



Academic Handbook
Traditional and Advanced Placement
Optometry Degree Programs
Class of 2030

Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University OD-Traditional and APOD
Academic Handbook – Updated Fall 2026 (September 27, 2026)

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For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

Term/Acronym	Definition
"University"	Drexel University
"College"	Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University
"PCO"	Pennsylvania College of Optometry
"Dean"	The Dean of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University
"Office of the Dean"	The Dean, Associate Deans, and professional staff of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University
"Traditional and Advanced Placement Programs"	Doctor of Optometry – Traditional and Advanced Placement Program
Academic Handbook	This document, the Traditional and Advanced Placement Program Academic Handbook
"CAP"	Committee on Academic Promotion
"Course Coordinator"	This is the term used within PCO and course syllabi. This is synonymous with "Instructor of Record" by Drexel University
"PCS"	Patient Care Supplement Course

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This Academic Handbook applies to optometry students enrolled in the traditional and advanced placement Doctor of Optometry programs within the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO). This Academic Handbook is published for students, faculty, and staff, all of whom are held responsible for reading and adhering to this Academic Handbook.
- 1.2 The faculty and administration of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry have developed this Academic Handbook to uphold the academic standards of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University for all students.
- 1.3 This Academic Handbook will be reviewed by the faculty and administration of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry for necessary updates on an annual basis.
 - 1.3.1 Recommended substantive changes to this Academic Handbook will be reviewed and acted upon by the in accordance with College and University policy and procedure.
 - 1.3.1.1 Approved substantive changes will be shared with all stakeholder groups impacted by the Academic Handbook.
- 1.4 Unless otherwise stated, the Dean of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry is the individual charged with rendering final interpretations of the Academic Handbook and deciding whether to grant any exception(s) to the Academic Handbook.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The Dean is the chief executive officer of the College and, in conjunction with their college administrators and faculty, is charged with the management and oversight of the college's programs, curriculum and other academic matters. The faculty, in conjunction with the Dean, creates and modifies the curriculum and obtains appropriate university approvals.
- 2.2 The Office of the Dean and their staff are charged with the administration of all aspects of the didactic program, including faculty and student schedules.
- 2.3 The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, or their designee, and their staff are charged with monitoring the progress of the students and developing modified programs, in conjunction with the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, when it is deemed necessary to ensure a student's academic success.
- 2.4 The Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs and their staff are charged with the administration and integration of all clinical courses (patient care) within the curriculum, along with the management of the educational operations of the clinics, including faculty and student schedules. They are also charged with administration of the clinical educational programs in The Eye Institute clinical network and at all off campus sites.
- 2.5 The Drexel University Division of Student Success and Enrollment Management is charged with the administration of matters related to registration, student counseling, tutoring, and student life on campus.
- 2.5.1 The Office of the University Registrar (OUR) is responsible for maintaining the students' permanent records.
- 2.6 The Executive Director of the Eye Institute, under the direction of the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs is responsible for all patient care/business operations of the University, specifically The Eye Institute, including patient scheduling, patient care protocols, maintenance of records, patient fees and insurance payments, compliance with infection control protocols, and other related issues.

3. FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 Course Instructor(s) are responsible for monitoring student performance throughout the term and providing students with performance feedback consistent with the course grading outline and syllabus.
- 3.2 A syllabus will be distributed for each course and will describe the course instructor(s), course description, prerequisites, course learning goals and outcome measures, course requirements, attendance procedures, ethical conduct and disability support services, course schedule, evaluation and grading, assignments and assessments, and learning materials.
- 3.3 Faculty are required to use their Drexel University email account when communicating with students, faculty, staff and administrators of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry and Drexel University.

4. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Students are responsible for understanding all requirements stated in the Academic Handbook.

5. ACADEMIC CALENDAR AND CLASS SCHEDULES

- 5.1 The academic calendar, from the Drexel University Office of the University Registrar (OUR), provides the beginning and ending dates for each term, as well as other important academic related dates.
 - 5.1.1 University holidays are listed on the University website.
- 5.2 Any travel or other commitments scheduled on days reserved for academic activities are made at the student's own risk in the event that these dates become necessary to be used for mandatory classes, laboratories, examinations, patient care or other educational activities.
- 5.3 The Weekly Class Schedule is created, maintained, and distributed electronically by the Office of the Dean. The Weekly Class Schedule is released prior to the start of the term. This weekly schedule is released as a supplement to the course syllabi. The Weekly Class Schedule includes University holidays.
 - 5.3.1 The Weekly Class Schedule is updated by the Office of the Dean as necessary. Students should monitor the Weekly Class Schedule as it is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., faculty illness, inclement weather).
- 5.4 Instructors require prior approval from the appropriate Associate Dean and/or their designee to modify the Weekly Class Schedule.
- 5.5 Both the University's Academic Calendar(s) and Weekly Class Schedules are subject to change.

6. ATTENDANCE

- 6.1 Student attendance at all instructional activities is expected, and students should attend every activity for which the student is scheduled.
- 6.2 Attendance and absence as described also apply to all scheduled examinations and assessments.
- 6.3 A syllabus will be distributed for each course and will provide information related to the course instructor, course description, prerequisites, course learning goals and outcome measures, course requirements, attendance procedures, student responsibilities for ethical conduct, course schedule, course schedule, evaluation and grading, assignments and assessments, and learning materials and disability support services.

- 6.4 Instructors have the option to require mandatory attendance at lectures. Mandatory attendance will be communicated by the instructor in writing to the students either in the syllabus or a syllabus addendum. Students should reference the course syllabus for consequences related to absences from mandatory lectures or assignments.
- 6.5 Attendance is mandatory for all examinations, laboratories, clinical assignments, including community screenings; Clinical Problem Solving (CPS) sessions; and, when specified, orientation, seminars, grand rounds, conferences, and meetings.
- Where attendance is mandatory, absences alone may result in a course grade of Failure (F), as specified in course syllabi.
- 6.6 The allowable number of absences (excused and unexcused) accrued before requiring a leave of absence or initiating a course failure is determined on a case-by-case basis and is evaluated by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs. Determinations are made based upon an evaluation of the proportion of time dedicated to the course or patient care activity in the College curriculum. A student who misses a substantial amount of any course may be required to take a leave of absence from the College, or complete a course reenrollment, as determined by the PCO Dean or their designee.
- 6.6.1 Students placed on involuntary academic leave of absence may appeal this decision to the Dean of PCO. The decision of the PCO Dean is final; there are no further appeals.
- 6.7 A student who is not in satisfactory academic standing (see Section 18) or who receives a deficiency at midterm may be required to attend specified courses or tutoring sessions. In this event, written notification to the student will be sent from the Office of the Dean or their designee.
- 6.8 In the event of extremely inclement weather conditions or other emergency situations, information will be provided about university closing via the Drexel University DREXELALERT system. Students can also consult the University website for weather related policy, guidance, and information.
- 6.8 For more information about tardiness and absence, see *Tardiness and Absences Document*.

7. Open for Future Use

8. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

- 8.1 Students are required to check their Drexel University e-mail account at least twice daily during the weekdays (Mon.-Fri.), as some correspondence from faculty instructors and administrators may be time dependent. Additionally,

all students are expected to check their Drexel University email accounts on a daily basis during weekends, breaks, holidays and other unassigned times until graduated or separated from the program.

- 8.2 Students are required to log into DrexelOne regularly to review their Student Checklist, financial tasks, and academic updates, as failure to complete these items may result in account holds
- 8.3 Enrolled students are required to use their Drexel University email account when communicating with faculty, staff and administrators within the Pennsylvania College of Optometry and Drexel University. Administrators, faculty and staff of Pennsylvania College of Optometry and Drexel University are not responsible for reading or responding to any email sent by students that is not sent from a Drexel University email account.
- 8.3.1 Letters and related communications regarding student academic standing (e.g., academic Warning, Probation, Dismissal) will be sent electronically to a PCO student via their Drexel University email address as PDF email attachments.

9. ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

- 9.1 Concerns related to the academic environment should initially be discussed with the instructor and the appropriate Associate Dean.
- 9.2 In the event that the Associate Dean is the course instructor or is otherwise a direct participant in the concerns, the situation should be discussed with the PCO Dean.
- 9.3 Discrimination or sexual harassment concerns should be brought to the attention of Drexel University's Office of Civil Rights Compliance at <https://drexel.edu/civil-rights>, civilrights@drexel.edu, or 215-895-1405. Any Drexel employee or student can make an anonymous report by calling 866-358-1010.

10. PATIENT CARE ASSIGNMENTS

- 10.1 Students are expected to read The Eye Institute Practice Manual, provided by the Office of Clinical Affairs.
- 10.2 Student assignments may be withdrawn for any of the following reasons:
 - 10.2.1 Decision of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion for academic and/or clinical deficiencies.
 - 10.2.2 Decision of the appropriate deliberative body regarding a violation of expected student professional behavior.
 - 10.2.3 Decision by an officer of Drexel University shared with the PCO Dean regarding nonpayment of tuition and fees or any other matter deemed appropriate.

11. EXAMINATIONS

11.1 Examinations: General Procedures

- 11.1.1 Examinations provide the opportunity for instructors to assess a student's knowledge and for a student to demonstrate academic progress and competence.
- 11.1.2 The PCO Rules for Taking Examinations are included in each course syllabus posted on Canvas. Each student is responsible for understanding these rules. Questions or concerns should be directed to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.
- 11.1.3 Infractions of the PCO Rules for Taking Examinations are considered serious offenses. Violation of these rules will be addressed using the Drexel University Academic Integrity Policy.
- 11.1.4 Examination and assessment details for a course will be included in the course syllabus, which will be posted or distributed at the beginning of each academic term.
- 11.1.5 Course instructors must inform students in writing in the syllabus at the beginning of a course of the relative weights to be given to various examinations and assessment tools used in determining the final grade.

11.2 Examinations: Schedules

- 11.2.1 Examination schedules are established and issued by the Office of the PCO Dean or their designee.
- 11.2.2 Examination schedules are subject to change for academic or unanticipated reasons.
- 11.2.3 In the event of extremely inclement weather conditions or other emergency situations, information will be provided about university closure or delays via the Drexel University DrexelALERT system.

11.3 Examinations: Attendance

- 11.3.1 A student must be registered for a course before they may take the course examination(s). The Office of the University Registrar is responsible for ensuring that only registered students receive a grade in a particular course.
- 11.3.2 Students are required to sit for all examinations as scheduled. If a student is unable to sit for an examination, they must immediately notify the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the course coordinator. This process is important to request an excused absence and schedule a make-up examination, if

appropriate. Unexcused absences will result in a grade of zero (0) for the exam.

- 11.3.3 The instructor of record for the course in conjunction with the Office of the Dean will notify the student of the make-up date and the format of the examination. Students should consult the course syllabus for additional information.

11.4 National Board Examinations

- 11.4.1 Passage of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) is not required for graduation. However, passage of Part I – Applied Basic Science, Part II – Patient Assessment and Management, and Part III – Patient Encounters and Performance Skills (PEPS) is required in most states for licensure. Therefore, it is recommended that all students register and sit for the examinations if they plan to practice in the United States.
- 11.4.2 See the Externship Course syllabus for guidelines related to on and off campus NBEO Part III scheduling.
- 11.4.3 Students should consult the NBEO website, www.optometry.org, for general information and registration procedures. Students are responsible for registering for the NBEO examinations by the deadlines posted on the NBEO website. All other questions should be directed to the Office of the PCO Dean.
- 11.4.4 Each student is required to release their NBEO scores to the College since these scores provide information vital to the College's ongoing curriculum assessment efforts and compliance with the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) standards.

12. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND GRADES

12.1 Didactic Grades and Evaluation

- 12.1.1 At the conclusion of a didactic course or term (usually within one week, as determined by the Office of the University Registrar (OUR), grades are rendered for each enrolled student. Unless otherwise specified in a course syllabus, the grading scale is:

Grade	Range	Grade Points Earned/Term Hour	Grade Interpretation
A	93.00 - 100.00	4.00	EXCELLENT Indicates exceptional achievement
A-	90.00 - 92.99	3.70	
B+	87.00 - 89.99	3.30	GOOD Indicates superior achievement
B	83.00 - 86.99	3.00	
B-	80.00 - 82.99	2.70	
C+	77.00 - 79.99	2.30	SATISFACTORY

C	73.00 - 76.99	2.00	Indicates acceptable achievement
C-	70.00 - 72.99	1.70	POOR - Credit earned but below desired standards
D+	67.00 - 69.99	1.30	UNSATISFACTORY
D	63.00 - 66.99	1.00	
D-	60.00 - 62.99	0.70	
F	< 59.99	0.00	FAILURE - No Credit Earned

Other Designations (carrying no Quality Points):

Grade	Grade Points Earned/Term Hour	Grade Interpretation
H	0.00	HONORS – Indicates outstanding performance; credits earned
P	0.00	PASS – Indicates performance meets all competencies or requirements; credits earned
CR	0.00	CREDIT Credit is given but no grade is assigned
F	0.00	FAILURE – Unsatisfactory performance. Remediation of the course is required
AU		AUDIT
I		INCOMPLETE (refer to Section 12.7)
IP		IN PROGRESS
GNS		GRADE NOT SUBMITTED
W		WITHDRAWAL (refer to Section 12.9)

12.1.2 No arbitrary percentage of the class will be designated to receive any particular grade category.

12.2 Failing Grades (F)

12.2.1 A failure (F) in a required course must be removed by the passing of the course through remediation by directed study (see Section 13.2), or re-enrollment (see Section 13.3) if applicable, within one term of the conclusion of the term in which the grade was earned.

12.2.1.1 The option of remediation or re-enrollment is not available once a student has been dismissed from the College.

12.2.1.2 If the grade of failure (F) is not remediated within the next term, the student will be dismissed from the College for academic reasons.

- 12.2.2 All failures (F's) must be remediated prior to beginning externship clinical rotations.
- 12.2.3 Remediation examinations will be scheduled in conjunction with the Office of the Dean or their designee (see Section 13).
- 12.2.4 A student not remediating a failing grade within the specified timeframe(s) will not be permitted to continue in the academic program without the written approval of the PCO Dean. After receiving this written approval, a student may be subject to special academic stipulations as determined by the PCO Dean or their designee, or the Committee on Academic Promotion.

12.3 Clinical Grades and Evaluations

- 12.3.1 Internship Program Clinical Grades: This grading scale applies to Patient Care 6,7,8. For Patient Care 5 grading, see Section 12.3.1.5.

Unless otherwise specified in a course syllabus, the grading scale for Traineeship and Internship is:

Grade	Grade Points Earned/Term Hour	Grade Interpretation
H	0.00	HONORS – Indicates outstanding performance in all competencies or requirements; credits earned (credits earned)
P+	0.00	PASS + Indicates performance exceeding most expected competencies or requirements (credits earned)
P	0.00	PASS Indicates performance meet expected competencies or requirements; (credits earned)
P-	0.00	PASS - Indicates performance that consistently and/or minimally meets expected competencies or requirements. Students earning a Pass- during the final term of internships will be required to begin their externships on campus (credits earned)
F	0.00	FAILURE Indicates performance below expected competencies or requirements. Reenrollment in the course is required. (no credits earned)
INC		INCOMPLETE (refer to Section 12.7)
IP		IN PROGRESS
GNS		GRADE NOT SUBMITTED

12.3.1.2 **Students must receive Honors (H), Pass + (P+), or Pass (P) in the Fall Patient Care Course in the third professional year in order to successfully transition to the spring third year externship off-campus. Students earning a Pass - during the final term of internships will be required to begin their externships on-campus.**

12.3.1.3 The grades of Honors (H), Pass + (P+), Pass (P), and Pass - (P-) will not be converted to quality points and, therefore, will not be calculated into the grade point average. However, the grade of Failure (F) will carry zero quality points and will be computed in the grade point average.

12.3.1.4 No arbitrary percentage of the class will be designated to receive any particular grade category.

12.3.2 **Externship Program Clinical Grades:** At the conclusion of a clinical course, grades are rendered for each enrolled student as follows:

12.3.2.1 The grades of Honors (H), Pass (P), or Failure (F) will be utilized for all externship clinical rotations on and off campus.

Grade	Grade Points Earned/Term Hour	Grade Interpretation
H	0.00	HONORS – Indicates outstanding performance in all competencies or requirements; credits earned (credits earned)
P	0.00	PASS Indicates performance meets expected competencies or requirements; (credits earned)
F	0.00	FAILURE Indicates performance below expected competencies or requirements. Enrollment in a Patient Care Supplemental course may be required. Reenrollment in the course is required. (no credits earned)
INC		INCOMPLETE (refer to Section 12.7)
IP		IN PROGRESS
GNS		GRADE NOT SUBMITTED

12.3.2.2 **For the Externship Program, earned clinical grades will be recorded on the transcript as Honors (H), Pass (P), or Failure (F).**

12.3.2.3 The grades of Honors (H) and Pass (P) will not be converted to quality points and, therefore, will not be calculated into the grade point average. However, the grade of Failure (F) will carry zero quality points and will be computed in the grade point average.

- 12.3.2.4 No arbitrary percentage of the class will be designated to receive any particular grade category
- 12.3.3 **Clinical Evaluations:** At the conclusion of a clinical course or rotation, an evaluation summary form concerning the quality of the student's work will be rendered.
- 12.3.3.1 The evaluation summaries are used in counseling students concerning clinical strengths and areas for improvement as well as in the preparation of letters of evaluation/ recommendation.
- 12.3.3.2 Evaluation summaries are rendered on standard forms designed for the course. These forms are provided by the Office of the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs.
- 12.3.3.3 Evaluation summaries are not considered a part of the student's Permanent Record File that is maintained in the Office of the University Registrar (OUR) but may be reviewed by the student in the Office of the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs.
- 12.3.3.4 A clinical evaluation may recommend enrollment in a Patient Care Supplemental (PCS) course (see Section 15). A student may be enrolled in a PCS course as part of a special program to meet personal/academic needs, to assist a student in transition or returning from a leave of absence, who has been placed on academic probation, or as recommended by the Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP).
- 12.4 Credit by Examination (CR)**
- 12.4.1 A student judged qualified by the appropriate Associate Dean may receive academic credit for a course within the curriculum by achieving satisfactory performance on special examinations administered by the College. A fee is charged for the examination.
- 12.4.2 Upon satisfactory completion of the examination and approval by the PCO Dean, a grade of Credit (CR) will be given and recorded during the term in which the examination was taken.
- 12.5 Credit by Transfer (CR)**
- 12.5.1 Credit by transfer may be accepted for any course(s) within the curriculum when it is determined the transfer course is substantially equivalent to that offered by the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University. This equivalency will be determined by the course coordinator in conjunction with the appropriate Associate Dean and approved by the PCO Dean.
- 12.5.2 Only courses in which the student received a grade of C, P (Pass), or above will be considered for transfer.

12.6 Audit (AU)

- 12.6.1 A course taken on an audit basis will not count toward the fulfillment of degree requirements.
- 12.6.2 Tuition and fees will be applied.
- 12.6.3 Since the credit hours attempted and quality points will not be awarded for an audited course, it will not affect the student's grade point average.
- 12.6.4 This non-credit registration is recorded as "AU" on the student's transcript.
- 12.6.5 In certain instances, the CAP, and/or the Office of the Dean, may require a student to audit a course or a component already taken.
- 12.6.6 A student may elect to officially audit any course within the curriculum by obtaining written permission from the course coordinator and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and registering for the course.
- 12.6.7 The student is required to provide the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs with written approval from the course coordinator no later than the fifth (5th) business day of the term.
- 12.6.8 The Office of the Dean will notify the course coordinator when a student has approval to audit a course.

12.7 Incomplete Grade (INC)

- 12.7.1 The temporary designation Incomplete (INC) may be used by the instructor when a complete assessment cannot be rendered because course work is not complete due to a student- centered reason, such as being granted an excused absence due to illness and/or personal urgency, and when the students' work is otherwise of passing quality.
- 12.7.2 Incomplete grades must be resolved within 45 calendar days after the end of the term in which the "INC" grade was received. The date for resolution of the Incomplete grade will be set by mutual agreement of the student and instructor.
 - 12.7.2.1 The PCO Dean or their designee may grant an extension for resolution of the Incomplete if written documentation is provided by the student and/or instructor confirming that "extenuating circumstances" exist. Written documentation of the terms of the extension will be provided to the student in writing, via their Drexel University email account.
 - 12.7.2.2 All Incomplete (INC) grades must be removed prior to beginning external clinical rotations to avoid a delay in the start and/or end date of the external clinical rotation.
- 12.7.3 If the student fails to remove the Incomplete (INC) grade within the time allowed, the course instructor, with the approval of the PCO Dean, will

authorize the Office of the University Registrar to change the grade to a Failure (F). The student, course instructor, the appropriate Associate Dean, and the PCO Dean will be notified in writing of this grade change.

- 12.7.4 When the Incomplete (INC) designation is used, the instructor or department will submit to the Office of the University Registrar, in writing, the reason for the designation of the Incomplete (INC) and the student's academic standing in the course to date.
- 12.7.5 The Office of the University Registrar will provide this information in the Academic Progress Meetings and to the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion for all students not meeting the requirements of satisfactory academic standing (potential dismissal, probation, warning). This additional information will assist the faculty and/or the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion in evaluating student performance in borderline cases.
- 12.7.6 The final grade of a student who receives an Incomplete (INC) is the decision of the course instructor.

12.8 In Progress Grade (IP) and Grade Not Submitted (GNS)

- 12.8.1 In Progress (IP) is a temporary grade status denoting the natural continuation of a course beyond the End of Term dates laid out by the Drexel Academic Calendar.
 - 12.8.1.1 All In Progress (IP) grades should be resolved by the course coordinator as a grade change submission at the end of the final examination.
 - 12.8.1.2 Grade submissions should be completed within 48 hours of the final examination.
- 12.8.2 Grade Not Submitted (GNS) is a temporary grade status denoting the course coordinator did not submit a grade by the grade submission deadline. This is not a grade.
 - 12.8.2.1 In the case of "GNS" appearing on a transcript, the student should reach out to the course coordinator for resolution.
 - 12.8.2.2 If the student does not receive a response from the course instructor within two (2) business days, the student may approach the Office of the Dean.

12.8.3 Withdrawal (W)

- 12.8.3.1 A student may not withdraw from a required course(s) or the entire curriculum without the approval of the PCO Associate Dean(s), and the subsequent approval of the PCO Dean. The desire to avoid a low grade is not an acceptable reason for withdrawal from a course or the entire curriculum.
- 12.8.3.2 Beginning with the spring term of the third professional year, withdrawals from any internal or external clinical assignment, or any changes in the contract signed with the Office of the Externship Program, are subject to the approval of

the Director of the Externship Program and the subsequent approval of the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs.

12.9 Grade Mediation and Adjudication

- 12.9.1 A student who has a concern about a reported grade in a course should first discuss the course grading policies and determinations with the instructor. It is expected that the student and instructor will address any misunderstandings and will attempt to resolve any disagreements over a reported grade.
- 12.9.1.1 On occasion, circumstances may develop in which a student and instructor disagree about a student's grade. The student may then appeal the grade decision, in writing, to the Associate Dean for the department in which the course is offered. The student has five (5) business days from the OUR Grades Due in Banner (published in the Academic Calendar), to bring concerns to the Associate Dean to begin the mediation process. The Associate Dean must resolve the grade decision within five (5) business days from the date the Associate Dean received the mediation request from the student. The Associate Dean's decision on a grading dispute is final. There is no further appeal of the grade within the College.
- 12.9.1.2 In the event that the Associate Dean teaches the course in question, the student's written appeal is made to the PCO Dean.
- 12.9.2 The original grade assigned by the instructor remains on the student's record while the appeals process is in progress and will be changed only when, and if, the appeal is successful.
- 12.9.3 Copies of sequestered exams, reports, and/or presentations submitted by students are required to be retained by the course instructor for a period of one calendar year from the end of the term in which the grade was earned.
- 12.9.4 If a Committee on Academic Promotions (CAP) Hearing is necessary, all grade mediation issues must be resolved prior to the CAP Hearing.

12.10 Change of Grade

- 12.10.1 Once submitted to the Office of the University Registrar, no grade, except that of Incomplete (INC) or In Progress (IP), may be changed without the mutual written consent of the course instructor and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

12.11 Grade Point Average (GPA)

- 12.11.1 A student's cumulative grade point average (GPA) is the weighted mean value of all quality points earned by the student in all courses taken for letter grades within the College.

- 12.11.1.2 Grades are converted to quality points by multiplying the number of credits for each course by the specified formula assigned to the letter grade. An A = 4 points, an A- = 3.7 points, a B+ = 3.3 points, a B = 3.0 points, a B- = 2.7 points, a C+ = 2.3 points, a C = 2.0 points, a C- = 1.7 points, a D+ = 1.3 points, a D = 1.0 point, a D- = 0.7 points, and an F = 0 points. Thus, an A in a four-credit course earns the student 16 quality points (4 x 4); a B in a four credit course earns 12 quality points (4 x 3), and so on.
- 12.11.1.3 The total number of quality points divided by the total credits used to calculate the quality points equals the grade-point average. A student has a GPA below 2.0 when total quality points are less than twice the total credits completed to earn grade points.
- 12.11.2 A student's cumulative grade-point average is calculated utilizing only courses taken within each degree program.

13. REMEDIATION

- 13.1 Remediation is required for all students who do not meet the academic standards established by PCO (see Section 18). Remediation by Self study occurs after final course grades are officially submitted. Remediation by re-enrollment is generally offered as a stipulation by the Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) committee or as part of a modified course of study. A student may be granted the opportunity to remediate a D+ or below grade by Self Study, as long as their academic standing is satisfactory.
- 13.2 Remediation by Self Study**
- 13.2.1 Eligible students are required to remediate all failing (F) grades and all D grades earned. If remediation is offered, self study is the first method that will be used to address failing (F) and D grades earned prior to a re-enrollment. (See Section 18 for academic standing).
- 13.2.2 Remediation by Self Study may include re-examination of the entire course material or an individualized area of weakness.
- 13.2.3 Under certain circumstances, the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) and/or Dean can mandate that the student remediate a grade other than that of a failure (F) or D grade. The student will then remediate the course in accordance with the stipulations set forth in writing by the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion and/or the Dean.
- 13.2.4 The highest grade that can be earned by Self Study is a grade of "C+" (satisfactory) or "P" (pass), depending upon the grading scale utilized in the course syllabus.
- 13.2.4.1 A student remediating must earn a C- or better on the remediation in order to successfully remediate the course. If a C- or better is not earned, the student will be dismissed for academic reasons.

- 13.2.5 Remediation of a course may result in a grade lower than the original grade. For example, an original earned grade of “D” may become an earned remediation grade of “F”, which becomes the final grade.
- 13.2.6 The new course grade earned by Self Study is recorded on the transcript and replaces the originally earned course grade during the term the original course was completed. The original grade is documented in the student’s academic record.
- 13.2.7 Students must successfully complete all necessary remediations within the subsequent term, on the predetermined remediation date(s) on the Academic Calendar as determined by the Instructor of Record, in conjunction with the PCO Dean and/or their designee. In addition, the following apply to remediations:
- 13.2.8 All traineeship and internship Patient Care courses (1-8) must be successfully completed prior to beginning the externship.
- 13.2.8.1 Depending on the level of clinical deficiencies, a student may also be required to enroll in a Patient Care Supplemental (PCS) course (see section 15).
- 13.2.10 Students will not be permitted to begin the externship phase of the program with any “F” or “D” grades on their transcript.
- 13.2.11 Students must fulfill all CAP stipulations prior to beginning externships.
- 13.2.12 Students remediating due to CAP stipulations will complete their remediation at a time as determined by the office of the Dean.
- 13.2.13 A course can be remediated by Self Study only once.
- 13.2.14 If a student fails to achieve a passing grade of a C- or above in a remediation, they are no longer in satisfactory academic standing, they will be dismissed for academic reasons.
- 13.2.15 The student is required to meet with the course instructor prior to the remediation to review the examination format and receive academic counseling regarding the course examination content.
- 13.2.16 The course instructor determines the content and format of delivery under the supervision of the appropriate Associate Dean and including any special stipulations set forth by the CAP, if applicable.
- 13.2.17 The instructor will be responsible for grade submission following Self Study.
- 13.2.18 The course Self Study requirements must be completed within the time frame prescribed by the Office of the Dean.

- 13.2.18.1 If a student does not attempt to remediate a grade of D+ or lower within the specified time, it will result in the dismissal of the student for academic reasons.

13.3 Remediation by Reenrollment

- 13.3.1 Re-enrollment may be offered when one of the following situations occurs:
- 13.3.1.1 A compulsory stipulation by the Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) committee.
- 13.3.1.2 A recorded failure in a Patient Care course
- 13.3.2 A student repeating credits through re-enrollment is required to register for those credits with the Office of the University Registrar
- 13.3.3 The grade earned during re-enrollment in the course is recorded on the transcript, during the term in which the re-enrolled course was completed and will be used to calculate the term GPA and cumulative GPA.
- 13.3.4 In all cases, the original failing grade will remain on the student's transcript but will not be used to calculate the student's cumulative grade point average.
- 13.3.5 The full grade scale designated for the course will be available to a student participating in a course reenrollment.
- 13.3.6 Any student who does not adhere to the agreed upon re-enrollment plan is subject to academic dismissal.
- 13.3.7 Tuition and fees will apply.

14. MODIFIED COURSE OF STUDY

- 14.1 Students may be eligible to participate in a modified course of studies upon returning from a leave of absence or reinstatement to PCO through a Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) decision.
- 14.1.1 In special or extenuating circumstances, the PCO Dean and/or their designee may determine a modified course of study.
- 14.2 The curriculum design and implementation for a modified course of studies is the responsibility of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in conjunction with the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, as appropriate.
- 14.3 Oversight of students participating in modified course of studies is the primarily provided by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

- 14.4 Students participating in modified course of studies will have the opportunity to review their updated curriculum with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs prior to the reinstatement.
- 14.5 All grades earned in coursework completed on a modified course of studies will be recorded on the transcript within the term they are taken and will be averaged into the Grade Point Average calculation.
- 14.6 If students on modified course of studies do not meet the terms outlined in this academic handbook for satisfactory academic progress, they may be academically dismissed from the PCO and will be notified, in writing, by the PCO Dean.

15. PATIENT CARE SUPPLEMENTAL

- 15.1 A Patient Care Supplemental (PCS) course is a custom designed course to meet the educational needs of an individual student. A student may be enrolled in such a course under a variety of circumstances including:

As part of a special program tailored to meet a student's personal or academic needs.

To assist a student in transition from an approved Leave of Absence.

As part of academic probation.

For remediation of externs who have been identified as weak or failing by their preceptor or have failed to meet professional behavior standards at externship sites or a TEI rotation.

A PCS course is a Pass (P)/Fail (F) course.

For additional information, please refer to the PCS syllabus.

Tuition and fees will apply.

- 15.1.1 For additional information, please refer to the PCS syllabus.

16. ACADEMIC PROGRESS MEETINGS: FACULTY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 16.1 The faculty is responsible for evaluating the academic achievement and potential of all students at the midpoint and conclusion of each academic term.

- 16.2 The faculty is responsible for providing feedback to the Office of the Dean about those students who will advance to the next term of the program.

17. MIDTERM ACADEMIC PROGRESS EVALUATION

- 17.1 The performance of all students registered within a course will be evaluated by the instructors of record at a point approximately mid-way into each academic term.
- 17.2 The name of any student who has been evaluated as “weak” or “failing” will be provided to the Office of the Dean. “Weak” students are defined as those earning a C or C– or less than a passing (P) grade at the midpoint of the term. “Failing” students are defined as those earning a D+ or below grade at the midpoint of the term. The Office of the PCO Dean will compile this information and present it at the Midterm Academic Progress meeting.
- 17.3 Following the Midterm Academic Progress meeting, the PCO Dean and/or their designee will notify the student in writing that their performance is unsatisfactory.
- 17.4 Additionally, the student will be contacted by the Office of the Dean and may be required to meet with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and may be recommended to meet with a member of the Counseling Center – Elkins Park Campus and/or the course Instructor.
- 17.5 A student is expected to take action to resolve their academic difficulties with the assistance of the individuals and services available to them.
- 17.6 The Office of the Dean may also require tutoring for students experiencing academic difficulty.
- 17.7 If a student fails to comply with the action items delineated in the post-Midterm Academic Progress meeting letter, the matter may then be referred to the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) for review and further action as appropriate, including potential dismissal.
- 17.8 Midterm evaluations/grades are not part of the student’s permanent transcript and are not used in the determination of academic standing.

18. ACADEMIC PROGRESS EVALUATION

- 18.1 The course coordinators or their designee will meet with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs to evaluate the performance of all registered students at the end of each grading period.
- 18.2 The academic standing of each student will be reviewed to evaluate academic and/or clinical performance. Information reviewed will include the student’s prior academic performance, academic status entering the term in question and any additional information relevant to their progress.

- 18.2.1 Grades become official after the OUR Grades Due in Banner date (published on the academic calendar).
- 18.2.1.1 If a student does not meet minimum program requirements, they will receive notification from the office of the PCO Dean and/or their designee. The student may be required to meet with appropriate individuals from the College.
- 18.3 Categories of Academic Standing include satisfactory, warning, probation, and dismissal.
- 18.3.1 Satisfactory Academic Standing – A student is in satisfactory academic standing when they are attaining a term grade point average and a cumulative grade point average (GPA) greater than or equal to 2.0, and any failing (F) grades or D grades have been successfully remediated.
- 18.3.1.1 Prior to beginning an external clinical rotation, a student must be in satisfactory academic standing and all requirements related to remediation and/or re-enrollment must be successfully completed.
- 18.3.1.2 Students must remain in satisfactory academic standing while holding student leadership positions. If a student is in a leadership position and falls below satisfactory academic standing, they will be required to step down from their position.
- 18.3.2 Academic Warning – A student may receive a notice of academic warning if their term GPA or cumulative GPA is 2.0 or higher, but below 2.40. Academic warning is an indication to the student that their academic performance is in danger of falling below minimum acceptable academic expectations.
- 18.3.3 Academic Probation – A student is considered on academic probation when:
- Their term GPA falls below 2.00;
 - Their cumulative GPA at the end of a term falls below 2.00;
 - They earn a Failure (F) in any course;
 - They earn a grade of “D” in two courses at any time in the program, whether in the same or different term(s).
- 18.3.4 Academic Dismissal – A first-year student will be dismissed from the academic program based upon GPA alone when:
- Their GPA is below 1.90 at the end of the Fall term;
 - Their cumulative GPA is below 2.0 at the end of the Spring term.
- All students** will be dismissed from the academic program when:

Their term GPA is below 2.0 for any two terms; OR

Their cumulative GPA falls below 2.0 for any two terms; OR

They earn a grade of “D” in three or more courses at any time in the program, whether in the same or different term(s); OR

They earn a grade of “D” while enrolled in a remediation of an “F” or “D” grade; OR

They earn a failing grade (F) in any two courses at any time in the program, whether in the same or different term(s); OR

They earn a failing grade (F) in any course at any time in the program and a term GPA below 2.0 for any term at any time in the program; OR

They earn a failing grade (F) in any course at any time in the program and two or more “D’s”.

NOTE: Any failure or “D” earned in courses that were subsequently passed through remediation or re-enrollment will count towards the number of overall course failures or “D’s” and will be noted in the student record.

The failure to undertake a necessary remediation or re-enrollment in any course during the time period as stipulated by the PCO Academic Handbook or guidance from the Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) may also result in academic dismissal. (See Section 18.6 for non-academic reasons for dismissal.)

18.4 A grade of “D” is defined as a D+, D-, or D.

18.5 A student who fails an externship course may be dismissed at any point during the term with approval of the PCO Dean and/or their designee.

18.5.1 Student failure to comply with directives from the PCO Dean and/or their designee may result in their dismissal from the academic program (see Section 18.6).

18.6 Dismissal for Other Reasons

18.6.1 In addition to the academic reasons for dismissal listed in Section 18.3.4, PCO reserves the right to initiate the process for terminating the enrollment of any student at any time for what the PCO faculty and/or administration believe to be good and sufficient reasons.

18.6.2 These good and sufficient reasons may include, but are not limited to, student demeanor, knowledge base, mental or physical fitness, as well as any form of cheating, plagiarism or unprofessional conduct.

- 18.6.3 Poor professionalism and/or conduct is viewed by the PCO as evidence that the student is not suited to a professional career and constitutes adequate cause for dismissal regardless of academic performance.

19. REINSTATEMENT

19.1 Administrative Reinstatement without Appeal

- 19.1.1 A student who has been dismissed for academic reasons may be reinstated to the PCO academic program upon a consensus recommendation at an Academic Progress Meeting and with the approval of the PCO Dean and/or their designee, without having to formally appeal to the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion.
- 19.1.2 A student will be notified in writing with the conditions of Administrative Reinstatement within 3 business days of the date of the Academic Progress Meeting.

19.2 Appeal Process for Reinstatement

- 19.2.1 A student who has been dismissed based upon the faculty consensus at an Academic Progress Meeting will receive a letter informing them of their standing within 3 business days of the meeting, not including the day of the meeting.
- 19.2.1.2 Students will be directed on how to engage in their didactic courses and clinical activities during the appeal process.
- 19.2.2 A student will have the right to request an appeal hearing with the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion or waive the right to appeal. This decision must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee within two (2) business days of receipt of the dismissal letter not including the day the letter is received.
- 19.2.3 Appeal hearings will be held as soon as possible after the request has been received from the student. The hearing will be scheduled based on availability of Committee members and may include evenings and weekends.
- 19.2.3.1 If a student wishes to appeal the dismissal, the appeal should be addressed to the Chair of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion and submitted to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee. Included in this letter of appeal should be a written explanation of why the student feels that their appeal for reinstatement should be considered and granted by the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion. The student must make themselves available to appear before the CAP.
- 19.2.4 The student must submit all other information and supporting documents in writing to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee at least two (2) business days prior to their scheduled appeal.

- 19.2.5 The student may also make an oral presentation to the Committee during the appeal hearing; however, such a presentation is not required.
- 19.2.6 A student who fails to contact the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs two (2) business days after the notification date of their dismissal letter will forfeit the right to their appeal.
- 19.2.7 If the student chooses not to make a formal appeal, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will ensure that a formal notation is made in the student's Permanent Record File.

20. PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY (PCO) COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PROMOTION

20.1 Composition of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion

- 20.1.1 The PCO Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) is a standing committee appointed by the PCO Dean. The committee for an assigned hearing is composed of four faculty members (three voting members and one Chair of the Committee).
- 20.1.2 The Dean may select a faculty member to serve as an alternate member of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion in the event of unavailability of a named Committee member, or for instances in which a Committee member has recused themselves or has been disqualified.
- 20.1.3 Representatives from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry Office of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs are non-voting members of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion.
- 20.1.4 Three (3) voting faculty members of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion must be present to consider an appeal for reinstatement.
- 20.1.5 Any member of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion may recuse or decline participation in any hearing, they will be replaced by the Dean; a new member will be assigned to the hearing.
- 20.1.6 The student may request the PCO Dean to disqualify one faculty member of the Committee without stating a reason. A request to disqualify more than one member of the Committee requires a written explanation. Any request for disqualification must be submitted to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee and addressed to the PCO Dean at least two (2) business days in advance of their scheduled hearing.

20.2 Responsibilities of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion

- 20.2.1 The PCO Committee on Academic Promotion (CAP) is responsible for hearing appeals for reinstatement from any student who has been dismissed based on criteria outlined in the Academic Progress Evaluation (Section 18).

- 20.2.2 The PCO CAP will consider and may act upon the written petition and/or a personal appeal.
- 20.2.3 The Committee may review grades, NBEO examination scores, and summaries concerning professional development and any extenuating circumstances, i.e., events beyond the student's control.
- 20.2.3.1 The Committee will have access to any prior CAP appeal decisions as part of the review.
- 20.2.4 The Committee shall decide either to uphold the dismissal; or reinstate the student either immediately, or at a future date.
- 20.2.5 If the Committee's decision is for reinstatement, the prerogatives of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion may include, but are not limited to, requiring the student to:
- Take a remediation examination(s);
 - Re-enroll in specific course(s);
 - Continue enrollment under a modified program;
 - Repeat specific courses or rotations even if previously passed;
 - Repeat an academic year of study;
 - Obtain academic counseling and/or tutoring provided by the University.
- 20.2.6 The PCO Dean will review and confirm the conditions put forth by the CAP Committee on Academic Promotion, and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will advise the student.
- 20.2.7 Students who are required to re-enroll and repeat a course are responsible for the academic/clinical work and examination(s) as outlined and required in the syllabus at the time of the course reenrollment. If needed, the PCO Dean and/or their designee, in consultation with the faculty for that course, will outline alternate conditions for said re-enrollment in writing.
- 20.2.8 A student who has been dismissed for academic reasons is not eligible for remediation or re-enrollment in any course.
- 20.2.9 Remediation or re-enrollment may occur only after a student is formally reinstated.
- 20.2.10 The PCO faculty, PCO Dean, PCO Associate Deans, and the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion will closely monitor the performance of all reinstated

students. Their continuance at the PCO will depend on successful compliance with the articulated Conditions of Reinstatement.

20.3 Conduct of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion Hearing

- 20.3.1 The hearing shall be conducted in such a manner as to give the student the full opportunity to explain the reason(s) for their unsatisfactory academic performance.
- 20.3.2 The Committee will have access to the student's complete files, including documentation of previous appeal(s) if any exists. If appropriate, the committee may call upon representatives from the University for information.
- 20.3.3 By appealing the dismissal, the student authorizes the committee to review relevant information including, but not limited to, grades, NBEO examination scores, faculty interviews, summaries concerning professional development, and any extenuating circumstances (i.e., events beyond the student's control).
 - 20.3.3.1 The student should realize that unsatisfactory performance based on poor or unwise judgment (e.g., spending too much time on nonacademic activities such as working inside or outside the College, excessive participation in student activities, and/or poor study habits) is not an acceptable explanation for poor academic performance.
 - 20.3.3.2 Consideration is given to possible extenuating circumstances, (i.e., events beyond the student's control), which may have interfered with academic responsibilities and performance. Verifiable evidence of such circumstances is required to be submitted to the Committee as part of the written statement of appeal.
- 20.3.4 A primary focus of the Committee is determining the student's potential for future academic success. Extenuating circumstances alone may not provide sufficient reason for reinstatement of the student. The PCO Committee on Academic Promotion grants reinstatement only if the Committee is convinced that the student is capable of making marked improvement in their academic performance. The student has the right to provide written letters of support from faculty members or other directly relevant individuals.
- 20.3.5 The appeal hearing will be conducted in a manner as to provide a fair evaluation of the student's performance. It will not be restricted unduly by rules of procedure or evidence, nor shall deviations from prescribed procedures invalidate a decision or proceeding unless significant prejudice to a student results.
- 20.3.6 Requests for an extension to scheduling an appeal should be made in writing by the student, addressed to the Chair of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion and submitted to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee at least two (2) business days prior to their scheduled hearing. Extensions may be granted when the presence of extenuating circumstances has been established clearly, or when a strong case has been made that

additional information pertinent to the appeal cannot be made available by the time the appeal would be heard normally.

- 20.3.7 The appeal hearing will be private. The Chair of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion will determine the number of persons to be admitted to the hearing. Those attending will treat all information confidentially.
- 20.3.8 The hearing shall be electronically recorded. The recording remains the property of the University and will be secured by the Office of the PCO Dean. If the student appellant wishes to obtain a transcribed copy of the hearing, a written request must be submitted to the Office of the PCO Dean. A fee may be charged to cover the transcription expense.
- 20.3.9 The Office of the PCO Dean will obtain and provide the academic record of each dismissed student for review by members of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion at the appeal hearing. The Committee may also seek written or verbal statements of evaluation from faculty and staff regarding the student's academic record and potential, and/or the Committee may ask such individuals to appear before the Committee.
- 20.3.10 The student shall be notified in writing of the action of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion, including all requirements set forth by the Committee, within five (5) business days following the hearing. Should the Committee require further information or time for deliberation; the student will be informed of the date by which a decision is to be rendered beyond the five (5) business days.

20.4 Academic Counseling and Assistance Available to Students

- 20.4.1 The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs is available to:
 - 20.4.1.1 Review with students the steps in appeals processes.
- 20.4.2 A member of the Counseling Center – Elkins Park is available to provide a student with, or facilitate, counseling services.
- 20.4.3 The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the academic advisors (e.g., for OD Traditional, and OD-Advanced Placement) in PCO will be available to meet with students for academic counseling services. Students should schedule an appointment with any of these academic advisors when they recognize they are struggling within the program, when they are not in satisfactory academic standing, and/or when they are being dismissed from the College. While the CAP committee will have final decisions regarding student dismissal and/or terms of reinstatement, the academic advisors are available to review with the student the options as outlined within the Academic Handbook.

20.5 Appealing a Decision of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion Not Involving Dismissal

- 20.5.1 This section pertains to any student who has been asked to remediate or re-enroll in a course, assume a modified program, or repeat an academic term or year.
- 20.5.2 Students may appeal non-dismissal actions of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion in the form of a letter directed to the PCO Dean.
- 20.5.3 The letter of appeal must be received by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee within two (2) business days of receiving their decision, not including the day of the student's receipt of the letter notifying them of the actions of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion. It should clearly delineate the reason for the appeal.
- 20.5.4 The PCO Dean must consider every case in which a student requests an appeal.
- 20.5.5 The PCO Dean will commence consideration of the appeal within three (3) business days after receipt of the letter of appeal, not including the day the appeal is received by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee.
- 20.5.6 The PCO Dean will consider and rule on the appeal. In some circumstances, the student may be included in the appeal meeting to be requested and arranged by the Dean or their designee.
- 20.5.6.1 The PCO Dean may serve alone or may select up to three members of the faculty, administrative staff or others, as they deem appropriate, to serve as an Appeals Advisory Committee to gain the benefit of their input prior to rendering a final decision.
- 20.5.7 The PCO Dean's decision on the appeal may uphold, modify, or reverse any previous decision.
- 20.5.8 The student shall be notified in writing of the decision of the Dean concerning the appeal.
- 20.5.9 The PCO Dean's decision will be made within five (5) business days, not including the day the student's letter of appeal is received by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee.
- 20.5.10 Should the PCO Dean require additional time for deliberation, the student will be informed of the date by which a decision is to be rendered.
- 20.5.11 The decision of the PCO Dean regarding the appeal of a decision of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion not involving Dismissal is final.
- 20.6 Appealing a Decision by the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion Involving Dismissal**

- 20.6.1 A student may appeal to the PCO Dean when the decision of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion is to uphold a dismissal.
- 20.6.2 The request must be made in writing by the student in a letter addressed to the PCO Dean and is limited to an **administrative review**, indicating alleged improprieties in the process/hearing by/before the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion, or new information that was unavailable to the student at the time of the hearing before the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion. The request is not to be used for additional fact finding. New information, **which was available but not presented** to the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion by the student, will not be considered.
- 20.6.3 This letter of appeal must be received by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee within five (5) business days, not including the day of the student's receipt of the letter notifying them of the actions of the PCO Committee on Academic Promotion.
- 20.6.4 The purpose of the appeal is to ensure that appropriate procedure has been adequately followed so that the opportunity clearly existed to introduce extenuating or other mitigating circumstances.
- 20.6.5 The PCO Dean may serve alone or may select up to three members of the faculty, administrative staff or others, as they deem appropriate, to serve as an Appeals Advisory Committee to gain the benefit of their input prior to rendering a final decision.
- 20.6.6 If convened, the Appeals Advisory Committee shall commence to consider the appeal within five (5) working days after receipt of the written notice of the appeal, not including the day of receipt of the appeal letter by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee. In the absence of the Dean, the Associate Vice Provost of the Drexel University Elkins Park campus will appoint a designee to assume these responsibilities.
- 20.6.7 The review will be carried out using all available documents, records of the Committee on Academic Promotion, and, if necessary, testimony by the CAP Committee Chair or other individuals, as deemed appropriate by the PCO Dean or the Appeals Advisory Committee.
- 20.6.8 The student may elect to forward to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee written statements in support of the appeal. The student may be given the opportunity to appear in person before the PCO Dean and the Appeals Advisory Committee, if convened.
- 20.6.9 Upon completion of their investigation and deliberation, the PCO Dean shall render their decision in writing to the student. The student shall be notified of the decision in writing within ten (10) business days of having filed the request for appeal with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and/or their designee, not including the day the appeal is received by the Associate Dean and/or their designee.

20.6.10 The student shall be accorded full student rights and privileges until all appeals have been exhausted with the exception of participation in patient care activities.

20.6.11 The decision of the Dean is final. There are no further appeals within the College or University.

21. STUDENT RECORDS

21.1 Student Records and Files

21.1.1 All student records are housed in The Office of the University Registrar (OUR) at Drexel University.

21.1.2 It is institutional policy that the material contained in the student records is confidential, with transfer of such information within the College/University permissible only for legitimate academic purposes. The school complies with the provisions of the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and as subsequently amended.

21.2 Examination of Student Records

21.2.1 A student must follow the Office of the University Registrar procedures for examining student records.

22. ENROLLMENT

22.1 The College expects that all candidates for degrees and certificates will be enrolled full time during consecutive academic periods (years, terms, or months depending on the year of the program) until the completion of the requirements for the degree or program have been completed.

23. SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

23.1 A student enrolled at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry is considered to be making satisfactory academic progress unless notified otherwise.

23.2 A student who is experiencing academic difficulty should, at their earliest opportunity, first speak with the course instructor or coordinator, or clinical faculty member/service chief regarding their performance.

23.3 The student should contact the Center for Learning and Academic Success Services (CLASS) regarding tutoring support. Personal counseling opportunities can be explored through the Counseling Center – Elkins Park Campus.

23.4 Other individuals within the College and University such as the appropriate Associate Dean, and/or faculty member of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University should also be contacted to discuss the student's academic performance.

- 23.5 Satisfactory academic progress through the various health professions education programs is an eligibility criterion for all students who receive Title IV student financial assistance. Students must carry a minimum of nine (9) credit hours when enrolled in a semester term to have full time student status for financial aid purposes.
- 23.6 A course not taken for a grade is not counted for these purposes. Under normal circumstances, all didactic coursework must be completed in no more than 5 years. A student must complete the entire program within seven (7) years (not including approved Leaves of Absence) and must present evidence of continued satisfactory academic progress at all times. The PCO Dean must approve of any exceptions to this total length of program.

24. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 24.1 The Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University follows the Office of Graduate Studies of Drexel University's leave of absence procedures outlined on the Drexel University website. A student should contact the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for assistance.

24.2 Return from a Leave of Absence

- 24.2.1 The student must notify the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs in writing of their intent to return to the College. The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will review the student's request and notify the Dean and appropriate personnel.
- 24.2.2 Upon approval to return from a Leave of Absence, regardless of the type, the student's permanent record and status is reviewed by the Office of the Dean. Upon returning from an approved leave, the Office of the Dean will determine the student's entry point into the curriculum.
- 24.2.3 A repeat of a course or portions of the curriculum previously completed successfully, or other academic and/or clinical conditions may be required or applied if deemed educationally necessary. Additional tuition/fees for repeated work may also apply.
- 24.2.4 Students are not permitted to engage in any educational activities until their program of study has been determined by the Office of the Dean and recorded in their academic record.

25. WITHDRAWAL

- 25.1 The following sets forth guidelines for student withdrawal from Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Drexel University. The sections that follow describe procedures and administrative actions to protect the interests of students and of the University. Unusual issues, not anticipated by these guidelines, may arise and will be managed appropriate to the individual circumstances.

- 25.1.1 A student may withdraw voluntarily from the College/University at any time. A student who wishes to withdraw must contact the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and indicate in writing the reason(s) for the withdrawal. The student must then meet with the PCO Dean and/or their designee(s).
- 25.2 The withdrawal from the program is completed only after all requirements associated with the Withdrawal from the University policy are successfully completed.
- 25.3 A student who wishes to seek re-admission to the Doctor of Optometry degree program must follow the procedures outlined in Section 26 of this Academic Handbook (Re-admission).
- 25.4 If the student is granted re-admission, the PCO Dean and/or their designee(s) will determine the content of the student's academic program, entry point, conditions, and requirements pertinent to the readmitted student's curriculum.

26. RE-ADMISSION

26.1 Student Dismissed for Academic Reasons/Student Who has Withdrawn

- 26.1.1 A student in either of these categories, who wishes to be readmitted to the Pennsylvania College of Optometry should re-apply to the Office of Admissions in the same way as any new applicant. Application procedures are outlined in the Drexel University catalog.

26.2 Student Dismissed for Non-Academic Reasons

- 26.2.1 A student in this category should submit their application to the Office of Admissions and the application will be reviewed by the PCO Dean.

27. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduation and the awarding of the Doctor of Optometry degree are contingent upon the satisfactory completion of academic, clinical, and professional requirements.

The student is responsible for understanding all requirements for graduation and completing them within the prescribed course of study.

The student must successfully pass all internal examinations and satisfactorily complete all required clinical activities. The student must successfully complete the entire prescribed course of study with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or better.

The student must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the faculty, the professional attributes and conduct necessary for the practice of optometry.

The student must have demonstrated integrity and honesty through their personal and professional behaviors.

Student misconduct such as cheating on examinations, falsifying clinical data, or activities constituting criminal behavior may result in the denial of the Doctor of Optometry degree even though the individual has satisfactorily completed the academic program.

The College/University reserves the right to place on probation, suspend or expel from the institution any student who willfully violates any rule or regulation of the College/University or the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or other state, Federal, or local government, whether or not convicted in a criminal court.

Upon satisfactory completion of the academic and professional standards set by the College/University and the optometry curriculum, the faculty and PCO Dean will recommend candidates to the Drexel University Provost for conferral of the Doctor of Optometry degree.

28. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- 28.1 PCO students are subject to the University's Academic Integrity Policy and the Drexel University Code of Conduct, both of which are incorporated into this Student Handbook by reference.
- 28.2 Conduct constituting an academic integrity violation includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, fabrication or falsification of academic or clinical data, and the use of generative artificial intelligence tools where such use is prohibited by the course syllabus or by University policy.
- 28.3 Suspected violations arising in a course are reported by the course coordinator to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and referred to the University Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for review under the University's Academic Integrity Policy.
- 28.4 Sanctions imposed under the University's Academic Integrity Policy are separate from, and in addition to, any academic action taken under this Student Handbook, including referral to the CAP.
- 28.5 A student found responsible for an academic integrity violation may not withdraw from the course to avoid the academic consequences of the violation. If the sanction includes a failing grade for the course, that grade is recorded in accordance with University policy.
- 28.6 Students are expected to maintain professional standards in all communications, including social media and other public online activity. Students may not post patient information, patient images, or examination content, and may not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the College or the University.

29. TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- 29.1 The Doctor of Optometry degree requires the demonstrated ability to perform the essential functions of the profession. Students must meet the technical standards of the Program, with or without reasonable accommodation, at the time of matriculation and throughout their enrollment.
- 29.2 The technical standards address observation and sensory ability; communication with patients, faculty, and other members of the health-care team; motor and tactile function sufficient to perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures safely; intellectual, conceptual, integrative, and quantitative ability; and behavioral, emotional, and professional maturity.
- 29.3 A student who requires accommodation in order to meet the technical standards must register with the Drexel University Office of Disability Resources. Accommodations are determined through the interactive process administered by that office and are not applied retroactively.
- 29.4 A student who is unable to meet the technical standards, with or without reasonable accommodation, will be reviewed in accordance with the Program's academic standards and administrative procedures.

30. HEALTH, SAFETY, AND CLINICAL COMPLIANCE

- 30.1 Participation in patient care is contingent upon the student's completion and continued maintenance of all health and compliance requirements of the College, the University, and The Eye Institute and its affiliated clinics.
- 30.2 These requirements include the immunization and health-screening requirements administered by the Drexel University Health Insurance & Immunization Office, maintenance of health insurance, privacy training under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), occupational safety and bloodborne-pathogen training, and any criminal background check, child-abuse clearance, or drug screening required by a clinical site.
- 30.3 A student who has not satisfied these requirements may be removed from patient care assignments. Time missed for this reason is treated as an unexcused absence and may delay progression through the clinical curriculum or result in program dismissal.
- 30.4 A student who sustains a needlestick, sharps, or other exposure incident, or who is injured while engaged in patient care, must report the incident immediately to the supervising clinical faculty member and complete the incident-reporting procedures of the clinical site.
- 30.5 Externship and other off-campus clinical sites may impose additional health, safety, screening, or credentialing requirements. Students are responsible for satisfying site-specific requirements by the deadlines set by the site and the Director of the Externship Program.

31. NONDISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND TITLE IX

- 31.1 Drexel University prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of any characteristic protected by law, and prohibits sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and retaliation. The University's civil rights policies apply to all enrolled PCO students.
- 31.2 Concerns and reports are directed to the Drexel University Office of Civil Rights Compliance, which administers the University's civil rights policies, including those arising under Title IX. A student may make a report regardless of whether the student also seeks an academic remedy under this Student Handbook.
- 31.3 Faculty and professional staff of the College who receive a report of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct are required to share that report with the Office of Civil Rights Compliance.
- 31.4 A student who is a party to a civil rights matter may request supportive measures, including academic adjustments, through the Office of Civil Rights Compliance.

32. STUDENT GRIEVANCES AND COMPLAINTS

- 32.1 A student who wishes to raise a concern that is not governed by the academic appeal procedures of this Student Handbook should first raise the concern with the course coordinator or the clinical faculty member involved.
- 32.2 If the concern is not resolved, the student may submit it in writing to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs or the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, as appropriate. The student may submit a written appeal of that determination to the Office of the Dean, whose decision is final.
- 32.3 Concerns alleging discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct are addressed by the Office of Civil Rights Compliance, and concerns alleging violations of the Code of Conduct are addressed by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards, rather than under this section.
- 32.4 A student who believes the Program is not in compliance with the standards of its accrediting body may file a complaint with the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education. Filing such a complaint does not substitute for the procedures described in this section.
- 32.5 Retaliation against a student for raising a good-faith concern or complaint is prohibited.

33. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- 33.1 PCO students have access to the student support resources of both the College and the University and are encouraged to seek assistance early, e.g. advising, tutoring and academic coaching.
- 33.2 Counseling and wellness services are available through the Drexel Counseling Center, and medical care is available through the Drexel Student Health Center. Use of these services is confidential and is not reported to the Program.
- 33.3 Registration, billing, financial aid, and enrollment transactions are administered through Drexel Central.
- 33.4 Accommodations for students with disabilities are administered by the Drexel University Office of Disability Resources.

34. FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS AND FINANCIAL AID IMPLICATIONS

- 34.1 Tuition, fees, refunds, and financial aid are administered by the University. Students are responsible for satisfying all financial obligations to the University.
- 34.2 A change in enrollment status, including remediation, a modified course of study, re-enrollment in a course, a leave of absence, or withdrawal, may affect tuition charges, refund eligibility, financial aid eligibility, and loan deferment or repayment.
- 34.3 Eligibility for federal financial aid requires that a student maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by University policy. That standard is administered by the University and is separate from the academic standings described in this Student Handbook.
- 34.4 A student considering a leave of absence, withdrawal, remediation, or a modified course of study should consult Drexel Central before submitting a request, in order to understand the financial and financial aid consequences.
- 34.5 Because the Program is lock-step, a change in enrollment status may extend a student's time to degree and increase the total cost of the Program.

35. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University complies with federal and state regulations regarding students with disabilities. For all information on students with disabilities, please refer to the Drexel University Office of Disability Resources.