

 **RESPECT** | GRADUATE  
SCHOOL

**STUDENT HANDBOOK 2017-2018**

## **RGS Student Handbook**

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## **I. Introduction**

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The Respect Graduate School (hereafter RGS and/or School and/or Institution) Handbook has been prepared solely for informational purposes. It does not create any legally binding obligations. The Student Handbook describes the provisions of the legal documents and corporate policies that govern the School's policies, programs and procedures in plain language, so that they may be readily understood. Although particularly applicable to full-time students, many of the provisions and policies are also applicable to part-time students. The Handbook does not cover every situation and is not intended to replace planning documents or institutional policies or practices, nor can it be construed to change their meaning. In the event that the descriptions in this Handbook disagree with those in other documents, policies, or practices, those documents, policies, or practices will govern the administration of plans and programs. The several RGS Handbooks are submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.

RGS is committed to review its policies and benefits continually. Accordingly, the Institution expressly reserves the rights to review, change, interpret or terminate any of these policies, programs, and procedures through the means of amendment described below.

The Student Handbook may be amended through the following procedure:

1. proposals for amendments and their rationales may be made to the Vice President by individual students, the Student Government Association (SGA), faculty, administrators or Board members;
2. the Vice President shall present the proposals and rationales to the following RGS constituencies: Student Government Association, full-time faculty, and administrators for discussion and possible revision. In the event the proposed change involves policy matters reserved to the Board of Trustees, the Board is to be informed;
3. upon a majority, positive vote by the Student Government Association and one of the other the two of the constituencies, the recommended amendment shall be considered by the Board; and
4. upon the approval by a majority of Board members, the amendment shall be incorporated into the Student Handbook.
5. The Institution's policies, programs and procedures are administered without discrimination against any person based on actual or perceived race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, genetic information, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, use of guide or support animals and/or mechanical aids, or any other basis protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

## **II. About the Respect Graduate School**

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### **A. The Plan of Organization and Administration**

RGS is a legally incorporated professional graduate school in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is independent of any other entity, organization or movement. The Institution is governed through its Board of Trustees (hereafter the Board). The Board's authority, duties and functions are indicated in the Respect Graduate School's Bylaws. The By-Laws are published on the RGS web site, are on file in the RGS Library and may be obtained on request from the Registrar-Facilities Manager. To accomplish its Mission, Goals and Values, RGS offers a graduate program leading to the degree, Master of Arts in Islamic Studies (MAIS).

The Institution functions through an administrative organization consisting of the President, Vice President, Dean of Academics, Dean of Student Affairs, Head Librarian and Registrar-Facilities

Manager. Each is ultimately responsible to the President for the administrative functions required by the educational programs of an institution of higher education. Each of these officers also serves in a staff capacity for the Board, as determined by the Board.

### **B. The Fiscal Year, Academic Calendar and Academic Year**

The fiscal year (hereafter FY) and the academic calendar (hereafter AC) begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the calendar year. The Academic Year (AY) usually begins in August and ends on June 30.

### **C. Semesters and Credit Hours**

RGS is in compliance with Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) sections 600.2 and 602.24f, 1, ii. RGS defines a credit hour in accord with Title 34 CFR. A credit hour is one hour (50 minutes) in class with two hours spent by the student in reading, research and preparation during a semester.

There are two semesters of fifteen weeks each. Field trips with writing assignments, attendance at lectures and special events relevant to the course or similar activities may count for one week each. Normally, the First or Fall Semester begins on the last Monday of August, and the Second or Spring Semester begins on the last Monday of January. At the discretion of the Board, the President, Dean of Academics and involved faculty, RGS may offer summer session(s), special courses and a January session. The President, in consultation with the Board, Dean of Academics, Dean of Student Affairs and Vice President, sets the schedules for the timing of school closings and re-openings related to religious observances and deadlines for the submission of semester grades by the faculty. The schedule for the AC is to be made public by July 15. Please note that Muslims use a lunar calendar, so the major Muslim holy days move throughout the year. This will influence the RGS' AC. And AY.

### **D. SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

In the event of concerns related to weather conditions or emergencies, the President makes the final decision on whether to close the School and determines when classes are to resume. Due notification is to be given on RGS website, through telephone answering facilities and over regional television and radio stations. In addition, all members of the RGS community are made aware of this procedure in the following manners: class syllabi, during opening convocations, catalog, handbooks and website.

The RGS is closed for the following holidays and religious observances: New Year's Day (January 1), Eid ul-Fitra, Eid ul-Adha, January 1, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and December 25. In the instances of the multi-day Eid celebrations, the Academic Calendar indicates the length of the School's closure.

## **III. Respect Graduate School Mission, Goals and Commitments**

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### **RGS KEY STATEMENTS, EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ALL PROGRAMS AT RESPECT GRADUATE SCHOOL**

#### ***Our Mission***

Respect Graduate School is an academic institution through which students and faculty engage in learning, research and teaching primarily in Islamic Studies. With genuine appreciation and study of traditional Islamic Disciplines, RGS employs interdisciplinary approaches to respond to evolving opportunities and challenges of North American social contexts. In addition to offering students and faculty academically excellent and stimulating environment, RGS develops

engagement with and furnishes service to the broader society, and establishes relationships with other academic and social institutions.

### ***Our Goals***

1. To educate men and women to be scholars and leaders for society who are moved to respond to changing social contexts intelligently and responsibly.
2. To stimulate in students scholarly creativity, nurture the spirit of leadership and promote respect for all people and diverse ideas.
3. To be an institution that engages society and provides service to it.

### ***Our Commitments***

#### **1. Respect**

The name of our School expresses our foundational commitments in the present and for the future. Respect for persons, ideas and difference is essential for everything we do at our institution. Respect begins with relationships among students, faculty and staff. We endeavor to center decisions, plans and actions on our students so as to stimulate their intellectual growth, personal well-being, sense of leadership, social responsibility and positive social interactions. We envision Respect Graduate School to be an academic institution in which people of diverse backgrounds put their varying and at times opposing ideas into respectful dialogs. We are committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all persons in each program. Therefore, the Institution's policies, and programs will be administered without discrimination against any person based on actual or perceived race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, genetic information, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, use of guide or support animals and/or mechanical aids, or any other basis protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

#### **2. Graduate Level Education**

Respect Graduate School provides a graduate level of education primarily in Islamic Studies. RGS expects its faculty and students to engage successfully in the rigors of graduate level study and research, to be knowledgeable about traditional positions as well as recent developments in the relevant subject areas, and to communicate their understandings effectively. As freedom of expression is essential in stimulating genuine thought, our School encourages the exchange and critique of ideas as fundamental to a graduate education. The anticipated outcomes of our graduate education include gaining deeper knowledge and/or professional skills in respective fields, demonstrating capabilities in research and learning, and formulating positions and perspectives that withstand analysis and that contribute to advancing the well-being of society.

#### **3. Service**

Service is Respect Graduate School's way to put knowledge into action. We believe that knowledge bears fruit through its practice; and knowledge that is not realized through action is nothing but burden. Knowledge that is actualized through service is elevated to the level of wisdom. Islamically understood, the best place to put knowledge into action is to serve humanity, for the best among us are those who benefit society the most. Happiness and contentment, the ultimate objectives that we all seek, can be attained both for the individual and the society through service that is altruistic, that is, it seeks nothing in return.

### ***RGS' Program Educational Objectives***

- 1. Information Literacy and Communication:** Access and evaluate information critically, be willing to further enhance their education, ability to work individually and in diverse teams, leadership abilities, communication skills, and integrity.
- 2. Religious Literacy:** Demonstrate an understanding of the core tenets and practices of the Islamic religious traditions and the various roles in both historical and contemporary cultural and inter-religious contexts.
- 3. Methodological Proficiency:** Understand a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of Islam and Religious Studies generally and to incorporate these as appropriate in their research and writing.
- 4. Global Citizenship:** Demonstrate an awareness of the diversity of religious ideas and practices, and appreciate the ways in which respect for diversity can inform and encourage global citizenship.

### ***RGS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES***

- a) Demonstrate a broad understanding of the world's religious traditions, teachings and practices.
- b) Demonstrate a broad understanding of the Islamic traditions.
- c) Demonstrate an understanding of the Quran and approaches to its study.
- d) Demonstrate an understanding of the Hadith and approaches to its study.
- e) Demonstrate the ability to interpret primary Muslim religious texts in Arabic and English.
- f) Demonstrate the ability to think critically and to write independently about religious and theological issues.
- g) Demonstrate the ability to apply religious and ethical values and beliefs to life

## **IV. Respect Graduate School's Educational Programs: A Brief Overview of the Degree Master of Arts in Islamic Studies (MAIS)**

RGS courses are grouped in seven basic categories with each offering having its own designation. The Categories are:

- 300: Qur'ān, Hadith, Sira and Arabic Language
- 400: Islamic Theology, Ethics, Law and Spirituality
- 500: Islam In Contemporary Society
- 600: Skills in Islamic Ministry and Practice
- 700: Inter-Religious Engagements and Relationships
- 800: Theories and Methods of Religious Study and Research
- 900: Advanced Studies

A. Master of Arts in Islamic Studies (MAIS) is a 36 credit-hours dual-track program. In this program, all students are required to include the following core courses in their study. The core courses are designed to provide a broad background both in the study of religion and in the foundations of Islamic Studies.

- MAIS 801 Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion
- MAIS 301 The Qur'an and its Interpretation
- MAIS 401 History of Islamic Thought and Literature

Students admitted to the program are normally expected to possess competency in basic Arabic and be knowledgeable about World Religions in order to better engage with their ongoing study and career objectives. Those lacking such competency and knowledge may fulfill this requirement through opportunities offered at the RGS.

Students choose either the Academic or the Professional Track of the program to complete their study. The academic track is designed for students who aim to continue their education on a doctoral level in preparation for an academic or research-based career. The professional track of the program is for students who are interested in Islamic Studies for careers that may vary in a wide range from Islamic Ministry to working with Non-Profit Organizations

The RGS dual-track system affords all students in the program the opportunity to explore the foundations of the program in partnership with students who share similar track-specific career goals, and also with students pursuing the alternative track and associated career goals. In other words, in the core courses, students in the professional track will have the opportunity to explore the course material in conversation with their colleagues in the academic track, and vice versa. In this way, students in both tracks will be programmatically positioned to recognize the critical importance of integrating the academic with the professional and vice versa. Thus, the core experience is, in part, designed to cultivate an awareness in students that, whichever career goals they may have chosen to pursue, their developing expertise in either the academic or professional area is a matter of specialization and emphasis, and not a matter of operating in silos of professional exclusivity. The core experience is designed to signal to students that their graduate formation as religious leaders will be deficient to the extent that the aspiring academic professional fails to integrate an ongoing concern with the practical dimensions of religious leadership, or to the degree that the aspiring practical professional fails to do the same with the academic dimensions.

Some students may opt to develop an approved Self-Designed Program of Study following the successful completion of the Core Courses.

Another important aspect of MAIS curriculum is its interdisciplinary nature and the way that it merges its multiple commitments to:

- \* the best of contemporary analytical scholarship in Islamic studies and related disciplinary fields such as history, political science, sociology, anthropology, and comparative literature,
- \* key texts and other elements of the classical Islamic religious sciences, as well as some of their concomitant methods of classical pedagogy e.g., Qur'anic recitation, and memorization,
- \* the classical and more recent theories and methods of the history of religions (also known as "religious studies"), and
- \* the theories and methods of the rapidly growing field of interreligious studies, including the sub-fields of the theologies of religious pluralism and comparative theology.

## **B. Academic Track**

Students who plan to continue their education on a doctoral level are advised to choose the Academic Track. The Academic Track deals with religion, and more specifically with Islam as an academic discipline without bias or favoritism for one tradition or interpretation over another. Although the program aims to offer a broad coverage in its field, it sees certain aspects of the study as the core components of the subject. Therefore, the students in the Academic Track are required to include the following courses in their study:

- MAIS 307 Arabic I: Elementary Arabic
- MAIS 402 Islamic Theology and Philosophy
- MAIS 406 Islamic Law and Legal Theories
- MAIS 303 Hadith

Students in the Academic Track are required to write a Master's thesis, which is equivalent to a 6.0 credit hour course. The procedure of writing a Master's thesis is cited in the section on Advising.

In order to complete the 36 hours requirement of the program, students will also take enough electives and/or independent studies in consultation with their advisor.

Students can be exempt from the required course Arabic I if they pass the RGS competency examination. The procedure of the competency exam may be found in the Student Handbook.

### **C. Professional Track**

Students who plan careers as imams, chaplains, teachers, and interfaith entrepreneurs or to work in public policy, law, foreign service, business, and journalism are encouraged to elect the Professional Track. The Professional Track provides students with the requisite education in the Islamic traditions and the organizational, administrative, and counseling skills to engage with diverse communities constructively. Therefore, students in the Professional Track are required to include the following courses in their study in addition to the Core Courses:

- \* MAIS 307 Arabic I: Elementary Arabic
- \* MAIS 406 Islamic Law and Legal Theories
- \* MAIS 601 Skills for Islamic Ministry
- \* MAIS 306 Recitation and Memorization of the Qur'an

Students in the Professional Track are required to take one unit of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education, MAIS 605) from an accredited institution that provides it. One unit of CPE corresponds to 3.0 credits. It is graded on a Pass/No Credit basis.

The course in the Recitation and Memorization of the Qur'an has a significant role in the RGS curriculum and, more broadly, in the context of North American societies. The Qur'an, the central religious text of Islam, literally means "the Recitation" and Muslims believe that the Qur'an has been passed down from generation to generation primarily through its recitation. Among the classical sciences of Islam, the one that concerns with the recitation of the Qur'an is called *Qira'ah*. The RGS among other North American institutions is distinctive in including the science of *Qira'ah* into its curriculum.

Besides the core courses, in order to complete 36 hours requirement of the program, students will need to take enough electives and/or independent studies in consultation with their advisor.

Students can be exempt from the courses of Arabic I and Recitation and Memorization of the Qur'an if they pass the competency examinations. The procedure of the competency examinations is given below in this Handbook.

The Professional Track also allows students the option of completing a Master's thesis, which is equivalent to a 6.0 credit hour given through two courses. Details about the Thesis are given below in the section on Advising

Besides the core courses, in order to complete 36 hours requirement of the program, students will need to take enough electives and/or independent studies in consultation with their advisor.

Students can be exempt from the courses of Arabic I and Recitation and Memorization of the Qur'an if they pass the competency examinations. The procedure of the competency examinations is given below in this Handbook.

The Professional Track also allows students the option of completing a Master's thesis, which is equivalent to a 6.0 credit hour given through two courses.

## **V. Applying for Admission As A Degree Candidate: Basic Requirements and Expectations**

1. Applicants are expected to have earned a Bachelor's Degree or its equivalent at a recognized college or university. "Recognized" means that the institution has been authorized to grant baccalaureate or equivalent degrees by the state or provincial or national agency with such authority. For example, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has authorized the RGS to grant the MAIS degree. The person's anticipated Grade Point Average (GPA) is expected to be at least 2.67 (B Minus) or its equivalent on a 4.0 scale. Exceptions to the requirement of the earned degree and/or the GPA may be made at the discretion of the RGS' Admission Committee. See the conditions for the exceptions under "Provisional Acceptance" given below.

**Note:** Accrediting agencies such as the Middle States Council on Higher Education (MSCHE) limit the percentage of persons who do not have Bachelor degrees who may take or audit a course. RGS Administration will consider this limitation on a case-by-case basis as applications are evaluated.

2. Applicants are expected to be able to carry on graduate level reading, research, writing and discussions in the English language. The general admissions application requires applicants to furnish a writing sample in English on a subject provided by the Admissions Committee. The Admissions Committee may require an applicant to take and pass a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam with a minimum score of 80 or pass the RGS English Proficiency Exam. In instances considered necessary by the Admissions Committee, an applicant may be required to take a writing workshop or course to improve his or her writing abilities.

3. Applicants are to complete and send to the RGS Registrar the Admissions Application available and posted on the RGS Website. That application requires the person to send the following:

a) Official transcripts of undergraduate and any graduate courses. In the event that such transcripts are not available, the applicant may furnish a copy of her or his diploma or appropriate certificate. If the person does not have such documents, the applicant may arrange for letters from faculty members or administrators presently or formally affiliated with such institutions or programs that attest to the applicant's course work and, as possible, completion of the course of study. See "Provisional Acceptance" given below.

b) A personal statement that includes the applicant's educational background and work/professional experience, and reasons for applying to MAIS program. The applicant may indicate the preferred track she or he intends to take.

c). The application form asks for the email addresses of two persons who are willing to provide comments and recommendations concerning the applicant. The RGS will send an email to recommenders that contains a link to a recommendation form. The Admissions Committee

prefers one recommendation to be from a current or former instructor. The recommendations are to be sent to the RGS' Registrar and not to the applicant.

d. Non-refundable \$30 application fee.

### **Provisional Admission**

1. Applicants who do not meet the GPA, TOEFL or English language proficiency standards outlined above may be granted provisional admission to the program at the discretion of the Admission Committee.

2. Applicants who have not satisfied all of the requirements listed above and/or whose application is incomplete may also be offered provisional admission by the Admissions Committee with the understanding that they will supply all of the required materials within a certain timeframe. The required materials are to be listed in the notification of admission along with a clearly stated timeframe for satisfying the requirements. If the specified requirements are not satisfied before the expiration of the timeframe, admission is rescinded.

3. Applicants who do not have a bachelor degree but who evidence ability to do graduate level work and who are proficient in the English language may be granted provisional acceptance to the Professional Track for an academic year. Often such persons have had substantial educational experiences in schools and settings such as madrasas and courses of study in other countries. During that provisional academic year, the individual will be mentored by an RGS faculty member appointed by the Dean of Academics and is to take and pass (with a B letter grade) the core courses required of all students and such other courses as advised by the mentor. At the conclusion of the provisional academic year, the person's instructors and the Deans will recommend either transition to be an RGS degree candidate or to be discontinued as an RGS student, The President shall receive the recommendation and after consulting with the person and the Deans, shall make the decision about transition to acceptance or discontinuance as a RGS degree student. The President's decision is final.

### **Admission for RGS Employees**

In order to protect against potential conflict of interest, RGS employees holding academic appointments above the rank of instructor or who serve in the RGS on a full-time basis must obtain permission from their Dean or supervisor apply for and accept admission to pursue a MAIS degree or to take courses as a non-degree student.

### **Deferred Admission**

Admitted applicants may request a deferral of their admission to graduate study for up to one full academic year without re-applying. If the deferral is approved and matriculation does not occur within the one-year period, the applicant must re-apply.

### **B. Applying for Admission As A Non-Degree Student: Basic Requirements and Expectations**

RGS may offer admission for graduate professional development to applicants who wish to enroll in courses at RGS but do not wish to complete a graduate degree. Applicants for non-degree admissions must apply though providing a completed Non-Degree Student Application Form available on the RGS Website and meet most of the same requirements and furnish the same documents as degree candidates noted concerning transcripts, personal statement, writing sample, English proficiency, and non-refundable application fee of \$30.

The chief difference with the degree application is the person's not needing to obtain the recommendations from others.

Note that non-degree students are responsible for completing the requirements of the courses they take and they receive credit for courses when they finish them.

If a Non-Degree Candidate decides to become degree candidate, she or he are to complete the balance of their applications (letters of recommendation), update their personal statements and present their applications to the Admissions Committee. If admitted to degree status, the course credits already earned will be applied to their programs

Once the application has been submitted, the applicant will be notified regarding their application with further instructions if necessary.

### **Admission of Auditors**

Auditors are to provide the Registrar with a transcript or other appropriate evidence (e.g., a diploma) indicating they have a bachelor degree or its equivalent. Auditors are not required to fulfill the course requirements and they receive neither grades nor credit for the courses. A transcript filed with the Registrar will indicate the designation AU. The designation is given for auditors who have attended at least one third of the class sessions. They are expected to do any readings and may participate in class discussions. The number of auditors enrolled in each class is limited and is also subject to instructor approval.

## **VI. Becoming a Respect Graduate School Student: Applying for Admission**

A. Persons may apply directly as either an Academic Degree Candidate or an Professional Degree Candidate. While still applying for admission as a degree candidate, a person may choose to defer the decision about one track or the other until her or his future plans become more definite and apply simply as a **Degree Candidate**. Those considering a Self-Designed Program are to complete first the core courses required of all students before formulating and gaining approval for the components of a Self-Designed Program.

B. Applications and inquiries are to be made to the Registrar. Application materials may be scanned and included as attachments on a Word document and sent as an email or as a PDF file or sent through surface mail.

C. The Admissions Committee is chaired by the Dean for Student Affairs and includes the Registrar as staff assistant, Dean of Academics and another faculty member appointed by the President.

D. RGS practices "rolling admissions," that is, applications are considered as they are completed and submitted. The Registrar acknowledges the receipt of materials and informs applicants of the status of their applications. The Dean of Student Affairs notifies the applicants of acceptance or non-acceptance in a timely manner.

E. Generally, because it often takes time to gather transcript and other materials, the optimum time for initiating the application process for either the first semester (beginning in late August) or second semester (beginning in late January) is mid-October-November.

F. The RGS website contains guidance and information regarding scholarships, grants and tuition remission concerns. Applicants who seek to apply for fiscal assistance are to submit requests at the time of transmitting their general admissions application. Descriptions of the costs scholarships and other forms of Financial Aid are provided in Section 12 of this Handbook and on the RGS Website.

## **VII. BEING AN RGS STUDENT: GETTING READY**

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### **A. Course Load**

In order to fulfill the requirements for the MAIS degree, a student is to complete satisfactorily thirty-six (36) course credits. To be considered a full-time student, the individual must take nine (9) credits each semester or a total of eighteen credits in an academic year. Typically, each course will provide three (3) credits. It is possible that some courses, such as independent studies or internships, may be scheduled for fewer hours.

A student may take a maximum of three (3) courses as independent studies with full-time or adjunct RGS faculty members. The syllabi for such courses are to be presented to the full-time faculty and recommended by the faculty for approval by the Dean of Academics. Students seeking an independent study must show that they have no outstanding incomplete grades and have at least a 3.00 GPA, and they must state how the proposed course will meet their professional or academic programs.

It is anticipated that the student is to complete the degree within five (5) academic years after beginning study at RGS. In the event that circumstances make it necessary for the person to extend student status, the individual is to petition the Dean of Academics for an extension for a specified period. The Dean, in consultation with the President, may grant the extension, with due provision for the student to meet any financial obligations that may accrue.

### **B. Transfer Procedure**

A maximum of nine (9) credit hours may be transferred from another graduate institution and may be accepted by RGS as fulfilling RGS course requirements under the following provisions:

- a. Under normal conditions, the student is to provide the Registrar with a syllabus and a transcript or other official statement of the grade for each course that the student is seeking to transfer to RGS;
- b. The course grade is to be at least a B (3.0) or its equivalent for each course;
- c. The course description(s) are to meet fully or substantially a course(s) offered at RGS;
- d. The course(s), if accepted at RGS as the equivalent of an RGS offering, will be transferred to the student's RGS program at the grade level awarded by the originating institution;
- e. A course(s) considered to be partially equivalent to that of an RGS offered course(s) may be given partial credit with the balance to be completed by an RGS offering; and
- f. The Dean for Academics and the RGS faculty member(s) conversant with the field(s) involved in the proposed transfer course(s) will consult concerning the acceptance of the course(s) and the Dean will make the decision as to whether or not the course(s) will be transferred.

RGS students who intend to take a course(s) at other graduate institutions and to have those course(s) and credits transferred to their RGS programs are advised to first consult with their advisors and the Dean for Academics. In order to affect such a transfer, the procedure above is to be followed.

## **STUDENT ORIENTATIONS AND COMPETENCY EXAMINATIONS**

Students who are new to the RGS are required to participate in New Student Orientation sessions. Usually the first session is held in August prior to the beginning of the first semester and the second is held prior to the beginning of second semester. The second orientation session

is also required of all other students except auditors. The Dean of Student Affairs presides over both orientation sessions.

1. The First Orientation Session serves as a basic introduction for the new students to present students, staff and faculty; the RGS Library; an examination of the Student Handbook and its Student Rights portions, Sexual Harassment Policy and Community Standards. New students are then brought together with their assigned advisors to confirm or revise their course schedules.
2. Students who begin their RGS experience in the second semester will be an orientation prior to the Second Orientation Session. The Second Orientation involves all students, faculty combines a general meeting of the Student Government Association, Faculty and Administration with a community discussion of the events and programs of the first semester with suggestions for second semester; a review of the policies and procedures related to Community Standards, with special attention to the Harassment Policies.
3. Competency Examinations will be administered separately yet in close conjunction with the Orientation Sessions. These Examinations are:

#### **A. Demonstrating Competence in the Arabic Language,**

Competence in the Arabic Language may be satisfied in one of the following manners:

1. In keeping with the RGS' transfer policy, students may transfer a course in Arabic taken at another institution. That course will be considered one of the three acceptable for transfer credit. The student will then be exempt for taking the Arabic I course offered at the RGS.

OR

2. The RGS Faculty will prepare and administer an Arabic Language Competence examination one week prior to the start of the Fall and Spring semesters. Students who pass the examination are exempt from taking the course in Arabic I. Exemption does not provide credits toward satisfying the 36 hours of course work to earn the MAIS degree. Students who pass the Arabic I examination are to take an elective course in their program. Students who do not satisfy the examination may retake examinations until they meet the requirement.

OR

1. Students who neither transfer an Arabic language course from another institution nor pass the RGS examination are to take and pass the Elementary Arabic I course offered by the RGS. The course may be taken on a regularly graded basis or as Pass/No Credit.

#### **B. Demonstrating Competence in the Recitation and Memorization of the Qur'ān**

Competence in the Recitation and Memorization of the Qur'ān may be satisfied in one of the following manners:

1. In keeping with the transfer policy described above, students may transfer a course in the recitation and memorization of the Qur'ān taken at another institution. That course will be considered one of the three acceptable for transfer credit. The student will then be exempt for taking the recitation and memorization of the Qur'ān offered at the RGS.

OR

2. The RGS Faculty will prepare and administer a competence examination on the recitation and memorization of the Qur'ān one week prior to the start of the Fall and Spring semesters. Students who pass the examination are exempt from taking the course in the recitation and memorization of the Qur'ān. Exemption does not provide credits toward satisfying the 36 hours of course work

to earn the MAIS degree. Students who pass the examination are to take an elective course in their program.

## **VIII. BEING AN RGS STUDENT: TAKING COURSES**

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### **1. Registration For Courses**

Students are responsible for consulting with their advisors about the sequencing of their courses of study and for obtaining the approval of their advisor prior to registering for courses. The Registrar will provide the appropriate forms for registration. The Deans and Registrar will determine the opening and closing dates for registering for courses. Students who register after the closing date may be charged a late fee.

### **2. Dropping Courses**

A student may withdraw from a course at any time up to the official withdrawal deadline specified in the RGS calendar, which is normally set at the day before the final four weeks of the term. Before this date, the student will receive a W grade, which will not affect the quality-point average. A grade of WF will be assigned for any course dropped after this deadline, and this grade will be computed as an F in calculating the quality-point average. Appeals for exceptions due to extenuating circumstances may be directed to the Dean of Academics. Detailed instructions for adding or dropping courses are issued by the Registrar's office. Course changes require the approval and signature of the advisor.

Full-time students who drop to part-time status (less than three courses a semester), and part-time students who withdraw from courses without replacing them with an equal number of units or credits in the same session, will receive an adjustment of tuition and fees on those courses, as follows:

- a) On or before the first day of classes, 100 percent of tuition and fees will be cancelled;
- b) After the first day of class, but within the first 60 percent of the semester, tuition and fees will be adjusted based on the number of calendar days remaining in the semester, divided by the number of calendar days in the semester, excluding scheduled breaks of five or more days.
- c) After 60 percent of the semester has passed, no adjustment will be made in tuition, or other fees.

It is the student's responsibility to contact the Financial Aid Office to verify the effect that any change in course load will have on financial aid eligibility.

### **3. Reading Preparation Days**

RGS generally provides two to three reading days prior to or during final exams each semester. The purpose of these days is for students to prepare for final exams and presentations without distraction. Nonetheless, the institution does allow student-organized activities during the reading days, with the permission of the Dean of Student Affairs in consultation with the Dean of Academics. Requests to schedule such activities must be made in writing to both deans, with a clear description of the intended audience, the schedule of events, and the need for facilities. No mandatory events are permitted during reading days.

### **4. Grades**

Academic achievement is designated by letter grades, modified by pluses and minuses, to which numerical grade points are assigned. For graduation, as an example, the cumulative grade-point average (GPA) must be no less than 3.00. The quality points and requirements assigned for each grade are as follows:

A = 4.00 points; A- = 3.67 points. These grades are given for achievement of the highest caliber. They reflect independent work, original thinking, and the ability to acquire and effectively use knowledge.

B+ = 3.33 points; B = 3.00 points; B- = 2.67 points. These grades are given for higher-than-average achievement. Evidence of independent work and original thinking is expected.

C+ = 2.33 points; C = 2.00 points; C- = 1.67 points. These grades are given when the student has demonstrated familiarity with the content of the course, familiarity with the methods of study of the course, and active participation in the work of the class.

D+ = 1.33 points. D = 1.00 point; D- = 0.67 point. These grades are given for work below the standards expected by the RGS. They indicate work that in one or more important aspects falls below the average expected of students for graduation. The work is, however, sufficient to be credited for graduation.

F = 0 points. This indicates failure.

W, WF = 0 points. These designations indicate withdrawal from a course before completion. W is assigned for all withdrawals prior to the official withdrawal deadline, normally before the last four weeks of a term; WF is assigned if the withdrawal takes place after the official withdrawal deadline, except in cases of illness or other extenuating circumstances, as authorized by the Dean of Academics.

P = Pass. Indicates Pass in courses taken on a Pass/No Credit basis. Does not affect the GPA.

NC = No points. Indicates failure in courses taken on a Pass/No Credit basis. Does not affect the GPA.

AUD = No points. The designation Audit is used for students granted permission to attend classes for the benefit they can derive from lectures and discussions but who are not taking the course for credit. An audit designation indicates attendance at a minimum of two-thirds of the class meetings of the course.

INC = 0 points. The designation indicates an Incomplete for the course. It is a temporary grade granted by the Dean of Academics only with the recommendation by the faculty member and on the student's presentation of compelling reasons, such as immediate health issues, bereavement, or similar major reasons for not completing the course's requirements. The student's petition to be granted an incomplete grade is to be accompanied by the course's instructor positive recommendation. The petition is to include a date for the completion of the required work. The Dean for Academics will inform the Registrar that a temporary designation of I has been granted to the student for a course. The student is to complete the requirements within one calendar year after the Dean of Academic's approval of the petition. Failure to complete the requirements will result in the awarding the grade of F for the course. A student who has an outstanding Incomplete may not register for an Independent study until the Incomplete is satisfied and a

regular grade is registered. Normally, a student may have only one Incomplete grade in a semester. Exceptions may be made due to extenuating circumstances on a case by case basis by the Dean of Academics in consultation with the Dean of Student Affairs and the President.

*Note:* A grade earned in a final examination will not be weighted more than one-third in computing the final grade for a course.

## **5. Attendance**

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. If absences occur, it is the student's responsibility to make up the work missed. It is the responsibility of the instructor to state in the course syllabus at the beginning of a semester his or her policies regarding attendance. Unexcused absences may lower the student's final grade. Permission to make up quizzes, tests, and exams may be granted at the discretion of the instructor. As a matter of courtesy, when students find it necessary to be absent from class, they should inform the instructor in advance if possible. In the event of an extended absence, students should notify the Dean of Student Affairs and the Dean of Academics as well.

## **6. Academic Standing**

To be eligible to continue as a degree candidate in good standing for a subsequent academic year, students must complete at least six (6) course units each academic year and have a GPA of at least 2.67 (B Minus).

When grades at the end of a fall or spring term indicate that a student is not meeting the minimum requirements to be in good standing, the student will be placed on academic probation. The Dean of Academics, Dean of Student Affairs and the student's advisor will consult with the student to ascertain causes for the situation and will propose a program of remediation and a schedule that is to be met if the student is to remain enrolled at RGS. The student may elect to take a leave of absence for up to a year and then resume probationary status and follow a remediation program. When the student improves to the required level, she or he may be removed from academic probation.

## **7. Academic Honesty**

- a) **Plagiarism:** RGS defines plagiarism as the use, deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment. A student's academic work is to be properly credited to the original author(s) and sources. An "outside source" is any work (published or unpublished) composed, written or created by any person other than the student who submitted the work. This definition is adapted from *Napolitano v. Princeton*, which established the accepted legal standard.

All work that students submit or present as part of course assignments or requirements must be their own original work, unless otherwise expressly permitted by the instructor. This includes any work presented in written, oral or electronic form, or in any other technical or artistic medium. When students use the specific thoughts, ideas, writings or expressions of others, they must accompany each instance of use with some form of attribution of the source. Direct quotes from any source (including the Internet) must be placed in quotation marks (or otherwise marked appropriately) and accompanied by proper citation, following the preferred bibliographic conventions of the department or instructor. It is the instructor's responsibility to make clear to all students in the class the preferred or required citation style for student work. Ignorance of bibliographic

conventions and citation procedures on the student's part is not a valid excuse for having committed plagiarism.

Students are not to present oral or written reports written by others as their own work. This includes incorporating formal lecture notes written or dictated by someone other than the student.

Students are not to use writing or research obtained from a term-paper service or purchased from any person or entity, unless they fully disclose such activity to the instructor and are given express permission to do so. Students may not submit or present work prepared in whole or in part to fulfill course requirements for more than one course, unless expressly permitted to do so by all of the instructors involved. Students are advised to keep all notes, drafts, and materials used in preparing assignments until a final course grade is given. For work in electronic form, they may be asked to keep all intermediate drafts and notes electronically or in hard copy until final grades are given. All such materials must be available for inspection by the instructor at any time.

- b) **Cheating:** Students may not submit any coursework prepared by, copied from or dictated by others. If the student is employing the services of a tutor (whether from the campus community or elsewhere), the tutor may not prepare the student's work for class.

Students may not provide or receive unauthorized help in taking examinations, tests or quizzes, or in preparing any other required materials for a course. Such restrictions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using unauthorized material in an examination, test or quiz
- Using e-mail or text-messaging during any exam without the permission of the instructor
- Stealing, using or transmitting in writing, electronically or verbally, actual examinations, tests, quizzes or portions thereof prior to, during or following an exam
- Reading or observing another's work without the person's consent, whether it be on paper, in electronic form or in any other medium

- c) **Helping or hindering others:** Students may not tamper with, damage or otherwise hinder the work of others to complete their own assignments. Students may not collaborate during an in-class examination, test or quiz, or work with others on out-of-class assignments, exams or projects unless expressly allowed or directed to do so by the instructor. If students have any reservation about their participation in any out-of-class assignments, they should consult with the instructor.

- d) **Falsification:** Students may not offer a falsified excuse for an absence from an examination, test, quiz or other course requirement, directly or through another source. Students may not falsify research data or results. They may not invent bibliographical entries for research papers or handouts. They may not falsify information about the date of submission for any coursework.

- e) **Other inappropriate behaviors:** In the preparation of a course, program, or degree work, students are directed to comply with the copyright law of the United States (Title XVII, U.S. Code). Violations of copyright law and of regulations regarding the use of copyrighted material for educational purposes are violations of this policy. Damage to, or abuse of, library, media, computing or other academic resources is prohibited by the laws

of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Students may not copy print or non-print media or download copyrighted files from the Internet beyond accepted norms. RGS Library staff should be consulted concerning U.S. copyright policies on "fair use" for educational purposes.

### **Consequences of Violating the Academic Honesty Policy**

A faculty member who suspects a student of violating the academic honesty policy with regard to an assignment, requirement, examination, test or quiz shall:

1. Inform the student of the perceived violation, explaining the reasons for the allegation and its consequences
2. Listen to the student's explanation

If the faculty member considers that the student has violated the academic honesty policy, the faculty member may take one or more of the following steps:

- Grade the work submitted as a zero, inform the student that any further infractions will be reported to the Dean of Academics for disciplinary action, and consider the incident to be a learning experience for the student
- Grade the work as a zero, require the student to resubmit the work or its equivalent, and inform the student that any further infractions will be reported to the Dean of Academics for disciplinary action
- Grade the work as a zero and report the alleged violation to the Dean of Academics and the student's advisor, together with a written memorandum explaining the violation and with any evidence that a violation has occurred. The faculty member shall inform the student verbally and in writing of the faculty member's decision to transmit the material to the Dean of Academics

In the event that the student accepts and does not appeal the faculty member's decision, and it is the first time that the student has violated the RGS Academic Honesty Policy, the Dean of Academics shall:

1. Consult with the faculty member about the student's situation
2. Speak personally with the student about the nature of personal integrity as well as academic and professional honesty, and explain the consequences for any further violations of RGS policy
3. Include in the student's file a notation concerning the violation. In the event that the student does not incur any further violations of the academic honesty policy while at RGS, the notation will be removed and destroyed

In the event that the student appeals the faculty member's decision, the Dean of Academics shall consult with the student and her or his academic advisor, advising her or him of the procedures involved and the person's right to be advised by others from within and outside of RGS, and to have such persons present at any hearings. If the student decides to pursue the appeal, then the dean and process will proceed as indicated:

1. Obtain from the student and the faculty member waivers to provide any necessary documents or resources that may be relevant to the appeal
2. Obtain from the student and the faculty member written statements explaining the alleged violation

3. Convene a hearing committee within twenty-one business days following the student's decision to proceed with the appeal

The hearing committee will proceed as follows:

- a) Membership on the hearing committee will include one RGS faculty member who is not the student's advisor or the involved faculty member; one faculty member from another college, university or theological school; and a member of RGS Student Council.
- b) The Dean of Academics will attend the hearing, participating only to clarify procedures. A member of the hearing committee will take the minutes of the meetings of the Committee.
- c) The hearing committee shall deliberate and come to a majority recommendation that shall be transmitted to the Dean within two business days of the hearing. The recommendation shall be the committee's judgment as to whether or not a violation took place.
- d) In the event that the decision sustains the faculty member's position, the Dean of Academics will determine the consequences for the student. These consequences may range from a notification in the student's file, as indicated above, to a failure for the course.
- e) In the event that the recommendation is that a violation did not take place, the Dean will arrange a meeting between the faculty member, the student and the student's advisor to clarify the original situation and to establish respectful relations between the persons involved.

In the event that a student who has incurred a sustained first violation of the Academic Honesty Policy is alleged to have violated the policy again, the same procedure described above is to be followed. If the second allegation is sustained, the Dean of Academics may recommend to the President penalties that range from a failure in the course to suspension for at least one semester to expulsion from the RGS. The President shall then review the materials and the minutes of the hearing committee and accept or modify (but not increase) the recommended penalty. The student may appeal the President's decision to the Board of Trustees. The student and the President and their advisors shall present his or her position to the Board. The decision of the Board will be final. The Secretary of the Board will inform the student and the President of the decision within two business days of the presentation to the Board.

### **8. Recording Class Sessions, Programs and Lectures**

Only with the prior express and written authorization of the faculty member or lecturer may students record a class, program or lecture by any means. Such recordings are to be only for the personal use of the student in order to more fully understand the material covered, or for a student(s) not present in the class session and for the same purpose agreed to by the faculty member or lecturer. Under no circumstances shall the recordings in any form be posted on social media, uploaded onto Internet sites, duplicated, or distributed for any purpose without the express and written permission of the instructor and members of the class or lecturer. In the latter instance, if the lecturer grants permission, questions and discussions by members of the audience and the presenter are to be excised from the recording. Violations of this policy will be considered a violation of RGS Academic Honesty.

## **IX. RGS Library**

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The mission of the RGS Library (hereafter RL) is to support the teaching, research, and service missions of RGS. To this end, the RL organizes and preserves its existing holdings and acquires new and out-of-print materials in order to provide the most comprehensive collection of works on Islam possible. Moreover, to make researching more convenient and efficient, the RL provides access to its collections electronically through the use of an online public access catalog (OPAC)/circulation system. Online reference services are available through e-mail, and regular walk-in Research and Writing Workshops are organized by the Library Director to promote information literacy and to ensure that students are able to effectively demonstrate their learning.

During each semester, the library is open on regularly scheduled class days, while during summer and winter breaks it is open on a reduced schedule.

### **Online Access for Faculty and Students**

The RL provides quick and convenient access to research resources for RGS faculty and students through its web page (<http://www.respectgs.us/rgs-library-2/>). Here, students can search the library's holding through Populi, a web-based higher education management software. Populi forms the base of operations for the library, providing online access to the catalog, and enabling each student to track their loans, holds, fines, and renewals through their unique user ID.

### **Research and Writing Assistance**

Each semester the library hosts a free walk-in Research and Writing Workshop. Topics to be covered include, but are not limited to, using Microsoft Word, formatting papers according to the Chicago Manual of Style, searching for and evaluating scholarly resources through online databases, citing sources, and creating a works cited list. These events are free and all students are highly encouraged to attend.

For those students who are unable to attend these workshops, the RL also offers online writing and reference services via e-mail, or on a walk-in basis (Monday-Friday). Whether you need someone to proof read a paper, locate research materials, or just to brainstorm ideas, the Librarian of the Respect Library is available to help.

### **Tutor Assistance**

The RL offers experienced tutoring assistance for every class to all of its students. To schedule a one-on-one session, please contact the school's librarian (see contact info. above).

### **Respect Library's Print Holdings**

The RL has been established to address the needs of students as well as faculty members, for both teaching and research purposes. The depth of our print holdings is continuously reviewed and updated by the Library Director to ensure that it remains relevant and supports the highest level of academic scholarship.

### **Document Delivery Fund (Copy Service)**

For journal articles that the Respect Library does not own, and which may not be obtained through the library's subscription databases, the library provides a document delivery fund that assists students and faculty with the acquisition of articles and books needed for research.

### **Library Sharing Arrangements**

RGS's supplementation of the physical and electronic holdings of the RL:

- a) Through a subscription to OCLC WorldShare Inter library Loan (ILL) Services the RL connects to 10,000 libraries in forty-six countries for resource sharing. By being a part of this global community, the RL achieves better visibility for its collections and enables its users to find the information they need.
- b) Through a cooperative agreement with Reeves Library of Moravian College, RGS students will be able to borrow the physical holdings of Reeves Library the same as any Moravian College student. Reeves Library has a substantial collection of books on a wide variety of subjects and the physical proximity of Moravian College to RGS provides students and faculty with convenient access. To obtain a guest membership for Reeves, student should present their RGS student ID at Reeves Library. Students are expected to observe and adhere to the borrowing policies set forth by Reeves and maintain good standing.

## **X. Being Part of the RGS Community: Community Standards**

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Respect Graduate School takes its name seriously. Respect extends beyond the classroom to all relationships among the faculty, administration, staff, and, of course, to those with and among RGS students. This section provides guidelines, expectations and rules regarding the relationships of students with one another and with the institution and the wider community. Our basic assumption is that the members of RGS are responsible, law-abiding adults who are engaged in professional and graduate-level studies. The policies set forth below are to be interpreted broadly, so as to meet the spirit and intent of the document, and should not necessarily be viewed as all-inclusive in nature. It is every student's responsibility to acquaint him or herself with this Student Handbook and RGS policies. Furthermore, student organizations and groups recognized by RGS are subject to its standards of organizational behavior. RGS is committed to fulfill the spirit and letter of these Community Standards.

### **Respect for Student Freedom of Expression**

The following commitments are based on the relevant section of *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students* (see American Association of University Professors, page 382). The Joint Statement was endorsed by the American Association of University Professors, United States Student Association, Association of American Colleges and Universities, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors (see page 381).

1. In the classroom, advising, discussions and programs, RGS faculty and administrators are to encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance is to be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards; and

2. RGS students are free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.

### **Respect for Individuals**

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that acknowledges and demonstrates respect for other individuals. Actions that harass, demean, or subject others to any form of physical threat, psychological stress, or humiliation are unacceptable. Basic honesty is expected at all times, both within academic pursuits and in all other interactions that take place elsewhere on campus, and in the wider community. While exercising respect for all individuals, students

are responsible for asserting their own rights and for communicating feelings and concerns to others by appropriate means.

### **Respect for Academic Honesty**

Academic integrity is an essential and foundational RGS principle. RGS expects students to carry on their academic work honestly and fairly. In addition, students should neither hinder nor unfairly assist other students in completing their work. The boundaries of what is or is not acceptable work may not always be clear; thus, if at any point in their academic work at the institution, students are uncertain about their responsibilities as scholars or about the propriety of a particular action, the instructor should be consulted. Note the Handbook sections above on academic honesty.

### **Respect for Safety**

It is expected that all members of the community will recognize their obligation to ensure the health and safety of all other members of the community. No individual is to endanger the health or safety of another. This extends from jokes and pranks to extreme situations involving firearms, other weapons, dangerous chemicals, explosives, fireworks, and fire. Failure to respect safety considerations includes, but is not limited to, tampering with or abusing fire safety equipment, such as alarms, alarm protectors, sprinklers, or fire extinguishers.

### **Respect for Property**

Every member of RGS community is expected to show respect for property, both personal and institutional, on campus and within the surrounding Bethlehem community. Failure to respect property includes, but is not limited to:

- The destruction of or damage to personal or institutional property
- The misuse or unauthorized use of the institution's electronic information and telecommunications systems, including violations of the Computing Resources Policy
- Unauthorized downloading of copyrighted materials
- The use of telephone or cable service in an unauthorized manner
- The misuse or unauthorized use of institutional or personal property or equipment
- The duplication of materials in an unauthorized manner
- Possession, use or duplication of keys without authorization
- Possession or use of a student identification other than one's own
- The theft or misappropriation of property owned by the institution or by members of the community or their guests
- Embezzlement or misuse of institutional or student organization funds

### **Respect for Alcohol and Drug Laws and Policies**

Unlawful possession, use or distribution of illicit drugs or alcohol by students, staff, employees, as well as by contractors and workers within the RGS buildings or on RGS premises, is prohibited and is a violation of local, state, and federal laws. RGS will observe all local, state, and federal laws relating to drug and alcohol abuse, including referral to local authorities for arrest or prosecution. The courts will determine penalties for violations of these laws. In addition, violators may be subject to institutional action. The presence and use of alcoholic beverages and controlled substances on the RGS campus and its buildings are prohibited except when prescribed by a physician. Persons who are prescribed such medication are to provide the Registrar with an official copy of the physician's authorization. In addition, the use of tobacco products and vaping is prohibited in all RGS buildings.

### **Respect for the Judicial System and Legal Authority**

All members of the RGS community are expected to follow all institutional regulations and policies, as well as all local, state, and federal laws. They also are expected to cooperate fully with all agents of the institution in the performance of their duties, to uphold the expectations of the community through their behavior, and to refuse to shield others from the consequences of their illicit actions.

### **Respect for the Broader Community**

RGS students are expected to be respectful members of the Lehigh Valley and Bethlehem communities and to conduct themselves in a way that represents the Institution in a positive fashion at all times.

### **Respect for All Persons**

RGS is a welcoming community. We embrace and value the diversity of all members of the campus community. The RGS statement on Non-Discrimination bears repeating for emphasis at the point:

The Institution's policies, programs and staff benefits will be administered without discrimination against any person based on actual or perceived race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, genetic information, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, use of guide or support animals and/or mechanical aids, or any other basis protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

## **XI. Student Services**

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### **Academic Advising:**

The advising process provides students with specific and accurate information and enables them to develop a working relationship with their advisors and move forward to complete their academic programs and progress into their chosen fields. The academic advising of students is an integral part of RGS faculty's teaching obligations. Therefore, faculty will be available to enrollees and prospective enrollees for consultation through their office phones and institutional email address at all times. Moreover, they are required to designate and publicize a minimum of two hours of "office hours" on a weekly basis, to provide advising and consultation. Furthermore, they are expected to respond positively to requests for appointments from enrollees and prospective enrollees.

RGS advising takes several forms and extends through and beyond the time students spend at RGS.

*1. Advising Before Enrollment:* RGS provides accurate, up-to-date information to prospective students about academic programs, the research interests of the faculty and degree requirements. Additionally, information on the following will be made available: the average time for the completion of a degree, the average amount of financial aid available, and employment opportunities after graduation (including the placement record of the program).

*2. Advising of New Students:* New students will be advised on the courses they should take during their first year; clear maps of the requirements they must meet, including course work, languages, research tools, examinations, internships and thesis work; and a delineation of the amount of time expected to complete each step. For each graduate student, the Dean of Academics will assign a faculty member as an academic advisor who, in consultation with the

student, will plan a program of study and conduct research in accordance with RGS guidelines. The advisor's primary duty will be to help students assess their academic strengths and weaknesses and to assist them in choosing the appropriate program track that will lead students to their future career goals.

*3. Advising of Students Concerning Writing and Research Skills:* The Vice President or his or her designee will provide counseling and assistance to students concerning researching and writing academic papers, the use of computers, and study skills.

*4. Advising of Continuing Students:* Advisors should evaluate student progress and performance on a regular basis (i.e., no less than once per semester) and in an informative way. In these evaluations, advisors should inform students about their performance in relation to the expectations of normal progress and to the norms associated with successful degree completion and placement after graduation.

*5. Advising of Graduating Students:* Students may obtain assistance in finding future employment, meeting the requirements for licensure, and/or pursuing further graduate study through the Associate for Student Services. This assistance includes: helping students prepare successful applications, including résumé-writing, building a dossier, and interviewing; providing access to information about employment and/or study opportunities; helping students obtain letters of recommendation from faculty; and encouraging student participation in, or awareness of, networking possibilities.

*6. Advising of Thesis Students:* The thesis advisor should take reasonable measures to ensure that each graduate student initiates thesis research; schedule regular meetings with his or her advisee to discuss their research and return comments on written work in a timely manner; clarify co-authorship publication practices; and should assume primary responsibility for ensuring that the student receives academic advising.

Degree Candidates in the Academic Track are required to write a Masters level thesis in an area of Islamic studies. The indicated basic points and procedures are to be followed in the preparation and presentation of the thesis.

### **Basic Points About the Thesis**

1. The thesis is a substantial research paper up to 50 pages in length that may be a new research project for the student or a major reworking of an earlier paper by the student.
2. The thesis is to demonstrate the student's ability to locate information, conduct research, analyze sources and synthesize arguments effectively and clearly in proper English.
3. The final version of an accepted thesis is to be deposited in a written format and in an electronic format with the Librarian of the RGS.
4. The written final version is to be put in a black binder. The thesis' pages are to have one-inch margins. As agreed upon by the student, the thesis advisor and Dean for Academics, the thesis may use either endnotes or footnotes. Bibliographical references are to follow the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

### **Course Work Involving the Thesis**

Prior to the start of the Fall Semester students intending to write their theses are to:

- a. Consult with the Dean for Academics and their academic advisors concerning the topic of the proposed theses and possible theses advisors and readers.
- b. Gain the consent of one or more faculty members to serve as their theses advisors and readers.
- c. Register for the course MAIS 803, Theory and Method of Thesis Writing I.

The RGS curriculum provides two courses that engage students in the formulation of theses.

1. Students normally take “Theory and Method of Thesis Writing I. The course to be offered in the Fall prior to writing their theses. The course is to assist students in developing methodological skills in research and academic writing. The course culminates in the student’s developing a proposal for the thesis. When possible, the students engaged in preparation for thesis writing meet with a faculty member in a seminar-style setting to work on the formulation of a draft thesis proposal that states the rationale for and basic argument or issues to be covered, the intended structure of the thesis, and ventured draft that will be discussed in an atmosphere of peer learning and sharing. By the end of the semester each student is expected to have a comprehensive thesis proposal that will be submitted to the Dean of Academics, thesis advisor, reader and course instructor. This course is taken on a Pass/No Pass basis. The thesis proposal is to be approved by the thesis advisor and the Dean for Academics. At a minimum, the proposal is to:

- i. Include a statement of the issue or argument that will be addressed in the thesis;
- ii. The importance of the thesis in the field of Islamic Studies;
- iii. The methodology that the student intends to employ;
- iv. A survey of relevant literature on the topic;
- v. A draft outline of and rationale for the thesis’ structure; and
- vi. A preliminary bibliography

2. Students intending to write theses and whose proposals have been approved, are to take the three credit normally letter-graded course, MAIS 804 Theory and Method of Thesis Writing II. During this course, students develop and write their theses. The written thesis and its oral defense are combined to form the course grade. The student is to meet at least every three weeks with her or his thesis advisor to go over the progress being made and that which needs yet to be covered in the thesis.

3. When the student, thesis advisor, and reader consider that the thesis is ready for presentation and defense, the thesis advisor is to notify the Dean for Academics. The Dean will schedule a date, time and place for the defense. The defense is open to all persons affiliated with the RGS, the student may invite others to be present. The defense itself is to center on the thesis and is to be an opportunity for students to gain as well as to share insights on their topic specifically, and Islamic studies generally.

4. If the thesis is approved conditionally so that changes and corrections are to be made, the thesis advisor is responsible for ensuring that the student makes such changes before certifying that the theses is officially approved.

5. A thesis that is accepted without conditions may be deposited directly with the RGS Librarian. Students enrolled in Theory and Method of Thesis course are expected to complete their theses by the end of the semester. In the event that an individual’s theses is not completed and/or approved, the student will receive a grade of Incomplete and is expected to complete the thesis and gain approval according to the conditions stipulated for Incompletes.

### **Career Advising and Counseling**

RGS places a special value on career counseling for its students Therefore, RGS aims to develop and continually improve an efficient and target-oriented career service plan. The Dean of Student Affairs and the Vice President will lead in career counseling efforts that will involve developing community contacts and institutions, as well as providing the resources listed below:

- a) *Doctoral Workshops*: These are designed mainly for students on the academic tracks. These workshops will be facilitated through seminars given by invited speakers and visits to doctorate-granting institutions. The goal of these workshops will be to provide guidance for acceptance and to create awareness about the nature of academic life.
- b) *On-Campus Experience*: RGS realizes that actual work experience plays an important role in a career search as well. Therefore, RGS will work with students to identify work opportunities on the RGS campus that will help them cultivate experiences relevant to their career goals.
- c) *Alumni Experience*: One of the best resources RGS has for placing its graduates in academic and professional positions is the RGS alumni body. Recognizing this, the RGS will create a close and active network between alumni and current enrollees through all current means of communication and through annual gatherings to prepare current enrollees for their future careers.
- d) *Personal Networks*: In today's complex society, personal networks are essential in career planning and placement. Aware of this fact, RGS will utilize all possible means to involve the Board of Trustees, faculty members, staff members, administrative personnel, parents, and the employers of alumni in the career searches of RGS students. In this respect, the diversity of the RGS Board members will serve the interests of RGS graduates well.

### **Psychological and Psychiatric Counseling Services**

Students can arrange for initial consultations and follow-up sessions with an on-call professional counselor, as needed. The RGS counselor is Dr. Hatice Yilmaz. She is board certified for child, adolescent, and adult psychiatry. She offers a variety of psychiatric services including comprehensive clinical assessment, diagnosis, psychotherapy, and medication management. Her office can be reached at (865) 861-6370.

### **Physical Health Counseling and Services**

The Dean of Student Affairs will also help students with health insurance needs to obtain suitable health coverage. One provider for student health insurance is IMG Global Insurance, with the URL address: <<http://www.imglobal.com/img-insurance/international-student-insurance/student-health-advantage.aspx>>.

For emergency care, injuries and illnesses, RGS students will be immediately directed or taken to the Airport Road Emergi Center (AREC) to receive urgent medical attention. AREC is nearby, 1.7 miles from the RGS campus, and is open year-round, seven days a week. The Center serves both as an urgent care center and a treatment facility for all types of non-life-threatening illnesses and injuries. Its Internet address is <<http://www.cedarcrestemergicenter.com>>. Lehigh Valley Hospital and St. Luke Hospital have campuses within one and three miles, respectively, of the RGS campus. RGS retains a prominent medical doctor, Dr. Gazi Abdulhay, as a medical counselor in regard to its health policies and services. His office can be reached at (610) 876 9640.

## **XII. Support for Students with Disabilities**

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A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, even with the use of mitigating measures such as glasses, medication, prostheses, or hearing aids. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, functions such as breathing, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, exercising cognitive abilities, sitting, standing, lifting, reaching, and working. RGS will

provide reasonable accommodations, upon request, to students whose conditions meet the legal definition of a disability under the ADA and who are considered otherwise qualified and can provide appropriate documentation of their disability. Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Student Affairs for further assistance and information.

RGS adheres to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 in ensuring the accessibility of its programs and services. The Dean of Student Affairs is responsible for assisting in providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities enrolled in RGS courses, and serves as a resource for other RGS departments serving individuals with disabilities, as needed

The first floor and lavatory facilities of the RGS building are completely accessible to students with special needs, and RGS is committed to keeping the building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The RGS campus has ramps, large restrooms and automatic main entrance doors with sensors, and classrooms that can accommodate wheel chairs. The Dean of Student Affairs is the ADA Coordinator of RGS and is responsible for providing all necessary accommodations for students with special needs, in accordance with ADA guidelines.

Accessible classroom setups, alternate testing, physical plant (campus) alterations, and other accommodations for students with documented disabilities are available on a case-by-case basis. It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to self-identify and request accommodation through the Dean of Student Affairs.

Students with sensory, medical or physical disabilities are to provide a letter from a diagnosing and/or treating physician to verify the existence of a disability. The letter is to include the credentials of the evaluator, and it must be dated and legibly signed. The letter is to include information on:

- The diagnosis and the methodology used to diagnose the condition
- How long the individual has had the condition
- How long the condition is expected to last
- Treatments used to manage the condition
- The condition un-medicated versus medicated (if applicable)
- Accommodations and/or interventions that would facilitate access to the RGS experience with a rationale for each request

The student is responsible to request an accommodation well in advance of the need, in order to give RGS a reasonable amount of time to evaluate the documentation and implement the request. Accommodations must be requested for each semester for which they are needed. Classroom accommodations require written notification to the faculty member teaching a course for which the student is registered. The notification is to be placed in a confidential portion of the student's file. The notification is to state the nature of the disability and the accommodation requested. The student, faculty member and Registrar are to sign that they have received the notification, and that the student and faculty member have agreed to the conditions of the accommodation. A copy of the agreed upon accommodation is retained by the faculty member and is not to be shared with others unless required, e.g., for in a grievance procedure, and the student is to retain a copy. The copy retained by the Registrar is part of the confidential portion of the student's folder and is subject to the protections of such materials indicated below.

In the event that the student feels that the accommodation has not been met, the student is to speak first to the instructor to resolve any issues. If that fails to resolve the issue, the student is to speak with the Dean of Student Affairs who is to confer with the faculty member. Failing that route, the student may file a grievance and initiate the grievance procedures. The Grievance procedure is presented at **Student Rights Related to Violations and Grievances** in this Handbook.

### **Service/Assistance Animals**

Some individuals with disabilities utilize the services of trained animals to directly assist them in daily life. Service animals, often referred to as *assistance animals*, are permitted to accompany a person with a disability on campus.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), a service animal is defined as "any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals to an impending seizure or protecting individuals during one, alerting individuals who are hearing impaired to intruders, or pulling a wheelchair and fetching dropped items." The following rules apply to service animals and their owners:

- Dogs must be licensed in accordance with city regulations and wear a valid vaccination tag
- Any other types of animals that are trained for service to a person with a disability must have vaccinations appropriate for that type of animal
- Animals must be in good health
- Animals must be on a leash at all times
- The owner of the service animal must be in full control of the animal at all times
- The owner is responsible for appropriate waste cleanup and the overall cleanliness of the animal

The service animal's owner is responsible for the appropriate management of his or her animal in all RGS facilities.

### **XIII. Student Use of Computing Resources**

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Logging in to or otherwise connecting to the campus network implies acceptance of RGS's Acceptable Use Policy, which is part of RGS' Computing Resources Policy.

RGS' computing equipment and network resources are dedicated to enhancing and supporting RGS' educational mission. These resources include all computers, workstations and multi-user computer systems, local area networks and connections to other computer networks via the Internet. All students, faculty and staff are responsible for using RGS's computing resources in a safe, effective, ethical, and lawful manner.

RGS' computer equipment and peripherals are available for occasional use for important personal tasks, provided such use does not interfere with the job responsibilities of the individual or others. Students' personally-owned computers, storage devices, and other peripherals are not included in the above statement. However, it does include any data transmitted over institutional assets or connections made through institutional assets. RGS has the right to inspect information stored on its system at any time, for any reason, and users cannot and should not have any expectation of privacy with regard to any data, documents, electronic mail messages, or other

computer files created or stored on computers within, or connected to, RGS' network. All Internet data composed, transmitted, or received through RGS' computer system is considered part of RGS' records, and as such, are subject at any time to disclosure to institutional officials, law enforcement, or third parties.

RGS reserves the right to monitor user activities on all institutional computer systems and to monitor communications utilizing the RGS network, in order to ensure compliance with institutional policy and with local, state, and federal law. Monitoring shall be performed only by individuals specifically authorized by the RGS Business Manager and will involve only the minimum data necessary to meet institutional requirements. Data collected through monitoring shall be made accessible only to individuals authorized by the Vice President. These individuals are responsible for maintaining confidentiality.

The intent of this Acceptable Use Policy is to give an overview of acceptable and unacceptable uses of RGS' computing resources without exhaustively enumerating all such uses and misuses. This statement is intended as an addition to existing policies concerning academic honesty and the use of facilities. The predominant concern of this policy is to safeguard RGS' computing resources and to promote honesty, respect for individuals, and respect for both physical and intellectual property. All expectations regarding academic honesty and professional ethics extend to assignments completed in electronic form. It is not permissible to use another person's computer authorization for any purpose or to provide one's own authorization to another person. It is not permissible to access someone else's work without explicit permission. It is not permissible to engage in any activity that would harass others or impede their work. All members of the campus community are required to adhere to all copyright laws. As part of the Internet community, students connecting their computers to RGS' network are required to take reasonable precautions against viruses, spyware, and adware.

While RGS makes every effort to maintain the security of its systems, it should be noted that there is no guarantee of the privacy of electronically stored information or electronic mail. Standards of ethics and behavior while computing should follow the standards of ethics and behavior outlined in the other institutional handbooks and policy documents. Disciplinary procedures for violations may result in the curtailment of network privileges and otherwise will follow standard institutional procedures. The items below constitute examples of acceptable and unacceptable use.

#### **Acceptable Use**

- Use consistent with the mission of RGS
- Use for purposes of, or in support of, education and research
- Use related to administrative and other support activities considered consistent with the mission of RGS
- Personal communications, as long as these do not interfere with the mission of RGS or overload system or network resources

#### **Unacceptable Use**

- Use of institutional computers or networks that violates local, state, or federal laws or statutes
- Providing, assisting with, or gaining unauthorized or inappropriate access to RGS's computing resources
- Use of institutional computers or networks for unauthorized or inappropriate access to systems, software or data at other sites

- Installing on the network unauthorized network devices and network services, such as wireless access points, Internet address resolution servers, hubs, routers, and switches
- Use of institutional systems or networks to copy, store, display, or distribute copyrighted material in any medium, or to prepare derivative works of such material, without the express permission of the copyright owner, except as otherwise allowed under copyright law
- Installation of software on institution-owned computers that is not in the public domain, or for which legal licensing has not been acquired by the individual user, or by RGS
- Activities that interfere with the ability of others to use institutional computing resources or other network-connected services effectively
- Activities that result in the loss of another person's work or unauthorized access to another person's work
- Connecting one's personal computer to the RGS network without active and current anti-virus, anti-spyware and adware protection
- Distribution of obscene, abusive, or threatening messages via electronic media such as e-mail or instant messaging
- Distribution of chain letters or broadcasting to lists of individuals in a manner that might cause congestion of the network
- Use of institutional computers or networks for commercial use or a profit-making enterprise, except as specifically agreed to by RGS

#### **Institutional Internet Peer-to-Peer File-Sharing Policy**

In recent years, Internet peer-to-peer file-sharing programs have made it easy to download and share music, movies and software files. RGS will, by policy and procedure:

- Ensure for all users adequate and equitable access to the Internet for academic purposes and personal communications
- Respect the community's rights to privacy and confidentiality, freedom of speech and academic freedom while using the network
- Educate the network-user community on the technical, legal and ethical aspects of copyright and intellectual property
- Uphold copyright law as spelled out in the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act and elsewhere

RGS' Policy for Acceptable Use of Computing Resources prohibits the "use of institutional systems or networks to copy, store, display, or distribute copyrighted material in any medium, or to prepare derivative works of such material, without the express permission of the copyright owner, except as otherwise allowed under copyright law."

RGS' acceptable use policy also prohibits "activities that interfere with the ability of others to use institutional computing resources or other network-connected services effectively." This applies to peer-to-peer file-sharing programs, irrespective of copyright violations, as these programs consume huge amounts of network resources.

#### **XIV. Student Rights**

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##### **The Role Of Students In The RGS Community Involves Rights And Responsibilities.**

The responsibility to secure and to respect general conditions conducive to the freedom to learn is shared by all members of the community.

The admission policies of RGS are designed to provide for a diverse student body consistent with the RGS' mission, goals and commitments. For the sake of clarity and emphasis, the RGS statement on Non-Discrimination bears repeating here:

The Institution's policies, programs and procedures are administered without discrimination against any person based on actual or perceived race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, genetic information, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, use of guide or support animals and/or mechanical aids, or any other basis protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws.

By enrolling in RGS, the student signifies agreement to abide by RGS' established policies, regulations, and procedures. Students also agree to abide by and to support the orderly processes established by RGS for the resolution of disputes and the violation of policies, regulations and procedures.

### **Protection of Freedom of Expression Within the Classroom Context**

In the classroom, advising, discussions and programs, RGS faculty and administrators are to encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance is to be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. RGS students are free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.

### **Freedom of Inquiry and Expression Beyond the Classroom Context**

Students, faculty and staff are free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them and to express opinions publicly and privately. They are always free to support causes by orderly means, i.e., those that do not disrupt the regular and essential operations of the institution. At the same time, it is required that, when making public statements or engaging in public demonstrations or expression, they dissociate their statements and activities from the institution, unless otherwise authorized by the institution.

### **Protection Against Improper Academic Evaluation**

Students are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance and integrity and complying with appropriate behavioral requirements, and they are provided with processes designed to protect them from improperly prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. Such processes include consultation with the instructor, the Dean of Academics or the appropriate administrator. *\*If an appeal involves an evaluation(s) by the Dean of Academics, the Vice President shall step into the roles noted below for the Dean of Academics.* In the event that a student believes that an instructor has improperly evaluated a test, paper and/or course grade, the following steps constitute the process to be undertaken:

1. The student is to confer with the faculty member who gave the evaluation. That discussion is to be a face-to-face opportunity unless circumstances warrant a mutually agreed upon exception;
  - (a) If the discussion results in the student's accepting the faculty member's evaluation(s), the evaluation(s) will be sustained;
  - (b) In the event that the faculty member agrees that the evaluation was not proper and merits a change, then s/he makes the appropriate changes. If the issue involves a change of an already submitted course grade and the faculty member agrees to an adjustment in the course grade, the faculty member is to inform the Dean of Academics and to state the

reasons for requesting such a change. The Dean of Academics will inform the Registrar of such a change;

(c) If the faculty member decides that the original evaluation(s) is to stand, and the student contests that decision, the student is to submit a written appeal to the Dean of Academics;

2. The student's appeal is to include the course syllabus, a clear statement of the assignment(s), reasons for appealing the instructor's decisions, and presentation of any paper(s), and tests that are relevant to the appeal. In order for reviewers of the appeal to come to appropriate conclusions, the paper(s) are to be both unannotated copies by the instructor's comments and annotated by the instructor;

3. Following the submission of the materials indicated above, the Dean of Academics will appoint a Review Committee that will consist of two RGS faculty members (full time or adjunct), and a non-RGS faculty/staff member who is conversant with the appropriate academic field and research techniques. The members of the Review Committee will review the submitted materials;

4. Upon completion of its examination of the materials, the Review Committee will interview both the student and the faculty member to discuss the evaluation(s) and the **materials as these** relate to the evaluation(s);

5. Within 14 days after the interview(s) the Review Committee will inform the student, the faculty member and the Dean of Academics in writing of its decision to either sustain the evaluation(s) or grant the appeal; and

6. If the student contests the Review Committee's decision, s/he may petition the President for a decision. The student is to furnish the President with the same materials given to the Review Committee and reasons for rejecting the decision of the Review Committee. The President's decision will be final.

### **Protection against Improper Disclosure**

Information about student views, beliefs and associations that RGS staff have acquired in the course of their work with students is protected against improper disclosure by the policies, regulations and procedures of the institution, as well as the professional standards of conduct of the staff.

## **XV. Student Rights Related to Educational Records**

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This section covers general regulations related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 and its amendments. Information on other policies and regulations of the institution can be found in other sections of this handbook. The Respect Graduate School has a retention schedule, which is based on the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers' (AACRAO) Retention of Records: Guide for Retention and Disposal of Student Records (2000 Edition). Respect Graduate School retains written documents submitted to its archives.

### **Student Records**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 and its amendments are federal laws that afford students certain rights with respect to their educational records. RGS will

maintain the confidentiality of student educational records in accordance with provisions of the Act and will accord all rights under the Act to current and former students of RGS who are declared independent.

Educational records are those directly related to students and maintained by RGS. They do not include the following:

- Records of instructional, supervisory and administrative personnel and ancillary educational personnel that are in the sole possession of the creator and are not accessible or revealed to any other individual except a substitute who may temporarily perform the duties of the creator
- Records relating to those employed by RGS that are made and maintained in the normal course of business, relate exclusively to personnel in their capacity as employees, and are not used for another purpose. *Note:* Records of persons employed solely as a consequence of RGS attendance, e.g., tutors and work-study students, are educational records
- Records, including student health records, created and maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other recognized medical or counseling professional or paraprofessional, to be used solely in connection with the provision of treatment to the student and not to be disclosed to anyone other than for treatment purposes, allowing that such records may be disclosed to physicians or professionals of the student's choice (*Note:* Treatment in this context does not include remedial education activities or other activities that are part of the program of instruction at RGS)
- Records of the institution that contain only information relating to persons after they are no longer students at the institution, e.g., the accomplishments of alumni
- Records of the institution relating to violations of state, federal or institutional regulations pertaining to alcohol or drugs

### **Rights of Inspection**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act provides students with the right to inspect and review information contained in their educational records; to challenge the content of those records that students consider to be inaccurate, misleading or in violation of their privacy or other rights; to attend a hearing if the outcome of the challenge is unsatisfactory; and to submit explanatory statements for inclusion in their files if they deem the decisions of the hearing panel unacceptable. The registrar has been assigned to coordinate the inspection and review procedures for student educational records, which include admissions, personal, academic and financial files, and academic, cooperative education and placement records.

### **Request for Review**

Students wishing to review their educational records must make a written request to the RGS Registrar, listing the item(s) to be reviewed. Only those records covered by the Act will be available for review. The items requested shall be made available no later than thirty calendar days following receipt of the written request. A copy of the academic record may be refused if a hold has been placed for non-payment of financial obligations. Copies may be made at the student's expense. Students have the right to receive a copy of the educational record when failure to provide a copy would prevent the student from inspecting and reviewing the record, e.g., when distance prevents the student from having ready access to campus.

### **Limitations on Student Rights**

There are some limitations to the rights of students to inspect records, in the following instances:

- Confidential letters and recommendations that are placed in the records to which the student has waived the right of inspection and review and that are related to the student's admission, application for employment or job placement, or receipt of honors
- Educational records containing information about more than one student; however, in such cases, the institution will permit access to any part of the record that pertains only to the requesting student.

### **Waiver of Student Rights**

Students may waive any or all of their rights under FERPA. RGS does not require waivers, and no institutional service shall be denied students who do not to supply waivers. All waivers must be in writing and signed by the student. Students may waive their right to inspect and review either individual documents (e.g., a letter of recommendation) or classes of documents (e.g., an admissions file). The items or documents to which students have waived the right of access shall be used only for the purpose(s) for which they were collected. If used for other purposes, the waivers shall be void and the student may inspect the documents. The student may revoke the waiver in writing, but revocation does not establish the right to inspect and review documents collected while the waiver was in force.

### **Consent Provisions**

No person outside of RGS shall have access to, nor shall RGS disclose, any personally identifiable information from any student's educational records without the written consent of the student. Consent must specify the records to be released, the purpose of the disclosure, and the party or class of parties to whom disclosure may be made. Consent must be signed and dated by the student.

### **Exceptions to the Consent Policy**

RGS reserves the right, as allowed under FERPA, to disclose educational records or components thereof, without written consent, to:

- Personnel within RGS who demonstrate a need to know and who act in the student's educational interest, including faculty, administration, clerical and professional employees, and other persons who manage student records;
- Officials of other institutions in which the student seeks to enroll, on the condition that RGS makes a reasonable attempt to inform the student of the disclosure. In most instances, if the student initiated the request to transfer, a permission to transfer educational records is implicit in the request;
- Officials of other schools in which the student is currently enrolled;
- Persons or organizations providing student financial aid, in order to determine the amount, eligibility or conditions of an award and to enforce the terms of an award;
- Accrediting organizations carrying out their functions;
- Authorized representatives of the Comptroller General of the United States, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, and state educational authorities, for information necessary for audit and evaluation of federal- or state-sponsored programs;
- State and federal officials to whom disclosure is required by state statute adopted prior to November 19, 1974;
- Organizations conducting studies to develop, validate and administer predictive tests, to administer student aid programs, or to improve instruction, so long as there is no further

external disclosure of personally identifiable information and provided the information is destroyed when it is no longer needed for the project;

- Persons in compliance with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena, if reasonable effort is made to notify the student; and
- Appropriate personnel in a health or safety emergency, so long as there is a serious threat to the student or others, the knowledge of the information is necessary to meet the emergency, time is of the essence, and the persons to whom the information is disclosed are in a position to deal with the emergency

### **Institutional Records of Disclosure**

RGS will keep a written record of all such exceptional disclosures, and the student has the right to inspect such records, which will include the names of the parties or agencies to whom disclosure was made, the legitimate reason for the disclosure, and the date of the disclosure. No record of disclosure shall be required for requests made by students for their own use, for disclosures made with a student's written consent, for those made to RGS officials, or for those specified as directory information.

### **Disclosure of Educational Record Information**

RGS will obtain written consent from students before disclosing any personally identifiable information from their educational record (with exceptions as noted under Exceptions to Consent Policy). Such written consent for disclosure must specify the records to be released, state the purpose of the disclosure, identify the party or class of parties to whom disclosure may be made, and be signed and dated by the student. All such consents shall be maintained in the student's educational record.

### **Challenges to the Content of Educational Records**

Students who believe their educational records contain information that is inaccurate or misleading, or that otherwise violates their privacy or other rights, may discuss their concerns informally with the Dean of Student Affairs. If the dean agrees with the student's request, the appropriate records shall be amended and the student shall be notified in writing of the amendment(s). If the dean disagrees, the dean must notify the student within fifteen calendar days that the records will not be amended and that the student has the right to a hearing on the matter.

A request for a formal hearing must be made in writing within thirty calendar days from the mailing of the notice from the dean. Within thirty days of receipt of the written request, the dean shall inform the student of the date, time, and place of the hearing. The student shall be afforded a full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issue(s) raised. The student may be assisted or represented at the hearing by one or more persons, including an attorney (at the student's expense). The hearing may be conducted by any party, including an official of RGS, so long as the person does not have a direct interest in its outcome. The panel that adjudicates such challenges is made up of the Dean of Academics, the Vice President, and a faculty member not involved in the challenge. The hearing panel shall base its decision solely on the evidence presented at the hearing. Its decision shall be final and in writing, summarizing the evidence and stating the reasons for the decision. The written report shall be mailed to the student and any other concerned party within fifteen calendar days of the hearing.

If the panel determines that the information at issue is inaccurate or misleading, or violates privacy or other rights, the student's record shall be amended in accordance with the decision and

the student so informed in writing. If the decision is unsatisfactory to the student, a statement or statements commenting on the information in the record or setting forth any reason for disagreeing with the decision may be placed by the student in the educational record. The statement(s) shall be maintained as part of the record and released whenever the record in question is disclosed to an authorized party.

*Note:* Rights of challenge cannot be used to question substantive educational judgments that are correctly recorded (e.g., course grades with which the student disagrees).

Students who believe that the adjudication of their challenge was unfair, or not in keeping with the provisions of FERPA, may request, in writing, assistance from the President of RGS to aid them in filing a complaint with the Family Policy and Regulations Office, U.S. Department of Education, Room 1087, 400 Maryland Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202.

### **Complaints of Institutional Non-Compliance**

Students may file complaints in writing concerning an alleged failure of the institution to comply with FERPA with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.

### **Destruction of Records**

Once a student has requested access to educational records, these records shall not be destroyed until inspection and review have been conducted. The following items shall not be destroyed or removed from the record: (1) explanatory statements placed in the record by the student (see the section on Challenges to the Content of Educational Records, above); and (2) records of disclosure and requests for disclosure. RGS reserves the right to destroy information contained in student records and files when the information on file is no longer valid or useful (e.g., letters of recommendation, once they have been used for their original purpose).

## **XVI. Student Rights Related to Violations and Grievances**

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### **Grievance Process**

The grievance process for any student complaint involving a matter (e.g., inappropriate language, preferential treatment, misuse of funds) not covered by existing institutional policy is as follows:

- 1) The complainant communicates his or her grievance to the Dean of Student Affairs (or to the Vice President, if the complaint is about the Dean of Student Affairs).
- 2) The dean begins the process of mediation or, at his or her discretion, defers the process of mediation. In the latter case, the grievance may be referred directly to the Grievance Panel.

The process of mediation may take any of the following courses:

- The individuals involved meet and determine a resolution.
- The individuals meet, together with a mediator assigned by the Dean. With the assistance of the mediator, they may determine a resolution. If a resolution is not achieved, the grievance may be resubmitted to the Dean, with a mediation report from the mediator and a written response from the target of the grievance. From this point on, the grievance is referred to the Grievance Panel.
- The individuals refuse mediation and submit a written mediation refusal to the Dean. The Dean reviews the mediation refusal and either refers the grievance directly to the Grievance Panel, or refers the grievance back to a mediator assigned by the Dean.

- When the grievance is referred to the Grievance Panel (composed of one administrator, one faculty member and one student selected by the Student Government Association president), the panel conducts a hearing. It may conduct an investigation and interview the persons concerned. The Grievance Panel then renders a judgment, which may take the form of dismissal of the complaint or the imposition of disciplinary measures. In the case of disciplinary action, the person on whom it is imposed may appeal to the appropriate dean.

### **Harassment and Inappropriate Conduct**

RGS is committed to providing a campus community in which all members are treated with respect and dignity and which is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive. Sexual harassment within the community is unlawful, as is harassment based upon race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, or membership in any other protected group. It is also unlawful to retaliate against a member of the campus community for filing a complaint or for cooperating in an investigation of harassment.

This policy applies to all members of the community, which for the purposes of this policy includes, but is not limited to, employees, students, independent contractors, consultants, leased employees, visitors and others working on institutional premises or with institutional employees or students. The scope of this policy includes, but is not limited to, all settings in which members of the campus community may find themselves in connection with their employment, education or other institutionally related activities, such as off-site meetings, conferences, social events, etc., including time spent traveling and socializing on the way to and from, and while at, such events. It also extends to other interactions between or among members of the campus community, to the extent that a community member's right to a campus community free from harassment or other inappropriate conduct is involved.

The institution will not tolerate harassment of, or retaliation against, its employees, students, or any other member of the campus community by anyone, including other members of the community. Furthermore, the institution will also attempt to protect its community members from harassment by others who may be encountered within the community, such as vendors, customers, and service employees.

The Vice President is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy in the case of administrators and support staff. In the case of faculty, the Dean of Academics will provide oversight.

### **Definition of Harassment and Inappropriate Conduct**

Harassment consists of unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, or visual, including stalking or cyber-stalking, based on a person's protected status, such as race, color, sex, national origin, religion, disability, age, or on any other basis prohibited by local, state, or federal law; and which has the effect of interfering unreasonably with another's work or academic performance, or creating an intimidating, offensive or hostile environment.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, slurs; negative stereotyping; ethnic jokes; offensive written or graphic material; display of offensive objects; or threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts that denigrate or show hostility or aversion toward an individual because of membership in a protected group, or toward a group with protected status.

### **Definition of Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is prohibited. This includes unwelcome or unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical or visual conduct of a sexual nature when: submission to such conduct is made, explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of a community member's employment, education or other participation in the community; submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting employment, education or other participation in the community; or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interference with work or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or academic environment.

It is not possible to list all of the circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment. However, the following are examples of conduct that, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment, depending upon the totality of the circumstances, including the severity of the conduct and its frequency or pervasiveness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances or propositions (whether or not they involve unwelcome physical touching);
- The explicit or implicit conditioning of any terms of employment or education (e.g., continued employment, wages, evaluation, advancement, assigned duties, on-call assignments, grades) on provision of sexual favors[
- Inquiries into another's sexual experience, discussions of one's sexual activities, comments on an individual's body or about the individual's sexual activity, deficiencies or prowess;
- Stalking, cyber-stalking or general intimidation of a sexual nature;
- Sexual innuendo, sexually suggestive comments, or the use of sexually explicit or vulgar language;
- Sexually oriented teasing or practical jokes; "humor" about gender-specific traits;
- Suggestive body language or gestures;
- Displays or transmission of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, posters, cartoons or other printed or visual material;
- Leering, whistling or physical contact, such as unwelcome touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another's body;
- Continued requests to socialize, on or off duty, on or off campus, when a community member has indicated rejection or lack of interest;
- Continued writing of sexually suggestive notes or letters when it is known or should be known that the addressee does not welcome them; and
- Derogatory or provocative remarks relating to an employee's sex or sexual orientation.

### **Retaliation**

No community member shall be subject to retaliation for making a complaint of harassment or inappropriate conduct, cooperating in the investigation of such a complaint, or otherwise opposing unlawful harassment or other inappropriate conduct.

### **Complaints of Harassment or Retaliation**

Because RGS takes allegations of harassment or retaliation seriously, it will respond promptly to complaints of such behavior. RGS strongly encourages any members of the community who believe they have been the target of harassment or inappropriate conduct to report the incident promptly, in writing. In addition, every member of the community is strongly encouraged to report, in writing, any such conduct observed, no matter whom the target is. A timely written report will enable the institution to respond rapidly in investigating the allegations and, where it

is determined that harassment or inappropriate conduct has occurred, take the necessary steps to eliminate the objectionable conduct or conditions and impose corrective action, where appropriate.

Should any community members believe that they are being harassed or subjected to inappropriate behavior, they may notify the offender directly and immediately that the behavior is unwelcome and offensive and must stop. However, if for any reason a community member does not wish to discuss the matter directly with the offender, or if the discussion does not successfully end the behavior, it is the community member's duty to report the conduct immediately. RGS is committed, and may be required by law, to take action if it learns of potential harassment or inappropriate conduct, even if the aggrieved party does not wish to file a formal complaint.

Depending on the identities of the complainant and the alleged perpetrator of prohibited conduct, the report should be made to the appropriate individual or office. If for any reason complainants are not comfortable reporting the conduct to the designated individuals, they may contact the Vice President or the President. Either the President or the Vice President will seek to engage a person within or beyond RGS who will listen to the complainant. That person will inform the President or Vice President of the substance and issues of the situation. Either officer will then refer the complaint to be acted on in the process indicated above.

### **Investigation**

A complaint of harassment will be investigated promptly and fairly. To the extent practicable, care will be taken to protect the identity of all parties to the complaint, consistent with a thorough and appropriate investigation.

An institutional investigation will include private interviews with the person reporting the incident, any witnesses, and the person alleged to have engaged in the harassment or inappropriate conduct. It is vital for all parties involved in the investigation to refrain from discussing any and all aspects of it, on or off campus. If the investigation determines that harassment or inappropriate conduct has occurred, the institution will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct and impose corrective action, where appropriate. After the decision, the person who filed the complaint and the person alleged to have committed the offense will be informed of the results of the investigation and any corrective action to be taken. However, the complainant may not be informed of the specifics of any disciplinary action imposed upon the perpetrator, to the extent that revealing this information might constitute an invasion of privacy.

False statements made by any party in connection with a complaint of harassment or inappropriate conduct or during an investigation will constitute an occasion for appropriate corrective action, up to and including termination of the person's relationship with the institution.

### **Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Inappropriate Behavior**

Students should report incidents of harassment and inappropriate behavior. Reports will be handled according to the procedures laid out in the table on the next page.

This is a general statement of policy and no more. While this policy sets forth institutional goals of promoting a community free of harassment and other inappropriate conduct, it is not intended to limit the institution's authority to discipline or take remedial action for conduct it deems unacceptable. It does not constitute a term or provision of any contract of employment or implied contract of employment between RGS and its employees, nor does it create contractual

obligations on behalf of the institution to any person. Likewise, it does not constitute a guarantee of continued student status to any person or otherwise create any obligation on the part of the institution.

### **Corrective Action**

*Employees:* If it is determined that harassment or inappropriate conduct has occurred, corrective action may range from a verbal warning and counseling to termination of employment, and may include such other forms of corrective action as the institution deems appropriate.

*Students:* If it is determined that harassment or inappropriate conduct has occurred, corrective action may range from a written warning to expulsion, and may include such other forms of corrective action as the institution deems appropriate. Generally, but not always, the "go-to person" is the Dean of Student Affairs or the Vice President.

*Faculty:* The procedures and corrective actions for faculty members are indicated in the Faculty Handbook.

*Administrators:* The procedures and corrective actions for faculty members are indicated in the Administrators' Handbook

### **Disciplinary Proceedings: General Information**

Students are expected to abide by the tenets of the Community Standards. Violations of the Community standards are not limited to those that have been outlined in the Community Standards section of this Handbook. Students should interpret the scope of community standards in the broadest sense.

### **Jurisdiction of the Institution**

Disciplinary action may be taken if off-campus behavior adversely affects the institution in the pursuit of its mission or violates existing local, state, or federal laws or ordinances.

If the activities of students result in violations of law, students are responsible for their actions and for any consequences imposed by authorities outside the institution. When student behavior is in violation of law and of the Community Standards, the institution reserves the right to take disciplinary action independent of, and in addition to, any action by civil or governmental agencies. The institution may elect to delay on-campus disciplinary action pending resolution of criminal charges.

### **Judicial Authority**

Responsibility for administration of the disciplinary process rests with Dean of Student Affairs. Upon a complaint or allegation of student misconduct, a judicial body may be appointed by the Dean of Student Affairs or an authorized designee to investigate the charge and recommend sanctions if a violation has occurred.

The term "judicial body" shall be used to identify any person or persons authorized by the Dean of Student Affairs to determine whether a student has violated the Community Standards and to determine sanctions. In most cases, the judicial body used to hear a case shall be a Discipline Review Committee appointed by the Dean of Student Affairs consisting of a faculty member, an administrator and a student appointed by the president of the Student Government Association.

In cases where a violation is admitted, and there are no complicating or mitigating factors, a decision shall be issued by the Dean of Student Affairs or an authorized designee. Cases involving denial of responsibility or conflicting evidence will be heard by a Discipline Review

Committee. In some cases, the individual accused may elect to have a hearing before a Discipline Review Committee, or an administrative hearing.

In all cases, the purpose of the judicial body is to determine whether a violation has occurred, and, if so, to assign responsibility and determine the nature of the sanction.

At the time a complaint is received, or at any time thereafter, during, or at the termination of the proceedings, RGS may drop disciplinary proceedings and leave the complainant to pursue remedies through criminal or civil authorities.

### **Judicial Proceedings:**

#### ***Rights of the Accused***

If the need for a hearing arises, accused students have the right:

- To have the hearing within a reasonable period of time after a charge is filed;
- To receive notice of the time and place of the hearing and of specific charges;
- To appear in person and present information on their own behalf, to call witnesses, and to ask questions of anyone present at the hearing. In determining responsibility for the alleged violation, RGS will permit witnesses of fact, but not of character;
- To elect not to attend a hearing; in such cases, the hearing shall be conducted solely on the basis of the evidence available;
- To refuse to answer or make a statement; however, decisions will be based on the evidence available;
- To have at the hearing a member of the faculty, administration or Student Government Association who may provide support but not participate in the hearing; individuals other than those listed above, such as family members and attorneys, will not be admitted;
- To receive written documentation of the outcome of a hearing and any sanctions imposed; and
- To request an appeal of the outcome of a hearing

#### ***Rights of the Accuser***

In a case involving one student bringing charges against another, the complainant also is afforded certain rights; these consist of the right

- To be treated with respect and seriousness;
- To be reasonably free of intimidation that may occur because of a case;
- In a case of sexual assault, to be informed of the status and outcome of the case;
- To have at the hearing a member of the faculty, administration or student body, who may provide support but not participate in the hearing; individuals other than those listed above, such as family members and attorneys, will not be admitted; and
- To receive or be referred to appropriate support services

### **Charges and Hearings**

Any member of the RGS community may file charges against any student for misconduct. Charges shall be prepared in writing and forwarded to the Vice President, the Dean of Student Affairs or their designee. Any charge should be submitted as soon as possible after the event occurs.

The Dean of Student Affairs or designee shall determine the appropriate judicial body for hearing the case.

The hearing process shall include:

- Written or other appropriate notice of the hearing for the accused student;
- Notice of the charges;
- The opportunity for the person charged to defend against the charges and to present witnesses having direct testimony concerning the charges;
- The opportunity for the person charged to be accompanied by a faculty, administrative or student member of the RGS community, who may support the accused student or accuser but not participate in the hearing; and
- A recorded version of the proceedings, if deemed appropriate

### **Deliberations and Decisions**

A finding of responsibility for a violation must be supported by the majority of the members of a disciplinary panel or by the sole member of an administrative hearing. The criterion of "preponderance of the evidence" shall be used to determine responsibility when the evidence suggests that the alleged violation was more likely to have occurred than not.

Upon reaching a verdict of responsibility, a judicial body shall determine the sanction.

Students will receive written notification of any decision and the sanction to be imposed. Copies of disciplinary letters will be placed in the student's file.

RGS is required (as a result of the Higher Education Act of 2008), upon written request, to disclose to the alleged victim of a crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense, or to the alleged victim's next of kin (if the victim dies as a result of the crime or offense), the final results of any institutional disciplinary proceeding dealing with that crime or offense.

### **Sanctions**

The following pages suggest the range of official actions that may be imposed for violation of RGS regulations or expectations. One or more sanctions may be imposed in any given case. A statement concerning suggested minimum sanctions for specific violations has been prepared by RGS and is updated periodically.

It should be noted that the RGS refund policy directs that when a student has been suspended or expelled from RGS for disciplinary reasons, refunds are not available. The definitions of terms are as follows:

- *Warning*: a notice in writing that a regulation has been violated.
- *Restitution*: compensation for loss, damage or injury, in the form of appropriate service, monetary or material replacement, or both.
- *Developmental Sanctions*: work assignments, service to RGS, reflection papers, counseling sessions, etc.
- *Suspension*: separation of the student from RGS for a specified period of time during which the student will not be allowed to participate in RGS-sponsored activity and will be barred from all RGS-owned property. Notification of suspension will not be maintained on the student's transcript during the period of suspension.
- *Interim Suspension*: separation of the student from RGS during which the student will not be allowed to participate in RGS-sponsored activity and will be barred from all RGS-owned property until a review hearing is conducted or a judicial board hearing is conducted for a case.

- *Expulsion*: permanent separation of the student from RGS. Notice of expulsion shall not appear on the student's transcript. The student will not be allowed to participate in any RGS-sponsored activity and will be barred from all RGS-owned property.

### **Appeals**

The student and RGS have the right to request an appeal for a hearing decision. Students wishing to appeal must make their request in writing. Appeals must be received by the Dean of Student Affairs within five class days of receipt of the original hearing verdict. The Dean of Student Affairs shall evaluate the written appeal to determine whether grounds exist (as stated below).

Appeals of cases for which grounds have been recognized by the Dean of Student Affairs are generally heard by an Appeal Board appointed by the Dean of Student Affairs. The Appeal Board can modify a sanction or call for a re-hearing of the case. The decision of the Board in these instances is final, except in cases involving suspension or expulsion from RGS, in which case a final appeal may be made to the President of RGS.

Appeals shall be limited to a review of the record of the hearing and its supporting documents for one or more of the following purposes:

- To determine whether the original hearing was fair in its proceedings;
- To determine if a decision was made contrary to the evidence presented;
- To evaluate the appropriateness of the sanction; and
- To consider new evidence that may alter the outcome of the case; in this instance, only the new evidence may be heard by the Appeal Board

### **Procedure for Student Appeals Concerning Grades**

In the event a student believes that an instructor has improperly evaluated a test, paper and/or course grade, the following steps constitute the process to be undertaken:

1. The student is to confer with the faculty member who gave the evaluation. That discussion is to be a face-to-face opportunity unless circumstances warrant a mutually agreed upon exception;
  - (a) If the discussion results in the student's accepting the faculty member's evaluation(s), the evaluation(s) will be sustained;
  - (b) In the event the faculty member agrees that the evaluation was not proper and merits a change, then s/he makes the appropriate changes. If the issue involves a change of an already submitted course grade and the faculty member agrees to an adjustment in the course grade, the faculty member is to inform the Dean of Academics and to state the reasons for requesting such a change. The Dean of Academics will inform the Registrar of such a change;
  - (c) If the faculty member decides that the original evaluation(s) is to stand, and the student contests that decision, the student is to submit a written appeal to the Dean of Academics;
2. The student's appeal is to include the course syllabus, a clear statement of the assignment(s), reasons for appealing the instructor's decisions, and presentation of any paper(s), and tests that are relevant to the appeal. In order for reviewers of the appeal to come to appropriate conclusions, the paper(s) are to be both un-annotated copies by the instructor's comments and annotated by the instructor;
3. Following the submission of the materials indicated above, the Dean of Academics will appoint a Review Committee that will consist of two RGS faculty members (full time or adjunct), and a non-RGS faculty/staff member who is conversant with the appropriate academic

field and research techniques. The members of the Review Committee will review the submitted materials;

4. Upon completion of its examination of the materials, the Review Committee will interview both the student and the faculty member to discuss the evaluation(s) and the materials as these relate to the evaluation(s);

5. Within 14 days after the interview(s) the Review Committee will inform the student, the faculty member and the Dean of Academics in writing of its decision to either sustain the evaluation(s) or grant the appeal; and

6. If the student contests the Review Committee's decision, s/he may petition the President for a decision. The student is to furnish the President with the same materials given to the Review Committee and reasons for rejecting the decision of the Review Committee. The President's decision will be final.

\* If an appeal involves an evaluation(s) by the Dean of Academics, the Vice President shall step into the roles noted above for the Dean of Academics.

### **Procedures for Resolving Student Allegations of Discrimination**

Student complaints that discrimination has occurred will be reviewed as follows:

#### **Informal Procedures**

- Students who believe that academic discrimination has occurred should discuss the matter with their advisor; and
- Students who believe that discrimination of a non-academic nature has occurred should discuss the matter with the Dean of Student Affairs.

It may be that discussion at this level, supplemented by the gathering of appropriate information, will result in a resolution of the matter to the students' satisfaction

#### **Formal Procedures**

If the matter is not resolved within a reasonable period of time to the satisfaction of the student, formal procedures may be instituted.

- Cases of an academic nature should be submitted with documentation to the Dean of Academics for resolution by the Academic Standards Committee; and
- Cases of a non-academic nature should be submitted to the Dean of Student Affairs for resolution by one of RGS' adjudication forums,

## **XVII. Student Co-Curricular Life and Student Government**

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### **Co-Curricular Life**

Co-curricular activities enhance the RGS experience. The rewards of involvement are many: making new friends, exploring new interests, developing talents, learning by doing, establishing valuable contacts, contributing to RGS and the greater community, and combining social and academic interests in ways that are personally rewarding. Students are encouraged to develop interest groups and other associations that do not conflict with RGS' mission, vision and mandates. The Dean of Student Affairs is to be informed about, and to approve, the formal establishment of any such group.

### **Student Government Association (SGA)**

The major student organization is the Student Government Association. Its purpose is to foster leadership skills, develop positive relationships among RGS students, organize social and service

activities for members, and encourage student-faculty cooperation. All students enrolled at RGS are members of the SGA and are eligible to vote on matters presented to the student body. Officers, elected annually by the members, lead the organization to fulfill its objectives.

### **Student Participation in Institutional Government**

As constituents of the RGS community, students are free, individually and collectively, to express views on issues of RGS policy and on matters of general interest to the student body through the governance organizations established to participate in the formulation and application of RGS policies, regulations and procedures. Students are welcome to carry their views on RGS policies to their representatives on faculty committees and the Board of Trustees.

### **Student Publications**

Student publications and the student press are a valuable aid in establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of free and responsible discussion and of intellectual exploration on the campus. These bring student concerns to the attention of the faculty and other RGS authorities, as well as aiding in formulating student knowledge of and opinions on campus issues and world developments. The Board has ultimate responsibility for all activities undertaken with the financial support of RGS. The following general concepts shall guide the relationship between RGS and student publications:

- Student publications shall be free of censorship and advance approval of copy, and its editors and managers shall be free to develop editorial policies subject to the responsibility to abide by established principles of journalistic ethics and practice and to avoid violating the rights or liberties of persons by defamatory expression, undocumented allegations, harassment, invasion of privacy, or violation of the community standard;
- Editors and managers of student publications shall be protected from suspension and removal because of student, faculty, administrative or public disapproval of editorial policy or publication content, so long as the standards set forth in the previous paragraph are met. Editors and managers shall be subject to removal only in accordance with the established policies, regulations and procedures of RGS; and
- All RGS-published or financed student publications shall state on their editorial page(s) that the opinions therein expressed are not necessarily those of RGS or the RGS community.

### **Student Recreational and Cultural Opportunities**

RGS encourages students to participate and/or make use of recreational facilities in the Lehigh Valley. Allentown and Bethlehem have excellent free public park systems replete with walking trails, bicycle paths, basketball courts, and soccer fields. And the Lehigh Valley is a significant cultural area. The Bethlehem and Allentown Public Libraries are free and open to student memberships. Excellent art museums, galleries, concert venues and theaters are both as free-standing institutions and institutions affiliated with the area's colleges and universities.

## **XVIII. Student Financial Aid**

RGS has a comprehensive scholarship and financial aid program available to qualified students. While taking into account student responsibilities and participation in helping to fund their educations, RGS makes financial aid available to students through scholarships, grants and tuition waivers. The Scholarships are merit-based and are awarded by the President on recommendation by the Admissions Committee. As the Admissions Committee reviews

applications for admission, it may identify persons who will be candidates for the Abu Hanifa Scholarship and the Hasan al-Basri Scholarships.

Financial need is a factor considered in awarding Grants and Tuition Waivers. The Website Tab “APPLY” leads to the section “Financial Affairs.” The application for Grants and Tuition Waivers is accessible in that portion. PLEASE NOTE: The deadline for applying for Grants and Tuition Waivers” is AUGUST 1

### **Basic Points About Eligibility**

To be eligible to receive a Scholarship and financial aid, students are to be:

- Citizens or permanent residents of the United States or eligible noncitizens (e.g., international students who hold an appropriate visa);
- Applicants for acceptance as RGS students or already enrolled and in good academic standing and (i.e., not be on academic probation); and
- Have completed the Application For Scholarships and “Grants and Waivers Financial form furnished required materials such as statements of need or, when appropriate, letters of recommendation

### **Scholarships**

Every year the following scholarships will be made available through the generosity of dedicated donors to full-time degree students enrolled in the RGS Program beginning in the Fall Semester. Recipients are to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 during their course of study at the RGS in order to continue to receive the scholarships.

a) **Abu Hanifa Scholarship:**

One full-time student at RGS may be awarded an Abu Hanifa Scholarship each year. This scholarship includes a full tuition waiver and a monthly stipend of \$1,000 for two Academic Years or until graduation whichever comes first;

b) **Hasan al-Basri Scholarships:**

Up to four full-time students at RGS may be awarded a Hasan al-Basri Scholarship each Academic Year. This scholarship includes a full tuition waiver and a monthly stipend of \$1,000 per month during the Academic Year or until graduation whichever comes first. Students receiving this scholarship will be expected to work up to 20 hours per week during the Academic Year as an assistant/intern at RGS.

c) **Area Mosque Scholarships:**

Up to two persons otherwise qualified to be admitted to the RGS program from each of the area mosques will be awarded an Area Mosque Scholarships each year. This scholarship includes a full tuition waiver for two Academic Years. It is awarded by RGS based on the nomination by two officials from a Mosque located in the PA, NJ, or NY areas. Nominations are to be submitted on Mosque letterhead with the signatures of two mosque board members and is to include recommendations by the Mosque that indicates the person’s character and contributions to the Muslim community and, as relevant, to the wider society. The nominees are expected to apply for admission to RGS.

Upon review of all completed applications submitted before the **August 1st deadline**, the admissions committee will award the following scholarships based on the strength of each student’s application, with particular consideration given to academic merit, personal statement, and letters of recommendation. The Admission Committee may require an interview and/or a

GRE score in order to make a final decision. Applicants who already have a GRE score are encouraged to submit it along with their application. Students who are chosen to receive scholarships will be notified through email by August 7.

### **Grants and Tuition Waivers**

In addition to these financial supports, the RGS will consider tuition grants and waivers based on available funds. Applicants for grants or tuition waiver are to include with their applications for Financial Aid a personal statement of need explaining how this financial assistance is necessary to continue their education at RGS. Upon completion of the application, the applicant will receive an email stating the status of their application and the expected timeframe for a final decision. The decision will be sent on or before August 7. The Admission Committee may require an interview with the applicant and/or may request additional documentation in order to make a final decision.

Other than these services, the Dean of Student Affairs will provide information and guidelines for obtaining funding from governmental and non-governmental sources.

### **Costs, Fees and Payment Options**

RGS aims to offer a quality education to all at the same time being affordable. In addition to financial aid programs, the fees involved are designed to provide our students with the best education at a reasonable cost. Please check the tab under Financial Affairs for information on Scholarships, Grants and Tuition Waivers.

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### **Semester Costs and Fees**

Tuition per credit hour: \$500 (classes are 3 credits each)

Student Services Fee: \$25

### **Sample Cost for a Semester**

Full-Time Tuition (9 hours): \$4,500

Fees: \$25

Books & Supplies: \$200

Total: \$4,725

### **One-Time Student Fees**

Library Fee: \$25

Computer and Internet Fee: \$50

### **Audit Fees**

Each Course: \$200

Alumni: \$200

Seniors (60+) \$200

### **Spring Deadlines**

Registration deadline: January 27

Course add/drop deadline: February 3

### **PAYMENT OPTIONS**

RGS has generous Scholarship, Grant and Tuition Waiver provisions, yet the costs of graduate education are covered only partially by those Institutional resources. Students share responsibility in meeting their educational expenses. RGS expects that by the end of the

Semester students will have completed their fiscal obligations for the semester. RGS provides the following Payment Options. Please note that, as Islamic practice indicates, RGS does not add interest costs to installment options:

Option 1: Full Payment of Tuition and Fees within the first two weeks of a semester

Option 2: Half Tuition and Fees at Mid Semester and last class of the Semester

Option 3: Monthly Payments during the Semester

Option 4: Alternate Arrangements as agreed upon by the President and Registrar

Students with outstanding balances in their accounts and who do not make arrangements to satisfy those accounts may have their registrations for courses for the next semester, notification of grades for the completed semester and issuance of transcripts delayed until their obligations are met.

## **XIX. Miscellaneous Matters**

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### **Compliance with the Uniform Crime Reporting Act Reporting Requirement**

RGS, in compliance with the Uniform Crime Act, publishes an annual report for current and prospective students and employees. This report contains important safety information and crime statistics for each year. These statistics pertain to reported crimes that have occurred on the RGS campus, in certain non-campus buildings or properties that are owned or controlled by RGS, and on public property within, or immediately adjacent to and accessible from, the campus.

RGS requires faculty, staff, students and guests to report any illegal or suspicious activity in a timely manner to any available RGS administrator. The administrator shall inform the Campus Facilities Manager, who will take appropriate action, which may include notification of the Bethlehem Police Department. The campus community is also required to notify officials of any situation or incident on campus that involves a significant emergency or dangerous situation that may pose an immediate or ongoing threat to the health and safety of anyone on campus or to campus property. Reports of any criminal activity will be reported annually.

Under the Act, RGS reports annually, no later than March 1, the following criminal offenses to the Facilities Manager or local police: (1) murder, (2) sex offenses, forcible or non-forcible, (3) robbery, (4) aggravated assault, (5) burglary, (6) motor vehicle theft, (7) manslaughter, (8) arson, and (9) arrests or persons referred for drug-related violations and/or possession of illegal weapons.

In addition, RGS will report any hate crimes. A reportable hate crime consists of larceny/theft; simple assault; intimidation; and destruction, damage, or vandalism of property; or a crime involving bodily injury to any person, as well as any crime in the nine categories listed above, in which the victim is intentionally selected because of his or her actual or perceived race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability.

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act) requires that institutions report "specified on-campus crimes that were reported to local police agencies or to any official of the institution with significant responsibility for student and campus activities." RGS self-designates those who fall into this category, including the following:

- The President
- All other administrators, including Deans

- All faculty/administration advisors to student organizations

### **RGS Registrar**

The Registrar manages scheduling for students and course registration. The office maintains academic records, posts grades on the campus network, and provides transcripts upon written request. The registrar also processes course additions and withdrawals, parent and student name and address changes, declarations of major, changes of major, graduation certification, diploma orders, veteran certifications, verifications of enrollment, loan deferments and approvals of summer study at other institutions. The office also provides forms and information for internships and independent study.

The Registrar will generate annually a “Program Follow-Up Report Concerning Career Placement.”

As part of the data collection upon enrollment, students will be asked to provide their employment history and their current employment. This data will be placed in the student’s records and will be updated as needed during their education at RGS.

The Registrar will generate a “Program Follow-Up” report each academic year and send the report to the administrative staff. If additional follow-up is needed, the Registrar will attempt to contact any students, and even instructors if needed, to further complete the follow-up.

Follow-up survey results will then be collected, evaluated and entered in the student information system by the Registrar.

If a student leaves the graduate program without formally withdrawing, withdrawal information will be created by the Registrar using the best available information.

### **Follow-Up after Placement and Evaluation Procedures**

Follow-up surveys will be conducted with graduates and employers of graduates to provide data for program effectiveness, various modes of delivery, and relevance to job requirements. This data will then be used to evaluate and improve the quality of program outcomes and to gauge the success of the institute’s achievement of its objectives.

### **Class Cancellation Policy**

Cancellations of individual class meetings, whether due to inclement weather or not, will be posted on RGS’ web portal (Populi) in a timely manner. Students may also opt to receive text message notifications regarding cancelations by adding their cellular number to their Populi account.

### **Confidentiality Obligations of Student Workers**

Student employees may at times have access to confidential information regarding students, employees and/or the business of the institution. Accordingly, they will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement stating that they understand the privacy of all such information and agree to uphold this obligation. Violation of confidentiality by student employees may result in termination of employment and/or subsequent disciplinary action.

AN ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS HANDBOOK IS AVAILABLE AT:  
<http://www.respectgs.us/student-handbook/>.