

Student Evaluation Review Committee (SERC) Policy and Procedures

Applies to: All University Employees

Policy #: ACAD-104

Policy Statement

The goal of the Student Evaluation Review Committee (hereinafter “SERC” or “Committee”) process is to uphold academic and professional standards, program standards, and University policies and procedures regarding student evaluation. The Committee will guide students toward successful completion of their program and assist with remediation of difficulties brought to the attention of the Committee. Successful program completion requires that all students, whether enrolled in campus-based, hybrid or online programs, meet academic standards and standards of professional competence, conduct, ethics, and demeanor required by their program of study. The SERC process is utilized when concerns are raised about a student’s academic sufficiency, fieldwork suitability, viability of professional judgment, or ethical or appropriate conduct in the academic learning environment. Difficulties in personal adjustment/appropriate behavior manifested outside of courses or field placement/internship are potentially relevant to a student’s professional development and are also of interest to this Committee, though formal review of such cases may, depending on the specific circumstances, rest with the Non-Academic Code of Conduct Committee. To the extent that non-academic code violations impact program and/or professional standards, or a student’s fitness for the profession, sanctions may be recommended by SERC and imposed by the Program Director as deemed appropriate.

The SERC is a committee that serves as a recommending body to the Program Director or equivalent. After meeting with a student and considering all information deemed relevant, a SERC’s recommendations about appropriate action can include: No Action Required, Remediation Plan, Academic Warning, Academic Probation, Approved Academic Absence, Suspension or Dismissal. The Program Director or equivalent makes the final decision relative to student’s status.

Purpose of the Policy

This SERC Policy and Procedures document is intended to provide guidance on the role, responsibilities, and procedures of SERC relative to Student Academic Performance Problems, Violations of Ethics or Academic Codes of Conduct, and Questions of Professional Suitability or Judgment.

Policy Details

- I. General Committee Tasks: SERC is responsible for review of and recommendations on referrals concerning violations or problematic issues arising from/under:
 - A. Student’s Academic Performance and Progress
 - B. Student’s Professional Suitability/Judgment
 - C. Student’s Ethical Behavior
 - D. Academic Code of Conduct

- II. Structure of SERC
 - A. Membership Composition
 1. The Committee comprises the following members appointed by the Program Director, Dean, or designee, as applicable¹:
 - a. Faculty members (minimum 2, including Chair);
 - b. Where appropriate, an alternate member may be identified.
 - c. The student’s Academic Advisor may be requested by the SERC Chair to attend the SERC meeting. If present, the advisor serves as a non-voting member.
 - d. The following nonvoting personnel may be invited at the request of the SERC Chair or the student, when deemed to be relevant:
 - i. Fieldwork/Internship Representative.
 - ii. Student Accessibility Coordinator.

¹ The Program Director, or designee, may request the presence of a staff member in Committee meetings for administrative assistance.

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iii. Designated Official for International Students.

III. Status of the Committee

- A. Nature of the Proceedings: SERC meetings are academic rather than legal proceedings. The presence of legal counsel and representation of any party therefore is not appropriate and is not permitted.
- B. All SERC proceedings and related communications are governed by the confidentiality/privacy provisions of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Discussions, deliberations, decisions, and recommendations may not be shared with people outside of the Committee, other than for a legitimate educational purpose consistent with FERPA.
- C. SERC Authority: SERC serves as an advisory body to the Program Director or designee, making recommendations for decision.

IV. Basis for Referral to SERC: The Committee considers a broad range of student issues, including, but not limited to, insufficient academic performance and/or progress, lack of suitability for the profession, unethical or inappropriate behavior and violations of the Academic Code of Conduct. The following are examples of reasons for referral to SERC:

- A. Insufficient Academic Performance or Progress: Probation Status results automatically from receipt of the following:
 - 1. For undergraduate students, a GPA below 2.0
 - 2. For graduate students, a GPA below 3.0 or a grade of No Credit or a grade below B-.
- B. Depending on the program, a student's academic standing may be jeopardized by one or more of the following:
 - 1. Receipt of one or more non-passing grades;
 - 2. Receipt of two or more Incomplete grades;
 - 3. Insufficient progress on course work or dissertation/doctoral project;
 - 4. Failure of comprehensive, competency or preliminary examination;
 - 5. Failure to meet academic program standards;
 - 6. Failure to meet professional program standards.
- C. Professional Practice Field Training Unsuitability
 - 1. Fieldwork unsuitability refers to a student's behavior and/or decision-making that is unsuitable, unethical, and/or inappropriate or unprofessional for practice in the field setting, as established by the profession.
 - 2. Concerns in the area of suitability for the profession include but are not limited to: lack of development of professional skills within a field context; expressions of personal issues in ways that are inappropriate to the setting; lack of sensitivity to the perspectives of people from other cultures such as diversity in religion, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status and/or gender.
- D. Unethical and/or Inappropriate Behavior
 - 1. The University requires that all students adhere to the relevant principles of applicable professional and/or licensing body(ies) (e.g., professional association codes of ethics and the ethical requirements of professional licensing and certification boards relevant to the profession in which the student aspires to membership).
 - 2. Students are expected to conduct themselves in academic and professional settings, including field training/internship and research sites, in a manner consistent with the profession's expectations. Professional conduct includes respect for all University community members (including students, administrators, staff, faculty, supervisors), as well as for all clients and personnel at training sites.
- E. Academic Code of Conduct Violations and Infractions

Student Evaluation Review Committee (SERC) Policy and Procedures



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Procedure

- I. Procedures Governing the SERC Process
 - A. SERC Committee Process Following Referral
 1. Student Notification
 - a. The student and the student's faculty advisor will receive written, confidential notification of the SERC meeting within five (5) business days of the referral.
 - b. The student is expected to attend this meeting.
 - c. Should the student fail to show for the designated meeting the SERC reserves the right to meet in the student's absence and make a recommendation that may result in decisions regarding academic status.
 - d. The meeting notification will be sent via email to the student's University email address as listed in the University's data base.
 - e. The notice to appear before SERC must be sent to a student at least five (5) business days prior to the date of the meeting.
 - f. An extension of the meeting time and date may be requested in writing by the student within two days of receipt of the notice.
 - g. Written notification of the meeting will include the following:
 - i. Time, date and place of the SERC meeting;
 - ii. Basis for the referral, including but not limited to Specific areas of student performance and/or behavior to be reviewed at the meeting;
 - iii. The student's rights and responsibilities in the meeting;
 - iv. The student's right to be accompanied to the meeting (see A.2.b);
 - v. Contact information (to include address, telephone and e-mail contact information) for the relevant SERC Chair.
 2. The SERC Meeting
 - a. During the SERC meeting, the Committee and student will review the specifics of the referral. As appropriate, the Committee may also discuss with the student possible resolution(s), however, the final determination of recommendation(s) shall be made by the SERC committee after meeting with a student and considering all information deemed relevant.
 - b. A student has the right to be accompanied to the SERC meeting by one person of their choice (attorney or legal counsel not permitted), provided the Committee Chair receives advance written notice (24 hours or greater) of the person's name and relationship to the student. An invited guest attends with the understanding that their role is to provide non-verbal support to the student. Invited guests may not participate in the meeting. If the SERC chair determines the invited guest is disrupting the meeting they will be asked to leave.
 - c. A student has the right to make a formal statement and present documents and any other evidence in response to every allegation or basis for referral to SERC.
 - d. For cases in which a student faces severe disciplinary actions (suspension or dismissal) AND the credibility of witnesses is central to the adjudication of the allegations, the accused student may indirectly question witnesses. Based on the circumstances and at the discretion of SERC, students may be permitted to question witnesses in one of the following ways:
 - i. Questions proposed in advance of SERC meeting, to be asked directly by SERC of witnesses present at the SERC meeting

Student Evaluation Review Committee (SERC) Policy and Procedures



Applies to: All University Employees

Policy #: **ACAD-104**

- ii. Questions proposed in advance of SERC meeting, to be asked indirectly by SERC of witnesses, using video technology (if available) when witnesses not physically present in SERC meeting
- iii. Questions proposed in advance, to witnesses through SERC, with written responses from witnesses submitted through SERC
- e. A student has the right to view/hear witness responses to questions and present statements, documents and any other evidence in rebuttal to witness responses
- f. SERC shall have the discretion to exclude questions deemed inflammatory, argumentative or irrelevant to the basis for the SERC referral.
- g. SERC shall have discretion to determine what weight, if any, to give to any statement or other evidence.
- h. The standard of proof in the SERC meeting is much lower than in a court of law and is known as 'more likely than not.' SERC members do not need to be 100% or even 75% sure, just more than 50% sure (51% or 50.1%).

B. SERC Recommendation

1. Typically, the SERC will provide its recommendation to the Program Director or designee within 10 business days following the SERC meeting.
2. Under exceptional circumstances, if additional information is required to render a recommendation, the SERC will obtain this information and render its recommendation no later than 15 business days from the date of the SERC meeting.
3. Determination of additional SERC meetings will be made by members of SERC based on relevant circumstances or as needs dictate.

C. Sanction Considerations: The Committee has the discretion and will consider the following factors in arriving at a recommendation as to what, if any, sanction and/or remediation plan, should be imposed, including but not limited to:

1. The degree and nature/type of academic, ethical or professional behavior;
2. The degree of the student's insight, accountability and willingness to resolve the issue;
3. The student's past history with the SERC and with any other disciplinary process;
4. The student's year in the program;
5. Financial ramifications of recommended action(s);
6. The impact of lack of access to University resources, including faculty, if a mandatory leave is recommended;
7. Prior global or annual student reviews;
8. Any other factor that SERC determines has bearing on the issue(s) before it.

D. Recommendation and Decision Process

1. Recommendations from the SERC should typically be forwarded by the Committee Chair to the relevant Program Director or designee within 10 business days of the SERC meeting.
2. Each recommendation should clearly state:
 - a) The reason(s) for and source of the SERC referral;
 - b) The student's relevant academic history and any unique relevant personal circumstances;
 - c) The student's perceived understanding of the issue(s) and response;
 - d) The actions the student has taken to date to correct the issue(s); and
 - e) The Committee's recommendation either that no action is required, or that of a particular sanction, or a remediation plan should be imposed. When a remediation plan is recommended, the Committee shall specify the recommended time-frame applicable to the recommended remediation process including the conditions for lifting the sanction (if applicable), and any recommended follow-up.

Student Evaluation Review Committee (SERC) Policy and Procedures



Applies to: All University Employees

Policy #: **ACAD-104**

3. Under normal circumstances, within 10 business days of receiving the recommendation, the Program Director or designee will either notify the student in writing of the Program Director's decision or refer the matter back to the Committee for further consideration and review with appropriate explanation.

E. Appeals Process

1. A student has the right to appeal a decision of the Program Director or designee to the relevant Academic Dean (or alternate University official, in the event of a conflict of interest).
2. Appeals will only be considered when they are received in writing within ten (10) business days of the date of the decision letter.
3. Appeals may be made only on the basis that one or more of the following factors occurred:
 - a) SERC process deviated from applicable SERC policy/procedures;
 - b) The program director's decision violated a university policy, rule or procedure;
 - c) There is new information directly relevant to the issue for which the recommendation was made; and/or
 - d) Bias or discrimination in the review process.
4. Absent unusual circumstances, appeals processes should typically be completed within twenty (20) business days of receipt of the appeal. Appeals decisions under this section are final. Failure to meet this timeline is not grounds for appeal.

F. Feedback to Involved Parties

1. Student will receive correspondence from the Program Director or designee to their university email address.
2. In cases resulting in a change to academic status, a copy of the decision letter will be given to the Student Advisor and, if the matter pertains to a field training/internship issue, to the student's Field Training/Internship Advisor.
3. In cases resulting in Probation, Approved Academic Absence, or Dismissal copies of the decision letter are also sent to relevant administrative personnel.
 - a) A copy of the decision letter is also placed in the student's academic record.
 - b) In addition, if the decision of the Program Director or equivalent involves a faculty member (e.g., if the remediation plan requires a particular action on the part of a faculty member, a change in advisor or dissertation chair, re-enrollment in a course, etc.), then that faculty member is provided specific feedback on his/her involvement by the Program Director or designee.

G. Outcomes/Sanctions under SERC Process

1. **Warning:** Warning Status, with or without a remediation plan, may be recommended by the SERC when a student's academic work or professional development falls below University or program standards, but the nature of the difficulty or infraction does not require more serious or more immediate action.
2. **Probation:** Probationary Status may be recommended when a student's academic progress or professional development has been inconsistent with University requirements.
 - a) A student is given a specific amount of time in which to remediate the cause(s) of probation or will otherwise face dismissal from the program.
 - b) It shall be the responsibility of the SERC in such circumstances to review the case and to determine whether the student has completed all of the requirements of the remediation, in which case the removal of the Probationary status will be recommended.
 - c) In the event that the SERC determines that the conditions which resulted in Probation have not been remediated, the SERC may recommend other action, including:
 - i. continuance of the status of Probation, or
 - ii. that a more severe sanction be imposed.
3. **Mandatory Academic Absence:** A student is recommended for Mandatory Academic Absence in cases in which the academic work or professional development, in the opinion of the Program Director or

Student Evaluation Review Committee (SERC) Policy and Procedures



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designee, and taking into consideration the SERC’s recommendations, requires serious remediation that necessitates a required academic absence in order to complete the required remediation. Any remediation shall be articulated in the SERC recommendation to the Program Director.

- a) Mandatory Academic Absences occurring midterm/mid semester may require repayment/return of financial aid funds. Students should contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.
 - b) For Mandatory Academic Absences lasting more than 180 days, if the student has received federal student loans, the loans may go into repayment 6 months from their last day of attendance. The student may contact their lender to receive information on deferment and forbearance options while not attending school.
 - c) Mandatory Academic Absences will not exceed one year from the last date of attendance.
4. Dismissal: Students may be dismissed from the academic program when
- a) conditions are judged to be of a serious nature and are not determined to be remediable,
 - b) a serious violation of standards of conduct, professional behavior, and/or ethics occurs, or
 - c) when a student has failed to remediate previously identified academic deficiencies within the specified time.
- H. Outcomes/Sanctions for cases involving infractions or serious violations of the Academic Code of Conduct are set forth in the Academic Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy and are hereby incorporated by reference.
- I. In the case of dismissal from the program or university, no tuition or fees will be refunded. Dismissed students may not enroll in courses while any appeal of dismissal is pending.
- J. Records: The record of the final determination in all cases will be maintained in the educational record of the student pursuant to the University Document Retention Policy.

Responsibilities

Position or Office	Responsibilities
Deans	Oversee the structure and member composition of SERC to ensure consistency with published policy. Receive and consider appeals based on published policy.
Program Director	Render decision based on SERC recommendations and notify the student in writing of the Program Director’s decision

Resources

University Catalog
 Alliant Student Academic Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy
 Alliant FERPA Policy

Contacts

Subject	Office
General Questions about SERC	Program Director
Appeals	Dean
Non-Academic Code of Conduct Committee	Office of Student Affairs

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Responsible Office

Registrar's Office

History (required)

All changes must be listed chronologically in the format below, including all edits and reviews. Note when the policy name or number changes. Note the Board of Trustees resolution number and date if board action was taken. Note if a revision date is exclusively for the policy section or the procedure section.

Issued: unknown
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