

**Make Your Technical Standards and Student Handbook Work For You:
Lessons From Real Life**

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Objectives

- ▶ Identify key components of technical standards and program policies.
- ▶ Discuss how to incorporate professionalism as an academic standard.
- ▶ Identify potential areas with a program's standards and policies that would hinder disciplinary action or dismissal.
- ▶ Create policy statements that allow programs to address problems decisively but remain flexible.

Standards and policies

- ▶ Technical standards
 - ▶ describe the set of skills and abilities that students must bring with them when they enter PA training
- ▶ Program policies
 - ▶ define expectations that students must meet in order to progress through and complete training

Professionalism as a standard

- ▶ What are the components of professionalism and appropriate conduct?
- ▶ Can we make an explicit, objective evaluative process?
- ▶ Can we create Technical Standards that would predict the ability of a person to meet professionalism expectations?

Common problematic issues

- ▶ Grades on exams and assignments
 - ▶ viewed as more objective
- ▶ Performance problems
 - ▶ viewed as more subjective
 - ▶ general areas of concern
 - ▶ professionalism
 - ▶ timeliness
 - ▶ plagiarism and cheating
 - ▶ participation
 - ▶ attitudes

Grades

- ▶ Exam failure
 - ▶ explicit standards for
 - ▶ passing score
 - ▶ retest or remediation options
 - ▶ potential for interpretation remains even in 'objective' exams
- ▶ Other assignments
 - ▶ follow patterns similar to those for exams

Performance issues: professionalism

- ▶ Professionalism
 - ▶ definitions vary and are broad
 - ▶ subjective evaluation
 - ▶ some objective criteria can be applied
 - ▶ a checklist can guide the narrative evaluation
 - ▶ compare student self-evaluation with faculty evaluation

Performance issues: timeliness

- ▶ Timeliness: both attendance and paperwork
 - ▶ explicit attendance requirements
 - ▶ explicit deadlines
 - ▶ clear consequences for not meeting expectations

Performance issues: plagiarism, cheating

- ▶ Specific description and identification as unacceptable
- ▶ Define as a professional behavior
- ▶ Clear expectations for 'remediation'
- ▶ Clear consequences for repeat infractions

Performance issues: participation, attitudes

- ▶ Take initiative in one's own education
- ▶ Contributor to the PA program
- ▶ Attitudes
 - ▶ positive demeanor
- ▶ Participate in a positive manner

Performance problems are academic

- ▶ Professionalism and its various components
 - ▶ explicitly academic performance issue(s)
 - ▶ weigh equally with exam/assignment grades
- ▶ Course grade component
 - ▶ emphasizes importance of professionalism

Discussion activity

- ▶ Technical standards describe the skills that students must bring with them to apply to their PA study.
- ▶ What skills will be the basis for the professional behavior that we expect PA students to develop?
- ▶ Describe these skills using the language of Technical Standards documentation.

Discussion—sample checklists

- ▶ A grading component for professionalism clearly indicates its importance.
- ▶ This introduces some objectivity to the evaluation of professionalism.
 - ▶ checklists provide guidance
 - ▶ student and faculty each complete checklist separately, then compare and discuss
- ▶ Describe possible components of and uses for the checklist.

Case studies

- ▶ Discuss scenario in terms of the policy or standard described.
- ▶ What parts of the policy or standard helped or impeded appropriate faculty or progress committee action?
- ▶ How might the policy or standard be revised to capture this situation without being overly restrictive?
- ▶ Would a particular re-write of the policy or standard fix this situation, but have unintended consequences for a similar case later on?

Summary and wrap-up

- ▶ Wrap-up
- ▶ References
 - ▶ Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant. *Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant Education*. 3rd ed. Duluth GA: Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant; 2006. Available at: <http://www.arc-pa.org/Standards/standards.html>.
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