

Policies and Procedures for Evaluation of Academic Performance and Determination of Status Postdoctoral Program

I. General Requirements for Promotion, Graduation, and Timely Completion of the Program

Promotion within or graduation from postdoctoral clinical and/or graduate research programs, whether individual or combined, requires:

- satisfactory completion of all academic, clinical, and research requirements;
- compliance with all educational, administrative, and regulatory policies; and
- sufficient ongoing progress towards attainment of competency or proficiency, as described by the program.

Promotion: Students (residents) must successfully complete all educational requirements of the current academic year to be promoted into the next academic year. Promotions guidelines require that students complete the year with no final course grade of “D” or “F” and with a minimum grade point average of 3.0. Any student not meeting these minimum requirements is not eligible for promotion and may be asked to repeat all or part of the academic year, or may be dismissed. The department or program may, in rare instances, allow conditional promotion (e.g., a patient care-based course for which an extension of the deadline for completion is appropriate given significant mitigating circumstances). In any case, full promotion will not be allowed until all unsatisfactory educational obligations have been resolved.

Graduation: Students (residents) must have first successfully completed each year of the program prior to their final year. During their final year, students must successfully complete all courses with no final course grade of “D” or “F” and with a minimum grade point average of 3.0. Regardless of the reason, any student not meeting these minimum requirements is not eligible for graduation, and may be recommended for dismissal. Generally, the department or program will specify a period of time deemed necessary for all unsatisfactory course work to be resolved before a student can graduate. In addition, to be considered eligible for graduation, students must also complete related educational obligations; these include achievement of acceptable clinical performance in the discipline, completion of patient treatment or appropriate transfer of all patients under their direct care, and fulfillment of administrative requirements. Students not meeting all such obligations will be deemed ineligible for graduation.

Timely progress towards completion: Students (residents) are expected to make continuous and timely progress towards completion of the program in the time specified in their Admissions offer. However, it is recognized that delayed graduation of students in a clinical or research program can occur due to patient care commitments, academic difficulties, student health issues, financial hardships, other personal considerations, and/or unforeseen delays in completing research projects. On the other hand, postdoctoral enrollment is tightly regulated due to resource limitations and accreditation requirements, so that an overly extended duration of study is not feasible. Consequently, the department may consider extensions of up to one additional year, without prejudice. For students who need more than one additional year, the department or program will review their individual cases and make a determination

whether to allow continuation in the program. In making this determination, there will be an evaluation of the student's progress to date and their putative ability to complete all aspects of the program. If warranted, students will be notified that they will be administratively terminated from the program by a set deadline, unless sufficient educational progress can be demonstrated.

II. Structure and Governance: Intra- and Interdepartmental Oversight

Each postdoctoral department or program has sufficient authority and autonomy to fulfill its educational mission according to the tenets of its particular discipline and relevant accreditation standards. Specific requirements relative to required courses, seminars, clinical experiences, and research or directed study will be determined for each student by their department or program, and may be amended as necessary to maintain educational rigor. Program directors and research advisors are responsible for establishing and maintaining academic plans that achieve successful and recognizable outcomes. Furthermore, student issues involving academic, clinical, behavioral, physical health, mental health, and/or personal issues are expected to be resolved at the department or program level as much as possible, in coordination with other University resources (including Disability and Access Services). Referrals also may be made to the associate dean for academic affairs, the associate dean for clinical affairs, the associate dean of students, and/or the director of educational resources, as warranted.

Academic matters that are cross-disciplinary and affect multiple postdoctoral departments and programs are the responsibility of the Office of Academic Affairs, with guidance from the Advanced Education Committee (AEC), which is chaired by the associate dean for academic affairs.

III. Role of the Advanced Education Committee

The Advanced Education Committee (formerly the Postdoctoral Curriculum Committee) is a school-wide group consisting of representatives from the postdoctoral clinical and graduate research programs. At the request of any given postdoctoral student, program director, or the dean, the committee will review academic/promotions and/or disciplinary/judicial issues related to an individual postdoctoral student. In these instances, the findings and recommendations of the Committee are advisory only but will be reported to the postdoctoral student, program director, and/or the dean, as warranted.

IV. Postdoctoral Grade Scale

The grading scale for both intra- and interdepartmental postdoctoral courses is: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, and F; there are no A+, D+, D-, F+, or F- grades. The use of a pass/fail (P/F) scale is generally not allowed for required intra- and interdepartmental courses, but may be considered in limited instances with approval of the associate dean for academic affairs. The use of P/F grades for elective courses is allowed without the need for approval by the associate dean for academic affairs. The grade of "I" (incomplete) as a temporary grade is only awarded under extenuating circumstances, such as inability to complete course work due to illness or personal reasons beyond the student's control. Normally, incomplete grades should be resolved within 30 days after the close of the semester. However, students are expected to resolve incomplete grades no later than the end of the subsequent semester, unless the program director authorizes additional time. A grade of "I" will not be recorded as a final grade on the transcript. If the

student does not rectify the incomplete grade by no later than the end of the subsequent semester (or additional time authorized by the program director), then the “I” will be automatically replaced with a grade of “F” (or with a “W” if the student withdraws from the program).

V. Minimum Grade Point Average and Resolution of Deficient Grades: At a minimum, all students must complete each year of the program with no final course grade of “D” or “F” and with a minimum grade point average of 3.0. Any student not meeting these minimum requirements is not eligible for promotion or graduation. Corrective action steps are generally recommended by the program director, and/or the department chair, and/or any program or department Committee (Promotions, Thesis, or Dissertation, as applicable). If the program director allows a student with a deficient grade to remain in a program, that deficient grade must be rectified. A grade of “F” must be rectified by repeating the course in its entirety. A grade of “D” may, at the discretion of the course director, be remediated by a written or oral reexamination or completion of an assigned project. Students and/or program directors may request that the Advanced Education Committee consider cases of non-promotion, non-graduation, or dismissal, and render advice, including non-binding recommendations to uphold or modify previous departmental recommendations.

When a student repeats a course in its entirety, the student will be awarded the grade earned for that course. The original grade remains on the student’s transcript, and a new grade is recorded in the year the course is retaken along with the designation “RP”. Successful completion of a remediation option without repetition of a course in its entirety will result in a grade improvement from a “D” to a “C-”. Improvement of a grade of “D” by this means will be recorded on the transcript as a “C-” with the designation “RM”. The original deficient grade will remain on the transcript.

VI. Vacation Policy and Absences: Students are expected to attend/participate in all assigned educational activities, including but not limited to classes (either in-person or remote), laboratories, clinical care, and research projects. Each department establishes their own policy for student vacation in addition to official school holidays. Each department also establishes their own policy for authorized and unauthorized absences. In general, absences must be approved by the relevant program director or research advisor.

Missed Examinations: Students must contact the course director prior to the start of any examination that will be missed due to valid illness or personal reason. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the course director to make up the missed examination in a timely manner. A student who will miss an examination in one of the Interdisciplinary Curriculum courses should contact not only the course director, but also the Office of Academic Affairs before the start of that examination. Students will normally be asked to provide relevant documentation to support the reason for absence from the examination.

Absence for Religious Reasons: The school remains open during religious holidays. If a student intends to be absent for a religious holiday, it is imperative that the program director be notified well in advance. The university policy can be found at <http://www.bu.edu/ctl/university-policies/policy-on-religious-observance/>. It should be noted that days absent from the program for religious purposes will generally be considered vacation days.

VII. Non-compliance with Regulatory Requirements: Students must be in compliance with all federal, state, University, and/or school regulatory requirements. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, HIPAA, CPR, Immunizations, Infection Control & Prevention, OSHA, Safety Rules, Management of Medical Emergencies, Health Insurance, and Emergency Contact Information. For some of these requirements (e.g., HIPAA), the entire dental school is a covered entity, and the University does not make any distinction between students that may not yet be actively treating patients. Non-compliance with such regulatory requirements is a serious matter, and sanctions will be imposed on students who are not in compliance. The type and duration of any sanctions will depend on the severity of the non-compliance. Sanctions include, but are not necessarily limited to, suspension from clinical patient care activities, research laboratories, classrooms/lectures, and/or computer/electronic access.

VIII. Post-matriculation Change in Program: Any changes in the official program of study are discouraged after a student has accepted the school's offer of admission. A student requesting a change of program must complete the Postdoctoral Program Change Request Form, which is available from the Office of Admissions. The student is responsible for obtaining approval signatures from all relevant program directors and department chairs, and for submitting the completed form to the postdoctoral admissions coordinator in the Office of Admissions. Consent of the associate dean for academic affairs is required before the change of program is implemented; please note that the academic dean has the authority to: 1) deny the change in program; 2) approve the change in program; or 3) approve the change in program, with modification.

When appropriate approval has been received, the Office of Admissions will review the request and provide a new offer of admissions letter. The process may require the student to complete a new application. The student must submit all required documents prior to receiving a new offer of admission. The student must also make appropriate arrangements with program department(s), GSDM registrar, International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO), Student Accounting Services, Student Financial Services, and any other affected GSDM and University offices in regard to the program change. International students are responsible for communicating with ISSO regarding status changes and must submit required documents and materials to GSDM Postdoctoral Admissions in order for a program change to be recorded in the University systems. A program change that results in a new expected graduation date should be made early in the academic year if the student wishes to be included in Commencement information, such as the official program, for that year.

IX. Program Extension: Students remaining past the program end date to complete clinical or research requirements must be officially registered and assessed tuition and/or fees, as applicable to their specific situation. Payment entitles a student to appropriate access to University libraries, research laboratories, academic staff, and other academic facilities for the purpose of completing their certificate or degree requirements.

X. Specific Recommendations of the Individual Program

The department reviews student performance outcomes to verify compliance/noncompliance with promotions or graduation guidelines. A number of determinations or actions are possible.

Academic Probation: Any student demonstrating unsatisfactory didactic, preclinical, clinical, and/or research performance may be placed on academic probation. The student will be informed of the reasons for this action and what must be accomplished within a specified time frame to be removed from academic probation. A student may be maintained on academic probation until the deficiency/ies for which they were originally placed on academic probation have been remedied. Students who are repeating courses, repeating years, or doing remediation/reexamination of courses are automatically placed on academic probation.

This status is not meant to be punitive. Rather, it serves to identify deficiencies in educational performance that, if not resolved, may negatively affect promotion or graduation. This status alerts the student that they may be in need of additional assistance. The intent is to provide support for the student to continue in the program, and such support may include referral to any other University or external resource.

Students on academic probation may be prohibited from clinical activities, including direct patient care, as determined by the department. This is to ensure the safety of patients when a student's deficiencies raise doubt about their ability to provide appropriate oral healthcare. Students on academic probation may also be restricted or prohibited from active participation in extra- or co-curricular activities, if such exist in the program, to allow more focused concentration on educational obligations. Exceptions to the preceding may be allowed by the department, as deemed appropriate.

The status of academic probation must be resolved before a student can be recommended for promotion or graduation. However, academic probation is a temporary status and is not part of a student's official permanent record. Specifically, this means that there will be no indication of probationary status on any licensing or credentialing requests for information solicited while a student is on academic probation or after removal from such status. An exception to this policy may be made in unforeseen circumstances requiring that probationary status be disclosed.

Promotion/Non-promotion: For students found to be in compliance with promotions guidelines, there is no requirement of the department for individual notification of such status, and there is no action required by the student; in these cases, promotion is automatically approved. For students found to be in non-compliance with promotions guidelines, each individual student is notified of the department's findings and the corrective actions recommended; in these cases, postdoctoral Patient Treatment Center eligibility may be denied or withdrawn until deficiencies are resolved.

Graduation/Non-graduation: For students completing their final year, the department will recommend graduation after review of all recorded final-year grades verifies that graduation guidelines have been met. In addition, the department will establish whether or not patient-care, research, and any other educational activities have been/will be completed before graduation.

Postdoctoral Clinic Eligibility/Non-eligibility: The welfare and safety of the school's patients are of paramount concern. The department will evaluate a student's qualifications to begin and/or continue direct patient care. No student will be allowed to provide direct patient care if the department determines that the didactic, preclinical, and/or clinical performance raise reasonable doubts about that individual's ability to adequately care for patients, even under supervised conditions.

Suspension: The program director and/or relevant associate dean (e.g., academic, clinical, or student affairs) may impose a temporary suspension from school upon any student for matters involving: the health, safety, or welfare of the student or other students, patients, faculty, or staff; the integrity of the educational process; non-compliance with regulatory and professional rules and regulations; or maintenance of order. Generally, this action is time-sensitive and often requires immediate implementation. As warranted, external agents may be involved (e.g., campus security/public safety). Students on suspension are prohibited from all curricular and co-curricular activities until the suspension is removed.

Dismissal from School: If review of the academic, preclinical, clinical, and/or research record establishes that a student's performance is beyond the scope of reasonable corrective action, then the department may recommend dismissal from the school. Dismissal is generally effective immediately, especially when patient care may be jeopardized, but may be postponed as warranted by relevant considerations pertaining to individual cases. It should be noted that the conditions for dismissal do not require students to have been placed on academic probation beforehand, either at all or for any specific time period.

Repetition of the Academic Year: If the department determines that a student's performance is beyond the scope of remediation/reexamination, but not beyond correction, the department may recommend that the student repeat the academic year. A student directed to repeat any given academic year will be required to repeat all of the courses in that year's curriculum. The program director or associate dean for academic affairs may exempt the student from some courses if previous performance indicates sufficient knowledge, skills, and values to meet entrance requirements for the next program year. However, the student may also be required to complete additional educational activities, to support successful outcomes.

If a student is required to repeat any given academic year, the student will be placed on academic probation, if not already in such status, and the status of academic probation will be extended through that repeat academic year, and the student will be subject to all specific conditions recommended by the department. The department, with approval of the Office of Academic Affairs, will notify the student of all courses to be repeated and any additional educational activities and/or specific conditions associated with their case. The student is responsible for attendance and full participation in these courses and related activities. To be considered successful, the student must achieve no final grade below a "C" in all repeated courses and meet all other conditions of the student's Academic Probation. Failure to meet this condition will result in the department's subsequent recommendation for dismissal from school.

Repetition of a Specific Course(s), without Repeating the Academic Year: The department may authorize a student to repeat courses, while concurrently participating in educational activities of the next academic year. This option is considered appropriate only for students with one or two unsatisfactory courses, and when curriculum scheduling permits. Students having three or more deficient courses typically will be recommended to repeat the academic year, or will be dismissed.

Any student repeating a specific course will remain on academic probation and will not be officially promoted until all designated courses are successfully repeated, with a final grade no lower than a “C” for each and every course being repeated. Although the student may be permitted to participate in the next year’s curriculum, the student will be responsible for attendance and full participation in the course(s) being repeated. Furthermore, student acceptance of this option is with the understanding that noncompliance with the department recommendation will usually result in dismissal.

Remediation/Reexamination of a Specific Course(s): The department may, in limited circumstances, authorize the remediation/reexamination of unsatisfactory/failed courses. The timeframe for this option is normally between the end of the current academic year and start of the following academic year. This option may be considered for students achieving two or three unsatisfactory (“D”) courses. Courses in which a final grade of “F” was achieved are not eligible for remediation/reexamination and require that an exception be granted by the department if remediation/reexamination is to be allowed.

If remediation/reexamination of a course is recommended, it is solely the student’s responsibility to contact the relevant course director(s) to initiate the remediation/reexamination process; neither the course director(s) nor the department have any responsibility to initiate the process after the student has been notified of this recommendation. Any student remediating/reexamining specific courses will remain on academic probation and will not be officially promoted until these courses have been successfully remediated/re-examined, with a final grade no lower than a “C.” Although the student may be permitted to participate in the next year’s curriculum, it is with the understanding that non-compliance with the department recommendation will usually result in dismissal.

XI. Appeals Process

Students (Residents) have the right to appeal department recommendations. Students are notified of their right to appeal in the letter communicating the recommendations of the relevant department. To initiate a formal appeal, the student must send a written letter to the dean requesting a review of the case, including a summary of the reasons for seeking such a review and description of additional factors deemed relevant to the appeal. Appeals to the dean must be submitted within 14 calendar days of the date of notification of the academic sanction or corrective action; late appeals will not be considered.

The dean will decide if the case merits further review and may request additional information, as needed. Generally, the scope of the dean’s review involves evaluating the merits of the appeal and any supportive documentation not previously available to the department. Following review, the dean will uphold, overturn, or modify the original recommendations of the department. The Dean’s decision shall then be communicated to the student and the appropriate School administrator(s) and relevant faculty and staff. Actions to be taken based on the dean’s decision regarding the appeal of a student in the postdoctoral program shall be handled by the associate dean for academic affairs.

Students have an additional level of appeal beyond the GSDM dean. Students who do not find the dean’s decisions to be acceptable have the right to appeal to the provost of Boston University Medical Campus. Appeals to the provost must be submitted in writing within 14 business days of the date of notification of

the school dean's decision. The provost will communicate their decision to the student and the GSDM dean, with any recommended actions. The provost's decision is final, and there are no further levels of appeal.

XII. Leave of Absence

A student (Resident) in academic difficulty may request a leave of absence from a program. This request is initiated by the student and is reviewed and approved first by the department and then the associate dean for academic affairs, who will establish conditions for the student's eventual return to school. Leaves of absence are for a minimum of one semester, or remaining portion thereof, but normally are for the remainder of a given academic year.