



The University of Alabama at Birmingham  
ACADEMIC GUIDELINES

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### **ACADEMIC STATUS**

The responsibility of the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Dentistry (SOD) includes the academic oversight of all students pursuing the DMD degree. The Academic Performance Committee (APC) is charged with monitoring and assessing the academic status of students in the DMD program. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (Academic Dean) serves as the Chair of the APC. The APC meets on a regular basis, but no less frequently than at the close of each term. The APC reviews grades and other material pertinent to student progress and evaluates the information as it relates to established school policy. Based on this information, the APC will make recommendations to the Academic Dean regarding promotion, repetition, remediation, and dismissal. The decision of academic status rests with the Academic Dean. These guidelines may be revised periodically, and academic decisions will be governed by the version of the Academic Guidelines in place at the time of the decision.

It should be noted that the APC reviews additional material as well as grades when determining academic status recommendations for students. Grades, professionalism including ethics, academic interactions, performance on the Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INDBE), and other feedback shared by faculty, staff, etc. may be a part of the decision-making process.

### **Promotion/Graduation**

Students with satisfactory professional conduct and no standing course failure(s) may be recommended for promotion to the succeeding term or graduation. Students with incomplete grades are eligible for promotion to a succeeding term contingent on successful fulfillment of course requirements and conversion of the incomplete grade to a passing grade. Students with incomplete grades are not eligible for graduation. Passing scores on the Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE) as well as demonstration of acceptable professional ethics and personal conduct, are required for promotion and graduation. The SOD administration reserves the right to waive the INBDE graduation requirement if testing centers are closed for a prolonged period of time.

This is in addition to other SOD and University policies including, but not limited to, appropriate medical clearance, the return of all institutional property, and payment of financial obligations.

### **Repetition/Dismissal**

A recommendation for repetition of the academic year will be made if the APC determines that a student has the potential to complete the DMD program, but has not met the criteria to

justify promotion to the next class level or for graduation. Any modification of the curriculum for the year being repeated will be at the discretion of the Academic Dean. Repetition of any given academic year for academic deficiencies or as a result of ethics sanctions will be allowed to occur only once.

A recommendation for academic dismissal will be made if evidence exists to indicate that a student may not be able to correct past academic deficiencies within a reasonable period of time. Once a student has been dismissed for academic reasons or ethics violations, future readmission to the UAB SOD will not be considered.

The APC may recommend repetition or dismissal if a student does not, in their professional judgment, show sufficient aptitude to justify allowing the student to continue, regardless of the student's grades. A student may be judged ineligible for promotion or be dismissed when he/she has displayed repeated lack of professionalism with respect to the management of patients, or in their interactions with other students, staff, or faculty. These factors, or any other concerns regarding professionalism, among others including attendance, may be treated equally important with academic standards, in that they reflect the developing capacity to deliver a high standard of patient care.

Any of the following conditions may justify the APC's recommendation for repetition or dismissal:

- Any failing grade.
- A failing grade and subsequent failure of the remediated course.
- Nonfulfillment of the outlined remediation of a failed course.
- Lack of appropriate professional development.
- Non-compliance with the Student Code of Ethics.
- Continued poor/marginal academic performance.

### **Procedure for student notification**

The Academic Dean, or their designee, will convey any decisions involving academic actions to the student. The involved student may be notified in-person, via telephone, email, or U.S. mail sent to the student's address listed in the SOD's records.

The notification shall include the student's academic deficiencies, the Academic Dean's decision, and the conditions for continuation in the program in the case of remediation of a course or repetition of an academic year, and the consequences of non-compliance and/or continued performance deficiencies.

### **GUIDELINES FOR APPEAL**

#### **Grade appeal**

A student may appeal a grade in a course if he/she feels one of the following applies: 1. The grading was not in accordance with published course grading policy; 2. Inconsistencies were

made in application of evaluation standards among students; 3. A procedural error occurred in establishing the grade (i.e. mathematical error); or 4. The grading was arbitrary or capricious.

The student should seek resolution using the following steps:

- 1) Clarification should be sought from the course director in an attempt to resolve the disagreement without further appeal. This step must be completed within two weeks of the release of the course grade in the BlazerNET/Banner system.
- 2) If the matter is not resolved by consultation with the course director, the student may submit a written appeal to the chair of the department in which the course is given (If the department chair is the course director, then the student may go straight to step 3 as outlined below). This must be accomplished within two days after the conclusion of step 1 for consideration. The written appeal must state the basis for the appeal. The department chair will make a decision for or against the appeal. If the decision is for the appeal, the division director/chair will initiate the grade change process for the course.
- 3) If the chair's decision is against appeal, the student may make a final appeal to the Academic Dean (If the Academic Dean is the course director, the Dean will appoint a substitute who will fulfill the duties listed in this step of the grade appeal process.). This must be done within two days after the chair's decision. The Academic Dean will review the matter and then make a decision whether or not to dismiss the appeal. If the decision is to hear the appeal, the Academic Dean will appoint an *ad hoc* committee of four faculty members and one student to conduct a hearing. The student may challenge the participation of members because of perceived conflict of interest, bias, or prejudice. Such challenges, including rationale, must be made within 48 hours of notification of the names of the committee members. At its discretion, the chair of the committee will determine whether such a conflict of interest exists and whether a member should be replaced. Postponement of the hearing may occur if a replacement member cannot be immediately identified. The *ad hoc* committee will make a recommendation to the Academic Dean, whose decision will be final.

### **Academic status appeal**

To appeal the decision made by the Academic Dean for dismissal or repetition of a year, the student must address a request in writing to the Chair of the Faculty Council along with the rationale or basis for the request within one week of the notification of the academic actions. The Chair of the Faculty Council will conduct a meeting of the Council as outlined below.

A hearing of the Council will be conducted as follows:

- 1) Minutes of the proceedings shall be kept.
- 2) The Chair of the Council will call the meeting to order and will introduce the members present.
- 3) The Academic Dean or his/her designee will present the rationale for the recommendations and decision relating to the student's academic status. The student who initiated the appeal will not be present during this part of the meeting.
- 4) The student shall then present his/her rationale for reversal of the Academic Dean's decision. The student may have a single advisor present. The advisor may not take part

- in the hearing and if the advisor becomes disruptive he/she may be dismissed from the proceedings. The student may also call witnesses on his/her behalf.
- 5) Council members may question witnesses, the student, and the Academic Dean as they deem necessary. The Council may also call additional witnesses and/or request additional documentation.
  - 6) After hearing the testimony, the Council shall meet in closed session where discussion shall take place followed by a motion for or against the Academic Dean's decision. A vote will be taken with a simple majority ruling. A vote in support of the Academic Dean's decision will end the appeal process at the SOD level. A vote in favor of the student's appeal will be followed by discussion and recommendations by the Council to the Dean of the SOD. These recommendations may range from less severe penalties to the complete lifting of academic actions.
  - 7) The Chair of the Faculty Council will communicate the results of the vote and any recommendations to the Dean and the Academic Dean. The Dean may implement or modify the Faculty Council's recommendation. The Dean of the SOD or their designee will issue a written final decision to the student via email, hand delivery, U.S. mail, or certified mail (sent to the student's address listed in the SOD's records) with copies distributed to the Chair of the Faculty Council and to the Academic Dean. The Dean's decision is final for the SOD.

### **THE GRADING SYSTEM**

Grades are intended to reflect the performance or degree of learning by the individual student. All grades are assigned after a careful review of information about a student's performance that was obtained in a systematic, reliable, and as valid a manner as possible.

In addition, completion of course evaluation surveys as distributed by the Office of Academic Affairs is mandatory. Failure to complete the course survey within the imposed timeframe will result in an automatic letter grade reduction for a standard letter grade course and automatic failure of a pass/fail course. If failure to complete the course survey results in failure of a course, the student will be subject to the academic actions associated with a failed course.

- A** Distinguished achievement of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of a student at a given stage of development. The A grade states that the student has achieved the goal(s) in the discipline under study.
- B** Satisfactory performance above the minimally acceptable level but below the distinguished level for a student at a given stage of development. The B grade states that the student has shown adequate performance in the discipline under study and is still developing in the discipline.
- C** Minimally acceptable performance for a student at a given stage of development. While the C grade indicates passing performance, it is evidence that a student is struggling in this discipline. Multiple C grades may indicate an overall lack of understanding of the dental curriculum and may be considered poor/marginal academic performance.

- F** An unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the student's performance in the required assessments has revealed poor understanding of the course content and a lack of competency in the stated area. The APC will make recommendations to the Academic Dean as to whether to allow remediation of the failed course or if more severe academic action is justified (repetition or dismissal). If remediation is allowed, the course director must submit to the student in writing the terms of the remediation plan (the Deficient Grade Report Form, Appendix A, can be used).
- I** A temporary grade of I may be assigned when, due to extraordinary circumstances, the student was prevented from completing the work of the course on time. For an I to be awarded, the following circumstances must be met: the student does not complete all course requirements by the final day of the course; the student's performance has been satisfactory to within two weeks of the end of the course; the student presents proof satisfactory to the course director, department chair, and Academic Dean that circumstances beyond their control prevented completion of course requirements, and such proof must be received by the course director no later than the deadline for grade submission as set by the Academic Dean. The I grade is not intended to be used when the course work has been unsatisfactory. Additionally, the Academic Dean must approve any grade assignments of I. The assignment of an I requires a written communication from the course director or Academic Dean specifying the time and manner in which the student must complete the course requirements during the student's next period of enrollment. Assignments to make up an I must be submitted by the end of the next term of enrollment at the SOD or earlier if mandated by the course director and/or Academic Dean; if not submitted by that time the I will automatically change to an F. The grade of I may be removed upon successful completion of required course work without restriction as to the grade assigned. Extension of the incomplete timeline may be granted if circumstances warrant and this requires formal petition from the student to the Academic Dean who will make the final decision on whether to grant an extension.
- G** On rare occasions, a student may be exempted from a course, and thus will be assigned the G grade designation. Requests for exemption are handled on an individual basis and the decision to allow a student to be exempt from a course rests solely with the Academic Dean. The G grade is not computed into the student's GPA. A student who exempts a course or courses will be considered on a special track and a class ranking will not be generated.
- W** A grade of W is potentially rendered in a course if there has been an administrative withdrawal, a student-initiated withdrawal, or an approved leave of absence. This grade signifies that either a course was not completed after its start or had not yet started.
- MT** A grade of MT is a temporary notation given in select multi-term courses. A notation of MT will not be calculated in the student's grade point average for the term in which the notation appears. An MT that is not changed by the grade submission deadline of the next term automatically converts to an F.

A student will not be eligible for graduation if they have not successfully completed or remediated any grades of MT, L, or F. Any remedial or make-up work after the final term of the D4 year will require re-enrollment at the SOD for at least an additional term with all associated costs including tuition and fees.

### **Pass/Fail Grades**

The Pass/Fail grading system applies in certain courses and is specified in the individual course syllabus. When a Pass grade is awarded, the student earns credit for the course, however this is not a component of the student's GPA. A failing grade in a Pass/Fail course will trigger the same outcomes as outlined previously under F.

### **Remediation**

Failure of a course may result in dismissal from the SOD, repetition of the academic year, or remediation of the course as decided by the Academic Dean after review of the student's academic progress and consultation with the Academic Performance Committee. The following pertains to a course that has been approved for remediation:

- A fee, as approved by the University and the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama, will be charged for any course that is remediated.
- Remediated courses will have a new course number, and will be graded on the Pass/Fail system.
- The original course grade as well as the remediated course grade will both appear on student transcripts.

Some courses are not amenable for remediation, as determined by the course director and the Academic Dean. Examples of such courses are large preclinical/clinical courses, and several biomedical science courses. If no remediation is offered, the APC may allow a student to retake the course while repeating the entire academic year. The APC and Academic Dean may consider other methods of remediation as well.

Didactic courses: It is desirable that any remediable F grade received in a didactic course, that has been approved for remediation by the Academic Dean, be remediated within four weeks of the release of the course grade in the BlazerNET/Banner system or the conclusion of a grade appeal, but this is at the discretion of the course director in consultation with the Academic Dean. If approved, the remediation may be satisfactorily completed by a variety of exercises and is at the discretion of the course director. These exercises may include any or all of the following as well as other methods: re-examination, an oral examination, a written assignment, reading assignments, additional laboratory exercises, and doing additional reports. If the Academic Dean approves remediation of a course, the course director is to notify the student in writing (the Deficient Grade Report Form, Appendix A, can be used) of the terms of the remediation plan. If a course is not successfully remediated within the specified time frame, the student will be subject to a re-evaluation of their academic status and may be dismissed from the DMD program or required to repeat the academic year.

Clinical and Laboratory Courses: Failing grades in clinical and laboratory disciplines often cannot be remediated, if allowed, in a four-week period, although course directors are encouraged to comply with this time period. F grades in clinical courses may require additional time in the preclinical dentistry laboratory and/or additional enrollment within the SOD.

Marginal Academic Performance: In addition, a student with marginal performance, even with passing grades, may be required to perform remedial work to continue in the DMD program. Furthermore, if the APC decides that the student's performance may compromise entry into a sequential course or program or jeopardize the treatment of patients, remedial classes and/or requirements may be assigned as warranted and may require additional enrollment within the SOD. If a student's clinical performance is deemed to compromise patient welfare, a student may be withdrawn from clinical activities, or given restricted clinical activities, until they are deemed safe and prepared and may necessitate additional enrollment within the SOD.

### **Student Attendance**

The Office of Academic Affairs expects students to attend all classes, clinics, and special events as planned through the School of Dentistry. If special circumstances prevent attendance, the student should promptly notify the appropriate parties and provide any relevant documentation. The Office of Academic Affairs supports all course-specific attendance policies as determined by the individual course directors for both predoctoral and postdoctoral students.

## POLICY ON NATIONAL BOARD DENTAL EXAMINATIONS

All candidates for the DMD degree must pass the Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE). Modifications of the National Board Dental Examination guidelines set forth below can be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Academic Dean.

### Integrated National Board Dental Examination (INBDE)

It is the student's responsibility to register for the exam. Anyone having difficulty with the registration process should contact the Office of Academic Affairs for assistance. The student **must** arrange to take the INBDE between the dates listed on the SOD Academic Calendar which fall between the end of the Review of Dentistry course and the end of the D4 fall break. Failure to take the exam by the deadline will result in academic actions as determined by the Academic Dean after consultation with the APC, and these actions may include administrative withdrawal from the SOD. If testing centers are closed for a prolonged time, the APC will re-evaluate this timeline and the Academic Dean may institute revised test scheduling guidelines which would be communicated to the D4 students. If a student fails the INBDE, they have the opportunity to retake the exam after the minimum wait of 90 days. If the student fails the exam a second time, they have the opportunity to retake the exam after the minimum wait of 90 days from the second exam date. If the student fails the exam a third time, the student will be dismissed from the SOD and will not receive their degree. If the results from a third attempt at the exam are not received by the graduation date, re-enrollment, with associated tuition/fees, and a subsequent graduation date will be set. If testing centers are closed for a prolonged period of time, the APC and Dean's Council will re-evaluate the National Board requirement for graduation from the UAB SOD and any changes would be communicated to the D4 students.

International Dentistry Program (IDP) students must have passed either the INBDE or both NBDE Parts I & II as a requirement for admission into the program. Thus, the IDP students are exempt from the above policy on National Board Dental Examinations.



## **WITHDRAWALS and LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

### **Administrative Withdrawals**

Students who must repeat all or part of the academic year as a result of academic sanctions or ethics violations may be administratively withdrawn from the SOD. The Academic Dean will determine the conditions for resumption of studies and the student's academic status.

### **Student-Initiated Withdrawals**

A student-initiated withdrawal means that the student is voluntarily severing his/her enrollment in the SOD prior to the completion of requirements for the DMD degree. Reasons might include changes in career objectives or other personal matters. The student's request for withdrawal shall be made in writing to the Academic Dean. Consistent with University policy, the Academic Dean may approve the student's request for withdrawal, but such approval carries no stated or implied commitments concerning future readmission to the SOD.

If a student withdraws from the SOD after the conclusion of a course, grades for that course will be generated and reflected on the student's transcript. Withdrawals initiated prior to the end of a course will result in a course grade of **W**. If the student withdraws following the close of a term, all course grades will be entered on the student's transcript.

Tuition for the term will be refunded if withdrawal occurs prior to the second week of a term. Fifty percent of tuition will be refunded if withdrawal occurs between week two and week four of the term. No refund of tuition will be made for withdrawals after the fourth week of a term.

If a student does not attend classes, complete assessments, and/or otherwise discontinues in the program without notifying the Academic Dean with a request for withdrawal, all courses for the given term will receive a grade based on the completed student exercises and any incomplete course work will receive a grade of zero for the final course grade evaluation. If failing grades are obtained due to lack of attendance, then the student's academic status will be re-evaluated.

### **Leave of Absence**

Leave of absence means that the student is temporarily halting his/her dental education at the SOD. Potentially acceptable grounds for requesting a leave of absence include medical, financial hardship and/or other personal/social obstacles, government required services (e.g., grand jury duty, military service, etc.), and to seek other educational opportunities (e.g., Fulbright Program, etc.). However, mere existence of these grounds does not ensure that the request will be granted. Anticipated academic difficulty is not grounds upon which to seek a leave of absence. If a leave of absence is granted during a term, the student will not receive grades for any course(s) in which they are currently enrolled.

The student's request for a leave of absence shall be made in writing to the Academic Dean, and typically for a period not to exceed one year (certain educational opportunities may require greater than a 1-year commitment and will be given consideration for a longer leave period).

The request shall set forth the period of absence desired, the reasons for the absence, and any other pertinent information. For those requesting government-required services, a copy of jury summons or a copy of military orders including the date of induction and duration must accompany the written request. To qualify for a leave of absence for a medical condition, the student must follow the UAB medical withdrawal policy (<https://www.uab.edu/students/health/medical-withdrawal>).

In making the decision on the request, the Academic Dean will consider the following factors: the student's reasons as stated in the request, the student's academic record, and the feasibility of reserving an open position in the SOD's enrollment upon returning. If the request is approved, the student is assured the opportunity to return to the SOD at a designated time as stipulated in the Academic Dean's letter of approval. Included in this letter may be conditions stating make-up or remedial work required of the student or other stipulations to help ensure the student is prepared for resumption of their dental studies. The student must confirm his or her plans to re-enroll by notifying the Academic Dean in writing by the date stipulated in the Academic Dean's letter. If the student fails to notify the Academic Dean or does not return to the SOD at or before the designated time for expiration of the granted leave of absence, he/she shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the SOD.

Tuition for the term will be refunded if approval of the leave occurs prior to the second week of a term. Fifty percent of tuition will be refunded if it occurs between week two and week four of the term. No refund of tuition will be made for an approved leave of absence after the fourth week of a term.

### **MAXIMUM PROGRAM LENGTH**

Students are expected to complete the DMD program in four academic years. Due to extenuating circumstances, including leaves of absence or repetition of a year, students may require more than four academic years to complete the program. If additional time to complete the program is granted, the program must be completed in no more than six academic years from the time of matriculation. Under extremely unusual circumstances, a student may petition in writing to the Academic Dean for an exception to this policy. Students admitted into the DMD/PhD program are exempt from the six-year stipulation.

### **STUDENT RECORDS & REGISTRATION**

All students are required to be officially registered before being permitted to attend classes or clinics. A complete admission to and registration in the University includes, but is not limited to, residency status classification, and medical clearance. Failure to complete these or any other part of the admission or registration procedures will make registration incomplete and subject to immediate cancellation.

Students are required to pay all University tuition and fees prior to the first day of classes. If payment is not received, the student's registration will be canceled and the student will be unable to attend classes or participate in patient care activities. When the tuition has been paid, students will be able to register and may be charged a "late registration" fee.

### **The Dean's Authority**

The Dean of the SOD has the authority to waive or modify any academic decisions, or develop an alternative course of action. The Academic Dean may delegate his/her authority as outlined in this document at their discretion.

Appendix A:

**UAB** SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY  
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

**DEFICIENT GRADE REPORT FORM**

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|                                     |                          |          |                          |        |                          |             |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------|-------------|
| DATE:                               |                          |          |                          |        |                          |             |
| TO:                                 |                          |          |                          |        |                          |             |
| FROM:                               |                          |          |                          |        |                          |             |
| COURSE NAME/NUMBER:                 |                          |          |                          |        |                          |             |
| Course Type:<br><i>(Select One)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | DIDACTIC | <input type="checkbox"/> | CLINIC | <input type="checkbox"/> | PRECLINICAL |

This memorandum is sent to you with respect to your performance, which is well below the expected level. Please give careful attention to the comments, recommendations, and plan.

COMMENTS REGARDING STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND POTENTIAL TO CORRECT DEFICIENCIES:

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RECOMMENDATIONS AND PLAN:

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COURSE DIRECTOR SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies to:     \_\_\_\_\_ Associate Dean, Academic Affairs  
                  \_\_\_\_\_ Department Chair