must not exceed 24 consecutive hours. At-home call (pager call) is defined as call taken from outside the assigned institution.
3. The frequency of at-home call is not subject to every third-night limitation. An at-home call must not be so frequent as to preclude rest and reasonable personal time for each student.

### Oversight

1. Each clinical department will have procedures to ensure consistent compliance with this policy.
2. This policy must be distributed to the students in the course syllabus and the Moodle e-learning portal for each clerkship site. It must also be distributed to supervising faculty and residents at all instructional sites. It is published in the PHSU Catalog, the PHSU Student Policies Manual and is available through the Public Folders of the Outlook Public Folders.
3. Medical student duty hours’ data is collected by the supervising faculty at each instructional site through attendance logs and reported to clerkship coordinators and department chairs.
4. The students can submit violations to this policy to the clinical department chair for immediate resolution. If a student is not satisfied with the resolution, the student can submit a letter detailing the violation to the Associate Dean of Faculty and Clinical Affairs, the Associate Dean for Medical Education or the Dean. If the violation persists, the student can submit a grievance to the Executive Director of Student Affairs.
5. Medicine Program Curriculum Committee monitors medical student duty hours through clerkship evaluation performed by the Clinical Curriculum Subcommittee.

Backup support systems must be provided when patient care responsibilities are unusually difficult or prolonged, or if unexpected circumstances create student fatigue sufficient to jeopardize patient care.

Revised and approved by:  
Medical Program Curriculum Committee August 21, 2017  
Executive Policy Committee January 29, 2018

## TRANSFER OF CREDITS POLICY (MSMS)

### Purpose

Some students of the Master in Sciences in Medical Science (MSMS) complete all graduation requirements but are unable to fulfill the minimum 3.0 GPA required for graduation. This is the result of a high credit load of several of the MSMS courses and a “C” in a major course may result in non-compliance with the required

GPA. These students have to repeat courses to obtain higher grades so that the GPA increases to required levels. However, some of them are accepted to continue post graduate higher education training, such as medical education and are unable to repeat courses in our institution.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a mechanism so that these students complete their MSMS degree while enrolled at another post graduate higher education program.

## Policy

MSMS students that comply with all graduation requirements, except the minimum 3.0 GPA, and are accepted in a medical education program or another doctoral program the within two years after completion of the courses of the MSMS program, may be eligible to get credit towards the MSMS degree from courses taken at another higher education institution.

The procedure to achieve this is the following:

1. The student must submit the *MSMS Transfer of Credits Request Form* to the Registrar's Office after completion of the courses of medical education or doctoral training within the established time.
2. The student must be enrolled in an LCME accredited medical school, a foreign medical school that has been appropriately accredited according to ECFMG <sup>1</sup> standards, or a doctoral program in an institution of higher education with regional accreditation (such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education).
3. After the student completes the course/s for which transfer credit is requested, the student must request that an official transcript be sent to Ponce Health Science University Registrar's Office.
4. The Associate Dean for Medical Education and the Assistant Dean for MSMS Program will evaluate the courses and grades in the transcript. A special analysis needs to be done for those students in medical schools where they have an "integrated" or "system based" curriculum.
5. Only courses with A's and B's may be cross transferred to substitute former courses with a C. If the GPA increases at or above 3.0 of, the student will be certified as eligible for the MSMS degree.
6. The Student Promotion Committee will evaluate the results and confirm to the Registrar if the student is a candidate for graduation.
7. Students admitted to the MSMS prior to the creation of this policy are eligible and will be notified about this policy.
8. The PHSU Registrar may establish an administrative fee for the time and efforts this entails.
9. The policy is effective May 5, 2016 and will be in effect for two years, after which it will be revised by the Executive and Policy Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ecfmg.org/about/initiatives-accreditation-requirement.html> ECFMG® has announced that, effective in 2023, physicians applying for ECFMG Certification will be required to graduate from a medical school that has been appropriately accredited. To satisfy this requirement, the physician's medical school must be accredited through a formal process that uses criteria comparable to those established for U.S. medical schools by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or that uses other globally accepted criteria.

## USMLE REQUIREMENTS

### United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Policy

This policy states the requirements and timeline established for Ponce Health Sciences University medical students for the USMLE examinations. The Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy for the MD Program establishes the maximum time frame to complete the entire academic program that is currently six years.

#### Comprehensive Basic Sciences Examination

1. All medical students must take the Comprehensive Basic Science Examination (CBSE) developed by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), as a USMLE Step 1 performance indicator.
2. The Office of Medical Education coordinates the administration of the test that is offered several times during the second semester of the last pre-clinical year.
3. The test score along with the students' academic performance during the first years of medical studies will be used to assess the readiness of the student to take and pass the USMLE Step 1.
4. The required scores to be authorized to take the USMLE Step 1 are revised annually and are based on PHSU-SOM student's outcomes in the past academic years.
5. Students who pass all preclinical courses and have not interrupted the regular medical curriculum program of studies will be allowed to enroll in the clerkships the first semester of the first clinical year, for which taking or passing USMLE Step 1 will not be required.

#### USMLE Step 1

It is the student responsibility to apply to take the USMLE Step 1 through the Licensing Examination Services at the USMLE website and select the eligibility period.

1. For students authorized to take the USMLE Step 1, it is strongly recommended to take it before the beginning of the course: Introduction to Clinical Practice, offered at the end of July.
2. Students will not be excused from scheduled academic activities to study or take the examination after the beginning of courses and clerkships. USMLE Step 1 is offered Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.
3. To register in the clerkships for the second semester of the first clinical year (January to May), the students are required to have a passing score in the USMLE Step 1 examination.
4. The registration for the second semester is in December. The official registration dates are published by the Registrar Office.
5. Those students who do not take or fail the USMLE Step 1 or the score is not available by the commencement of the second semester of the first clinical year cannot register in the clinical clerkships for the second semester. Students must contact the Registrar Office for the options for review courses.
6. For those students who have interrupted the regular medical curriculum program of studies, it will be required to have a passing score in the USMLE Step 1 examination to enroll in the clerkships for the first semester of the first clinical year (August to December).
7. The registration for the fall semester is in July and the official registration dates are published by the Registrar Office.
8. Students have a maximum of three opportunities to pass the USMLE Step 1.
9. Students are not allowed to be more than one year out of the regular medical curriculum program of studies unless for an approved medical LOA.

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10. Students who fail the USMLE Step 1 for the third time and/or have been one year or more out of the regular medical curriculum program of studies will be referred to Students Promotion Committee for consideration of dismissal from the Medicine Program.

### **USMLE - Step 2**

1. All medical students must take and pass the USMLE Step 2-CK component as a requirement for graduation.
2. It is strongly recommended that the students take the USMLE Step 2-CK no later than August 30, of the year they will start applying to residency programs, in a way the score is available when the Electronic Residency Application System (ERAS) opens and the interviews for residency programs begin.
3. The last opportunity to take and pass the USMLE 2-CK examination to complete this graduation requirement with the May graduating class will be the last week of April of the corresponding graduation year.

Rev. February 16, 2021