

## **Policy 900 Academic Conduct**

**Policy Number: 900**

**Effective Date: 06/01/16**

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### **Scope**

This Policy on Academic Conduct applies to predoctoral researchers (“Covered Individuals”) of The Graduate School of the Stowers Institute for Medical Research (“School”).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to establish expectations regarding academic integrity and guidelines for addressing violations of those expectations as well as appeals of academic decision-making.

### **Policy**

#### **Academic Integrity**

Predoctoral researchers must demonstrate personal integrity and honesty at all times in their coursework and research. Predoctoral researchers are obligated to refrain from acts they know or should have reason to know will impair their integrity or the integrity of the School. Because scientific research is the vital part of the curriculum of the School, predoctoral researchers are expected to adhere to the same high ethical standards in every facet of research as faculty and staff and to abide by policies of the School, Stowers Group of Companies (SGC), and Stowers Institute for Medical Research (SIMR). All forms of academic dishonesty or misconduct are prohibited. Violations under the jurisdiction of this Policy include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, forgery, alteration, misrepresentation, or other practices that deviate from those commonly accepted within the academic and scientific communities, as determined and communicated by the School in its discretion.

#### **Discipline**

Violations of this Policy may result in a discipline up to and including dismissal from the School.

A suspected violation of this Policy should be referred first to the relevant faculty member or the Dean for Academic Affairs. The faculty member will promptly review the facts and circumstances, determine whether a violation occurred, and, if so, recommend appropriate discipline to the Dean for Academic Affairs.

#### **Suspension**

Regardless of other language provided in this Policy, a predoctoral researcher may be suspended immediately from any classroom or lab session for inappropriate or unsafe behavior or failure to adhere to any School academic policy.

Immediate suspension may last from several hours up until the determination of the Dean for Academic Affairs. Faculty members are solely responsible for making the decision to suspend immediately a predoctoral researcher from classroom or lab sessions in progress for

inappropriate or unsafe behaviors. The faculty member will notify the Dean and Dean for Academic Affairs as soon as practicable when a predoctoral researcher receives an immediate suspension. At the time of a suspension by the faculty and as soon as practicable following an immediate suspension, conditions for reinstatement are explained by the Dean or Dean for Academic Affairs. Failure to meet the conditions of reinstatement may result in course failure.

During any suspension under this Policy, if it is an extended period, the predoctoral researcher's schedule will be halted and frozen until they are released from the suspension and return to class, lab activities, and program and activities.

The Dean for Academic Affairs will review the faculty member's recommendation based on information provided by the faculty member, determine whether a policy violation occurred and, if so, what interventions need to occur, and notify the predoctoral researcher of the determination in writing.

### *Academic Appeal*

A predoctoral researcher may appeal any of the following:

1. Failing final course grade.
2. Suspension from lab or course activities exceeding two weeks.
3. Recommendation for dismissal.

An appeal is initiated by the predoctoral researcher submitting a typed statement to the Chair of the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee, no later than seven (7) business days after being notified of the failing final course grade, suspension from lab or course activities, or recommendation for dismissal. The typed statement must include the following:

1. A description of the issue.
2. Specific steps that have already been taken to resolve the issue with the faculty and/or School administration.
3. Evidence supporting why the predoctoral researcher believes the decision made was inconsistent with existing School, SIMR or course policy, was arbitrary, or lacked sufficient evidence.

In preparing the appeal, it is the predoctoral researcher's responsibility and burden to prove that the action taken by the faculty was inconsistent with existing policy, arbitrary, or lacked sufficient evidence. The predoctoral researcher may seek assistance from a School faculty member as an advisor in preparing the statement for an appeal. The role of the advisor is to assist the predoctoral researcher in understanding the policy and procedure. The advisor's role does not include gathering information or presenting evidence.

The predoctoral researcher will submit the letter of appeal with supporting documents to the Chair of the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee. The Chair will forward appeal documents to faculty involved in the subject matter of the appeal or its resolution. Faculty will submit to the Chair of the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee within five (5) business days their response to the appeal document, including their supporting documentation. The Chair of the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee will forward the faculty's response to the predoctoral researcher.

The Academic Progression and Assessment Committee will meet within seven (7) business days of receiving all the written appeal documents to hear the appeal. The predoctoral researcher may request one continuance, not to exceed one week, for good cause. The predoctoral researcher and faculty will be notified 72 hours before the hearing of the time, date, and location of the hearing. It is preferable that predoctoral researchers and faculty attend the committee hearing in person. However, GSSIMR will accommodate the use of speakerphone or approved virtual method for a predoctoral researcher, advisor, faculty member or committee members who are unable to participate in an in-person hearing. Members of the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee, the involved predoctoral researcher and faculty, and the predoctoral researcher's advisor will hear the appeal. The meeting is confidential and restricted to those persons listed. If an incident involves more than one predoctoral researcher, each predoctoral researcher will be heard individually.

An Academic Progression and Assessment Committee member, who has been directly involved in the awarding of a failing course grade or recommending dismissal, will be replaced by a faculty member appointed by the Dean. If an Academic Progression and Assessment Committee member is the involved predoctoral researcher's thesis advisor, a replacement committee member will be assigned by the Dean for the purpose of the appeal.

The predoctoral researcher may be accompanied to the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee hearing by their thesis advisor. When the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee has heard all the evidence, the committee members will meet, in private, to discuss the appeal. The committee will make a decision within seven (7) business days after the hearing.

In an appeal of a failing course grade, the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee can either: 1) uphold the assigned grade or 2) return the grade to the faculty for reconsideration. If the faculty is asked to reconsider a grade by the committee, the faculty can uphold the assigned grade or change the grade. The faculty member will notify the committee of their decision within 72 hours. The faculty member's decision is final. The Academic Progression and Assessment Committee will notify the Dean and the predoctoral researcher of the outcome of the appeal.

If the outcome of an appeal results in dismissal from the program or suspension from lab or classroom activities for more than two weeks, the predoctoral researcher may make one last appeal to the Dean. The Dean of the Graduate School may take any action they deem is appropriate under the circumstances of the case. The decision of the Dean is final.

#### *Readmission Following Dismissal*

Dismissal from the School is a serious action and results when two (2) failing grades are earned in any course or the Academic Progression and Assessment Committee determine dismissal as the appropriate action. Therefore, a predoctoral researcher who has been dismissed from the School should not expect to be readmitted. A predoctoral researcher who is dismissed from the School may choose to apply for readmission through the Admissions Committee. The Admissions Committee may consider an application for readmission if there is clear evidence of probable future academic success. It is the predoctoral researcher's responsibility to support the application for readmission by submitting the following materials to the chairperson of the Admissions Committee:

1. A letter indicating the predoctoral researcher's interest to be considered for readmission and including a written plan for achieving future academic success in the program.
2. Letters of recommendation for readmission from both the academic advisor and another faculty member from the most recent course taken.

The Admissions Committee reviews these materials and the predoctoral researcher's overall academic record in making a decision and reserves the right to stipulate additional requirements for readmission.

This Policy was approved by the GSSIMR Board of Directors on September 5, 2018.

This Policy was reviewed and amended by the GSSIMR Board of Directors on November 09, 2020.

This Policy was reviewed and amended by the GSSIMR Board of Directors on September 20, 2023.

This Policy will be reviewed by the GSSIMR Board of Directors in 2026.