

Guidelines for course directors on the follow-up and reporting of students in academic difficulty

Approved by: Undergraduate Medical Education Curriculum Committee

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A defining responsibility of each course director is the regular review of the performance of all students throughout the duration of their course or theme, as per the *Standards for timely review of student, course, and teacher evaluation data*. The identification of students who may be struggling in the course is of particular importance in the context of this ongoing review, as is the course director's response.

Immediately upon identifying a student in difficulty (defined as failure of a component, borderline performance on a component, failure to complete or submit a component, inadequate performance on any one or more competency measures linked to the UME program objectives, and/or concerning professional behaviour), the course director is required to meet with the student about his/her substandard performance and record the discussion that takes place. The fact that the meeting occurred must be conveyed to the Preclerkship/Clerkship Director, who will determine whether the student in question should be discussed during the next in camera portion of the Preclerkship/Clerkship Committee meeting. Measures to address the student's unsatisfactory performance may be taken as set out in the *Guidelines for Assessment of Students in Academic Difficulty (Preclerkship/Clerkship versions)*.

Having communicated with the student after the first incidence of difficulty, the course director is then expected to take particular note of all subsequent assessments of the student within the same course, and to communicate informally with the Preclerkship/Clerkship Director regarding the observed trend in the student's performance; this approach is expected in all cases, even where the student was not discussed at the Preclerkship/Clerkship Committee, assigned extra work or remediation, or otherwise given significant attention. Any subsequent instance of academic difficulty or concerning behaviour by the same student will at minimum necessitate another meeting between the student and course director and follow-up communication between the course director and Preclerkship/Clerkship Director. Depending on the level of concern about the student's performance, the Preclerkship/Clerkship Director may also meet with the student personally, as per the *Guidelines for Assessment of Students in Academic Difficulty (Preclerkship/Clerkship versions)*.

Note: The discussion of a student at the Preclerkship/Clerkship Committee is a constructive, student-success-oriented mechanism that serves to determine whether the student's difficulties are specific to an individual topic or more broad-based, and to bring the student to the attention of other course directors in case a pattern of difficulties emerges in future. It is therefore expected that in the majority of cases, a student in difficulty will be discussed by the Preclerkship/Clerkship Committee, unless both the course director and the Preclerkship/Clerkship Director are satisfied that the student's observed weakness genuinely represented an incident that is uncharacteristic, explicable, and unlikely to recur.