

**Rush University Medical Center  
Graduate Medical Education**

**SUGGESTED PROBATION GUIDELINES POLICY**

During the course of a graduate medical education program, a house officer may experience academic difficulty that results in the need for a period of probation. The term probation refers to formal notification to the house officer that the program leadership has determined that there is an academic deficiency that requires attention and must be improved. Examples of academic deficiencies may include, but are not limited to cognitive and skill concerns, questions regarding professionalism, personal and attitude issues, and mental health and substance abuse problems. All of these are potentially academic issues in that they may have an impact on the house officer's ability to succeed academically. Individual programs may delineate criteria for determining when and which academic deficiencies merit probation, but they should not imply that any such list is intended to be fully inclusive.

The House Officer's Agreement does not require any lesser corrective action or counseling prior to placing a house officer on probation. As an illustration, the process of instituting probation might begin with a dialogue between the program director, the house officer, and possibly the department chairman. An attempt may be made to informally determine a course of corrective action, short of probation, that may result in remediation of the deficiency. This process should be documented, may serve as formal discipline and is intended to inform the house officer that probation may result from his/her failure to remediate the deficiency.

That a formal probation is warranted is within the purview of the program director, although the program director will ordinarily discuss this intention with the department chairman. It should be communicated in the form of a letter to the house officer and it is preferable if the letter can be delivered in person. The letter should contain the following elements:

1. A description of the deficiency or deficiencies, which may include examples;
2. A statement that the house officer is being placed on probation, with a starting date;
3. The actions that must be followed in order to successfully remediate the deficiency or deficiencies, possibly appearing as an enumerated list;
4. A statement that the probation will end if and when the actions are completed, with an expected date of completion;
5. The consequences of failing to remediate the deficiencies;
6. A statement that the house officer has been informed of the terms of the probation, as well as, the date the house officer was informed of the decision;
7. The signatures of the program director and, if possible, the house officer. (If the house officer refuses to sign, the program director should note that decision and state that the house officer has been informed of the terms of probation).

Assistance in the preparation of the letter is available from the GME office, the Dean's Office, and Legal Affairs. The original letter should be given to the house officer. A copy should be kept in the resident's academic file.

The probation letter will permanently reside in the house officer's academic file, as well as, any documents generated which reflect the success or failure on the part of the house officer in correcting the deficiencies.