

Student Academic Policies

The following academic policies apply to all students who matriculate during the academic year of this catalog publication. These policies will apply throughout the entire time a student is enrolled in the college. In the event that these policies need to be revised as the result of new accreditation requirements, mandates by the United States Department of Education, or other unforeseen circumstances, students will be notified in writing prior to the effective date of the new policy.

Faculty and students should also refer to the University Academic Policy section for additional policies that apply to all students at Midwestern University.

Student Promotion and Graduation Committee

(SPGC) is responsible for enforcing the published academic and professional standards established by the faculty and for assuring that they are met by all students enrolled in each program. As such, this Committee establishes the criteria and policies and procedures for student advancement and graduation, as well as academic probation, dismissal, and readmission. This Committee meets routinely and is most often scheduled at the conclusion of each academic quarter to review the academic progress and performance of students enrolled in the program in relation to institutional academic policies. At the end of the academic year, the Committee assesses the academic and professional progress and performance of each student. If the student's progress is satisfactory, the student is promoted to the next academic year, provided all tuition and fees have been paid. Finally, the Committee also identifies and recommends to the MWU Faculty Senate candidates for graduation.

If a student fails to make satisfactory progress in completing the prescribed course of study, the Committee shall take appropriate action to correct the deficiency (ies). In instances involving repeated failures of a student to maintain satisfactory academic/professional progress, the Committee may recommend dismissal.

If a student's academic performance is scheduled for discussion during a Student Promotion and Graduation Committee meeting and the result could change the student's status in the College (extended program or dismissal), then the student will be invited to either appear personally before the Committee or submit a letter or documentation to be presented at the meeting on their behalf. The invited students must indicate, in writing, their intention to appear or provide their materials 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. If the student chooses to appear before the Committee, this prerogative extends to the involved student only and not to any other individuals. The information will be provided to the Chair and Committee members of the SPGC.

Among the options available to the Committee in regard to unsatisfactory student performance are:

1. That a written caution be provided to the student.
2. That the student:
 - A. be placed on academic probation for a specified period of time;
 - B. take an alternative approved course offered at another college or university;
 - C. repeat the course(s) in which there is a failure when the course is offered again in the curriculum;
 - D. be placed in an extended program;
 - E. require that the student take additional coursework (e.g., OPTOG 1597 A-C, OPTOG 1697 A-C, or OPTOG 1797 A-D); or
 - F. be dismissed from the College.

Within two working days following the Committee meeting, the Associate Dean is responsible for providing notification in writing with a delivery confirmation (i.e., next-day express mail, e-mail, or hand-delivery) to the involved student, informing them of the recommendation of the Committee. The Associate Dean is responsible for reviewing all recommendations for consistency with stated College academic policies and practices. The Dean or Associate Dean is responsible for providing written notification to all appropriate academic support offices (i.e., Registrar, Student Financial Services, etc.).

Academic Standards

An annual didactic grade point average will be used as the central measure of academic performance. It is calculated from all didactic and clinical courses from a particular professional year. Grades earned in courses taken prior to matriculation in the professional program and grades earned for courses taken at the College in a more advanced professional year than that in which the student is enrolled, are not included in the calculation of this annual grade point average. Grades earned for courses taken at another institution while enrolled in the professional program are included in the calculation of this annual grade point average if the transfer coursework was approved by the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee.

Students must maintain an annual grade point average of 2.00 in their professional program to remain in good academic standing. If a student's annual grade point average drops below 2.00 at the end of any quarter during the academic year, or the student earns a grade of "F/WF" in one or more courses, the student is notified, in writing that they are being placed on academic probation for the next academic quarter.

Probation represents notice that continued inadequate academic performance may result in dismissal from the program and the College.

If the student has an annual grade point average less than 2.00 at the end of an academic year, or has earned one or two "F/WF" grades in a quarter the student will be either dismissed or will be placed in an extended program (academic deceleration). The extended program year must take place in the year immediately following and the student will be required to successfully repeat all the courses in which the grades of "W/F/WF" were received and successfully complete any and all additional courses as assigned by the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee. A student is allowed to go through an extended program only once. To be returned to good academic standing, an individual must raise the student's annual grade point average to 2.00 or above at the end of the repeat year. Such a student reenters the next professional year curriculum and resumes a full load. A reentering student must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 at the end of each quarter to continue at AZCOPT.

If the student does not meet the criteria for satisfactory academic performance at the end of the extended program, the individual will be dismissed.

If the student earns an "F/WF" in three or more courses overall, and/ or fails a repeated course, the student will be dismissed from the College. The dismissal is based on the determination by the Committee that the student has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the student possesses the aptitude to successfully achieve the standards and requirements set forth in the academic policies and professional expectations for the program.

Academic recommendations are made by the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee to the Associate Dean. Students will be notified, in writing, within two working days following the committee meeting regarding the recommendations of the Committee.

The following policies also guide decisions made by the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee:

1. A student must pass all required courses before entering the next year of the professional program.

2. Students placed on an extended program must pass any and all additional required courses assigned by the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee.
3. Students must successfully resolve all "I" (Incomplete) and "IP" (In-Progress) grades before beginning externship.
4. To proceed with externship, a student must earn an annual didactic grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.00 for the third professional year.
5. In the event that a student does not pass NBEO Part I, the student may continue in the program. However, a student must pass NBEO Part I in order to graduate.

Appeal Process

Following notification of a decision for dismissal or academic deceleration, a student may appeal, in writing, the decision to the Dean. Such appeals must be received by the Dean within three working days after the student is officially notified of the dismissal or deceleration decision. A narrative explaining the basis of the appeal should accompany the request. An appeal must be based on one of the following premises:

1. Bias of one or more Committee members.
2. Material information not available to the Committee at the time of its initial decision.
3. Procedural error.

The Dean will review the appeal request and narrative and decide if there is sufficient information to convene a meeting of the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee, which would be asked to provide a recommendation to the Dean on the appeal request.

Once a decision is made to convene a Committee meeting, the student requesting an appeal shall be notified in writing with a delivery confirmation (i.e., e-mail or hand delivery) by the Associate Dean at least two working days in advance of the scheduled Committee meeting in which the student's appeal will be heard. The student will be invited to either appear personally before the committee or submit a letter or documentation to be presented at the meeting on their behalf. The invited students must indicate, in writing, their intention to appear or provide their materials 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. The information will be provided to the Chair and committee members of the SPGC. If the student chooses to appear before the Committee, this prerogative extends to the involved student only and not to any other individuals. The Committee submits its recommendation to the Dean. Upon receipt of the Committee's recommendation, the Dean will make a decision, typically within ten working days and then notify the student and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. The decision of the Dean is final.

Students must attend all didactic courses in which they are registered until the appeal process is

complete. Students registered in a clinical course (rotation) may be placed on a mandatory academic leave of absence until the appeal process is finalized.

Dismissal

A student may be dismissed from the College for academic reasons upon the recommendation of the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee. The dismissal is based on the determination by the Committee that the student has not satisfactorily demonstrated that the student possesses the aptitude to successfully achieve the standards and requirements set forth in the academic policies and professional expectations for the program.

Extended Program

Problems may arise that may necessitate the extension of a student's academic course load. Accordingly, an individual's academic course load may be reduced so that the student enters what is termed an extended program or split academic course of study. Such a program rearranges the course schedule so that the normal time period for the program is extended, usually by one additional year. Only enrolled students may enter an extended program. To enter an extended program, either one or both of the following conditions must be met:

1. **Personal hardship.** If a student is experiencing unusual stresses in life and an extended academic load could alleviate added stress, the student may petition the College for an extended program. This petition is to be submitted to the Dean or Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and may not be automatically granted, but may be approved in exceptional circumstances. The Dean and Associate Dean are responsible for reviewing and assessing the petition and may forward it to the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee if appropriate. The student will be informed of the decision, in writing, by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs or Dean.
2. **Academic.** As described above, a student ending an academic year with an annual GPA of less than 2.00 may be given the option to repeat courses from that year in which "F" grades were received. A student may be placed on an extended program for academic reasons at the discretion of the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee. A student placed on an extended program for academic reasons is automatically placed on academic probation and may not be returned to good academic standing until the extended program is successfully completed. In addition, the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee may require the student to take additional coursework to strengthen and /or maintain mastery of optometric skills, techniques and concepts during the extended program. In this case, the additional coursework will be considered as required courses for graduation. If a student earns a failing grade in this additional course work, the student will be referred to the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee.

If a student is placed on an extended program, such action does not modify or limit the committee's actions for dismissal. Thus, the student may be dismissed for academic reasons while on an extended program.

A student placed on an extended program for academic reasons will be returned to good academic standing when the individual reenters the prescribed academic program and completes all courses that were unsatisfactory and are required for graduation and successfully completes any and all additional courses as assigned by the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee.

A reentering student must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 at the end of each quarter to continue at the college. A student is allowed to go through an extended program only once.

Grade Appeals

A student whose academic progress will be subject to review by the Student Promotion and Graduation Committee and who wishes to appeal a grade must do so in an expedited manner prior to the scheduled meeting of the committee. In this case, an appeal of a didactic course grade must be submitted within one business day following posting of the grade and must be based on one of the following premises:

1. Factual errors in course assessment tools
2. Mathematical error in calculating the final grade
3. Bias

The course director must act on this appeal within one business day. If the appeal is denied, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs should notify the student of the Associate Dean's decision within one business day following receipt of the student's re-appeal. The decision of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs is final.

An appeal of a failing clinical clerkship or rotation grade must be submitted within two business days after a grade for rotation is posted. The course director must act on this appeal within two business days. If the appeal is denied, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs. The Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs should notify the student of the Associate Dean's decision within two business days following receipt of the student's reappeal. The decision of the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs is final. Students are allowed only one failed or withdrawn failed externship, and only one retake of the failed or withdrawn failed externship while enrolled at the College.

Any extension of the time for student appeal or course director's decision must be approved by the College Dean. All appeals and decisions must be communicated in written form.