



Policy Title:

Deceleration Policy and Procedure

Policy Identifier:

A3.14d

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Category: Academic Policies and Student Progression	

ARC-PA Standards

A3.14d

Scope

University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia (USC SOMC) PA students.

Policy Statement

Deceleration occurs when a student moves from their original cohort to a subsequent cohort. Because the PA curriculum is an integrated, cumulative, lockstep program designed for students to progress and graduate as a single cohort, deceleration is rare and approved only under extenuating circumstances. Deceleration allows a student to rejoin the program at a later point with another cohort at a reentry point determined by the program.

Reason for Policy

To ensure compliance with ARC-PA Standard A3.14d by defining clear policies and procedures for student deceleration. This policy ensures consistency, fairness, and transparency when a student temporarily separates from their cohort and reenters the program under specified conditions.

Definitions

- **Deceleration:** A formal process in which a student delays progression and joins a subsequent cohort at a designated point in the curriculum.
- **Voluntary Deceleration:** Initiated by the student for qualifying extenuating circumstances.
- **Mandatory Deceleration:** Directed by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) as a corrective or preventive measure.
- **Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC):** The committee responsible for evaluating student performance and recommending deceleration when warranted.

Procedures

1. General Guidelines



- Deceleration is not typically granted solely for academic performance reasons.
- Students who decelerate for any reason must comply with all policies, curricular changes, tuition and fee structures, and Student Handbook requirements associated with their new cohort.
- The goal of deceleration is to provide students with a structured and supported pathway to return to good standing and successfully complete the program.
- There are two forms of deceleration:
 - Voluntary Deceleration – initiated by the student.
 - Mandatory Deceleration – required by the SPPC.

2. Voluntary Deceleration

Voluntary deceleration may be requested by a student experiencing extenuating circumstances, such as illness, pregnancy, personal or family emergencies, or military leave, that significantly affect their ability to continue. Voluntary deceleration is a proactive decision made before academic failure occurs and is approved only when justified by the circumstances.

Procedure for Voluntary Deceleration

1. The student must submit a written request for voluntary deceleration to the Program Director, describing the reason and anticipated duration.
2. The Program Director reviews the request and determines whether deceleration is warranted and how it will affect future matriculation.
3. If approved, the Program Director develops a written plan outlining expectations, reentry timing, and requirements.
4. The student must sign the plan to indicate understanding and agreement.
5. Prior to returning, the student must notify the Program in writing of their intent to return and may be required to meet with the SPPC or other designated PA Program faculty to develop a reintegration plan.
6. Prior to resuming coursework, the student may be required to complete a new background check and urine drug screening in accordance with initial enrollment requirements. The student shall bear the associated costs.

Curricular and Financial Considerations

- A decelerated student must comply with any revisions to the curriculum, tuition and fees, and policies outlined in the Student Handbook of their new cohort.

3. Mandatory Deceleration

Mandatory deceleration may be required by the SPPC as a remedial or preventive measure when a student demonstrates deficiencies that could impede academic or professional success.

This measure provides the student with an opportunity to strengthen foundational knowledge, clinical skills, or professionalism before continuing.

Procedure for Mandatory Deceleration

1. The SPPC provides a written recommendation for mandatory deceleration to the Program Director.
2. The Program Director reviews and approves the recommendation and determines the



reentry plan.

3. If approved, the Program Director develops a written plan outlining conditions, timing, and performance requirements.
4. The student must sign the plan to indicate understanding and agreement.
5. Prior to returning, the student must notify the Program in writing and may be required to meet with the SPPC or designate PA Program faculty for reintegration planning.
6. Prior to resuming coursework, the student may be required to complete a new background check and urine drug screening in accordance with initial enrollment requirements. The student shall bear the associated costs.

Curricular and Financial Considerations

- The student must adhere to the curriculum, tuition, and policies of their new cohort.
- Program updates implemented during the deceleration period apply to all returning students.

Enforcement and Accountability

All decisions regarding deceleration are subject to review and approval by the SPPC and Program Director. Students must meet all reentry conditions before returning to active status. Failure to return within the approved timeframe may result in withdrawal and require reapplication through CASPA.

Contacts

Program Director
USC School of Medicine Columbia
Physician Assistant Program

History

Date of Change	Change
01/01/2026	Policy drafted into new template