

Title of Policy: Student Appeals

I. PURPOSE

To provide and describe the process by which a student can appeal a decision made by an SMS program Student Progress Committee (SPC). Any SMS student called to a SPC meeting and has a summary action or judgment placed on them for academic and/or professional reasons has the right to appeal that decision. The appeals process is to ensure that proper procedure has been followed, that appropriate precedents and policies have been applied, and to ensure that the judgment is in line with the precipitating event.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

- A. Only judgements or disciplinary actions originating from an SPC decision will be considered in initiating the SMS appeals process.
- B. Appeal requests must fall into one of the following three categories and be specified by the student at the time the appeal is requested:
 - 1. The SPC sanction imposed is disproportionate to the violation.
 - 2. The processes utilized by the SPC were flawed.
 - 3. New evidence exists that was not available at the SPC meeting AND the evidence would have likely altered the outcome.
- C. The Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) will make the student aware of the Appeals Committee membership. A student should never contact a member to discuss the case while the appeal process is ongoing. The contacted member is obligated to report the timing and nature of the contact to the committee chair. Concerns should only be addressed to the ADAA, including concerns of conflict of interest.

- D. A student may submit a request to the ADAA to replace a committee member for a perceived conflict of interest. If allowed, the ADAA will arrange an alternate committee member who will sit for the assigned meeting only. Students will be made aware that committee member re-assignment may delay the meeting date/time.
- E. In rare cases the Appeals Chair could ask the student to meet with the Appeals Committee. Only students will be allowed to attend if requested. No family members, friends, or legal entities will be allowed.
- F. In all cases, the Appeals Chair will keep the meeting minutes. No other forms of recording shall be permitted by the student or committee members.
- G. Appeals Committee members should not discuss the student or the case details before or after the meeting with each other or with non-committee members. Only information presented in the scheduled meeting may be considered in the appeals decision.

III. DEFINITIONS

The SMS Appeals Committee will review SMS student appeals regarding decisions made by program Student Progress Committees. The Committee consists of five to six full-time SMS faculty members, to include representatives from each PA program at minimum and other SMS programs when feasible. Limited/one-time reassignments may be made by the SMS ADAA should a conflict of interest arise. Members serve a two-year term or as needed assignments, and the Chair is assigned by the SMS Dean for a three-year term.

IV. AUDIENCE

This policy applies to any SMS student called to a Student Progress Committee (SPC) meeting and has a summary action or judgement placed on them for academic and/or professional reasons.

V. COMPLIANCE

If the policy and procedures found herein are not properly followed by the SMS student requesting an appeal, the appeal will not be considered.

VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The SMS Appeals Committee will review SMS student appeals regarding decisions made by program Student Progress Committees.

The SMS ADAA will initiate SMS Appeals Committee meetings based on student request and answer any questions regarding policy and procedure. The SMS ADAA may also call Appeals Committee meetings to discuss policy and procedure concerns and/or recommendations that would be sent to the Dean and/or the Leadership Committee for review. Minutes will be taken.

The SMS Associate Dean handles the Appeals process in the absence of the ADAA.

VII. PROCEDURES

1. After a student has received official documentation of an SPC decision, a student may begin the appeals process by contacting the ADAA by email.
2. If a student appeals the SPC decision, they must submit a professional, succinct letter for the appeal to the SMS ADAA, or the SMS Associate Dean if the former is unavailable, within five (5) business days of receiving written notification of the SPC decision.
3. The student appeal letter submitted to the ADAA must outline the category of the student's appeal (see 'C' in policy section) and the student's rationale for the appeal. It should be focused on the facts of the case and/or procedural concerns. It should NOT be accusatory to any individual(s) or comparative to situations inside or outside of the institution. The content of the letter should be the student's alone and not written by other family members or lawyers.
4. The ADAA will review the student appeal letter and determine if the appeal meets criteria and merit. If approved, the ADAA will activate the

- Appeals Committee and contact the Appeals Committee Chair so that a meeting time can be scheduled. The date and time of the meeting will be relayed to the student by the ADAA as soon as it is available.
5. The ADAA will contact the student and/or set up a meeting to further discuss the details of the appeals process and to answer any questions but is not allowed to act as a counselor or give any advice regarding the specifics of the case.
 6. The ADAA will inform the appropriate Program Director that the appeals process has been activated. The ADAA will also request that all information used by the SPC to reach its decision be sent along with complete meeting minutes to the ADAA. The ADAA will compile this information and then pass it on to the Appeals Committee Chair.
 7. The Appeals Committee will review the case information as well as the student appeal letter to determine if any breaches of policy or procedure occurred and whether relevant precedent was considered in the SPC's decision. Detailed minutes will be kept for every meeting. The Committee will either uphold the SPC's decision or will uphold the student's appeal.
 8. Once the Appeals Committee has met and made its decision, the Chair will have 24 hours to inform the ADAA of the decision. Additionally, the Appeals Committee Chair forwards the decision(s) to the SPC Chair.
 9. Within three (3) business days following the Appeals committee meeting, the student will receive notification of the Appeals Committee's decision regarding the original SPC recommendation(s) and relevant instructions/expectations via the student's University-issued email account. The ADAA will pass this information to the student via email. Additionally, the Chair of the Appeals Committee will send an official letter through U.S. Mail to the student.
 10. The ADAA will inform the appropriate Program Director and the Chair of the appropriate SPC of the decision of the Appeals Committee to uphold the student's appeal or to uphold the SPC's decision. In the event the Appeals Committee decides to uphold the student's appeal, the SPC Chair will schedule a follow-up SPC meeting to reconsider the student

case. If the Appeals Committee decides to uphold the SPC's decision, the student decision letter sent via email and U.S. Mail will instruct the student to complete instructions previously provided by the SPC.

VIII. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, STATUTES, AND RELATED POLICIES

SACSCOC Standard 10.1 (Academic policies) and Standard 12.3 (Student rights), and ARC-PA Standard A3.15g (policies and procedures for student grievances and appeals).

IX. CONTACT INFORMATION

The office of the ADAA: (423)869-6501. The ADAA may be reached by dialing the School of Medical Sciences main phone number at 423-869-3611 and asking to be transferred to the ADAA.

X. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Original policy adoption: January 8, 2020.

Revision: approved by SMS Dean's Council on June 15, 2023.