

**NECO** | New England  
College of Optometry

# Student Handbook 2022-2023

Published: May 3, 2022  
Updated: July 21, 2022  
Volume 28

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# INTRODUCTION

## Notice Regarding Student Handbook

New England College of Optometry (NECO) makes every effort to be certain that the handbook is substantively true and correct in content and policy as of the date of publication. It should not, however, be construed as the basis of an offer or contract between NECO and any present or prospective student. While to NECO's knowledge, the handbook contains no erroneous, deceptive, or misleading statements or omissions, NECO retains the right to amend, add or delete any information in the handbook, including any course of study, program or regulation, subsequent to publication thereof. Changes are made on a periodic basis utilizing NECO's website or printed material.

## Accreditation

The New England College of Optometry is accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) of the American Optometric Association and by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). Both ACOE and NECHE are recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as reliable authorities on the quality of education and adhere to the standards of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The College has been continuously accredited by ACOE since 1941 and by NECHE since 1976.

For further information: <https://www.neco.edu/consumer-information/accreditation/>

# STUDENT RESOURCES

## Office & Department Guide

Office/Department	Telephone	Email/website
Academic Affairs	617-587-5587	<a href="mailto:academicaffairs@neco.edu">academicaffairs@neco.edu</a>
Admissions Office	617-587-5580	<a href="mailto:admissions@neco.edu">admissions@neco.edu</a>
Bioscience Department	617-587-5590	
Business Office	617-587-5583	<a href="mailto:businessoffice@neco.edu">businessoffice@neco.edu</a>
Campus Store	617-587-5600	<a href="http://ShopNECO.com">ShopNECO.com</a>
CAPA	617-587-5593	<a href="mailto:capa@neco.edu">capa@neco.edu</a>
Center for Educational Effectiveness	617-587-5604	
Clinical Education Office	617-587-5566	<a href="mailto:clinicaleducation@neco.edu">clinicaleducation@neco.edu</a>
College Main Number (Beacon St Campus)	617-266-2030*	
Financial Aid Office	617-587-5582	<a href="mailto:finaid@neco.edu">finaid@neco.edu</a>
Front Office (Reception, Lost & Found, Mail)	617-587-5652	<a href="mailto:frontdeskreceptionist@neco.edu">frontdeskreceptionist@neco.edu</a>
Human Resources Office	617-587-5599	<a href="mailto:hr@neco.edu">hr@neco.edu</a>
Information Technology Office	617-587-5591	<a href="mailto:helpdesk@neco.edu">helpdesk@neco.edu</a>
Library	617-587-5589	<a href="mailto:library@neco.edu">library@neco.edu</a>
NECO Center for Eye Care Comm Ave	617-262-2020	<a href="mailto:eyecare-commonwealth@neco.edu">eyecare-commonwealth@neco.edu</a>
NECO Center for Eye Care Roslindale	617-323-7300	<a href="mailto:eyecare-roslindale@neco.edu">eyecare-roslindale@neco.edu</a>
President's Office	617-587-5678	<a href="mailto:presidentsoffice@neco.edu">presidentsoffice@neco.edu</a>
Primary Care Department	617-587-5594	
Registrar's Office	617-587-5581	<a href="mailto:registrar@neco.edu">registrar@neco.edu</a>
Specialty & Advanced Care Office	617-587-5595	
Vision Science Department	617-587-5588	

\*Access the NECO directory by calling 617-266-2030 to locate a specific individual, department, or office.

## Hours of Operation at Beacon Street Campus

Building hours are subject to change, please see the Facilities page of the NECO Portal for most up to date hours of operations.

## College Closing or Delay

College closures, delays, and cancellations apply only to academic programs held at the Beacon Street campus, and the Clinical Training Center at the Commonwealth Avenue campus. Employees, students, and other personnel with clinical assignments (including at NECO's internal clinics) must report to their clinic unless specifically and individually notified otherwise.

The Office of Facilities Operations and Administration, in consultation with leadership, determines when health or safety concerns necessitate building closures or delayed openings. The College communicates unexpected changes to hours of operation primarily through the Informacast emergency notification system (see the “Emergency Notification System” section for more information).

Parking on the Beacon Street lot is not permitted during unexpected building closures.

### Clinical Sites

- A student assigned to **clinic** is expected to contact their preceptor and/or the clinic director. If the clinical site remains open, the student is expected to go to clinic. If the student is unable to attend, the student must follow the procedure for an “unexpected absence” which can be found under “Absence Policies and Procedures”.
- A student assigned to **screening** will have their screening canceled if the Beacon Street Campus is closed regardless of the status of the screening site.
- A student assigned to an **observation** will have their observation canceled if the Beacon Street Campus is closed. The student is expected to contact their preceptor to cancel the observation for that day and reschedule their observation at the earliest available time.

## Emergency Notification System

Under the Clery Act, emergency notifications are used to, “immediately notify the campus community upon the confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on the campus” (34 CFR 668.48(g)). These situations include, but are not limited to:

- Human behavior; campus or community violence
- Natural disasters; severe snow, severe storm, flood, earthquake
- Utility outages and leaks; gas, electric, water
- Hazardous events; toxic substance spills or releases
- Unexpected building closures
- Any other event posing an immediate threat to the campus

The College uses Informacast, an Emergency Notification System (ENS) designed to send simultaneous mobile, voice, and text notifications during catastrophic events. This system complements other communication protocols used during emergencies, such as email, the emergency public address system, and fire alarms. The ENS will be initiated as quickly as possible to ensure the safety of the NECO community, unless issuing a notification will, in the professional judgment of responsible authorities, compromise efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

NECO has an obligation to inform all community members who might be present of emergency situations on campus. Students are automatically enrolled in the ENS upon commencement of studies. NECO highly

discourages opting-out of these communications, as this decreases the College's ability to provide critical information in an emergency.

Timely warnings may be issued independent of the ENS system if the College identifies an ongoing, but not imminent, threat to the College community.

The Office of Facilities Operations and Administration tests the ENS system twice a year.

## NECO ID Cards and Campus Access

NECO ID cards (or "badges") are issued upon matriculation at no cost. ID Cards promote the safety of our community by identifying authorized persons on the premises. Additionally, NECO ID cards provide swipe access to certain doors at the Beacon Street campus, the NECO Center for Eye Care, and the Clinical Training Center.

ID Cards must be worn visibly at all times while on the premises. Those entering a NECO building without their ID may be denied access to the facility.

The following violations of security protocol, among others, undermine campus security and may be grounds for disciplinary action:

- Refusal to wear the NECO ID;
- Manipulation of the ID's appearance;
- Propping or holding open card access doors, or otherwise allowing entry to individuals without card swipe access. This includes strangers as well as other community members and individuals a student knows.

Card access is pre-approved, and lack thereof is intentional. Unless explicitly told otherwise, those without card access are not authorized to enter spaces protected by card access.

Plastic ID holders and lanyards are available at the Beacon Street Front Office upon request. ID cards must be returned to the Beacon Street Front Office when a student ends or leaves their program.

All inquiries regarding card access to the Beacon Street campus and Clinical Training Center should be directed to the Office of Facilities Operations and Administration at [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu).

### Replacement ID Cards

Lost, stolen, or broken ID cards should be reported immediately to the Office of Facilities Operations and Administration at [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu). ID replacement requests should also be directed to [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu).

Cards with incorrect or outdated information, defective cards, and the first replacement for a lost card will be provided at no charge. If a student loses their card more than once, each subsequent replacement will cost \$5.

## Student's Personal Property Policy

Students bring personal property onto the College premises at their own risk, and personal property owners are responsible for the security of their belongings. The College assumes no responsibility and shall not be liable for any articles or vehicles lost, stolen, damaged, or left behind. Such property includes mail or parcels sent to or left for students.

## Bicycle Rack

Bike, moped, and electric scooter owners may utilize the Beacon Street campus bike racks during posted hours of operation. Owners are responsible for securing their property to prevent theft and assume full responsibility for said property while on College grounds (see Student's Personal Property Policy).

- Parking bicycles—as well as mopeds and electric scooters—in any location outside of the designated bike racks is not permitted.
- Vehicles with batteries (electric scooters, etc.) are prohibited inside the Beacon Street building.
- If inside the building, vehicles without batteries (such as skateboards) must be carried, not wheeled, and stowed in a locker. If it won't fit in your locker, you must leave it outside the building.

The Office of Facilities Operations and Administration will assist with cutting bike locks if given permission in writing from the owner. Bikes left in the storage rack overnight may be impounded. The bike owner will have 48 hours to collect their bicycle before it is discarded. The Office of Facilities Operations and Administration reserves the right to remove and discard bikes deemed abandoned.

## Lockers

NECO makes lockers available to students to facilitate the daily storage of their learning and personal materials. The Office of Facilities Operations and Administration manages the locker program at Beacon Street. Lockers are assigned at the beginning of every academic year, and unless otherwise noted must be vacated before the summer term.

Items that may **not** be stored in lockers include:

- Flammable materials, dangerous chemicals, explosives, or weapons of any kind.
- Illegal or controlled substances such as drugs or alcohol.
- Battery-operated scooters, and other items containing lithium batteries.
- Food and other perishable items.

Students are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness and integrity of their assigned locker. If a student is assigned a locker without a built-in lock, the student is responsible for providing their own. Students may not switch lockers without authorization from the Office of Facilities Operations and Administration.

Lockers are NECO property, and NECO reserves the right to open a locker with or without the consent of the student to whom the locker is assigned. See the Facilities page of the Portal and the Student's Personal Property policy for more information.

## Mail Room

Students may utilize the Beacon Street Front Office to send prepaid outgoing mail through USPS. The mailroom can deliver envelopes and small packages between campuses, but does not handle outgoing student mail shipping through UPS, FedEx, or any carrier beside USPS.

If shipping personal items to the College address, the following guidelines apply. Each parcel must:

- Not exceed 20 pounds
- Measure within 2' x 2' x 2'
- Not contain perishable items.
- List the recipient's name clearly on the address label.

Students will receive an email from the Front Office once their delivery has been processed and is ready for pickup. Personal items unclaimed after five business days will be returned to sender. Any variance to this is at the approval of the Operations department.

Inquiries should be directed to [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu) or by dialing (617) 587-5652. See "Students Personal Property Policy" for information regarding liability and responsibility for parcels.

## Lost and Found

Lost items recovered on the Beacon Street campus or the shuttle are held at the Front Office. Unclaimed items will be discarded or donated after 30 days.

Lost items recovered at the Clinical Training Center are held on-site at the CTC.

## Room Reservations

Students seeking to reserve a room for student meetings, events, and functions must contact the Associate Director of Student Services.

Room reservation requests are subject to approval from both CAPA and the Office of Facilities Operations and Administration.

## Servery/Café and Vending Machines

The servery, Starbucks machine, and vending food and snack items are located in the garden level of the Beacon Street campus. Please see the Facilities page of the Portal for servery hours of operation.

## Student Parking at Beacon Street Campus

NECO community members who utilize parking privileges are required to be familiar with and abide by the Institutional Parking Policy (found on the Facilities section of the Portal). Parking decisions are made at the full discretion of the Office of Facilities Operations and Administration.

Active NECO students may apply for the “After Hours Only” parking permit decal (sticker) through the Portal. Parking on the Beacon Street lot without proper authorization is prohibited. Students who wish to park outside the hours allowed by their decal, or without a decal, must request a temporary day pass from the Office of Facilities Operations and Administration. The Office has full authority over approving or declining a parking request, and may ask students to move their vehicles at any time.

Parking policies, parking decal request forms, and other transportation related information can be found on the NECO Portal under the Facilities Page. All inquiries should be directed to [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu).

## Shuttle Service

NECO runs a free shuttle for NECO community members—the “LimBus”—between the Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue campuses during the Fall and Spring semesters on days when both the Beacon Street campus and the Clinical Training Center are open. There is no service during the summer sessions. The shuttle schedule is posted on the Facilities page of the Portal.

Shuttle services are on a “first come, first serve” basis with a maximum capacity of 14 persons. Standees are not permitted. Community members must present their NECO ID in order to ride the shuttle. The driver has the authority to refuse service if ID is not shown or if any other safety standards are not followed.

Lost items should be turned in to the Front Office at Beacon Street to be held by the Office of Operations and Administration. Questions, comments, or concerns should be directed to [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu).

## NECO Campus Store\*

ShopNECO is NECO's online campus store, owned and operated by AdvancedOnline company. NECO no longer determines the merchandise selection, pricing, or sales. Questions should be addressed to their Customer Service. Find the store: Direct at [ShopNECO.com](https://ShopNECO.com) or use the STORE tab at top of NECO's website.

\*Scrubs and/or optometric equipment are not available on ShopNECO. Please refer to the documents in the Forms & Policies page in the NECO Student Portal.

## Student Equipment Kits

The PCI Instructor of Record will manage the order and distribution of equipment kits for PCI students. These will be purchased centrally and the cost is included in student fees. For more information, contact the Office of Clinical Education.

## MBTA Passes

Discounted passes may be purchased during the first week in September and the first week in January. Please contact CAPA for further information and exact deadlines. For more public transportation information, call the T at 617-222-5000 or go to their website: [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com).

## Printing & Copies

See the NECO IT Portal for more details.

## Faxes and Scanning

Faxing and/or scanning related to College or Clinic business can be done in the CAPA Office located on the first floor of the Beacon Street Campus right off the Rotunda.

## Gender Inclusive Restrooms

NECO values all members of our community and seeks to create a campus culture that recognizes and supports individuals of all genders. NECO is committed to providing safe, accessible, and convenient restroom facilities. Students, faculty, staff, and visitors are encouraged to use the restroom that most closely aligns with their gender identity.

Single occupancy, all gender restrooms are located throughout the college, and are available for everyone to use. The most accessible locations include:

- In the Rotunda, under the stairs on the first floor;
- Next to the Admissions office on the first floor;
- In the Lower Library on the garden level, next to the kitchenette.

Additional locations that are not wheelchair accessible are:

- In the Kamens Center next to the Chen Room on the first floor;
- Next to Conference Room 2501 on the second floor.

Please direct any issues with restroom access to the Office of Operations and Administration to [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu).

## Usage of Perfumes and Colognes

Please be aware that some individuals have allergic reactions to perfumes and colognes. Please minimize your use.



# CENTER FOR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT (CAPA)

Center for Academic and Professional Achievement (CAPA) focuses on providing a NECO experience in which every student is supported by the campus environment, connected to the institution, and prepared for life long success in the optometric field. For general questions or concerns, please contact [capa@neco.edu](mailto:capa@neco.edu).

## Student Organizations

### Student Groups

The following recognized student groups at the New England College of Optometry provide opportunities for leadership development in student government; optometric research; local, national and international eye care; and public health legislation.

Student Council  
 American Academy of Optometry  
 American Optometric Student Association  
 Asian Optometry Student Organization  
 Beta Sigma Kappa  
 Canadian Association of Optometry Students (CAOS)  
 College of Optometrists in Vision Development  
 Contact Lens Society  
 La Vista  
 Lions Club  
 Massachusetts Society of Optometrists  
 National Optometric Student Association  
 Performance Vision Club  
 PRISM  
 Private Practice Club  
 Public Health Club  
 Sigma Upsilon Sigma  
 Student Alliance for the Advancement of Diversity and Inclusion  
 Volunteer Optometric Services to Humanity

Descriptions can be reviewed on the Student Life section of the NECO portal. If you have further questions, please contact Jill Cummings, Associate Director of Student Services.

## Student Council

Student Council governs the internal affairs of the student body. The Council consists of twenty-three voting members and is made up of the Executive Board (a president, a vice president, treasurer, secretary, and media/clubs coordinator) and:

- Representatives from the first, second, and, third year classes of the Four-Year OD Program
- Representative from the Accelerated OD Program (AODP)
- Representative from the Advanced Standing International Program (ASIP)
- Representative from the Masters of Science in Vision Science Program (MS)

Student Council positions are open to any student who meets the GPA requirements and are elected by the student body.

Every year, each class in the Four-Year OD Program elects a president, a vice-president and three representatives to the Student Council. The AODP, ASIP and MS Programs each elect one representative. The students elected to these positions have the duty of representing their class during Student Council meetings as well as acting as liaison between their professors and classmates.

For the first semester of the first year of the Four-Year OD program, there will be class liaisons to facilitate communication with course faculty. The vice-president of the Student Council will act as the interim president for the first year students in the Four Year OD Program until elections for a full class council are held in the Spring Term. Rising second and third year students of the Four Year OD Program, the MS Program and the Accelerated OD Program hold elections at the end of the Spring Term for positions beginning the following Summer Term. The Advanced Standing International Program holds elections in the middle of the Summer Term for the positions beginning the following Fall Term.

Student Council works toward making change to Optometric legislation and organizes activities such as the NECO Olympics, the Halloween party and the Eye Ball. At the fall budget meeting, the Executive Council members allocate funds from student activity fees to the various recognized school organizations.

The Council also meets periodically with school administrators to help set policies concerning student interests and oversees the election of student representatives to various administrative committees such as Curriculum, Student Affairs and Financial Aid which usually occurs at the end of the academic year. The Alumni Association Board of Directors includes all members of the Executive Student Council. Monthly Council meetings are usually held in the late afternoon at the most convenient time for everyone.

The needs of the student body regulate the frequency of meetings. One of the secretaries of the Student Council will email announcements regarding when and where the meeting will be held. Meetings are open to all students, faculty and administrators as observers without rights to speak or to vote, unless otherwise invited.

If you have any questions concerning the Student Council, contact Jill Cummings, Associate Director of Student Services.

### GPA Requirements to Hold Student Office/Committee Member

Student office positions include, but are not limited to, all leadership positions on Student Council and within student organizations. A student must have and maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.400 or better; the student must not be on Academic Probation and/or Clinical Probation for more than 1 semester, in order to run for a student office, hold a student office, represent a student government office or be a student member on College committees.

A student who fails to maintain these requirements must resign their position immediately. If applicable, the position will be replaced as outlined in the by-laws of the organization or committee.

## International Students

### I-20 Validation

International students must have their I-20 forms signed every year in order to re-enter the United States. F-1 Students need to come to CAPA at the end of the first week of the Fall term. To schedule an appointment, please email [barnesp@neco.edu](mailto:barnesp@neco.edu).

### Immigration Information:

International students should direct their questions to Pankhuri Barnes in CAPA via [barnesp@neco.edu](mailto:barnesp@neco.edu) or 617-587-5663. An appointment may be needed to clarify the disposition of the information or to process documents.

### Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

The student has 30 days to enter the country before your official program start date, as listed on your Form I-20. If the student does not report to your school by their program start date, the DSO (Designated School Official) may terminate their SEVIS record. It is suggested that the student contact NECO immediately once they [enter the country](#) so that there is no question of their arrival.

If the student cannot enter the United States for the term listed on your Form I-20, they should contact their school officials as soon as possible so that they can update the student's record so their plans are accurately reflected in SEVIS.

As an F-1 student, the most common phrase will be "maintaining status." Maintaining their status means that they are fulfilling the purpose for why the U.S. Department of State issued the student their visa and whether they are following the regulations associated with that purpose. Remember, a student visa is a travel document the student receives from a U.S. consulate or embassy before they enter the United States. The student's status is what they

must maintain after they are granted entrance into the United States. Learn more about the rules you must follow by talking to your DSO and reviewing the [Maintaining Status](#) page on Study in the States.

When departing the United States, the student must make sure to get the second page of their I-20 signed (Travel Endorsement) annually. F-1 students and dependents have 60 days after program end date (or training end date) to depart the United States.

## Immunization Requirements

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the College Immunization Law requires all students in a health science program who may be in contact with patients to provide the College with proof of immunity against measles, mumps, rubella (2 doses of each vaccine are required); tetanus; diphtheria; acellular pertussis; varicella (2 doses), the hepatitis B (3 dose series) vaccine, and meningitis (one dose of the MenACWY vaccine for any student up to and including age 21). The College also requires a Mantoux PPD test for tuberculosis annually and be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 . The College mandates that students obtain all immunizations prior to enrollment.

Exemptions from immunizations can be made only for certain medical conditions, such as health circumstances which contraindicate immunization, pregnancy, or participation in a current sequence of immunizations. A written statement from a physician is necessary in all health circumstances.

Students will not be allowed to participate in clinical assignments which begin in the first term of the first year until all immunization requirements have been fulfilled. The College's clinical affiliations may also require additional immunizations and/or testing that must be complied with before participating in patient care at that clinical site.

Please keep a copy of your immunization documents for use. If your personal copy has been lost and you need a copy of your immunization records you can request them through your doctor or make a request through CAPA via MedProctor. For more information, or have questions, please contact Pankhuri Barnes in CAPA at [barnesp@neco.edu](mailto:barnesp@neco.edu).

### Immunization Policy for All Clinical Providers

Consistent with the variety of Massachusetts laws, regulations and public health orders requiring all health professionals who may be in contact with patients to be vaccinated against certain diseases, and in accordance with recommendations by the CDC, the NECO Clinical Network requires proof of immunization from clinical providers, including screening doctors, residents, opticians and student interns.

All providers in the clinical system are required to comply with these regulations, and will be asked to provide documentation of vaccinations of the following before hire:

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (2 doses)
- Tetanus/Diphtheria/Acellular Pertussis (Tdap- Adacel only)

- Hepatitis B (3-dose series) vaccination is strongly recommended\*
  - \*A waiver for Hepatitis B vaccination may be allowed under certain circumstances, based on service location. (Requests for waivers should be directed to the NECO Chief Compliance Officer for review).
- Varicella
- COVID-19 vaccinations (both first and second doses within 5 months of start of clinic, and maintaining up-to-date vaccination (i.e. booster) thereafter, following CDC and NECO guidelines for intervals between boosters)
- Tuberculosis Test upon hire and if symptomatic (Mantoux or Quantiferon gold test) \*
  - \*Annual TB testing will **not** be required at NECO owned and operated sites (Commonwealth and Roslindale) unless there has been a history of exposure to TB. Initial TB testing is required for all new providers upon hire, and a response to an annual symptoms questionnaire may be requested.
- Additionally, influenza and pertussis vaccinations are highly recommended. They may be required by specific clinical sites.

To assist any provider who is disabled, has a qualifying medical condition that contraindicates the vaccination, or who objects to an immunization or vaccination on the basis of sincerely held religious beliefs and practices, NECO will engage in an interactive process to determine if a reasonable accommodation can be provided so long as it does not create an undue hardship for NECO and/or does not pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others in the workplace, including but not limited to other employees, patients and visitors to NECO facilities and/or to the employee.

To request an accommodation for one of the above reasons, please notify Dr. Gary Chu in writing at [chu@neco.edu](mailto:chu@neco.edu). Once NECO is aware of the request for an accommodation, NECO will engage in an interactive process to identify possible accommodations. Please know that you may request an accommodation without fear of retaliation.

Providers (including screening doctors, residents, opticians, and student interns), will not be allowed to participate in clinical assignments until all immunization requirements have been met or an accommodation, that does not cause an undue burden, has been granted. Questions about requirements may be addressed to the Chief Compliance Officer. [\*CDC Recommendations for Healthcare Worker Vaccinations\*](#)

The NECO Clinical Network's contracted sites (i.e. health centers, local hospitals, Veterans Administration hospitals and clinics, schools, homeless shelters, etc.) may require additional immunizations and/or testing that must be completed before participating in patient care at that clinical site. If the contracted site does not include one or multiple of the above required elements, the NECO personnel should follow NECO requirements. Fulfillment of immunization requirements will be tracked by the NECO credentialing department for employees, and by CAPA for student interns.

## Counseling

All counseling inquiries should be directed to CAPA at 617-587-5593.

### Thrive@NECO

Thrive@NECO provides students with expanded access to mental health services. The 24/7/365 line provides in-the-moment support with a licensed clinician. Additionally, ten free visits with a counselor, whether in person or via telehealth, are available to all students. Call 833-434-1217 any time!

Students can also find more information about Thrive@NECO in the NECO portal [here](#).

## Student Advising

CAPA offers individual advising appointments to discuss study skills, time management strategies, and more. Please reach out to Marianna Toumpourou, Associate Director of Student Accessibility & Advising at [toumpouroum@neco.edu](mailto:toumpouroum@neco.edu) or 617-202-8648.

## Health Insurance for Students

According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and NECO policy, all students (regardless of enrollment) must be covered by a comprehensive health insurance program. NECO makes available a general health insurance program that meets these standards. This policy is provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield and administered by University Health Plans. There is an option to waive the college provided insurance if a student is already covered.

Questions about this requirement and waiver deadlines can be directed to the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement (CAPA).

## Tutoring Requests

For all tutoring services, didactic or clinical, please contact [peertutoring@neco.edu](mailto:peertutoring@neco.edu). For didactic tutoring, please make sure to get an email approval from your professor.

## Accommodations

Students seeking accommodations are encouraged to review the Accommodation documents posted to the NECO portal [here](#). Any questions about accommodations can be directed to Marianna Toumpourou, Associate Director of Student Accessibility & Advising at [toumpouroum@neco.edu](mailto:toumpouroum@neco.edu) or 617-202-8648.

# LIBRARY

## About the NECO Library

Located on the garden level of the 424 Beacon Street campus, the NECO Library offers a full range of information services. A member of Fenway Library Organization, a local library consortium, the library shares its catalog with several other local special and academic libraries. These libraries are open to current NECO students, and students are able to borrow materials from most of the other FLO libraries. A NECO ID is needed to visit the other libraries, borrow books or request articles.

## Service Desk

The library's service desk circulates physical reserve materials in support of the current term course offerings (additionally, the library provides access to online reserve materials). These varied materials include books, articles, notes, lens sets, skulls and calculators, among other items. From this desk, library staff members support users in locating relevant materials and learning research techniques. The library also loans iPad Minis for use on campus, as well as chargers, adapters, and peripherals for various devices. For more details regarding the library's borrowing policies, please visit [library.neco.edu/services/borrow](http://library.neco.edu/services/borrow).

## Library Website

[library.neco.edu](http://library.neco.edu) is a 24/7 gateway to the library's vast collections. From here, you can search the library's holdings, including databases, scholarly articles, eBooks, eJournals, clinical point-of-care tools, and print materials. You can also easily request materials that the library does not own. In order to access the library's subscribed resources from off campus, you must log in using your NECO Gmail account.

## Textbooks

Required readings for all courses are available on reserve at the NECO Library. All are available in print, and most are available online as well. Print books on reserve can be borrowed four hours at a time, and can be requested at the library's service desk. Current course reserves lists can be found on the library website here: <https://library.neco.edu/reserves>

# TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID

## AY 2022-2023 Tuition and Fees

The Board of Trustees of the New England College of Optometry has set the annual tuition rate for the 2022-2023 Academic Year as follows:

- \$44,748 – all four years of the Four-Year OD Degree Program
- \$61,218 – first and second years of Accelerated OD Degree Program
- \$44,748 – third year of Accelerated OD Degree Program
- \$61,218 – first year of Advanced Standing International Program
- \$44,748 – second year of Advanced Standing International Program
- \$61,218 – first year of Accelerated OD China Program
- \$11,187 – per clinical rotation second year of Accelerated OD China Program
- \$22,374 – per year of Master of Science in Vision Science Degree Program
- \$1,398 – per credit hour cost for non-degree students taking First Professional Courses

A student enrolled less than full-time will be charged at a per credit rate.

Tuition rates are subject to change by the Board of Trustees of the College. The annual tuition is payable in installments coinciding with the start of each academic term. A student will be billed for each term that a student is registered for didactic or clinical courses.

### Repeated Courses Tuition Charges

A student who is not registered full time in the term that the repeated course is given will be charged on a per credit basis for the repeated course as well as any other course as applicable. A student who is registered full time in the term that the repeated course is given will not be charged more than full time tuition for the term.

### Exempted Course Tuition Charges

A student in a degree program who is exempted from a course will not receive a reduction in tuition.

### Extended Program Tuition Charges

A student whose program is extended will be subject to applicable tuition and fee charges.

### Thesis Maintenance Fee

A student in the MS degree program has a grace period of two terms, usually summer and fall, from their original completion date before a thesis maintenance fee of \$600 per term is assessed. This charge will be assessed until the student graduates, formally withdraws or is administratively withdrawn due to the thesis deadline having passed.



## Dual Program Tuition

A student in the dual OD/MS degree program will have the tuition charge waived as long as they are paying full-time tuition charges for the OD program.

## Fees and Expenses

Annual fees include a student activity fee of \$375 and an individual health insurance fee of approximately \$2,287 for all students (final health insurance fees for the year have not yet been determined). The health insurance fee will only be waived if other insurance has been deemed acceptable.

## First Year Student Fee

One-time fees for first-year students only include a \$300 laboratory fee for all programs, and a \$1,275 equipment fee for the Four-Year OD Program and Accelerated OD Program.

Fees and expenses are subject to change by the Board of Trustees of the College.

## Payment Policy

All tuition and fees are due and payable on or before the first day of classes of each term, except for first-year students in the Four-Year OD Program. Tuition and fees for the first term for first-year students in the Four-Year OD Program are due by August 15<sup>th</sup> (about two weeks before the beginning of the term). Students may not register or attend classes if tuition and fees are not paid in full or appropriate arrangements have not been made with the Business Office at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the term. The College does not accept credit cards for the payment of tuition and fees. The College may charge a late fee of \$100 for accounts not paid by the due date.

## Refund Policy

The College's refund policy with regard to tuition, fees\* and other expenses applies in the case of a student's withdrawal, dismissal, or leave of absence, as follows:

Effective Date of Withdrawal, Dismissal, or Leave of Absence	Percentage Refunded
Before the 1 <sup>st</sup> day of the academic term	100%
During the 1 <sup>st</sup> week	90%
During the 2 <sup>nd</sup> week	80%
During the 3 <sup>rd</sup> week	70%
During the 4 <sup>th</sup> week	60%
After the 4 <sup>th</sup> week	0%

\*All fees, except for the mandatory equipment fee, are non-refundable. The equipment fee is refundable only if the equipment is returned intact and unopened within the first two weeks of the term.

When calculating a refund, a reasonable administrative fee may be charged. This fee shall be the lesser of 5% of charges assessed to the student or \$100.

A refund of excess financial aid is processed by direct deposit to the student's bank account.

A refund of the health insurance fee is generally not permitted except in cases where it is determined that the eligibility requirements were not met or if the request for coverage was determined by the College to have been sent in error. A student may not cancel their insurance once he/she is enrolled, unless he/she joins the military. A student should contact the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement with regard to health insurance questions or concerns.

## Hold on Services Policy

The College may withhold services to any student or former student who has financial or other outstanding obligations to the College. Outstanding obligations include, but are not limited to:

- Tuition and fees
- Clinic and campus store charges
- Library late fees and book replacement charges
- Unreturned borrowed equipment
- Institutional loan defaults (Perkins, HPSL, LDS, Fund for Education, Saval Loans, short-term emergency loans, etc.)
- HEAL student loan default
- Collection fees
- Returned check fees

Withheld services include, but are not limited to:

- Classroom instruction, clinical education, etc.
- Library use and other services
- Awarding of diploma
- Transcripts to third parties
- Certifications
- Enrollment verifications
- Board, licensure and other forms processing

## Financial Aid Handbook

The Financial Aid Office publishes a handbook every academic year. The handbook includes information about financial aid eligibility, loans, scholarships and information for international students. The handbook is located in the NECO Portal or on the Financial Aid website at <https://www.neco.edu/admissions/tuition-and-aid/>

## On Campus Work-Study, Loans and Scholarships

On campus work-study jobs and work study forms are posted on the NECO Portal on the Financial Aid page. Information about loans and scholarships can be found in the NECO Portal or on the Financial Aid main website.

## Student Award Disclosure Policy

NECO offers a limited number of scholarships from private donors and its endowment. Outside organizations frequently ask the College for assistance in selecting deserving students for their scholarships or other awards. Depending on the award criteria, students may have to actively apply for a scholarship or be selected by a committee based on grades, GPA, financial need, student loan indebtedness, state of residence, or other factors.

Scholarship committees may be composed of faculty members, administrators, private donors, student representatives, or others, who on a strict “need to know” basis, review a candidate’s qualifications. Although the information is reviewed with the utmost confidentiality, some students may not wish to participate. A student may opt out of the scholarship/award process by submitting a written request to both the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration and the Director of Financial Aid. Scholarship selection occurs most of the year, so it is best to submit your request to opt out early in the academic year. The opt out status from the scholarship/award process will remain in effect unless a written rescission is received by both the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration and the Director of Financial Aid.

Students who receive endowed scholarships from NECO donors, or other awards, are given recognition by the College to celebrate their achievements. Recognition can be in the form of being honored at one of the awards ceremonies, a written announcement in the awards program, an announcement and photo on the College’s website, or other form of communication.

## Satisfactory Academic Standing/Progress and Financial Aid Eligibility

A student will be placed on Financial Aid Warning after two consecutive terms on Academic and/or Clinical Probation. During the Financial Aid Warning term, a student will receive federal financial aid for which he or she is otherwise eligible. If the Academic or Clinical Probation is not resolved at the end of the Financial Aid Warning term, the student will be required to meet with the Student Affairs Committee. If allowed to continue in the program, they will be placed on Financial Aid Probation and is eligible for one more term of federal financial aid. At the end of the Financial Aid Probation term, the student, who has not been removed from Academic and/or Clinical Probation and is allowed to continue in the program, will no longer be eligible for federal financial assistance.

Once Academic and/or Clinical Probation is resolved or the specified modified program requirements are met, the Financial Aid Warning or Probation is lifted. The student may regain eligibility for federal financial aid after all issues are resolved. Please refer to the Financial Aid Handbook for further details.

# ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This section outlines the academic policies of the New England College of Optometry. Students, faculty and administrators are expected to familiarize themselves with the academic, clinical, student ethics and administrative policies.

The Student Affairs Committee (SAC), composed of faculty members, administrators and student representatives, is responsible for the implementation of and adherence to the College's academic policies as well as other policies as defined throughout the Student Handbook.

## Academic Calendar

The Office of Academic Affairs is responsible for annually coordinating and publishing the academic year calendar. The calendar can be found at [www.neco.edu/academics/current-calendar](http://www.neco.edu/academics/current-calendar). All students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with important academic dates. It is important for students to check the academic calendar periodically as some dates may change. Final year students taking clinical rotations follow the calendar at their clinical site.

## Student Status Policies

The Registrar will determine a student's academic progress and standing after each term. All grades, including Incomplete, In Progress, and Remedial are considered for purposes of determining academic standing and academic progress. Academic standing and academic progress will only be calculated once per term following the grade submission deadline.

### Credit Hour Definition

One credit hour is equivalent to

- 15 hours of in class lectures and a minimum of 30 hours of out of class student work per term
- 30 hours of laboratory per term
- 30 hours of online interactive training per term
- 30 hours of clinic and a minimum of 15 hours of out a class student work per term

### Enrollment Status by Program

A student who attends and completes all required courses offered to their class for the term or academic year will be considered to be full time. These course load designations are used for student classification status only. (For policies relating to tuition see 'Tuition and Financial Aid' section.)

#### **First Professional Degree Program**

- Fall and Spring Term is defined as
  - Full time: 12 or more credit hours
  - Half time: at least 8 and up to 11.99 credit hours

- Part time: less than 8 credit hours
- Summer Term and each term in the final year are defined as:
  - Full time: 9 or more credit hours
  - Half time: at least 4.5 and up to 8.99 credit hours
  - Part Time: less than 4.50 credit hours

### **Stand Alone Graduate Degree Program**

- Fall and Spring Term is defined as
  - Full time: 10 or more credit hours
  - Half time: at least 5 and up to 9.99 credit hours
  - Part time: less than 5 credit hours
- Summer Term is defined as:
  - Full time: 9 or more credit hours
  - Half time: at least 5 and up to 9.99 credit hours
  - Part time: less than 5 credit hours

### **Academic Standing**

A student is considered to be in good academic standing unless they have met any of the criteria for Academic Dismissal and/or Clinical Dismissal for a second consecutive time or has not met the requirements set forth in a modified program. (Please review the 'Academic and Clinical Dismissal' sections that are in the latter part of this handbook.)

### **Academic Distinction**

NECO strives to recognize students that have demonstrated high academic achievement and performance. The distinctions below detail the qualifications to receive these honors. Please note, GPA cannot be rounded up.

#### **BSK**

Students in the First Professional Program who have a cumulative GPA of 3.50 or higher at the end of each academic year will be invited to apply to join BSK.

#### **Dean's List**

Awarded after the Fall and Spring terms (Rotations and Summer terms do not qualify) to students in the First Professional Degree Program. Students who have a term GPA of 3.50 or higher will be awarded Dean's List. A letter will be sent to the student and the honor will be noted on the student's transcript.

#### **Honor Roll**

Awarded after the Fall and Spring terms (Rotations and Summer terms do not qualify) to students in the First Professional Degree Program. Students who have a term GPA of 3.00 – 3.49 will be awarded Honor Roll. A letter will be sent to the student and the honor will be noted on the student's transcript.

## Academic Progress

A student whose expected date of graduation is not more than one year after the date anticipated at the time of matriculation will be considered to be making satisfactory academic progress. At the end of each term, the Registrar and/or the SAC review each student's performance. A student may progress normally or may be placed in one or more of the following categories:

- Academic Warning
- Academic Probation
- Clinical Probation
- Disciplinary Probation
- Modified Status
- Inquiry Status

## Academic Warning

A student in a first professional program will be placed on academic warning when their cumulative GPA falls within the range of 2.000 – 2.399. The student will receive a written notice, which may be transmitted via the student's NECO email from the Registrar.

\*Students that entered their academic program prior to 2019, and if they earned a cumulative GPA between 2.000-2.199, will be placed on Academic Warning.

## **Resolution of Academic Warning**

Academic warning will be resolved when the student's cumulative GPA is 2.400 or above.

\*Students that entered their academic program prior to 2019: Academic warning will be resolved when the student's cumulative GPA is 2.200 or above.

## Academic Probation

A student will be placed on academic probation for one or more of the reasons listed below for their degree program. The student will receive a written notice, which may be transmitted via the student's NECO email from the Registrar each time they meet a requirement to be placed on academic probation. Any student placed on academic probation will be required to meet with the SAC and may be required to meet with the Associate Director of Student Advising. A student in the Accelerated OD Program or the Advanced Standing International Program will also be required to meet with their program advisor. A student in a graduate program will also be required to meet with the Director of the program.

### First Professional Degree Program (FYOD, ASIP, AODP, MS/OD China)

- Student's cumulative GPA is below the minimum grade point average of 2.000 required for advancement to the next professional year or graduation

- Student's term GPA is 1.600 or below in any one term
- Student has earned one grade of "F" in one term

#### OD/MS Dual Degree Program

- Student's MS cumulative GPA is below the minimum grade point average of 3.000 required for advancement to the next year or graduation
- Student's OD cumulative GPA is below the minimum grade point average of 2.750 required for advancement to the next year or graduation
- Student's term GPA is 1.600 or below in any one term for either program
- Student has earned one grade of "F" in one term for either program

#### OD/PhD Dual Degree Program

- Student's OD cumulative GPA is below the minimum grade point average of 2.750 required for advancement to the next year or graduation
- Student's term GPA is 1.600 or below in any one term
- Student has earned one grade of "F" in one term

#### Stand Alone Graduate Program (MS)

- Student's cumulative GPA is below the minimum grade point average of 3.000 required for advancement to the next year or graduation
- Student's term GPA is 1.600 or below in any one term
- Student has earned one grade of "F" in one term

### **Resolution of Academic Probation**

Academic probation in a first professional program will be resolved when the student's cumulative GPA is 2.000 or above and any requirements set by the SAC and/or the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs has been met.

Academic probation in a graduate program will be resolved when the student's cumulative GPA is 3.000 or above and any requirements set by the Director of the Graduate Program, the SAC and/or the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs has been met.

Academic probation in the OD/MS program will be resolved when the student's OD cumulative GPA is 2.750 or above and MS cumulative GPA is 3.000 or above and any requirements set by the Director of the Graduate Program, the SAC and/or Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs has been met.

Academic probation in the OD/PhD program will be resolved when the student's OD cumulative GPA is 2.750 or above and any requirements set by the Director of the Graduate Program, the SAC and/or Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs has been met.

## Clinical Probation

The student will receive a written notice, which will be communicated via the student's NECO email, from the Registrar each time they meet the criteria for being placed on clinical probation. Any student placed on clinical probation may be required to meet with the SAC.

A student will be placed on clinical probation for one or more of the following:

- Student has earned a grade of Remedial (RM) in a clinical course
- Student has earned a grade of Failure (F) in a clinical course.

## **Resolution of Clinical Probation**

Clinical Probation for a student who received a grade of RM in a clinical course will be resolved if a student receives a grade of Pass (P) or higher in their next clinical course.

Clinical Probation for a student who received a grade of F in a clinical course will be resolved after the student meets the requirements set forth by the SAC, the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs and/or as part of a remedial program, e.g., repeating and passing the failed clinical course.

## Disciplinary Probation

A student will be placed on disciplinary probation if they are found in violation of any policies under 'Student Policies and Profession Standards' section of this handbook. A letter will be placed in the student's file. If the student is involved in subsequent violations, they will be eligible for dismissal and will meet with the Student Affairs Committee.

## **Resolution of Disciplinary Probation**

Disciplinary probation will be resolved if the student meets the conditions set forth in their retention letter from the SAC or other appropriate committee. The appropriate committee will determine on an individual basis if the letter(s) with regard to disciplinary probation will remain in the student's file permanently and if 'Disciplinary Probation' or another notation will be transcribed on the student's transcript.

## Modified Status

A student whose program has been changed or has been retained by the SAC will be placed on modified status. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee in collaboration with the Student Affairs Committee may modify a student's academic or clinical program. Modification may take the form of increasing the time allowed to complete the curriculum, the sequence in which courses are taken, and/or by setting a different academic and/or clinical standard. The modified program will also contain the academic and/or clinical standard(s) that the student must meet in the modified program. The SAC may set different academic and/or clinical standard(s) as part of a student's performance review or dismissal hearing as well as recommend curriculum changes to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs.



## Re-classed

The SAC committee treats every academic situation individually, and their decisions are based upon what is best for the student. In some circumstances, the SAC committee may decide to retain a student, but require the student to repeat a previous semester, or even a full academic year.

## Student Request for Modified Program

Ordinarily a student's request for a change in their academic curriculum should be submitted to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs no later than two weeks after mid-term exams. If approved, a student's request for a change in their curriculum will place the student on modified status. The same procedures as listed under 'Modified Status' will be used to create the modified program.

## Inquiry Status

A student who has an unprofessional conduct complaint pending before the SAC or a disciplinary probation violation pending will be classified as an inquiry status student until the complaint is resolved. Please review the 'Unprofessional Conduct' section of this handbook for more information.

## Requirements for Student Advancement

A student is required to meet minimum academic and clinical standards in order to advance to the next year of study. A student in the OD/MS or OD/PhD program must meet the professional and graduate program standards to advance to the next year of study.

### First Professional Degree Program

- A student must have at least a 2.000 cumulative GPA at the end of each academic year and have completed all clinical requirements without an unresolved grade of "F" for that year unless placed on modified status.
- To enter the final professional year, a student must have a 2.000 cumulative GPA, no more than one grade of Incomplete, In Progress, Remedial or Fail in didactic or clinical courses, and have completed all clinical requirements for all three years without an unresolved grade of "F" unless placed on modified status.

### OD/MS Dual Degree Program

- A student must have at least a 2.750 OD cumulative GPA and a 3.000 MS cumulative GPA at the end of each academic year.
- A student must meet all program requirements for that year which is confirmed by their advisor to the Graduate Studies Committee.
- A student must have no more than one grade of Incomplete, In Progress, or Fail in didactic or clinical courses unless placed on modified status. To enter the final Professional Year, a student must also have completed all clinical requirements for all three years

### OD/PhD Dual Degree Program

- A student must have at least a 2.750 OD cumulative GPA at the end of each academic year.
- A student must meet all program requirements, both OD and PhD, for that year which is confirmed by their PhD graduate advisor to the NECO Director of Graduate Studies.
- A student must have no more than one grade of Incomplete, In Progress, or Fail in didactic or clinical courses unless placed on modified status. To enter the final Professional Year, a student must also have completed all clinical requirements for all three years in the OD program.

### Stand Alone Graduate Degree Program

- A student must have at least a 3.000 cumulative GPA at the end of each academic year.
- A student must meet all program requirements for that year which is confirmed by their advisor to the Graduate Studies Committee.
- A student must have no more than one grade of Incomplete, In Progress, or Fail in a didactic course unless placed on modified status.

## Change in Enrollment Status

Students who have a status change after the beginning of the current term will be given the grade of withdrawal (W) applied to their discontinued courses they were enrolled in.

### Leave of Absence and Readmission

A student, who is in good academic standing may request a leave of absence from the College. This request must be submitted in writing to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs at least 30 days in advance of the anticipated leave date. This requirement of an advanced notice will be waived only under extraordinary circumstances.

If the student is in their final year of a first professional program and/or in a graduate program, the Clinical Education Office and/or the Office of Graduate Studies will be notified by the Office of Academic Affairs upon receipt of the request.

The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs will inform the student in writing of the decision and any terms and date of reentry relative to returning to the College as well as also notifying the appropriate offices.

### **Please note the following:**

- The decision to grant the leave will be a function of consultation among the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs, the Director of Clinical Education if a student is in their final year, the Director of Graduate Studies if a student is in a graduate program, the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, and any other appropriate individuals.
- A leave of absence may not be granted before all tuition and fees are paid in full and a student must arrange an appointment with a staff member from the following offices

- Center for Academic and Professional Achievement (CAPA) to discuss next steps and visa status implications (for international students)
- Financial Aid Office to answer any questions about aid
- Business Office to determine the student's unpaid balance
- Registrar to answer questions about transcripts
- A leave of absence is usually not extended beyond one year. Ordinarily, a student is granted only one leave of absence.
- A student who returns to the College after a leave of absence may be required to take additional coursework due to curriculum changes. A student taking a leave of absence does so with the understanding that course sequencing may change during the leave of absence. A student may be required to pass a clinical proficiency examination prior to assignment to clinical patient care.

### **Conditional Leave of Absence and Readmission**

If a student is not eligible for a leave of absence, yet presents extraordinary extenuating remediable circumstances, a conditional leave of absence may be requested. Examples of such circumstances could include illness or other medical/personal conditions. Documentation of the circumstances by a practitioner deemed to be qualified by the College must accompany the requests. Remediation of the condition by a qualified practitioner must be presented by the student in order to return to the College. Conditions set in the return documentation, such as continued medical care or therapy, must be adhered to.

If the student is in their final year of a first professional program and/or in a graduate program, the Clinical Education Office and/or the Office of Graduate Studies will be notified by the Office of Academic Affairs upon receipt of the request.

The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs will inform the student in writing of the decision and any terms and date of reentry relative to returning to the College as well as also notifying the appropriate offices.

#### **Please note the following:**

- The decision to grant the conditional leave will be a function of consultation among the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs, the Director of Clinical Education if a student is in their final year, the Director of Graduate Studies if a student is in a graduate program, the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, and any other appropriate individuals.
- A leave of absence may not be granted before all tuition and fees are paid in full and the student has met with the Financial Aid Office to discuss the effect of the leave upon financial aid arrangements.
- A leave of absence is usually not extended beyond one year. Ordinarily, a student is granted only one leave of absence.
- A student who returns to the College after a leave of absence may be required to take additional coursework due to curriculum changes. A student taking a leave of absence does so with the understanding that course sequencing may change during the leave of absence.
- A student who returns to the College after a conditional leave will be required to pass a clinical proficiency examination prior to assignment to clinical patient care. If the student fails to pass, the

student will be required to complete clinical tutoring before retaking the proficiency examination. Failing to pass a second time may result in the student being reclassified as to their level in the program or not being allowed to return.

## College Withdrawal

A student in a first professional program may withdraw from the College by informing the Registrar in writing. This should be done at least two (2) weeks before Final Exams begin or three (3) weeks before the end of a final year clinical assignment. A student who does not withdraw by these deadlines will receive a 'Zero/Fail' for any missed examinations, papers, etcetera and this 'Zero/Fail' will be used in the grade calculation.

A student in a graduate program may withdraw from the College by informing the Director of Graduate Studies in writing. The Director will notify the Registrar in writing and provide the student's withdrawal letter.

A student must arrange an appointment with a staff member from the following offices

- Center for Academic and Professional Achievement (CAPA) - to discuss next steps and visa status implications (for international students)
- Financial Aid Office - to answer any questions about aid
- Business Office - to determine the student's unpaid balance
- Registrar - to answer questions about transcripts

When the withdrawal from the College becomes official, the following actions will occur:

- Deactivation of the student's identification card to remove access to campus buildings except as a visitor during regular business hours.
- Discontinuation of the student's email account. The student must provide the IT Department with another email address within five (5) days where email can be forwarded for thirty (30) days. If a student fails to give the College IT Department another email account within five (5) days forwarding will not be instituted.

## Academic Dismissal

A student who meets any criteria for dismissal will be required to meet with the SAC for review and determination of their status.

A student in a first professional degree program may be subject to dismissal for one or more of the following reasons:

- When the term GPA is 1.6 or below
- When the cumulative GPA is below 2.000
- Following two consecutive terms on academic probation
- When a grade of "F" is earned in a course
- When a grade of "F" is earned in a course retaken to resolve a grade of "F"
- When the requirements for advancement are not met

- When additional modified status requirements have not been met

A student in a graduate degree program may be subject to dismissal:

- When the term GPA is 1.6 or below
- When the cumulative GPA is less than 3.000
- Following two consecutive terms on academic probation (not including an intervening summer session)
- When missing MS program requirements by their expected due dates
- When requirements for advancement are not met
- When additional modified status requirements have not been met

A student in the combined OD/MS degree program may be subject to dismissal from either or both programs:

- When the term GPA is 1.6 or below for either program
- When a grade of "F" is earned in a course
- When a grade of "F" is earned in a course retaken to resolve a grade of "F"
- When the OD cumulative GPA is less than 2.750
- When the MS cumulative GPA is less than 3.000
- Following two consecutive terms on academic probation (not including an intervening summer session)
- When missing MS program requirements by their expected due dates
- When requirements for advancement are not met
- When additional modified status requirements have not been met

A student in the combined OD/PhD degree program may be subject to dismissal from either or both programs:

- When the term GPA is 1.60 or below for the OD program
- When two grades of "F" are earned in the same term
- When the OD cumulative GPA is less than 2.750
- Following two consecutive terms on academic probation (not including an intervening summer session)
- When missing PhD program requirements by their expected due dates,
- When requirements for advancement are not met
- When additional modified status requirements have not been met

### Clinical Dismissal

A student who meets any criteria for dismissal will be required to meet with the SAC for review and determination of their status.

A student in a first professional, combined OD/MS or combined OD/PhD degree program may be subject to dismissal for one or more of the following reasons:

- Following the grade of Fail (F) earned in a clinical course that involves patient care,

- Following two consecutive Remedial (RM) grades earned in clinical courses that involve patient care,
- When three non-consecutive Remedial (RM) grades are accumulated in clinical courses that involve patient care,
- Following two consecutive terms on clinical probation,
- When additional modified status/remedial requirements have not been met.

### Dismissal Meeting Policy and Procedure

The SAC presides over two types of dismissal meetings:

- Unsatisfactory Academic or Clinical Progress as specified by the criteria noted above
- Unprofessional Conduct: academic, clinical, or personal behavior that violates any element of NECO's policies

The SAC will notify the student in writing usually by NECO email of the time and date of their meeting. A student has the right to select a faculty member or administrator of the New England College of Optometry as an advisor.

As part of the review, the SAC will consider the student's full academic record (which includes the application sent to Admissions), clinical record (if applicable), and all pertinent information provided by the student such as:

- Circumstances regarding poor academic and/or clinical performance
- The student's proposal for satisfactorily completing the academic and/or clinical program
- Any relevant medical documentation
- Written faculty reflections/comments when requested by the student

Following the dismissal meeting, the student may be dismissed, reclassified to a subsequent year, or retained on modified status. The SAC will notify the student in writing usually by NECO email of the decision to dismiss or retain. A dismissal that is upheld will always be permanently transcribed onto the student's transcript.

### Appeal of Dismissal

The student may submit a written appeal of their dismissal to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs within three days after the date of the letter in which SAC informs the student of their dismissal. This letter should include the date, the reason(s) for the appeal, and the student's signature. The document can either be submitted via email or in person. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee will serve as a reviewer of appeals of dismissals.

An appeal will only be considered for two specific reasons:

1. If a student demonstrates that the SAC did not follow the dismissal process
2. If the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs finds that *new* extenuating evidence exists that was not available at the time of the hearing

The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee will act in an expeditious manner after receipt of a written appeal and may elect to convene a committee of faculty and/or administrators to assist with this decision at any point of the process. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee may request input from the SAC, GSC, if applicable, or others as necessary.

If the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs deems that the appeal is justified, they may consult further with others before advising the student in writing usually by NECO email of the student's status, curriculum changes or conditions that are required as part of the student's program in order to be retained. If the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs does not feel that the appeal is justified, the student will be advised in writing usually by NECO email of this finding. The decision of the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs will be final.

A student who is appealing a dismissal will be allowed to attend didactic courses and may be allowed to attend clinical courses. The student must contact the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs who will inform the student as to what courses and clinical assignments they may attend. The original date of dismissal is used for financial aid purposes unless an appeal is granted.

### Consequences of Dismissal

As soon as dismissal from the College becomes official, the following will occur:

- Permanently transcribing of dismissal on student's record
- Deactivation of the student's identification card to remove access to campus buildings except as a visitor during regular business hours,
- The student must contact IT within five (5) days to set up forwarding of their NECO email for thirty (30) days. If a student fails to contact the College IT department within five (5) days, forwarding will not be instituted.

A student is also able to connect with a staff member from the following offices

- Center for Academic and Professional Achievement - to discuss next steps and visa status implications (for international students)
- Financial Aid Office - to answer any questions about aid
- Business Office - to determine the student's unpaid balance
- Registrar - to answer questions about transcripts

### Reapplication after Withdrawal or Dismissal

A student who has withdrawn or has been dismissed from the College must reapply by submitting new documentation to the College for readmission to the program. A student who withdraws or has been dismissed from the College must apply to the Admissions Committee for readmission but will not be readmitted without the recommendation of the Student Affairs Committee. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee in consultation with the SAC and the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) if applicable will determine the reentry level, date of reentry and modified program, if necessary. The original expected graduation date may be revised as appropriate.

The former student must have met all prior fiscal obligations to the College before petitioning or applying for readmission. Withdrawal from the College in good academic standing does not in itself guarantee readmission. Previous admission to the College in no way guarantees successful readmission by a former student who reapplies to the College. Readmission to the College will only be decided by the process listed in the above paragraph. An administrator or faculty member of the College has no authority to insinuate that a student will be successfully readmitted.

## Changes in Didactic Course Status

### Add/Drop

Students may add or drop an elective course only during the first week of classes without a 'W' grade noted on their transcript. After the first week of classes students are required to request a course withdrawal. Non-elective courses are not eligible for add/drop; however, a student can request a change to their current program. Please see the *Student Request for Modified Program* section for more information.

### Withdrawal from Didactic Courses

A student is not normally allowed to withdraw (drop) from individual courses. In unusual circumstances, a student who is performing at a "C" or higher level may petition the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee for exception to this policy. The petition must be presented no later than two weeks prior to the final examination. Permission to withdraw from the course will only be given by the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee after consultation with the instructor of record. If the student's request is approved, a grade of "W" will be transcribed. A student who withdraws from one or more courses will be placed on modified status. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee will devise a modified program using the same procedures as listed under Modified Status for this student. A copy of the letter approving the withdrawal and providing the student's modified program will be sent to the Registrar.

If a student withdraws from a course without permission, as evidenced by nonattendance and failure to complete assignments and examinations, a grade of "F" will be transcribed.

Withdrawal from course(s) after the third week of classes will not result in a tuition adjustment if the student is still attending the College.

### Exemption from Didactic Courses

A student may be exempted from a course only with the approval of the instructor of record. If the instructor finds that the student has sufficient educational background and successfully pass a test administered by the instructor, the student may be exempted from the course. If the student is granted an exemption, the course instructor must notify the Registrar and student in writing by the end of the third week of the beginning of the course with a duration of 14 or more weeks; end of the first week of the beginning of the course with a duration of 12 or less weeks. The student is required to attend the course until receiving written notification of



an exemption. An exemption from a course does not entail a change in tuition. Once the exemption has been granted the student will receive the grade of EX.

### Auditing a Didactic Course

A student may audit a course with the recommendation of the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee. A student is required to attend the majority of classes and/or any lab sessions required by the instructor. Attendance must be verified by the instructor of record in order for the course to be transcribed.

If a student has extenuating circumstances that prevent them from attending the scheduled meetings of a course but would still like to audit, approval must be obtained from the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs and the Instructor of Record.

Students auditing a course are allowed to attend lectures and labs as well have access to course materials. Students will not receive credit for the course nor be responsible for taking any quizzes, examinations, or practicals. Students must fill out the Audit Request form on the Registrar's page of the student portal to be registered for the course. At the end of the course the student will receive the grade of AU.

### Repeating of a Didactic Course Previously Passed

In extremely rare circumstances, the Dean of Academic Affairs has the authority to invite a student to repeat a course the student previously passed. This privilege would only be granted to students that:

- 1) Do not meet the GPA requirements for graduation before entering rotations, and
- 2) If it was apparent the student did not have a fair chance to raise their GPA to meet the required threshold.

Both class grades will reflect on the student transcript. The first attempt credits will be changed to "0.00", while the second credits will stand. The student will accept the second grade counting towards GPA, even if it ends up being lower than the first grade. Students will repeat this class during their summer term during their first rotation. After the repeated class is graded, and if the GPA is not at or above the required GPA threshold, the student will face dismissal by the Student Affairs Committee.

## Changes in Clinical Course Status

### Withdrawal from Clinical Courses

A student is not normally allowed to withdraw from a clinical course. A student may request permission to withdraw from a clinical course by writing to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs and providing a copy to the Office of Clinical Education no later than 3 weeks before the last day of the student's present clinical assignment or 3 weeks before the first day of the student's next clinical assignment.

Permission to withdraw from a clinical course will only be given by the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee. If the student's request is approved, a grade of "W" will be transcribed. A student who

withdraws from a clinical course will be placed on modified status. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee will devise a modified program for this student. A copy of the letter approving the withdrawal and providing the student's modified program will be sent to the Registrar and the Office of Clinical Education.

If a student withdraws from a clinical course without permission by not attending clinic assignments (Patient Care I, II, III, IV) or by failing to complete other requirements of the clinical course, a grade of "F" will be transcribed.

Withdrawal from any clinical course(s) after the third week of the term will not result in a tuition adjustment.

### Exemption from Clinical Courses

There is no exemption from or substitutions for clinical courses involving patient care. Students will be assigned only to clinical assignments that have been previously established by formal affiliation with the College, with the exception of student scheduled observations as a part of Patient Care I (PCI). The Office of Clinical Education publishes a list of clinical affiliates annually.

### Auditing a Clinical Course

A clinical course can only be taken as an audit if required as part of a student's modified degree program due to their modified or probationary status. A student is required to meet the same attendance standards as a student taking the course for credit. The above attendance and satisfactory progress must be verified by the clinical preceptor in order for the course to be transcribed.

### Repeating of a Clinical Course

A student may only repeat a clinical course if required by the SAC or as part of a modified program when placed on modified status. Both grades will be transcribed on the student's transcript. A student may not elect to repeat a clinical course.

## Grading Policies and Procedures – Didactic Courses

### Didactic Grade Definitions

Grade	4.0 Scale	Definition
A	4.00	Excellent
B	3.00	Good
C	2.00	Fair
D	1.00	Lowest Passing
F	0.00	Failure
FD	1.00	Failed, passed special examination
P		Pass as part of the pass/fail system

F		Failure as part of the pass/fail system
I		Incomplete
AU		Audit
W		Withdrawal
EX		Exempt
NG/NC		No grade/No credit given, approved by Registrar
IP/WIP		In Progress

### Grade of Incomplete, Didactic Course

A student who does not complete all course requirements by the end of the term in which the course was taken may, at the discretion of the course instructor, be given a grade of Incomplete. Grades of Incomplete should be given only when a significant component of the course work has not been completed with the instructor's permission and/or the final exam was missed with approval from the Academic Affairs Office. An incomplete grade should never be used in lieu of an "F" or any other grade.

### **Resolution of Incomplete Grade**

A student who has a grade of Incomplete is required to make arrangements with the instructor to complete the course requirements within 5 weeks following the term in which the Incomplete was given. A student receiving an Incomplete in the Spring Term is advised to remain in the Boston area until the Incomplete is resolved.

If the grade of Incomplete is not removed within this 5-week period, the grade will automatically become a grade of "F". If extenuating circumstances arise, the instructor of record may request an extension by contacting the Registrar before the deadline has passed. Otherwise, the Incomplete will expire, and an F will be applied.

A student in the MS program who has an incomplete in the final course of the MS program will only have two terms in which to complete this course. If the student is administratively withdrawn from the MS program, the grade will automatically become a grade of "W". The Director of Graduate Students can extend this deadline only if the student registers and pays the Thesis Maintenance Fee.

Following the resolution of an Incomplete, the new course grade will be used in calculating the term and cumulative GPA. This may result in the student being placed on academic warning or probation for the term or in the student being eligible for dismissal.

### Grade of Failure, Didactic Course

A student who has earned a grade of "F" will be placed on Academic Probation and required to meet with the SAC for a dismissal hearing. If the student is retained by the SAC, the student will be required to make up the failed class. The instructor of record will have the right to decide which of the options listed below is to be chosen for the student to resolve the failing grade.

A student receiving an “F” in the Spring Term is advised to remain in the Boston area.

### Resolution of F Grade

A grade of “F” may be resolved by repeating the entire course at the next regularly scheduled course offering OR by taking a special examination within 5 weeks following the term in which the grade of “F” was earned. The instructor of record will have the right to decide which of these options is to be chosen for each student.

#### Retake a Special Examination to resolve an “F”

A student can resolve a grade of “F” by taking and passing a special examination. The original grade of “F” will be changed on the transcript to the grade of “FD” which is equivalent to a “D” grade and will be used for GPA calculation. Academic warning or probation will remain for the term even though the change from an “F” to “FD” may qualify for the removal of academic warning or probation.

If taking a special examination does not satisfactorily resolve the grade of “F”, the student will be required to meet with the SAC as described in Repeat Course to resolve an “F”.

#### Repeat Course to resolve an “F”

A student can resolve a grade of “F” by retaking the class or a reasonably equivalent course as approved by the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or designee. When a student repeats the course in which an “F” was earned, both grades will be transcribed on the student’s transcript, and both grades will count in the GPA.

## Grading Policies and Procedures – Clinical Courses

### Clinical Grade Definitions

Clinical grades represent an overall rating of a student’s clinical performance as judged by technical skills, knowledge base, analytical skills, diagnostic skills, treatment and management, attitude, communication skills and professionalism. Successful completion of clinical courses is defined in terms of grades of Pass (P) or above. Clinical grading criteria are specified in the ‘Clinical Course Syllabi’.

Clinical preceptors must submit written documentation to the Office of Clinical Education to support all clinical grades.

Grade	Definition
H	Honors (Outstanding)
P	Pass (Performing at expected levels)
RM	Remedial (Performing below expected levels)
RMP	Remedial to Pass (Remedial, passed next clinical course)

RMF	Remedial to Fail (Remedial, did not pass next clinical course)
F	Failure (Inadequate)
I	Incomplete (Adequate, requirements not completed)
AU	Audit
W	Withdrawal
IP/WIP	In Progress
NG/NC	No grade/No credit given, approved by Registrar

### **Grade of Incomplete, Clinical Course**

A student who does not complete all clinical course requirements by the end of the term in which the course was taken may, at the discretion of the clinical preceptor or Instructor of Record of Clinical Programs, be given a grade of Incomplete. A grade of Incomplete should be given only when a significant component of the clinical work has not been completed, and should never be used in lieu of an "F" or any other grade.

### **Resolution of Incomplete Grade**

A student receiving a grade of Incomplete is required to contact the Instructor of Record of Clinical Programs or their designee immediately following receipt of the grade of Incomplete in order to make arrangements to complete the clinical course. The work must be completed within 3 weeks following the term in which the Incomplete was given. The student and the Instructor of Record of Clinical Programs will be informed by the Registrar of the actual deadline date of when the grade must be received.

If the grade of Incomplete is not removed by the actual deadline date given by the Registrar, the grade will automatically become an "RM". If extenuating circumstances arise, the Instructor of Record of Clinical Programs may request an extension by contacting the Registrar before the deadline has passed.

Following the resolution of an Incomplete, the new clinical course grade will be used in determining the student's status with regard to clinical probation, academic standing or eligibility for dismissal.

### **Grade of Remedial, Clinical Course**

It is recommended that a student who earns a Remedial grade in a clinical course meet with the Instructor of Record of the respective course (PCI, PCII, PCIII or PCIV) to discuss possible consequences and steps for resolution.

A student who receives a grade of Remedial at the end of any clinical term will be placed on Clinical Probation.

### **Resolution of Remedial Grade**

A grade of Pass (P) or higher in their next level clinical course and if applicable, the successful completion of their modified program, will remove a student from clinical probation. The original Remedial (RM) grade will be converted to a Remedial/Pass (RMP).

A grade of Remedial (RM) or Failure (F) in their next level clinical course, will convert the first Remedial grade (RM) to a Remedial/Failure (RMF) grade. The student is then eligible for dismissal and will be required to meet with the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) as described in the 'Grade of Failure, Clinical Course' section.

Additional clinical assignments may be required when more than one Remedial grade is obtained and when a Remedial grade is awarded in the final term of the program. A student accumulating either two consecutive or three non-consecutive "RM" grades throughout the clinical curriculum is eligible for dismissal.

### Grade of Failure, Clinical Course

A student who earns a grade of "F" in a clinical course involving patient care will be required to meet with the SAC for a dismissal hearing. It is recommended that the student contact the Associate Director of Student Accessibility and Advising to discuss the program of remediation, circumstances and specific needs.

### **Resolution of Failure Grade**

The resolution of an "F" grade depends on the outcome of the SAC dismissal hearing. If a student is allowed to continue, the student will be placed on modified status and is required to contact the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs and/or the clinical IOR of the failed classed for their program of remediation. Before further advancement in the clinical program is allowed, the student will have to satisfactorily complete a course of remediation and achieve a grade of "P" or above in the repeated clinical course.

Upon completion of the remedial course work and repeated clinical course, the student's performance will be reviewed by the SAC and further action will be taken by the SAC if necessary.

## **Submitting Grades**

Final grades are due from the instructor of record three days after the final exam. For any questions, please contact the Registrar.

## **Notification of Grades**

A grade report can be sent to the student, at the end of the term, upon a student's written request. The registrar can mail, email, or even physically hand out grade reports. Please contact the Office of the Registrar for more details.

A grade report or transcript at the end of a term will not be released until the student's course evaluations have been completed. Please review 'Course Evaluation Requirement' section for more information.

## Change of Grade Policy

The instructor of record for each course has final authority for the designation of grades. Once a grade has been reported to the Registrar's Office, the following procedures apply:

### Change of grade for Incomplete (clinical or didactic) or Failure (didactic)

The instructor of record must complete a Change of Grade Form found on the NECO portal.

### Change of grade due to a clerical error

The instructor of record must complete a Change of Grade Form via the NECO portal. We require a statement indicating the reason for the change for review by the Registrar. The Registrar may request final approval from the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs.

### Change of grade due to a calculation error

The instructor of record must complete a Change of Grade Form via the NECO portal. We require a statement indicating the reason for the change for review by the Registrar.

## Grade Point Average (GPA) Calculation

The term or cumulative GPA is calculated by dividing the total number of quality points by the total number of credit hours attempted during a specific time period. Pass/Fail grades, Clinical grades, Incomplete grades, and In Progress grades are not used in the calculation of the GPA.

A course that is taught over the span of two or three terms and for which only one grade is given is recorded as "IP" (In Progress), "WIP" (Work In Progress) or a blank space for the first or second term. When the final grade is received, it is recorded for each term of the course. An interim grade, which reflects a student's progress in a course that is in progress, especially "D" or "F", will be used for the evaluation of academic standing and progress.

Quality points are awarded per credit hour as follows:

- A = 4.00
- B = 3.00
- C = 2.00
- D or FD = 1.00
- F = 1.00

## Course Information and Policies

The College accepts no obligation to re-offer courses to any student during the same academic year.

## Course Evaluation Requirement

At the end of each term, students are required to complete evaluations for each didactic and clinical course in which they are enrolled. Types of evaluations include but are not limited to: lecture, lab, seminar, clinical site, preceptor, and instructor. Students will have two weeks to complete their course evaluations through Meditrek, [www.meditrek.com](http://www.meditrek.com), a confidential evaluation site.

Failure to submit the assigned surveys on time for each course will result in a grade of Incomplete for the corresponding course. For example, if a student does not complete their lab evaluations for Course X, they will receive a grade of Incomplete for Course X for the term. If the grade of Incomplete is not resolved within the deadline given by the Registrar, a grade of Remedial (RM) for clinical courses or Fail (F) for didactic courses will be submitted and remain on the student's permanent transcript.

Students should direct all questions to the Office of Academic Affairs, [academicaffairs@neco.edu](mailto:academicaffairs@neco.edu).

## CPR, AED and Epi-pen Certification

All students are required to maintain certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), in the use of automated external defibrillation (AED) and in the use of an EpiPen. Students will not be allowed to participate in clinical assignments without proper certification.

Mandatory certification courses for CPR, AED and EpiPen will be arranged for students by the Office of Clinical Education.

## Attendance and Tardiness Policies

Students are expected to attend all classes and are required to attend all laboratory sessions, clinical assignments (Patient Care I, II, III, IV), mandatory meetings and training (e.g. HIPAA, FERPA, etc.). Absences require prior approval when possible. Students should review the 'Absence Policies and Procedures' section of the Student Handbook to see which policy applies.

Students who agree to switch a clinical/lab with classmates and or additional, volunteer clinical assignments are subject to the same attendance/absence policies and procedures.

### Additional Attendance Requirements for Clinical Assignments:

- Attendance at clinic orientation each term is mandatory. A student who misses orientation may be delayed from starting their clinical assignment. Additional clinic time for missed orientation will be added to the student's overall minimum hours needed at a rate of two hours make-up per hour missed and may be assigned during school break/vacations.
- Attendance is mandatory for all clinical assignments in Patient Care I, II, III and IV.
- Students should review the 'Absence Policies and Procedures' section of the Student Handbook for information regarding planned or unplanned absences.



- Patient Care II, III, and IV students are required to follow the attendance policies as outlined in the corresponding Patient Care course syllabus and in accordance with the policies of the clinical site to which they are assigned. Please refer to the Student Handbook, specifically the “Clinical Sites” section, for additional information.
- Third year students in the Four-year OD program are expected to fulfill their clinical assignments during Midterm and Final exam week during the Fall term. Third year students in the Four-year OD program are expected to fulfill their clinical assignments during Final exam week during the Spring term.
- First and second-year students in the Four-year OD program, first and second-year students in the AODP program, first-year students in the MS/OD China program, and first-year students in the ASIP program will not be assigned to clinical assignments during Midterm and Final exam weeks and Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring Breaks.
- Final year students participating in clinical rotations do not follow the academic calendar in regards to scheduled holidays or breaks. They follow the calendar at their clinical site, in accordance with the attendance and time off policies as outlined in the Patient Care IV syllabus.

### Tardiness for Clinic Assignments

Punctuality is expected for all clinical assignments. The student must notify their assigned clinic and preceptor of unavoidable delays. Failure to do so will be considered an unauthorized absence. The preceptor has the right to inform Academic Affairs if a student has more than one incident of tardiness. Furthermore, this may be considered unprofessional conduct and may be brought before the Student Affairs Committee.

## Absence Policies and Procedures

A student who will be missing one of the following must submit an electronic “Absence Request Form” (located on the homepage of the Moodle website) and supporting documentation (if applicable) to the Academic Affairs Office:

- Clinic Assignment\*
- Examination
- Lab Session (includes lab switches)
- Mandatory Class, Training or Meeting
- More than three days of academic activity including regular classes

\*A student who will be missing any clinical assignment must obtain their preceptor’s permission to be absent from clinic before applying for an excused absence.

There are three types of absences

1. Expected Absences
2. Unexpected Absences
3. Unauthorized Absences

## Expected Absences

A student with an expected absence needs to submit the “Absence Request Form” with appropriate documentation at least 30 days in advance to the Academic Affairs Office. Not all requests for expected absences will be approved. Expected Absences include:

- Religious Observance
- Jury Duty
- National Boards
- Planned Medical Leave
- Academic Event/Meeting

**Note:** There are certain timeframes that will be announced via email or in the Academic Calendar that students will not be allowed to be absent or switch any clinic assignments, exams, lab sessions, or mandatory classes/training/meetings.

## Unexpected Absences

An unexpected absence includes:

- Illness (ex. Flu)
- Persona/Family Emergency

A student with an unexpected absence must:

1. Contact instructor and/or preceptor to inform them of their unexpected absence.
2. Fill out an electronic “Absence Request Form”. The “Absence Request Form” should be submitted with documentation within three business days or as instructed by the Academic Affairs Office.

**Note:** Students should refer to the “Attendance and Tardiness Policy” section of the Student Handbook and the “Attendance Policies” section of the applicable Patient Care course syllabus for more information regarding the absence policy and missed clinic sessions.

## Unauthorized Absences

An unauthorized absence is an unexcused absence as determined by the Office of Academic Affairs and is considered unprofessional conduct. An unauthorized absence includes, but is not limited to:

- Not following the procedures with regard to expected and/or unexpected absences
- Leaving a clinic assignment without permission
- An unapproved clinic and/or lab assignment switch
- An unexcused absence from clinic or other mandatory assignment

## Student’s Responsibilities for Excused Absences

If a student is granted an excused absence, the student assumes all responsibility for:

- Obtaining and completing missed assignments and examinations
- Switching laboratory sections with written notification of the switch to relevant instructors
- Making every effort to switch clinical assignments with a classmate to insure coverage for patient care and completion of their own clinical requirements.

A student should review the additional information and/or a requirement listed below that apply to their expected or unexpected absence. A student will not be granted an excused absence because of travel plans or personal events that are in conflict with the Academic or Clinical Site Calendars. The Office of Academic Affairs will notify all parties as to whether or not the absence has been approved.

### Absence to Attend Professionally Related Activities or Corporate-Sponsored Educational Programs/Events

- Absence must be approved in advance (see “expected absences”) regardless of the number of days of absence.
- A student must have a GPA of at least 2.399 and may not be on Warning, Probation and/or Inquiry Status.
- A student will be granted one leave for professional activities per term. Extraordinary circumstances may warrant an exception. Exceptions will be reviewed on an individual basis, but may be granted if the student has an official role in the event, (e.g. officer, coordinator, etc.) and should have a GPA above 2.80. The student’s role should be described as part of the request.

Student participation in professional activities is encouraged by the College. It must also be recognized that a student’s priority is to their studies and their obligation to patient care.

### Absence Due to Jury Duty

A student must submit a request at least 30 days in advance to the Office of Academic Affairs providing a photocopy of the Jury Duty Notice as well as documentation that all appropriate absence policies have been followed and authorized. A student must switch lab sessions and clinic assignments with classmates.

### Absence from and/or Switch of a Laboratory Session

A student must obtain prior approval from the laboratory instructor, instructor of record or the appropriate department chair if the instructor(s) are unavailable prior to the start of the laboratory session. An Absence Request Form must be submitted if the student will be missing a laboratory session or requesting a switch.

### Absence from a Mandatory Class, Training or Meeting

A student must obtain prior approval from the instructor of record for the class and/or the appropriate office convening the meeting.

## Absence from Midterm and Final Examinations

All students are required to attend midterm and final examinations on the dates published by the Office of Academic Affairs except in the case of serious illness or personal emergency. If a student is ill or has a personal emergency, the student must contact the Office of Academic Affairs (617-587-5587) prior to the start of the examination to request an excused absence. Not all requests will be approved. If there is no one available in Academic Affairs to verbally discuss the request for an excused absence, the student should leave a message on Academic Affairs' voicemail and must then contact the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement (617-587-5593) to inform them of their inability to attend. The office that is verbally contacted will inform the instructor of record that the student is unable to attend the examination.

In the case of illness, a written medical excuse must be submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs. The written medical excuse documentation must include date(s) of the illness and a date specifying medical clearance to return to the College. In the case of a personal emergency, the Office of Academic Affairs will inform the student of what documentation is necessary.

The Office of Academic Affairs will contact the instructor of record via email with a copy to the student and the Registrar's Office as to whether or not the absence from the examination has been approved.

Upon written notification of an approved absence from the Office of Academic Affairs:

- The student is required to contact the instructor of record to reschedule the missed examination immediately upon their return.
- If the missed exam is the final exam, the instructor of record will award a grade of Incomplete until the exam has been made up. Please see "Resolution of Incomplete Grades" with regard to deadlines.

Students who do not follow the procedures above will not be given an excused absence. The instructor of record is not required to offer a make-up exam for this student. Options include recording a grade of 0 (zero) for the exam, requiring an alternative exam and/or other additional assignment, or other options at the discretion of the instructor of record.

The Office of Academic Affairs will keep a record of examinations missed by each student and will forward the records to the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration each term. Habitual absences from examinations will not be tolerated and will be treated as unprofessional conduct.

## Absence Due to National Boards

A student may schedule one day of travel time prior to the administration of Part III of the board exam and one day after administration of the exam. A student may not schedule time off for Part III boards during the first week of a clinical rotation. A student must obtain approval from their clinical preceptor in advance.

### Absence from a Quiz

The instructor of record will determine the consequences for being absent from an announced or unannounced quiz. A student should contact the instructor of record prior to the quiz for a previously announced quiz.

### Absence Due to Religious Observance

In general, the College does not observe religious holidays. Each student, upon notifying their instructor of record, lab instructor, clinical preceptor and clinical director at least 30 days in advance, shall be excused from class, lab or clinical assignment to observe a religious holiday of their faith.

While the student will be held responsible for the material covered in their absence, each student shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up any work missed. No test, quiz, major class event, or major College event will be scheduled on a major religious holiday. Faculty and administration shall in no way penalize a student who is absent from academic or clinical activities because of religious observances.

## Examination Procedures and Protocols

The following procedures and protocols have been established in an effort to ensure examination integrity and fairness to all students. The goal of this policy is to deter cheating and define appropriate testing conditions and behaviors. Students found in violation of these procedures and/or protocols may be eligible for dismissal from the college.

### Procedures and protocols

- All students shall conduct themselves in a professional manner and abide by the Code of Ethics agreements that students signed during orientation.
- Students are not permitted in the examination room before the proctor allows them in.
- Students should arrive in a timely manner to review their seating and room assignments at least 10 minutes before the start of the examination. Entering the classroom when the examination begins or after the examination has begun is disruptive to others.
- While waiting to enter the examination room, please keep your voices to a minimum to avoid disruption of an ongoing examination.
- Once in the exam room, all personal belongings must be left at the front of the classroom. These include, but are not limited to:
  - bags, backpacks, purses,
  - coats, hats, gloves, caps,
  - hooded clothing (cannot be placed over the head during an examination and may be subject to inspection),
  - books/notes,
  - cell phones, smart phones and all other electronic devices which must be turned off,
  - calculator cover,
  - food/drinks except water as specified below,

- “good luck” pieces.
- The following items are permitted at the student’s desk:
  - NECO Student Photo ID
  - Pencils/pens
  - Rulers, compass, protractor
  - Permissible calculator\* without cover, if required for exam
  - Clear bottle of water without label

\*Permissible calculators include only those in the Texas Instruments 30X-series. A calculator must be used by only the owner and may not be given to another student. Students are responsible for their calculator being in proper working order; proctors do not have calculators for students. Proctors may inspect calculators during the exam. The allowance of a calculator during the examination is at the discretion of the course instructor.

- Students will be randomly assigned to their examination room.
- The proctor has the right to ask any student to move from their seat to any other seat in the room before and throughout the duration of the examination. These requests are standard protocol and do not necessarily indicate a problem. If asked to move, collect your belongings and examination and move to the requested location quickly and quietly.
- During the examination, a student must keep their eyes on their own paper and avoid unnecessary wandering of eyes. Under no circumstances is a student allowed to borrow anything from a classmate or communicate in any form with another classmate during the examination.
- Once a student finishes the examination, the student should submit the exam to the proctor, quietly collect personal belongings, and leave the examination vicinity. The examination vicinity includes all areas where conversation may be overheard by other students still in the examination room. These include, but are not limited to: hallways, restrooms near the exam room, rotunda, and atrium.
- Except in emergencies, a student will not be allowed to leave the examination room until they have finished and submitted their examination. Feeding a parking meter is not viewed as an emergency reason to leave the examination room. A student should use restroom facilities before the examination starts. A student who urgently needs to use the restroom should use the one on the same floor as the examination and immediately return to the examination. Only one student at a time will be allowed out of the exam room for restroom purposes and the student’s name will be noted by the proctor. Restrooms will be randomly checked for study materials during exam week. A student found wandering the building during an examination will be asked to explain their presence.
- A student should represent themselves accordingly to prevent their actions from being interpreted as cheating during any examination and to encourage others to adhere to these high standards of ethical academic behavior and professional conduct.

### Cheating on an examination/inappropriate behavior:

- Giving any answer that is not your own
- Looking at other students’ answers even if you don’t change your own answer

- Using or possessing unapproved materials during examinations such as cheat sheets, notes, formulas or personal items
- Using a calculator that is not within the Texas Instruments 30X-series
- Possessing or using any unapproved electronic device, including smart phones and cell phones
- Whispering or other behaviors deemed inappropriate by the examination proctors

### Midterm and Final Exam Schedules

Exam schedules are created and distributed via email by the Office of Academic Affairs. The schedules are also posted on the NECO portal.

## Graduation and Degree Requirements

The Registrar's Office is responsible for awarding NECO's degrees. All students must submit an Application to Graduate. The Registrar's Office sends out the Application to Graduate to all final year students once they have been audited.

There are three conferral periods per academic year with one Commencement ceremony. When students complete their requirements, they will be recommended for their degree to be conferred upon the next conferral date. The Commencement Ceremony takes place on the May conferral date. The conferral dates for the 2022-2023 academic year are as follows:

September 1, 2022  
 December 15, 2022  
 May 22, 2023

### Bachelor of Science in Optometry Degree

A student who has not earned a bachelor's degree prior to enrolling in the four-year first professional program may apply for the Bachelor of Science in Optometry degree. At the beginning of the second year of study, the student must submit a written request to the Registrar stating that they have not received a bachelor's degree and is requesting to be evaluated for eligibility to receive the College's bachelor's degree. Because a student is not eligible for the bachelor's degree after graduation from the College, any deficiencies in the undergraduate course requirements must be completed prior to receipt of the Doctor of Optometry degree. BS degrees will be conferred simultaneously as the Doctor of Optometry.

**In order to be eligible for the bachelor's degree, the student must:**

1. Hold no prior bachelor's degree;
2. Have successfully completed (C or above) at least twelve semester hours of Social Science and twelve semester hours of Humanities at the undergraduate level (Information regarding the categorization of courses may be obtained from the Registrar's Office.);
3. Have successfully completed two years of study at the New England College of Optometry;
4. Have not yet received the Doctor of Optometry degree.

## Requirements to Graduate

Degrees will be conferred pursuant to the following requirements being met:

- **Curriculum Requirements:** All didactic and clinical requirements for the degree must have been completed successfully
- **Academic Requirements\***
  - First Professional Degree Program: A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.000 with no outstanding grades of Failure, Remedial, or Incomplete is required
  - Graduate Degree Program: A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.000 is required with no outstanding grades of Failure or Incomplete.
  - OD/MS Dual Degree Program: A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.000 in the graduate program and a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.750 in the first professional program is required with no outstanding grades of Failure or Incomplete in either program.
- **Professional Conduct Requirement:** No student will be allowed to graduate with charges or pending actions.
- **Thesis Requirement for MS Graduate Program only:** An approved thesis must be defended and submitted.
- **Requirements for MS/OD China Program only:** The award of the MS degree in China and passing Part I of the NBEO board exam are required prior to the OD degree being awarded.
- **Faculty and Board of Trustees Approval:** Conferring of a degree requires formal approval by the Faculty and Board of Trustees.
- **Fiscal Requirements:** All fiscal obligations must have been satisfied at least one week prior to the conferring of a degree. These include tuition and fees, expenses incurred at the clinic and Campus Store, library charges and/or other fees.
- **Financial Aid:** A student who has received financial aid must complete an online Exit Interview prior to graduating.

\*The cumulative GPA is not a rounded number. Example: a cumulative GPA of 1.999 does not qualify a student in a first professional program to graduate.

## Commencement Participation

NECO holds a Commencement Ceremony once a year in May. Students completing their degree in December 2022, May 2023 or September 2023 are eligible to participate in the May 2023 Commencement Ceremony. Students may only participate in one Commencement Ceremony, unless they are in the OD/MS Dual Degree program and are not receiving their degrees at the same time.

Students who are earning their degree in September 2023 will be able to participate in the May 2023 Commencement Ceremony, however they will not receive their diploma or official conferral on their transcript until all the degree requirements have been met.



# REGISTRAR'S OFFICE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

## Forms & Documents

The Registrar's Office has all student forms available on the Registrar page in the student section of the NECO Portal. Students can find forms to update their name, addresses, request enrollment letters, transcripts, and submit the application to graduate.

## Deferment Forms and Enrollment Verification Letters

Please submit your Deferment Forms with your part completed and/or submit your written requests for letters verifying your student status to the Registrar's Office via the NECO student portal. The Registrar's Office has a three to five business day turnaround time for all requests.

## Change of Name and Address Policy

A student is required to provide the Registrar with their local address and telephone number, permanent address and telephone number, and legal name while in attendance at the College. The student is responsible for notifying the Registrar's Office immediately in writing of any changes. A student's name, address and telephone number are considered directory information and will be available to individuals affiliated with the College such as the library consortium as well as third parties at the discretion of the Registrar.

The Registrar's Office does not ordinarily provide mailing lists to third parties. A third party must submit a written request for a mailing list and designate its single usage. The Registrar reserves the right to consult with the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs.

A student's name of record includes first name, middle initial(s) or middle name(s) if applicable and the family name. The College will change the name of currently enrolled students on its official records upon receipt of a request in writing accompanied by evidence of the legal basis for the change. A record of the previous name will be maintained, but all official documents will be released under the new name. The College will not record name changes for former students. Note: The diploma is awarded using the student's name of record in the format submitted by the student on a diploma application.

Students can find the change of address forms and the name change form on the NECO Portal.

## NECO Preferred First Name Policy

New England College of Optometry recognizes individuals may prefer to use first names other than their legal first name to identify themselves. To foster an inclusive environment that encourages self-expression,

current students and employees may use a preferred first name on campus. These may include, but are not limited to, people who use their middle name instead of their first name, people who use nicknames of a legal name, people who use an anglicized name, or people who use a name that affirms their gender identity. We strive to have this name used wherever a legal name is not necessary.

### Places Where Preferred First Name May Be Used as an Alternative to your Legal Name

Your chosen name will appear in the following College systems:

- Moodle (LMS)
- Class Rosters
- Internal Communications, where allowable

### Places Where Legal Name Must Be Used

- Enrollment Inquiries and Verifications
- Financial Aid
- Health, Insurance and Medical Documents and Records
- When international students are applying for F-1 Visa
- Official Transcripts/Diplomas
- Payment/Billing
- Student and Employee Payroll systems

### Submitting Your Preferred First Name

- Students can submit a request for a preferred name change to the Registrar's Office via the NECO portal
- Requests for preferred name will be reviewed by the Registrar to ensure the preferred name is not used for the purposes of misrepresentation
- You will receive a notification from the Registrar's Office either confirming or denying your request. Students may challenge a denied chosen name through the Dean of Students whose decision is final.
- If you are a faculty or staff member of the college you must submit your preferred first name request to the Human Resources department in person.
- NECO reserves the right to deny or remove, with or without notice, a chosen name if it is used for inappropriate purposes including, but not limited to, misrepresentation, use of offensive language, including profanity or language which has the effect of mockery, or avoiding legal obligation. Students will be notified if the chosen name is not accepted.
- Updating chosen name in student systems identified in the chosen name policy can take upwards of a week.
- Using or changing a chosen name is not the same as legally changing a name through the courts. Student legal names will remain the same in all College related systems. Students wishing to pursue a legal name change should consult with the Registrar's Office.

## Getting a New Student ID

Students who want a new NECO ID card with their preferred name, must bring the preferred name approval notification to the Front Desk and request a new card.

## Student Schedules

The Office of Academic Affairs creates and distributes class schedules. The schedules are posted on the NECO Student Portal.

## Grade Reports

Grades are coordinated by the Registrar's Office and are sent to students at the end of each semester. Please contact the Registrar's Office directly to obtain a grade report.

## Massachusetts Nonresident Driver Requirement

If you are a nonresident enrolled as a full-time student at a school or college in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who operates a motor vehicle in Massachusetts that is registered in another state or country during any period beginning on September 1<sup>st</sup> of any year, and ending on August 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year you must comply with the following law:

"IT IS UNLAWFUL FOR A NONRESIDENT STUDENT TO FAIL TO FILE A NONRESIDENT DRIVER STATEMENT WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT LOCATED IN THE SAME CITY OR TOWN AS THE SCHOOL OR COLLEGE ATTENDED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 3 OF CHAPTER 90 OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS. FAILURE TO FILE SUCH STATEMENT IS PUNISHABLE BY A FINE NOT TO EXCEED \$200."

You may download this form [here](#). Instructions are located at the top of the form. It is recommended that you keep a copy for your personal files.

The student must complete the form in quadruplicate and mail to:

Boston Police Department  
Attn: Community Service Officer  
650 Harrison Avenue  
Boston, MA 02116-6199

## Transcript Policy

Official transcripts are available to all students. Official transcripts are printed on official paper and bears the seal of the College and the signature of the Registrar. Official transcripts contain all academic and clinical course work taken at the College. Official transcripts may not be released to a third party if the

student or former student has not met their financial or other outstanding obligation to the College. Further information is available in the 'Hold On Services Policy'.

Unofficial transcripts can be obtained via the Registrar's Office. Unofficial transcripts are printed on white paper with an UNOFFICIAL watermark on each page. Unofficial transcripts do not bear the seal of the College or the signature of the Registrar. They also contain all academic and clinical course work taken at the College.

Official transcripts can be requested online via the [National Student Clearinghouse](#) (NSC). Unofficial transcript requests can be made online via the Unofficial Transcript Request Form on the NECO Portal. A transcript will only be issued after the student has made the request in writing either through the NSC or the forms portal. There is a three to five business day processing time for all transcript requests. Requests are handled on a first come/first serve basis. The student is responsible for providing the correct address for mailing of a transcript. If an additional transcript has to be sent because of an address error by the student, the transcript fee will be charged again.

## Family Education Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords eligible students certain rights with respect to their education records. (An "eligible student" under FERPA is a student who is 18 years of age or older or who attends a postsecondary institution at any age.) These rights include:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the College receives a request for access. A student should submit to the Registrar, Dean, Head of the Academic department, or other appropriate official, a written request that identifies the record(s) the student wishes to inspect. The New England College of Optometry official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by the school official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. A student who wishes to ask New England College of Optometry to amend a record should write to the Registrar, clearly identify the part of the record the student wants changed, and specify why it should be changed. If New England College of Optometry decides not to amend the record as requested, New England College of Optometry will notify the student in writing of the decision and the student's right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to provide written consent before New England College of Optometry discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. New England College of Optometry discloses education records without a student's prior written consent under the FERPA exception for disclosure to school

officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is typically a person employed by the New England College of Optometry in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person serving on the board of trustees; or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee. A school official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the New England College of Optometry who performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, or collection agent or a student volunteering to assist another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibilities for the New England College of Optometry. Upon request, the school also discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the New England College of Optometry to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

## Directory Information

The following information is considered directory information and may be released on request without the student's specific written consent: Student's name, local Address, NECO Email Address, telephone number, date of birth, dates of enrollment, academic degree program(s), anticipated or actual date of graduation, honors and awards, enrollment status (full-time/part-time status) and year in school (Class Cohort). Students may opt-out of this by filling out the "Directory Information Opt-Out Form" located on the portal.

## Student Records Access

The individuals at the College who have access to the student records, other than the Registrar's Office employees, are the President, the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration, the Chair and Members of the Student Affairs Committee, the Director of Clinical Education, the Director of the Accelerated OD, the Director of the Advanced Standing International and the Director/Committee of the Master of Science Programs (if the student is in that program), and College-authorized auditors. Other College administrators with legitimate educational interests are allowed access to student records as mandated by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

## FERPA Consent to Disclose

Students have the option to grant a parent, guardian, or other third-party permission to parts of their student record. The student must submit the FERPA Wavier/Release form via the Registrar's page of the NECO Portal.

## Licensing Exam Information

Information on licensing exams can be found at the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) site, [www.optometry.org](http://www.optometry.org). This is also where you may order board exam scores to be sent to state licensing offices.

Please note that students are responsible for understanding the requirements of the states in which they plan to seek licensure. You are strongly urged to research your state's requirements at least five months before you graduate. The Association of Regulatory Boards of Optometry provides a list of states with direct links to their licensing web sites, at <https://www.arbo.org/memberboards>. In addition, the NBEO site contains a directory of board addresses, telephone numbers and web sites at [https://www.nbeo.org/state\\_board.cfm](https://www.nbeo.org/state_board.cfm).

# STUDENT POLICIES AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

## Institutional Communication

The College uses electronic and written communications in the delivery of its educational programs and in the conduct of its business affairs. Students are responsible for assuring that they read and respond appropriately to all communications, especially email, from faculty and administration.

### Electronic Communications Policy

While the College fully supports an individual's right to freedom of speech, as well as pursuit of academic freedom, the email systems and electronic communications systems of the College are not an appropriate medium for all types of communication. Material that is harassing, profane, obscene, intimidating, defamatory, or otherwise unlawful or inappropriate may not be sent by email or other methods of electronic communications.

The use of the College's communications systems (including email, websites and phone systems) is reserved primarily for the conduct of business at the College. The College's systems may not be used to solicit or proselytize for outside or personal commercial ventures, religious or political causes or activities, outside organizations or other solicitations or activities that would jeopardize the College's tax-exempt status or would otherwise violate this policy.

To enhance efficient communications, the College establishes internal distribution lists for various programs. The College does not routinely monitor the College's Systems, but does reserve the right to gain access to email in a student's account or to monitor internet use. However, group emails sent via the College established distribution lists may be monitored by College administrators.

## Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy

In order to promote and support the use of technology in the classroom, NECO has decided to implement a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy. This is in lieu of requiring all students to purchase a particular device.

Just as you are required to purchase specific supplies and textbooks in order to gain a high-quality education, a mobile device will now be required to complement course instruction. Most importantly you will be required to bring an approved device to midterm and final examinations in several of your courses. You may already own a device that will meet the required specifications (see below), and several options are available.

Many of our instructors have already implemented technology in their classrooms with much success, and NECO would like to make this experience available to everyone.

Instructors will vary on how and when devices will be used in their classrooms. Devices can also be used by students to access the library's collection of information resources from on-campus, in clinic, or wherever they may be.

### Approved Devices

The college requires one of the following 4 device types:

- Tablet PC Convertible (Surface RT tablets are not supported)
  - Windows 10, 64-bit version
  - Intel i7 processor
  - 8 GB RAM
  - 250GB hard drive or 256GB solid-state hard drive
  - Gigabit wireless card
  - Screen capable of 1366 x 768
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader (current version)
  - Malware protection antivirus ([Malwarebytes](#) or [Sophos Home](#))
- Notebook Computer
  - Windows 10, 64-bit version
  - Intel i7 processor
  - 8GB RAM
  - 250GB hard drive or 256GB solid-state hard drive
  - Gigabit Wireless card
  - Screen capable of 1366 x 768

- Adobe Acrobat Reader (current version)
- Malware protection antivirus ([Malwarebytes](#) or [Sophos Home](#))
- Mac Requirements
  - Operating System: 10.15 (Catalina), NOTE: Avoid upgrading to Big Sur until developers are able to update their software to be compatible.
  - CPU: Intel processor
  - RAM: 8 GB
  - Hard Drive: 250GB 7200RPM SATA or 256GB solid-state SATA hard drive
  - LCD capable of 1366 x 768 resolution
  - Adobe Acrobat Reader (current version)
  - Malware protection antivirus ([Malwarebytes](#) or [Sophos Home](#))
- iPad Requirements\*
  - Hardware: iPad 4, 5 and iPad Mini iPad Pro and 6th generation
  - Operating System: iOS 10 or higher. Only genuine versions of iOS are supported.
  - 500 MB of free space (required to commence a computer exam)
  - iPad must not be jailbroken

\*Not recommended as a substitute for a full featured laptop, especially for third year students interested in taking online electives.

## Guidelines for Use

- The primary purpose of the use of personal devices at school is educational.
- The use of a personal device is not to be a distraction in any way to teachers or students. This includes attempting to setup proxies and downloading programs to bypass security.
- Students shall not record or distribute pictures or videos of students or staff without their express permission.

Questions around electronic devices for educational use should be directed to: Emily Bouchard, Instructional Technologist: [boucharde@neco.edu](mailto:boucharde@neco.edu) | 617-587-5604

## Cloud Storage Policy

### GSuite & Google Drive

As cloud-based services become more widely used, faculty, students and staff are encouraged to leverage NECO's GSuite (formerly Google Apps) contract and Google Drive. Google Drive is a cloud-based file storage service provided by Google under our NECO GSuite contract. It lets you store and access your files anywhere – on the web, on your hard drive, or on the go. Change a file on the web, computer, or mobile device and the updated version is available on every device where you can access Google Drive. Your files are automatically synchronized and kept up-to-date. This service makes the secure sharing and collaboration much easier and allows for the storage and sharing of files up to 5 TB in size.



Google Drive lets you choose exactly who has access to your files with easy-to-use access controls. You can share just the one specific document or file with someone, or set up a folder in Google Drive so that specific people have access to an entire folder. How granular you get is up to you. We recommend making security easy to maintain by keeping the permissions you set up simple, set up a folder for each different group/community with whom you want to share documents.

## HIPAA & FERPA Compliance

When properly administered and secured, Google Drive is HIPAA and FERPA compliant and NECO's GSuite contract is covered by a HIPAA Business Associate Agreement (BAA). The NECO Information Technology department discourages the use of third-party cloud storage platforms (i.e. Dropbox and Microsoft OneDrive) due to NECO IT's inability to manage top-level administrative settings on those platforms.

## Avoiding HIPAA Violations when Storing Personal Health Information

Users who will be storing content containing personal health information (PHI) need to take extra precautions to avoid HIPAA violations. Please consult IT if you have any questions.

- Configure access controls carefully - never share documents outside our domain
- Use 2-factor authentication for access
- Use strong passwords - minimum of eight characters containing numbers and symbols
- Set the visibility of documents to private - prevents others from finding the files in searches
- Never put PHI in the titles of files - file names can sometimes be visible to prying eyes
- PHI is **not** permitted in Google Groups, Contacts or elsewhere.

## Social Media Policy

NECO uses various Social Media channels to help build community within the online environment. Students are expected to uphold standards of professionalism within those communication challenges. The NECO Social Media and Email Guidelines can be found in the Marketing section of the NECO portal, which all students should review.

If students create any outside social media groups for communication, such groups will not be monitored by NECO staff for content and messaging. Choosing to participate in these groups is optional where you can opt in and out at any point in time. NECO branding materials should not be used in these groups, and students should not represent that any group communications represent NECO's views or policies. Students are encouraged to remain professional in any and all online communities to maintain a strong digital footprint. Your digital footprint matters as a future doctor. What you do online contributes to a portrait that is more public than you may realize. It is important that you know what kind of digital trail you are leaving and the possible impact of that trail.

## Student Photo Policy

Photographs may be taken while on New England College of Optometry premises or at off College campus events. Students should be aware that by attending these events their picture may be taken and their likeness may be used by the College in the College's publications, internal promotional video boards and websites. All photographs and subsequent materials become the property of the College and there is no form of compensation for said photographic images.

Students who do not wish to have a photograph taken should advise the event planner of their wishes and should request the photographer not to take their picture; however, there is no guarantee that a picture will not be taken.

The College is not responsible for any photographs that are taken on College premises or at College events held off campus by unauthorized individuals.

## Copyright Policy

The New England College of Optometry ('the College') is committed to providing an environment that supports the research and the teaching activities of its faculty, students, and staff. As a matter of principle and practice, the College encourages all of its members to publish their papers, books, and other forms of communication without restriction in order to share openly their findings and knowledge with both the optometric profession as well as the general public.

In furtherance of this credo, the College has adopted a Copyright Policy that is intended to provide guidance for the members of the College community, including faculty, visiting faculty, staff, administrators, and students, in matters of copyright compliance when using a variety of creative works including, but not limited to: printed materials, digital media, sound recordings, and computer and educational software. The College expects that all members of the community adhere to the provisions of the United States Copyright Law – Title 17, United States Code, Sec. 101 (<https://www.copyright.gov/title17/>). The Policy presents to the College community a summary of U.S. copyright law related to the use of copyrighted works in the classroom, in the CMS (Moodle) and the library as well as to provide guidelines and procedures for obtaining permission to use copyrighted works.

While the policy provides practical advice and procedures on copyright matters, legal advice should be sought if a member of the community feels clarification is needed. Members of the College community who willfully disregard the Policy do so at their own risk and assume all liability. Therefore, community members should not rely on this summary; rather, they should read the Copyright Policy in its entirety [here](#) and find resources about Copyright at [library.neco.edu/copyright](http://library.neco.edu/copyright).

## Student Ethics Policy

The Student Ethics Policy was written by students to ensure ethical behavior and practices. Students at the New England College of Optometry are preparing for a career in a profession which demands of its members high standards of ethical conduct and personal honesty. All students are expected to make a commitment to abide by a Code of Ethics, exemplifying a standard of behavior, which forms a sound basis for future professional conduct. Students are required to respect the academic environment of the College, to uphold the rights and wellbeing of all members of the College community, and to avoid any form of dishonesty.

All students are required to endorse the Code of Ethics, thereby agreeing to uphold the provisions of academic and professional conduct as well as the College and NBEO exam conduct. The NBEO ethics policy can be found [here](#).

Furthermore, the New England College of Optometry supports the ideals of the American Optometric Association Code of Ethics as a valuable guideline for future professional practice. This can be found at <https://www.aoa.org/about-the-aoa/ethics-and-values?sso=y>.

## Misconduct Descriptions

### Academic Misconduct

This is a misrepresentation of one's own academic achievement. It includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Cheating on examinations,
2. Not following 'Examination Procedures and Protocols',
3. Copying and/or providing examination questions and/or answers to others,
4. Plagiarism.

### Professional Misconduct

This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Deliberate acts of disrespectful behavior toward faculty, staff, students or patients,
2. Failure to abide by standard clinical policies and procedures,
3. Theft of an examination or examination answers,
4. Forgery, alteration or knowing misuse of patient records,
5. Theft or destruction of College/Clinic property and/or property belonging to members of the College's community,
6. Failure to read and respond when requested to faculty or administrative communications.

A student whose behavior can be reasonably inferred that he or she has acted in accordance with academic and/or professional misconduct may be subject to actions by the Student Affairs Committee.

When an infraction of the Ethics Policy has been perceived, the observer(s) shall submit a written complaint describing the infraction directly to the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee within three business days. If further action is necessary, the SAC will invoke the Unprofessional Conduct Policy.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's work as one's own, whether intentional or accidental. Plagiarism can occur by not citing or incorrectly citing a source, such that information appears to come from an author other than the one who produced or cited that information. Plagiarism can also include fabricating sources or data.

At NECO, plagiarism is considered academic misconduct and violates the Ethics Policy. A student who commits academic misconduct will be subject to actions by the Student Affairs Committee.

When writing documents, be sure to always properly credit the source you are using for information. Remember that verbatim text requires quotation marks and a citation. Paraphrased text requires a citation. Images also require a citation.

For help with citation, visit the library or contact the library by emailing [library@neco.edu](mailto:library@neco.edu) or calling 617-587-5589. The library staff can assist students in using various citation managers and tools, which will create citations for you. The library staff can also teach students where to find images that are copyright-compliant.

NECO encourages students to make use of resources for citation, such as the library's citation guide (available at <https://library.neco.edu/services/citing>).

## Falsification of Records

Falsification of official records is a violation of College policy and is subject to disciplinary action. Such falsification includes forging signatures, or deliberately misrepresenting or altering information submitted on College records. Appropriate action will be taken which includes expulsion from the College.

## Unprofessional Conduct

The College reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of any student at any time for whatever the faculty and administration at the New England College of Optometry consider to be good and sufficient reasons. Unprofessional conduct may include, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, unexcused absences from clinical assignments, professional misconduct related to patient care, behavior that puts the health and safety of the community at risk, falsifying clinical records, abusive behavior, organizing or participating in harassment or hazing, and theft or destruction of the College's, Clinic's or College member's property as well as other conduct unbecoming a future health professional and student at the College.

A faculty member, student or other member of the College community who considers a student's conduct to be unprofessional must submit a written complaint to the Chair of the Student Affairs Committee. A member

of the College should consult with their supervisor before submitting the complaint. Upon receipt of the written complaint, the SAC will notify the student that a complaint has been received and that the student has been placed on Inquiry Status pending an investigation of the complaint by the Student Affairs Committee. The student will also be informed that he or she shall have the right to present evidence and testimony and may also select a faculty member or administrator of the College as an advisor to aid him/her in answering the complaint. The student will be notified by the Chair of the SAC as to the date, time and place of the investigative hearing and will be provided with information with regard to the unprofessional conduct charge.

An investigative subcommittee usually consisting of the Chair, a student member and one faculty member of the SAC will be formed. The subcommittee will meet separately with the student, the individual making the charge and any other individual with information pertinent to the complaint. The subcommittee shall attempt to collect, within reason, all evidence and testimony relevant to the charge before making its recommendations to a majority of the SAC in an expeditious manner. Penalties are determined on an individual basis and include, but are not limited to, dismissal, suspension, disciplinary probation and additional academic and/or clinical assignments. The Chair of the SAC will notify the student in writing as to the results of the inquiry and actions to be taken.

### Appeal of SAC Decision on Unprofessional Conduct

The student may submit a written appeal of the decision of the SAC to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs within five business days after the date of the letter in which the SAC advises the student of their decision. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs will serve as the primary reviewer of appeals of the decision.

An appeal will only be considered if a student demonstrates that the SAC did not follow the investigative hearing process or finds that *new* extenuating evidence exists that was not available at the time of the investigative hearing. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs will act in an expeditious manner after receipt of a written appeal and may elect to convene a committee of faculty and/or administrators to assist with this decision at any point of the process. The Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs may request input from the SAC or others as necessary.

If the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs deems that the appeal is justified, they may request input from the SAC and/or other involved parties as appropriate before advising the student in writing of the final decision. If the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs does not find that the appeal is justified, the student will be advised in writing of this final decision.

A student who is appealing an unprofessional conduct decision with the consequence of dismissal or suspension should contact the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs to find out what didactic courses and/or clinical courses/assignments that they may attend.

An unprofessional conduct dismissal or suspension will always be permanently transcribed onto the student's transcript and record. An administrator or faculty member of the College has no authority to intimate that this transcription can be changed or eliminated.

## Consequences of Unprofessional Conduct, Dismissal or Suspension

As soon as the dismissal or suspension from the College becomes official, a student must complete the following:

- An interview with the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration
- An exit interview with a member of the Financial Aid Office
- An exit interview with a member of the Business Office

And the following will occur:

- Transcribing of unprofessional conduct dismissal or suspension on the student's transcript and record
- Deactivation of the student's identification card to remove access to campus buildings except as a visitor during regular business hours
- Discontinuation of the student's email account. The student must provide the IT Department with another email address within five (5) days where email can be forwarded for thirty (30) days. If a student fails to give the College IT Department another account within five (5) days forwarding will not be instituted

## Course Proprietary Policy

No instructor may be audio-taped, video-taped, or photographed without their specific permission. With the permission of the instructor, course materials in the form of lectures, handouts, presentations, videos or other materials not restricted by copyright may be obtained by the student for private use but may not be disseminated without the permission of the instructor. Violation of this policy will be considered unprofessional conduct.

## The Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and protects qualified applicants and students with disabilities from discrimination in all aspects of the application process and student life. The ADA defines a disability as "any mental or physical condition that substantially limits an individual's ability to perform one or more major life activities" as compared with the average person in the general population. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for one's self, working and learning.

The ADA also requires an institution of higher education to provide reasonable accommodation to a qualified individual with a documented disability, provided that the accommodation does not create undue hardship to the school. Reasonable accommodation is the provision of aids or modification to testing, services or a program of study, which allows access by individuals with disabilities. An undue hardship refers to any accommodation that would be unduly costly, substantially disruptive or that would fundamentally alter the nature of the program. Both matriculated and non-matriculated students may request reasonable accommodations from NECO.

The College strictly adheres to the provisions of the ADA. Applicants and students seeking to discuss educational needs related to their disability and/or to complete NECO's process for requesting accommodations are encouraged to contact the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement (CAPA) ([capa@neco.edu](mailto:capa@neco.edu)).

If you believe you have been discriminated against with regard to the ADA, please contact CAPA immediately.

## Hazing Policy

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts prohibits hazing. Hazing is defined as any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Consent of the individual is not available as a defense. The crime of hazing is punishable by a fine of not more than \$3,000 or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

Any person who knows that another person is the victim of hazing and is at the scene of such a crime should report the crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as possible. Failure to report is punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000.

The New England College of Optometry will not tolerate hazing of any kind. Hazing will be considered unprofessional conduct. Any student found guilty of hazing by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, whether or not the incident was affiliated with the College, will be subject to immediate dismissal for unprofessional conduct.

## Harassment

The College is committed to providing an environment in which each student is treated with dignity and respect. Any verbal, physical, or other form of harassment of students because of race, sexual identity, gender identity, national origin, age, religion, mental or physical disability, and veteran status, by staff, faculty, other students, or others authorized to be on the premises is illegal and will not be tolerated. Such harassment is defined as unwelcome statements, questions, innuendoes, actions, pictures, gestures, jokes, etc., regardless of their subtlety, that cause someone to be offended, intimidated, humiliated, or degraded. Harassment creates an unhealthy environment; sexual harassment creates a hostile environment: both negatively impact academic performance, and is strictly prohibited at the College.

All College administrators and faculty have the explicit responsibility and duty to take immediate action to prevent the occurrence of any harassment of students because of race, sexual identity, gender identity, national origin, age, religion, mental or physical disability, and veteran status. They also have the responsibility to report any complaints or observations of such harassment immediately to the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration. Any student who has been harassed is encouraged to tell either the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration or the Director of Human Resources. Reports of harassment

of any kind will be responded to immediately. Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process of handling harassment reports. Concerns related to sexual harassment are specifically addressed in the following policy.

The following are resources:

- Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
  - <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-commission-against-discrimination>
- Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
  - <https://www.masstpc.org/>

## Sexual Harassment

### Definition of Sexual Harassment

“Sexual harassment” means sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or as a basis for employment decisions; or
- Such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive work environment.

The definition of sexual harassment is broad and in addition to the above examples, other sexually oriented conduct, whether it is intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a work place environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to male or female workers may also constitute sexual harassment.

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct which if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending upon the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances - whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or verbal references to sexual conduct, innuendoes of a sexual nature; comments on an individual’s body, comments about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one’s sexual experiences; and
- Discussion of one’s sexual activities.

## Reporting a Violation of This Policy

Any employee who observes or is subject to discrimination, harassment or retaliation is advised and encouraged to report the offensive incident to their immediate supervisor, department head, or the Executive



Director of Human Resources. Reports of discrimination, harassment or retaliation will receive immediate attention by College administrators.

The notice does not have to be in writing and does not need to be formal. These individuals are also available to discuss any concerns employees may have and to provide information about the College's policy on harassment and our complaint and investigation process. College supervisors are responsible for taking necessary measures to prevent discrimination, harassment and retaliation and for informing their own supervisors, department heads, and/or the Executive Director of Human Resources of observed or reported incidents or complaints.

### Investigation

When the College is notified of an alleged violation of this policy, it will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances; the College cannot promise complete confidentiality or that it will do nothing. The College's investigation will include an interview with the person reporting the possible violation of this policy and with witnesses when appropriate. The College will also interview the person alleged to have committed the violation. When the College has completed its investigation it will, to the extent appropriate, inform the person reporting the violation and the person alleged to have committed the violation of the result of that investigation.

### Disciplinary Action

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, then the College will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct and, where appropriate, will impose disciplinary action. Such action may range from counseling to termination of employment, and may include such other forms of disciplinary action as the College deems appropriate under the circumstances.

The College recognizes that, in some instances, an investigation of a report of discrimination, harassment or retaliation may result in a determination that no such conduct occurred and may even have been intentionally falsely made. If an investigation reveals that an employee has maliciously or intentionally made a false accusation, such employee will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### Retaliation

Retaliation against an individual who has reported in good faith any conduct prohibited by this policy, and retaliation against individuals for participating in or cooperating in good faith with an investigation of a violation of this policy is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the College.

Any individual found to have engaged in retaliation that is prohibited by this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. Employees are encouraged to report any retaliation promptly.

## Additional Remedies

In addition to the College's internal investigation procedures, an employee may file a formal complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or other state or local antidiscrimination agency, listed below. Using the College's internal discrimination, harassment or retaliation investigation process will likely result in a quicker resolution and does not prohibit an employee from filing a complaint with outside agencies. (300 days to file a claim for each agency below).

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC")  
 John F. Kennedy Federal Building  
 Government Center  
 4th Floor, Room 475  
 Boston, MA 02203  
 Telephone: (800) 669-4000  
 Fax: (617) 565-3196  
 TTY: (800) 669-6820

The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination ("MCAD")  
 Boston Office  
 One Ashburton Place, Sixth Floor, Room 601  
 Boston, MA 02108  
 Telephone: (617) 994-6000  
 Fax: (617) 994-6024 TTY: (617) 994-6196

## **Title IX and VAWA Protections**

NECO takes sexual harassment, gender discrimination and sexual violence seriously. As a student, faculty member, staff member, or visitor you are protected under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) of 2013.

The decision to file a formal report or complaint about sexual violence and sexual assault is a personal choice. We're here to help you understand your options and the resources available, whether you decide to report or not. If you decide not to file a formal report, resources are still available to you for counseling, academic support and other needs. Behavior that is covered by Title IX/Title VII/VAWA includes, but is not limited to:

### Gender discrimination

Inappropriate language, humor and/or jokes, or common expressions that target or are discriminatory toward a specific gender (including pregnancy or childbirth), sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, gender transition, transgender status, or gender variance.

### Sexual assault

- Nonconsensual sexual contact
- Nonconsensual intercourse
- Taking sexual advantage of a consensual or nonconsensual person

### Sexual harassment

- Displaying inappropriate sexual images that are offensive and unwelcome
- Unwelcome, gender-based verbal or physical conduct
- Exchanging sexual images, sexual acts or dating for grades or advancement

### Domestic/Dating Violence

- Intimate partner violence, committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim.

### Other behaviors

- Stalking — Unwelcome, continuous and menacing pursuit directed at a specific person electronically or in person that would cause a reasonable person to either fear for the person's safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress.
- "Sexting" — Unwelcome text messaging or sexual comments and/or images
- Cyberbullying — Use of an electronic medium to target and psychologically torment a person

The New England College of Optometry, seeks to foster an environment that supports its educational mission and is committed to providing a safe learning, and working environment for all members of the college community that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct and related violence. NECO does not discriminate on the basis of sex, gender, or sexual orientation in its education programs or activities and prohibits specific forms of behavior that violate Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") and/or all other applicable state and federal laws.

### What is Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." It protects individuals from sexual or gender-based bullying, discrimination, harassment, and violence. This includes protection from being retaliated against for filing a complaint of discrimination or harassment. The law covers sex-based discrimination against students, faculty, and staff.

TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972, 20 U.S.C.A. § 1681 ET. SEQ.

NECO also complies with all obligations under the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (“VAWA”) and the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (“Clery Act”).

NECO provides a variety of confidential and non-confidential support resources, reporting options and complaint procedures to those persons who believe they have been subjected to sexual misconduct, relationship violence and stalking. NECO will work closely with those persons to provide referrals to law enforcement and support resources. The college prohibits retaliation and provides appropriate interim measures including changes to academic and co-curricular activities, transportation, dining, and employment situations as well as no contact orders. In keeping with its obligations under Title IX, the college is committed to promptly, fairly, and equitably investigating complaints, ensuring the safety of the Complainant, and providing remedies and resources. Sanctions (Students and Student Organizations) and Discipline (Employees) for violations of this policy will be administered after an investigation by the college and a finding that an individual or student organization is responsible for violating the policy. The Title IX Coordinator/deputy coordinator will oversee the initial response and assessment of reports, the investigation and resolution process.

NECO also complies with Massachusetts laws that protect individuals from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, as well as on the basis of gender identity. Questions or concerns about possible discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity under state law may also be directed to a Title IX Coordinator or deputy coordinators listed below:

**Beth Davies**

Executive Director of Human Resources/Title IX Coordinator

hurierj@neco.edu

Phone: 617-894-2834

**Mollie Forman**

Compliance and Safety Manager/Deputy Title IX Coordinator

formanm@neco.edu

Phone: 617-587-5618

Mobile: 857-301-2777

**Dr. Gary Chu**

Vice President, Professional Affairs/Deputy Title IX Coordinator

email: chu@neco.edu

Office: 617-587-5541

Mobile: 617-834-3245

All training provided to Title IX coordinators by Institutional Compliance Solutions

<http://icslawyer.com/community-access/community-access-higher-ed/>

Please use this [link](#) to view further information on Title IX.

You may also report concerns to the following confidential hotlines:

- NECO Confidential telephone hotline- 617-587-5753
- NECO Confidential email- [voice@neco.edu](mailto:voice@neco.edu)

### Community Resources

Boston Police	617-343-4250	If you experience sexual harassment, gender discrimination, or sexual violence, we encourage you to reach out right away – we are here to help.
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC)	800-841-8371 (24-hour hotline)	BARCC offers free, confidential services to sexual assault survivors, their friends and families. It also operates a 24-hour confidential hotline that provides survivors of sexual assault with telephone counseling and personal support. The Center also maintains a referral network of survivor support groups (call 617-492-RAPE or 617-492-7273).
Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC)	115 Broad Street Boston, MA 02110 617-399-6720	VRLC is dedicated to serving the legal needs of sexual assault victim. The VRLC provides free legal services, legal training and technical assistance.
<u>Jane Doe Inc.</u> (Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence)	P.O. Box 960849 Boston, MA 02196 617-248-0922 <a href="mailto:info@janedoe.org">info@janedoe.org</a>	Jane Doe Inc. is an interactive service locator tool to find sexual assault and domestic violence resources in your area and a map of service providers across Massachusetts.
Casa Myrna Vasquez	451 Blue Hill Ave. Boston, 02121 617-521-0100	Case Myrna provides Boston’s most comprehensive range of programs to address domestic and dating violence.
Fenway Health Violence Recovery Program (VRP)	617-927-6202	VRP provides counseling, support groups, advocacy, and referral services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)

Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence	617-338-2355 (24- hour multilingual helpline)	victims of bias crime, domestic violence, sexual assault, and police misconduct.  Multilingual helpline is staffed by trained advocates who together speak a total of 12 Asian languages and dialects including Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, and Taiwanese), Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Nepali, Punjabi, Callers to ATASK receive crisis intervention, safety planning, emotional support, and information about domestic violence and restraining orders.
Fenway Health	LGBT Helpline (ages 25+): 617-267-9001; Toll-Free: 888-340-4528;	Through Fenway’s Helplines, you can receive help, information, referrals, and support for a range of issues including anti-gay/lesbian harassment and violence.

**Government Agencies**

Individuals who believe that they have been subjected to prohibited conduct may file a formal complaint with either or all of the government agencies set forth below.

- United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)  
JFK Federal Building Room 475  
Government Center  
Boston, MA 02203  
800-669-4000
- Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD)  
One Ashburton Place Room 601  
Boston, MA 02108  
617-994-6000
- United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights  
5 Post Office Square, 8th Floor  
Boston, MA 02109  
Telephone: 617-289-0111  
Facsimile: 617-289-0150  
TTY: 1-800-877-8339

**File a Formal Complaint**

NECO has designated grievance procedures designed to provide prompt and equitable methods of investigation into concerns regarding sexual harassment and other sexual misconduct.

You may file a formal complaint alleging a violation of the college policies by submitting the complaint to the NECO Title IX Coordinator at [voice@neco.edu](mailto:voice@neco.edu)

Please remember that your formal complaint must be in writing. In addition, your formal complaint:

- Must be a document or electronic submission
- Contain your physical or digital signature, or otherwise indicates that you are the person filing the formal complaint
- Allege sexual harassment against an alleged harasser and request that the college investigate the allegation(s)
- State the name of the alleged harasser (if known) and describe with reasonable specificity the incident(s) of alleged harassment, including the date and place of such incident(s)
- Must be in your own words, and may not be authored by others, including family members, advisors, or attorneys
- Should have an attached list of any sources of information (for example, witnesses, correspondence, records, and the like) that you believe may be relevant to the investigation. Your complaint should not be delayed if such sources of information are unknown or unavailable
- At the time of filing your formal complaint, you must be participating in or attempting to participate in the education program at NECO

### Get more information and support

To report a Title IX/Title VII violation, please contact our Title IX Coordinator. NECO provides an Annual Security Report that includes additional information regarding definitions of prohibited conduct, counseling and assistance resources available and the sexual violence prevention and awareness programs available to all members of the University community. The latest Annual Security Report is published on the NECO website [here](#).

## Nondiscrimination Policy

The College does not discriminate with regard to any of its policies, practices, or activities involving students on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, veteran status or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies:

Beth Davies  
 Executive Director of Human Resources  
 New England College of Optometry  
 424 Beacon Street  
 Boston, MA 02115  
 617-894-2834

Inquiries concerning the application of nondiscrimination policies may also be referred to:

Boston Office  
 Office of Civil Rights  
 US Department of Education  
 5 Post Office Square, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 Boston, MA 02109-3921  
 617-289-0111  
[OCR.Boston@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Boston@ed.gov)  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>

## Grievance Procedure

### Purpose

The New England College of Optometry (NECO) strives to provide a positive experience for our community members. In order to promote the development of quality programs and services, the college has established a process to review and address complaints that do not fall within the purview of other established policies and processes. This will allow the opportunity to promote quality standards and make effective decisions about improvements to programs and services.

### Policy

NECO will respond to student complaints that fall outside the purview of other established complaint policies that fall into one of the following service categories:

- Didactic or Clinical Education
- Student Services
- Business Processes
- College Facilities

Student leadership meets regularly with the Student Life Committee of the Board of Trustees and President to discuss student concerns that impact the student experience.

Student Council meetings include the presence of the President or Vice President of Academic Affairs to discuss any student concerns. The President of the Student Council also meets regularly with the President of NECO.

Ongoing town halls with the President provide an opportunity for students to constructively work on areas of improvement.

Individual problems of a personal nature should be brought to the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs or the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration.



## Didactic or Clinic Specific Concerns

Students who are experiencing difficulty in a course or clinical site who feel that they have a valid concern over the evaluation of their performance should follow the below protocol:

1. Arrange a meeting to discuss the concern with the instructor of record/preceptor responsible for the specific performance assessment.
2. After step 1, if the student is not satisfied with the resolution, they may appeal the action by doing the following:
  - a. If the concern is course specific, the student should meet with the Department Chair for that course, who may elect to include the course instructor in the discussion to help facilitate the resolution of the student's concern. If the Department Chair does not resolve the issue, the Vice President of Academic Affairs can be consulted on next steps.
  - b. If the concern is clinical in nature, the student should arrange a meeting with the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs. If the Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs does not resolve the issue, the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs can be consulted on next steps.
3. If the student is dissatisfied with the resolution, they may appeal the action, providing written documentation of the evaluation concern and arranging a meeting with the Vice President/Dean for Academic Affairs. The Vice President will involve appropriate faculty and administrators in the review of the student concern. Students who have concerns over assessment of their academic performance in didactic or clinical education who consult with other administrators will be advised to follow the protocol outlined above.

## Institutional Record of Student Complaints

In compliance with federal regulations and accrediting bodies, a Student Complaint Log is maintained in the office of the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration. Any student submitting a complaint in writing to the attention of the Office of the President, Vice President/Dean for Academic Affairs, or Dean for Academic Resources and Administration will have their complaint entered into this log and preserved for review by future accrediting teams.

In order to have a complaint entered into the Student Complaint Log, the student must complete the following:

1. The complaint must be addressed to the Office of the President, Vice President/Dean for Academic Affairs, or Dean for Academic Resources and Administration.
2. The complaint must be signed by the student.
3. All written student complaints will be included in the Student Complaint Log.

The Student Complaint Log will include the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, steps taken to resolve the complaint, and the final decision to resolve the complaint, including any referral to outside agencies.

In order to maintain privacy, any request to view the log by accrediting bodies will require that the names contained in the log complaints will be masked prior to inspection by the accrediting body. No actual documents will be shared with the accrediting body without the express permission of the complainant.

The Dean of Academic Resources and Administration reserves the right to record a complaint received by other means; however, NECO is only required to act upon complaints submitted through the formal procedure above.

## Smoke-Free Environment

NECO is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all members of the community and believes that we should all have a right to a smoke-free environment. Compliance with the smoke-free policy is mandatory and applies to all employees, faculty and staff, consultants, contractors and visitors.

Smoking and Vaping, including combustible tobacco products such as cigarettes, cigars, and pipes, and e-devices such as Juul, Bo and other electronic nicotine delivery systems by students, faculty, staff, guests, visitors, and contractors is strictly prohibited.

Smoking is not permitted anywhere in any NECO workplaces, including all common work areas, elevators, hallways, college owned or leased vehicles, restrooms, cafe, student lounge/study spaces, labs, conference and meeting rooms and all other enclosed areas in the workplace.

## Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy

As a recipient of federal monies, the New England College of Optometry maintains a Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy, in compliance with The Drug Free Schools and Communities Act Amendment of 1989. The purpose of the policy is to prevent the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol, and the abuse of alcohol, by students.

In accordance with federal regulations, the policy contains information about the use of drugs and alcohol in relation to:

- The standards of conduct expected by the College;
- Disciplinary actions for violations of the standards;
- Legal sanctions for violating corresponding laws;
- Potential health risks;
- Accessible counseling and treatment services.

This policy is to be distributed to students initially entering the College community and to all students annually. There will be a biennial review of the policy to determine its effectiveness, to implement any necessary changes, and to ensure the consistent application of sanctions for violations of the policy.

## Standards of Conduct

The College strictly prohibits, on its premises and at all College sponsored functions off campus:

- The possession, use or distribution of illicit drugs, including the inappropriate possession, use, or distribution of pharmaceutical drugs;
- The possession or consumption of alcohol by, or distribution to, persons under 21 years old.

The College reserves the right to restrict the use, distribution, or possession of alcohol on College premises or at any College sponsored functions by persons 21 years old or older. The College also reserves the right to request documentation of age before serving alcohol.

Functions planned for students by employees or students at which alcohol will be served must be pre-approved by the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration at least one month in advance of the event.

At all College functions, non-alcoholic beverages must be provided and located in a visible area separate from alcoholic beverages. Food must always be available at all College functions where alcohol is served.

The College expects employees and students to create and maintain a professional and educational environment that is safe and healthy and encourages responsible conduct. Furthermore, the College holds employees and students responsible for the consequences of using or distributing illicit drugs, and serving or consuming alcohol.

## Disciplinary Action

Reports of suspected violations of the Drug & Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy by employees and students will be responded to by College administration.

Disciplinary action will be imposed on students who violate the Drug & Alcohol Abuse Prevention Policy and may include immediate suspension or dismissal from the College as well as affect the student's eligibility for financial aid. Please see [www.FAFSA.gov](http://www.FAFSA.gov) for further information.

Students violating local, state, or federal laws regarding drugs and alcohol on College premises or at College functions are not exempt from the corresponding legal sanctions. Disciplinary action taken by the College for legal violations may include a referral to local authorities for prosecution, the sanctions listed above, and/or mandatory completion of an appropriate rehabilitation program as a condition of continued student status.

## Legal Sanctions for Violating Alcohol Laws

A minor in possession of alcohol, who is not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, may be fined not more than \$50 for the first offense and not more than \$150 for a second or subsequent offense. The above minor may also be arrested without a warrant by a police officer and if convicted will have their driver's license suspended for a period of 90 days.

A person who falsifies age documentation or misrepresents their age for the purpose of possessing or consuming alcohol is subject to a fine of \$300.

Anyone delivering or serving alcohol to a person under 21, or for the use by someone under 21, is subject to a fine of up to \$2,000 or imprisonment for not more than one year or both.

The fine for operating a motor vehicle while drinking an alcoholic beverage may result in a fine of not less than \$500 nor more than \$5,000 or by imprisonment for not more than two and one-half years, or both such fine and imprisonment.

A person suspected by authorities of driving under the influence of alcohol will be stopped and given a sobriety test. Failure of the test will result in immediate arrest, and revocation of one's driver's license. A first conviction for driving under the influence of alcohol may result in a fine of up to \$1000, imprisonment for up to two years, mandatory completion of an alcohol education or rehabilitation program and revocation of one's license. Sanctions for driving under the influence increase in severity with each successive conviction.

A person suspected of public intoxication may be taken into protective custody for at least 5 hours.

### Legal Sanctions for Violating Drug Laws

Criminal penalties for offenses vary according to the particular substance and the quantity of the substance. Generally, the penalties for manufacturing or distributing controlled substances are greater than for simple possession.

Illegal possession with the intent to manufacture or distribute is subject to the same penalties as illegal manufacture or distribution. Possessing relatively large quantities of illicit substances will be considered possession with intent to distribute.

In general, persons suspected of possessing, using, or distributing illicit drugs will be arrested and will remain in jail until bail is met. A court date for arraignment will be set within 10 days.

Convictions for some offenses include mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment. A person sentenced to a mandatory term is not eligible for parole, furlough, or work release. Penalties for repeat offenses are increasingly harsher.

A person convicted of a drug offense may be declared ineligible for any or all federal benefits for up to one year, or longer for repeat offenses. Federal benefits include grants and contracts, and professional licenses.

### Health Risks

#### Alcohol Abuse

- nausea & headaches
- fatigue
- malnutrition
- brain cell damage
- cirrhosis
- loss of memory
- poor concentration
- ulcers
- liver & stomach cancer
- bone degeneration

- increased heart rate
- personality disorders
- blackouts
- alcoholism
- heart disease
- respiratory arrest
- addiction
- coma
- convulsions
- heart failure
- malnutrition
- hypertension
- pulmonary edema
- death
- lowered blood pressure
- cardiac arrhythmias

### **Illicit Drug Use**

- brain, nerve & liver damage
- personality disorders
- psychosis

### **Counseling and Treatment Services**

All students are required to purchase or have an equivalent health insurance plan. Mental health services are considered essential health benefits and should include behavioral health treatment, behavioral health inpatient services, and substance abuse treatment. Please visit the Center for Academic and Professional Achievement to discuss insurance plans purchased through the school and local agencies providing behavioral health treatment options. For emergency service, call 911 or go to the closest emergency room.

### **Boston Area Referral and Treatment Agencies**

Listed below are randomly selected agencies providing referrals and/or rehabilitation services. The list does not represent recommendations for any particular programs. It is advisable to check with your doctor and health insurance provider for individual referrals.

- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence: provides education, information, help, and hope to the public. It advocates prevention, intervention, and treatment through a nationwide network.
- Drug & Alcohol Hotline - (800) 327-5050
- Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education - Find a treatment center, learn how to get help and information for family and friends.
- High Point - (800) 233-4478
- ADCare Recovery - (617) 227-2622

# CAMPUS SECURITY POLICIES

## Solicitation Policy

The College maintains relationships with many corporations in the health care field. Newly instituted healthcare industry guidelines and recent Commonwealth of Massachusetts laws have strict rules defining what types of sponsorship can be permitted between health care corporations and providers, students, and teaching institutions. There are penalties to both the corporation and the benefiting individual or institution for violating these laws.

Companies are not permitted to solicit on College property unless authorized by the Dean of Academic Resources and Administration or the Vice President/Dean of Academic Affairs. The College does not provide lists of students, NECO email addresses or residence addresses to external corporate groups. Student groups requesting direct corporate support must first notify the Development Office. Travel to meetings that are paid or reimbursed by a corporation requires prior approval of the Office of Academic Affairs.

## Campus Sex Crimes Prevention Act of 2000

The federal Campus Sex Crimes Prevention Act, enacted on October 28, 2000, requires institutions of higher education to issue a statement advising the campus community where law enforcement agency information provided by a State concerning registered sex offenders may be obtained. It also requires sex offenders already required to register in a State to provide notice, as required under State law, of each institution of higher education in that State at which the person is employed, carries on a vocation, volunteers services, or is a student.

In Massachusetts, individuals can obtain information on registered sex offenders living and working in the immediate area by contacting their local police department. General information about the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/sex-offender-registry-board>, or by calling (978) 740-6400.

## Clery Act Campus Crime Reporting

The New England College of Optometry's Annual Security Report, in compliance with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, is released by October 1st of each year.

The report includes the College's policies concerning campus safety and security, such as alcohol and drug use, crime prevention, the reporting of crimes, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other matters.

The College's Annual Security Report also includes crime statistics for the previous three years on campus, on property owned or controlled by the College, and on public property within, or immediately adjacent to and

accessible from, the campus. The College maintains crime statistics for its main campus, as well as two NECO Center for Eye Care clinical and clinical teaching facilities under lease or other occupancy arrangements. Since the College does not maintain residence halls on or off campus, the statistics should not be relied upon for any reportable events related to areas where students might reside.

To access the report please visit <https://www.neco.edu/consumer-information/>, or the Facilities page of the Portal. A printed version may be requested by emailing [facilities@neco.edu](mailto:facilities@neco.edu).

## Campus Security Authorities

Campus Security Authorities (“CSAs”), as required by the Clery Act, are College officials specially trained in responding to and properly documenting crimes and safety incidents. If a community member is uncomfortable reporting a crime or safety incident to the Office of Facilities Operations and Administration, or to law enforcement, they are strongly encouraged to contact a CSA.

If a CSA learns of a crime committed on or adjacent to campus, they are obligated to report it; however, if anonymity is requested, they are not required to report the identity of the survivor, unless required by other state or federal laws. NECO strongly encourages full reporting, especially in cases where the community may be at risk.

See the Facilities page of the Portal for the current list of CSAs.