

RESPECT | GRADUATE
SCHOOL

STUDENT HANDBOOK

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About the Student Handbook

The Student Handbook describes the provisions of the legal documents and corporate policies that govern institutional policies, programs, and procedures related to students. The provisions and policies are applicable to all students (full or part-time). The Handbook does not cover every situation and is not intended to replace planning documents, institutional policies, or practices, nor can it be construed to change their meaning. At any time that this Handbook disagrees with other more recent documents, policies, or practices, those documents, policies, or practices will govern the administration of plans and programs. All Respect Graduate School (Hereafter RGS) Handbooks have been approved by the Board of Trustees. All members of the RGS are expected to follow all institutional regulations and policies, as well as all local, state, and federal laws. They are also 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 accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

RGS expressly reserves the right to review, change, interpret, or terminate any of these policies, programs, and procedures through the means of amendment described below.

RGS takes its name seriously. Respect extends beyond the classroom to all relationships among the faculty, administration, staff, and 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 to meet the spirit and intent of the document and should not be viewed as all-inclusive in nature. It is every student's responsibility to acquaint themselves 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 fulfilling the spirit and letter of these community standards.

About Respect Graduate School

Respect Graduate School is a legally incorporated graduate school in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is independent of any other entity or organization. The institution is governed through its Board of Trustees (Board). The Board's authority, duties, and functions are indicated in the RGS By-laws. The By-Laws are published on the RGS website, are on file in the RGS Library, and may be obtained on request from the Director of Operations and HR.

RGS was founded as a non-profit organization in 2012 by a group of Turkish-American academics and community leaders with the motivational support of thousands of community members who take their intellectual and spiritual inspiration from the ideas of twentieth and twenty-first century Turkish scholars of Islam, such as Said Nursi and Fethullah Gulen, who promoted the deep study of the Islamic disciplines and dialogue among the adherents of different faiths and civilizations. Their vision was to educate the young generation in Islamic faith and practice and to foster positive relations among different peoples. Fethullah Gülen had for decades promoted the founding of schools and universities across the globe to serve and educate people of all faiths and no faith. He supported the establishment of a university in Pennsylvania where the rich Islamic tradition would be studied with academic rigor, where students would learn to think critically and apply religious knowledge to contemporary issues, and where the community would find support in facing modern challenges to belief, identity, and moral living.

The Respect Institute began offering courses in Islamic Studies and holding interfaith events on campus with panels of speakers on topics such as the commonalities among the Abrahamic scriptures, shared values among the faiths, and the importance of knowing people different from us. As the support for such initiatives grew, the board decided to establish a master's degree in Islamic Studies, to gain Pennsylvania state approval to grant degrees, and to pursue MSCHE accreditation. Starting at the graduate level was intended to enable university graduates in many fields to expand and refine their knowledge of the Islamic tradition while preparing for future roles as intellectuals, leaders, and scholars. Respect's future plans included establishing an undergraduate college as well as a doctoral program following the example of the many great Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish universities established for similar reasons across the U. S.

The inaugural President, Dr. Suleyman Eris, was appointed by the founding committee composed of Dr. Mehmet Ozbilgin and Dr. Sezai Sablak. The original name of the organization was The Respect

Institute. RGS has been managed by an independent Board of Trustees, composed of members with diverse religious, ethnic, social, and professional backgrounds.

Between 2018 and 2023, Respect improved its community ties with both Turkish and non-Turkish communities. It enlarged and diversified its donor base, expanded its continuing education portfolio, started offering courses in English and Turkish, increased its enrollment, and diversified its staff. During this five-year period, Respect has gained invaluable insights and experiences both in its business and educational capabilities.

The Board decided to initiate the degree-granting authorization process and in June 2023 launched a new Master of Arts in Islamic Studies.

Degree-granting Authority from the Pennsylvania Department of Education

In June 2023, Respect received authority to grant the Master of Arts in Islamic Studies from the State of Pennsylvania again and submitted its pre-application for accreditation to MSCHE in October 2023. In August 2023, Respect launched its first cohort of program-enrolled master's students in Islamic Studies. MSCHE approved the pre-application on June 27, 2024, and RGS submitted its letter of intent to apply for Candidacy on July 11, 2024.

Accreditation Status

The Commission's most recent action on the institution's accreditation status on March 13, 2025, was to grant the institution candidate status for accreditation. MSCHE is recognized by the U. S. Secretary of Education to conduct accreditation and pre-accreditation (candidate status) activities for institutions of higher education, including distance, correspondence education, and direct assessment programs offered at those institutions. The Commission's geographic area of accrediting activities is throughout the United States.

RGS is currently a Candidate institution and a member of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE or the Commission).

The vision, mission, and goals of RGS were established through a collaborative process involving board, community, student, staff, and faculty members.

Vision

To become a distinguished university where religious and human knowledge are investigated from within a perspective that centers the Sacred.

Mission

Respect Graduate School is an academic institution that specializes in Islamic Studies, aiming at excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship. With genuine appreciation for and study of traditional Islamic disciplines, RGS applies interdisciplinary and creative approaches to equip students to respond to contemporary social and intellectual challenges in the global context. Fostering respect and dialogue with diverse communities, RGS also offers moral and spiritual service to all.

Goals

1. To endow students with broad and deep knowledge in Islamic Studies from both traditional and modern perspectives.
2. To prepare students to conduct research in Islamic studies and related fields by providing them with the necessary analytical, critical, methodological, and interpretive skills.
3. To provide the broader society with lifelong learning opportunities and beneficial services

Our Commitments to Institutional Learning Outcomes

Respect

The name “Respect” expresses our foundational commitments. Respect for people, ideas, and differences is central to our ethos. Respect begins with relationships among students, faculty, staff, the board, and the wider community. We endeavor to center decisions, plans, and actions on our students to stimulate their intellectual growth, personal well-being, social responsibility, and positive social interactions.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Respect Graduate School is a welcoming community. We embrace and value the diversity of all members of the campus community. RGS does not discriminate 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, mental or physical disability, use of guide or support animals and/or mechanical aids, or on any other basis protected by applicable local, state, and federal laws.

Graduate Level Education

Respect Graduate School provides a graduate level of education 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 aims of our graduate education include gaining broad and deep knowledge of the central fields of Islamic studies, demonstrating capabilities in research and further learning, and formulating positions and perspectives that withstand analysis and critical engagement.

Support of Difference, Dialog, Diversity, and Pluralism

RGS is committed to maintaining an academic environment that fosters dialogue, pluralism, mutual respect, appreciation of divergent views, and awareness of the importance of individual rights. To this end, the institution reasserts the importance of civility and the valuable contribution that diversity in race, ethnicity, religion, and culture brings to the community.

Service to All

We believe that beneficial knowledge bears fruit through its practice; and knowledge actualized through service is elevated to the level of wisdom. Islamically understood, the best place to put knowledge into action is in the service of local and global communities, in short, humanity, for the best among us are those who benefit society the most.

The President's Welcome

Dear Student,

Respect Graduate School is an academic institution that specializes in Islamic Studies. Our mission is to achieve excellence in teaching, learning and research, which naturally leads us to a continuous quest for betterment on the journey of acquiring knowledge. As Blondel says, “we cannot stop at an object in the middle to make absolute truth of it without falling into the idolatry of the understanding; every premature affirmation is illegitimate.” Being aware of the opportunities and challenges of our global social contexts, we believe that an important way of achieving this excellence in knowledge is to engage both classical and interdisciplinary methodologies in our studies. With this model, we aim to be a contemporary academic institution with genuine appreciation and application of the traditional wisdom.

For us, the quest for excellence in knowledge is a defining feature not only for our students and faculty, but also for all humanity. Therefore, an academic institution should be able to open channels for the broader society by providing intellectual opportunities and services. In this regard, our name Respect indicates the value that guides our everyday practices. We believe that every individual and every being deserves respect regardless of their orientation and current position. Thus, we respectfully welcome the members of the broader society who sincerely want to be a part of our journey at RGS.

Suleyman Eris, Ph. D.

Greetings from the Dean of Academics

Dear Student,

I am delighted to announce that Respect Graduate School offers a unique 36-credit Master of Arts in Islamic Studies. At RGS, we have developed a comprehensive curriculum that allows our students to become familiar with many disciplines in Islamic Studies. We offer both online and in-person classes. We aim to acquaint our students with both analytical and traditional approaches to Islamic Studies. In addition to knowledge of the classical Islamic disciplines, our students develop the ability to think critically and take interdisciplinary approaches to religious topics and questions. As the Dean of Academic Affairs, I want to make it clear that RGS is not a place where students simply collect information in various Islamic disciplines. Rather, we encourage our students to develop sound research and scholarship capabilities as well as moral integrity and leadership capacity. I look forward to welcoming you to RGS.

Adnan Aslan, Ph. D.

The Board of Trustees

The President and Trustees constitute the ultimate corporate authority responsible before the law for the College's policies and programs. A current Trustee serves as the chair, the presiding officer of the Board, and the President is an *ex officio* member of all its committees. There are twelve (12) board members currently. In addition to a religiously, racially, and ethnically diverse board of trustees drawn from the wider community, a faculty member and an RGS master's student serve on the Board of Trustees. The Board meets four times a year. The current trustees are identified on the trustee webpage, located on the President's Office homepage.

The President

Reporting to the Board as the chief executive officer of the College is the President, who is also a member and the presiding officer of the faculty of the College. Reporting directly to the President are the Dean of Academics; the Dean of Students, Institutional Planning and Accreditation; the Vice President of Operations and Finance; the Dean of Continuing Education; and the Director of Religious Services.

The President is a non-voting member of the Board of Trustees, responsible for the management and governance of the institution, setting the direction and tone of the institution, and carrying out and interpreting the policies of the Board. In this capacity, the President works with diverse groups of RGS stakeholders including trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and a diverse group of community members. The President is the chief spokesperson for RGS and responsible ultimately for the vision of the institution and its strategic plan.

The Vice President of Operations and Finance

The Vice President of Operations and Finance is responsible for institutional finance and accounting, the institutional budget, institutional marketing, debt financing, acquisitions, and the physical campus of RGS, as well as other administrative operations. The Vice President oversees several administrative offices including Facilities, Business Operations, Human Resources, Finance and Budget, Information Technology and Services, the RGS website, Safety, Security, and Environmental Compliance, Investment and Institutional Development, and the College Counsel.

The Dean of Academics

The Dean of Academics reports to the President and leads the Division of Academic Affairs and its Master of Arts in Islamic Studies (Hereafter MAIS) degree program. The dean is a full-time faculty member who has a portion of time set aside for administrative duties. The dean leads and collaborates with MAIS faculty on curriculum development, educational effectiveness assessment, academic conference planning, faculty recruitment and development, and evaluation of teaching effectiveness. In the area of program review and outcomes assessment, the dean directs and participates in course and program review as well as academic advising. The dean collaborates with faculty in academic policy development and the development of the annual academic division budget.

The Dean of Academics is responsible for the policies and procedures affecting all academic departments. The Dean oversees the annual budgets of the academic division, its programs and activities; leads curricular and faculty development; and, in consultation with the faculty, makes recommendations on the membership of committees to the President. The Dean also works closely with the Office of the President on budgetary and compensation matters. In addition, concerns about the professional conduct of faculty members are the Dean of Academics' responsibility.

The Dean of Students, Institutional Planning, and Accreditation

The Dean of Students, Institutional Planning and Accreditation reports to the President and has primary responsibility for the Division of Student Services, which includes recruitment, admissions and orientation, scholarships, registration, the library, student conduct, convocation, graduation, and student support and development. The Dean of Students oversees compliance with student-related federal, state, and local statutes including student rights to privacy and the confidentiality of student records. The Dean provides guidance and advocacy to the Student Council (Hereafter SC). In collaboration with the President's Cabinet, the Dean guides institutional planning, data collection and analysis, and assessment of educational effectiveness. The Dean of Students maintains communication with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and leads the accreditation effort as the Accreditation Liaison Officer with MSCHE.

The Dean of Continuing Education and Certificate Programs

The Dean of Continuing Education and Certificate Programs reports to the President, plays a dynamic leadership role at RGS, and is responsible for the strategic development, implementation, and oversight of comprehensive continuing education initiatives and certificate programs. This position involves collaborating with various stakeholders to identify market needs, designing and refining curriculum content to meet industry standards, and ensuring the quality and relevance of educational offerings. The dean manages program budgets, leads student recruitment efforts, and fosters partnerships with industry professionals, businesses, and external organizations. Additionally, the role involves staying informed about regulatory requirements, conducting data analysis to assess program effectiveness, and facilitating professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. The Dean of Continuing Education and Certificate Programs plays a pivotal role in advancing the institution's commitment to lifelong learning and professional development overseeing the Quran School, the Family School, *Risale* and Hizmet Studies, and the Clinical Pastoral Education program.

The Faculty

The faculty of Respect Graduate School has responsibility for providing the leadership of the Master of Arts in Islamic Studies and its course offerings, teaching, advising and mentoring its students, maintaining and improving the academic curriculum, establishing academic policies and standards, assessing student learning outcomes, and initiating consideration and recommendations on any matter of faculty concern. They undertake such legislative and advisory functions in connection with the work of the institution as may be referred by the President and Board of Trustees. They engage in advancing knowledge and scholarship in their fields and maintain communication with the senior administration.

The faculty is led by the Dean of Academics, who also teaches courses.

Respect Graduate School Student Council

The Student Council (SC) is a body of elected graduate students who represent the interests of the student body in the RGS Master of Arts in Islamic Studies program. The SC aims to address the concerns, interests, and opinions of RGS students by acting as a conduit between students, faculty, staff, and administration. Additionally, the SC functions as an advocate for enhancing academic policies, campus life, community relations, event publicity, and student well-being. It supports

student activities and organizations by allocating funding from the Student Activities Budget according to the SC constitution.

Student Council Participation in Respect Graduate School Governance

The SC President represents students as a non-voting member of the Board of Trustees. SC officers also serve as needed on RGS committees such as Faculty and Administration Search Committees, RGS conference committees, and the Graduation Committee, as well as other ad hoc committees. The SC is also responsible for recognizing student organizations, implementing the SC constitution, supporting student organization constitutions, and managing institutional funds allocated to it and to student organizations.

Respect Graduate School Expectations

Students, administrators, and staff of RGS are free to express their views in private or public contexts, so long as this expression is conducted in a manner that is respectful of other views and without conveying an impression that these views might represent the official stance of RGS. Only the President and the Board Chairperson may speak publicly on behalf of RGS

The RGS community is to be free from all forms of conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive, or disruptive.

Respect Graduate School Community Standards

Respect Graduate School maintains that all faculty, staff, and students are expected to be respectful members of the Lehigh Valley and Bethlehem communities and to conduct themselves in a way that always represents the institution in a positive fashion. RGS is a welcoming community.

RGS takes its name seriously. Respect extends beyond the classroom to all relationships among the faculty, administration, staff, and RGS students. This expectation includes relationships with all members of the institution and in its relationships with the wider community as well as in scholarly contexts.

The following community standards are to be interpreted broadly to meet the spirit and intent of the document and should not be viewed as all-inclusive in nature. It is every individual's responsibility to acquaint himself or herself with these standards.

Respect for Student Freedom of Expression

The following commitments are based on the relevant section of the *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students* of the American Association of University Professors. 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.

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.

Students, faculty, and staff of RGS are free to express their views in private or public contexts, so long as this expression is conducted in a manner that is respectful of other views and without conveying an impression that these views might represent the official stance of RGS. Only the President and the Board Chairperson may speak publicly on behalf of RGS

Classroom Expression, Public Statements, and Demonstrations

Student Academic Freedom

Students can freely discuss and express their thoughts in the classroom, question information or perspectives presented in their courses, and hold their own opinions. However, they also bear the responsibility of avoiding actions that hinder the instructor's ability to teach and other students' opportunity to learn. This involves not disrupting the educational process and expressing one's views in a respectful manner.

Discussion and expression are allowed within the following parameters:

1. Expression is allowed unless it disrupts classes and operations of the institution, jeopardizes safety, or conflicts with the RGS mission.

2. Public statements and demonstrations by individuals or organizations must be clearly labeled as representing only those entities, not RGS itself.
3. Students and student groups can invite individuals to campus, but they need to follow facility usage requirements and obtain permission from the Office of the Dean of Students and Facilities.
4. Sponsoring an event with a guest speaker or obtaining permission to host an event does not imply approval or endorsement of the speaker's views by the student(s).

Respect for Individuals and their Rights

Members of the RGS community 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 defined as harassment and 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, community members are responsible for asserting their own rights and for communicating feelings and concerns to others by appropriate means.

Respect for Academic Honesty and Integrity

Academic integrity is an essential and foundational RGS principle. RGS expects students and faculty to carry on their academic work honestly and fairly. In addition, they should neither hinder nor unfairly assist others 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, they are uncertain about their responsibilities as scholars or about the propriety of a particular action, the instructor or the Dean of Academics should be consulted. However, as a general guideline, all students and faculty members should strictly refrain from any unacknowledged adoption, in a submitted work, of the ideas, words, or works of another.

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 the 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:

1. The destruction of or damage to personal or institutional property
2. The misuse or unauthorized use of the institution's electronic information and telecommunications systems, including violations of the Computing Resources Policy
3. Unauthorized downloading of copyrighted materials
4. The use of telephone or cable service in an unauthorized manner
5. The misuse or unauthorized use of institutional or private property or equipment
6. The duplication of materials in an unauthorized manner
7. Possession, use, or duplication of keys without authorization
8. Possession or use of a student identification other than one's own
9. The theft or misappropriation of property owned by the institution or by members of the community or their guests
10. 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 RGS buildings or on RGS premises, is prohibited and is a violation of local, state, and federal laws. RGS observes 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 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 Dean of Students 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 Policies Concerning Weapons

Respect Graduate School promotes a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all students, faculty, staff, and those who are on its premises. To that end, RGS prohibits all students, faculty, staff, administrators, independent contractors, and other guests from possessing or using firearms on its property, including all related buildings, grounds, and parking areas, and any RGS-owned or leased property, including vehicles, even by those who may possess a valid concealed carry or other permit. If RGS retains on-duty security officers, they may carry their service weapons or other defensive devices that they are trained to use when conducting official business on campus.

RGS prohibition of weapons includes but is not limited to firearms; ammunition; bombs; grenades; fireworks and other explosive devices; blackjacks and brass knuckles; knives; swords; razors; box cutters; daggers; and other cutting instruments the blades of which can be exposed in an automatic way by a switch, push-button, spring mechanism, or otherwise; stun guns and tasers; batons and clubs; paintball and pellet guns; and any other harmful instruments and devices. Any questions concerning a questionable item or any other questions about the campus weapons policy are to be directed to the Vice President of Operations and Finance.

Respect for a Safe and Productive Work Environment

Respect Graduate School promotes a safe and productive work environment. Irresponsible and/or illegal behaviors include, but are not limited to, acts such as stealing; dishonesty; harassment of any kind; possession, use and sale of drugs and alcohol while on campus; working while under the influence of drugs or alcohol; physical violence; verbal insults; and deliberate violations of safety practices. The Institution will discipline faculty and staff members when they exhibit behaviors that need correction. Discipline may include oral or written reprimands, demotion, suspension and/or termination, according to processes to be determined by the board on the recommendation of the faculty, SC, and administration.

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 are also 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.

Amendments or Additions to Respect Graduate School Policies and Procedures

Proposals for amendments to RGS policies or procedures and their rationales may be made to the Dean of Students by individual students, the SC, faculty, administrators, or Board members. The Dean shall present the proposals and rationales for discussion to the following RGS constituencies: SC, the Academic Affairs Committee, and the President's Cabinet. Upon a majority, positive vote of the President's Cabinet, the amendment shall be forwarded to the Board of Trustees for consideration. Upon the approval by a majority of Board members, the change shall be incorporated into the appropriate handbook, website, or other policy repository.

Program Overview

The Master of Arts in Islamic Studies

The Master of Arts in Islamic Studies at Respect Graduate School is a 36-credit-hour program of graduate-level study in which students read from key texts of the classical Islamic disciplines in Arabic and English and from among the best secondary sources in English. They are introduced to the classical and more recent theories and methods of the history of religions (also known as "religious studies"). They also study theories and methods of the rapidly growing field of interreligious studies, including the sub-fields of the theologies of religious pluralism and comparative theology.

The required courses are designed to provide students with a strong background in traditional Islamic disciplines on one hand, and with an ability, on the other, to evaluate the tradition with an analytical mindset necessary for today's very fast-changing world. The MAIS program at RGS fully prepares its graduates for the pursuit of several goals, such as continuing their graduate education in Islamic studies or a related field, seeking training for a career in the ministry or religious leadership, conducting research, embarking on a profession in a nonprofit organization, or simply engaging in further learning for the sake of acquiring more knowledge.

Core Required Courses

The following are the core courses of the program, and all students must include them in their program of study. Substitution may be allowed by the Dean of Academics under special circumstances:

1. MAIS 501 Qur'anic (Classical) Arabic I: Knowledge of Word Structures
2. MAIS 502 Qur'anic (Classical) Arabic II: Knowledge of Sentence Structures
3. MAIS 503 Introduction to Qur'anic Studies
4. MAIS 504 Introduction to Hadith Studies
5. MAIS 505 Survey of Islamic Thought
6. MAIS 506 Research Techniques in Islamic Studies
7. MAIS 507 Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion
8. MAIS 508 The Final Research Paper

Important Note: Students can be exempt from the required courses MAIS 501 and MAIS 502 if they pass the Exemption Exam. The Exam is available to students who already have fluency in the classical Arabic language. Students who have passed an Exemption or Competency Examination at another institution must still take the RGS examination.

Students who do not pass the Exemption Exam must pass MAIS 501 and MAIS 502. If they do not pass the courses or the Exemption Exam by the time they complete the core courses, they may not become official candidates in the graduate program and may not be permitted to continue to the Final Research Paper.

The required courses for the MAIS program at RGS are significant to Islamic Studies and key to the program's excellence.

1. The most important Islamic sources, including the Qur'an and Hadith, two foundational sources of Islam, are in Arabic. Therefore, without a thorough understanding of the Arabic language, it is impossible to appreciate the essence of Islamic Studies. We designed a highly effective teaching approach for Qur'anic Arabic with the goal of providing our students with the ability to understand Islamic texts in their original Arabic language in two semesters. To achieve this aim, we provide intense Qur'anic Arabic lessons that focus solely on reading skills.
2. The Qur'an and Hadith, which are widely believed to be the authoritative sources of Islamic knowledge and worldviews, play a significant role in the core study. Both are examined from a variety of perspectives, including their history, structure, content, and how they have been interpreted.
3. It is intriguing to observe how past and present Muslims generated such a diverse range of views based on their various readings of the Islamic scriptural sources, the Quran, and the

Hadith. Students are introduced to four intellectual traditions within Islam through a survey: Islamic Theology, Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Jurisprudence, and Islamic Spirituality. They can then learn more about each of these traditions by enrolling in elective courses based on their interests.

Elective Courses – 12 credits

To complete the 36-credit-hour requirement of the program, students must complete 12 credit hours of electives and/or independent studies. Courses should be chosen in consultation with one's advisor from the courses offered each semester.

Students may freely choose four elective courses totaling 12 credit hours from the course offerings each term. Courses have been grouped into the type of discipline in which they are a part.

Theoretical Disciplines (MAIS 509, 510, 511, 520)

Course Number and Name	Credit Hours	Prerequisite
MAIS 509: Islamic Theology (Kalam)	3	MAIS 501, 502, and 505
MAIS 510: Islamic Philosophy	3	MAIS 501, 502, and 505
MAIS 511: Islamic Spirituality	3	MAIS 501, 502, and 505
MAIS 520: Islamic Ethics	3	None

Practical Disciplines (Pick four from MAIS 512, 513, 514, 520, 521, 522, 527)

Course Number and Name	Credit Hours	Prerequisite
MAIS 512: Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh)	3	MAIS 501, 502, and 505
MAIS 513: Islam and Contemporary Issues	3	MAIS 505
MAIS 514: Islam and Gender Issues	3	MAIS 505
MAIS 520: Islamic Ethics	3	None
MAIS 521: Skills for Islamic Ministry	3	None

MAIS 522: Introduction to Islamic Banking and Finance	3	None
MAIS 527: Islam and Global Politics	3	None

Historical Disciplines (MAIS 515, 516, 517, 526, 529)

Course Number and Name	Credit Hours	Prerequisite
MAIS 515: History of Islamic Civilization I: From Beginning Until Pre-Modern	3	None
MAIS 516: History of Islamic Civilization II: From Pre-Modern Until Today	3	MAIS 515
MAIS 517: Sira: The Life of the Prophet	3	MAIS 501 and 502
MAIS 526: Science and Civilization in Islam	3	None
MAIS 529: History of Christian-Muslim Relations	3	None

Intercultural and Dialogical Disciplines (Pick four from MAIS 518, 519, 521, 524, 525, 529)

Course Number and Name	Credit Hours	Prerequisite
MAIS 518: Islam in America	3	None
MAIS 519: World Religions	3	None
MAIS 521: Skills for Islamic Ministry	3	None
MAIS 524: Dialogue in the World of Diversity	3	None
MAIS 525: CPE: Clinical Pastoral Education	3	None
MAIS 529: History of Christian-Muslim Relations	3	None

Additional Electives:

MAIS 523: Reading Islamic Texts in Classical Arabic (3 credit hours - Prerequisite: MAIS 501 and 502)

MAIS 528: The Near East (3 credit hours - Prerequisite: None)

MAIS 530: Independent Study (3 credit hours - Prerequisite: None)

Non-Credit Preparatory Course:

MAIS 500: Introduction to Reading Arabic

This course is for any student who cannot read the Arabic alphabet. MAIS 501 prerequisite is knowledge of the Arabic alphabet and its sound-letter correspondence. (For further information, see the course description.)

The Final Research Paper

Studying in our MA program entails more than just reading and learning about Islamic Studies. Researching and presenting the results in scholarly writing is an equally significant element of the study. As a result, the curriculum provides our students with essential research and writing abilities. They have the opportunity to practice these abilities by writing essays for each course under the supervision of the professors.

In addition, students must write a comprehensive research paper to fulfill a 3-credit-hour requirement to complete the program. They should ideally write their paper on the field of concentration or set of electives that they have chosen and give an oral defense of the paper before it is officially submitted. While students may begin their research early in the program, they must complete their research paper during the last semester of their studies.

The Final Research Paper Policy

Introduction

As part of the graduation requirements for the Master's program in Islamic Studies (MAIS) at RGS, each student must complete and submit a final research paper. This policy outlines the procedures, requirements, and expectations for the successful completion of the research paper.

Objectives

The FRP aims to:

1. Develop students' research skills and academic writing abilities.
2. Encourage in-depth study and analysis of a specific topic within Islamic Studies.
3. Contribute to the academic field of Islamic Studies through original research.

Selecting an Advisor

- a. Students must select a faculty advisor for their final research paper by the end of their second regular semester (Fall or Spring) in the program.
- b. The advisor should be a full-time faculty member in the Islamic Studies department.

- c. Students should consult with potential advisors about their research interests and availability before making a formal request.
- d. Once an advisor agrees to supervise the research, the student must submit an “Advisor Selection Form” to the department office for approval.

Topic Selection and Proposal

Relevance: The research topic must be relevant to Islamic Studies and approved by the faculty advisor.

Proposal: Students must submit a research proposal that includes the research question, objectives, methodology, and a preliminary bibliography. This proposal must be approved by the faculty advisor and the Dean of Academics before proceeding (See RGS Guidelines for the Preparation of a Proposal for a Final Research Paper).

1. In consultation with their adviser, students must develop a research topic and prepare a formal proposal.
2. The proposal should include:
3. Working title
4. Research question(s)
5. Brief literature review
6. Methodology
7. Preliminary outline
8. Tentative bibliography
9. The proposal must be submitted to the adviser for approval by the end of the third regular semester.
10. Once approved by the adviser, the proposal must be submitted to the Dean of Academics for final approval.

Writing the Research Paper

1. Students should meet regularly with their adviser throughout the research and writing process.
2. The final paper should be between 12,000 and 15,000 words (excluding bibliography and appendices).
3. The paper must follow the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style for citations and formatting.
4. Students must submit drafts to their adviser according to an agreed-upon schedule.

5. Originality: The paper must be the student's original work. Plagiarism in any form is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Submission and Review

1. The completed paper must be submitted to the adviser at least six weeks before the end of the student's final semester.
2. The adviser will review the paper and may request revisions before approving it for submission to the second reader.
3. Once approved by the adviser, the paper will be sent to a second reader, selected by the Dean of Academics, for review.
4. The second reader will have two weeks to review the paper and provide feedback.

Oral Defense and Evaluation

1. Upon approval from both the adviser and second reader, an oral defense will be scheduled.
2. The oral defense committee will consist of the adviser, second reader, and one additional faculty member.
3. Students will present their research for 20-30 minutes, followed by questions from the committee.
4. The committee will deliberate and inform the student of the outcome (Pass, Pass with Minor Revisions, Major Revisions Required, or Fail) immediately after the defense.

Final Submission

1. If revisions are required, students must complete them within two weeks and submit the final version to their adviser for approval.
2. Once the final version is approved, students must submit the electronic copy both in PDF and Word formats to the Dean of Academic Affairs (See the Final Research Paper format guideline). A hard copy signed by both student and advisor(s) must be submitted to the Academic Dean and will be maintained in the Respect Library.

Registration in the Final Semester and Graduation

1. Students must register for the MAIS 508 MA Research Paper course (3 credits) in their final semester.

2. If the paper is not completed within one semester, an IP (incomplete) mark will appear in the student's Populi account, and the student must register and pay \$200. for an extension into the following semester(s). When approved, IP will change to a P for Pass.
3. Students must ensure all other graduation requirements are met and submit the "Intent to Graduate" form by the deadline set by the Registrar's office. The Registrar sends this form to students who are in their final semester at the beginning of the semester.

Time Limit

1. The entire process, from proposal approval to final submission, must be completed within three semesters.
2. Extensions may be granted in exceptional circumstances with written approval from the Dean of Academics. Extensions of additional semesters past the student's final semester will be charged the extension fee of \$200 per semester.

Support and Resources

Supporting Courses: Before beginning their final paper, students must successfully complete MAIS 506 (Research Techniques in Islamic Studies and Resources) and MAIS 507 (Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion). These courses are specifically designed to aid students in the preparation of their final research paper, MAIS 508. Each year workshops are offered to serve as a resource for students. Workshops on research methods, academic writing, argument formation, and citation practices are among the topics covered.

Library Access: Students will have access to the RGS library's resources, including online databases and journals.

Academic Integrity

Students must adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with university policies.

For any questions or further assistance regarding the research paper, students should contact their faculty advisor.

By adhering to this Final Research Paper policy, students will ensure a smooth and successful completion of their research paper, fulfilling an essential requirement for their Master's degree in Islamic Studies.

This policy is subject to periodic review and may be updated as necessary. Students are responsible for adhering to the most current version of this policy.

Final Research Paper Enrollment Policy and Procedure

FRP Enrollment Policy:

1. Students must enroll in the Final Research Paper (FRP) course during their final semester in which they plan to complete and defend their research.
2. Students are required to enroll in the section offered by their chosen advisor. (FRP Policy- Advisor selection)
3. The FRP enrollment confirms that the student is in the final stage of the program and intends to complete all degree requirements in that semester.

Procedure and Deadlines

Failure to meet the FRP submission or revision deadlines may delay defense scheduling and graduation eligibility.

Final Research Paper Extension Fee

Students who do not complete their Final Research Paper in the semester in which they register for this 3-credit paper may be granted an extension of a semester or more by their advisor. However, an extension fee of \$200 per semester will be charged.

Graduation Requirements

Graduate degree program requirements include meeting the following Student Learning Outcomes:

Student Learning Outcomes

All MAIS students must demonstrate the following learning outcomes in final semester course papers as well as in their final research paper. A fully developed outcomes assessment system has

been developed by the RGS faculty that students are made aware of in courses and when they begin their final research paper. Common rubrics are used to evaluate mastery on particular elements.

1. Demonstrate a broad understanding of the Islamic traditions based on foundational sources,
2. Demonstrate the ability to think critically on traditional and contemporary social and intellectual issues, and
3. Demonstrate the ability to conduct scholarly research and to present the results in academic writings.

Assessment of MAIS Program Student Learning Outcomes

The faculty has designed a systematic methodology of program learning outcomes assessment using well-defined qualitative measures.

The RGS assessment system has two elements: First, the three program learning outcomes are assessed over a three-year period.

1. Students are assessed for their ability to demonstrate a broad understanding of the Islamic tradition based on foundational sources in a final research paper against a common rubric created by the faculty. Assessment of this program learning outcome is done at the end of Introduction to Quranic Studies, Introduction to Hadith Studies, Theology, and Survey of Islamic Thought.
2. Students are assessed for their ability to demonstrate graduate-level critical thinking in the final papers of courses whose topics inherently lend themselves to critical thought. Assessment of this program learning outcome is done on the final course paper using a common rubric. Critical Thinking in Philosophy, Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion and Islamic Philosophy
3. Students are assessed in their final papers on the ability to conduct a graduate-level standard of scholarly research and express their argument and analysis in academic writing. Assessment of this program learning outcome is done on the final course paper of The Biography of the Prophet, Islamic Spirituality, and Islamic Jurisprudence.

Each student has an assessment file of the three program outcomes kept by the Registrar. The results of these assessments will be compared with the results of the assessment of their final research paper. The final research papers are kept both by the Registrar in an electronic file and in hard copy in the RGS Library.

The second part of our outcomes assessment occurs in students' final semester when they produce their final research paper (FRP) under the supervision of a faculty advisor. The paper is assessed by a faculty committee against a common rubric appropriate to graduate level standards. The independent assessments of the committee members against this common rubric are submitted into the student's assessment file. The student presents an oral defense of the paper. The oral defense is also assessed against a common rubric by the committee and filed in the student's cumulative file.

The ability to demonstrate a satisfactory standard of program learning outcomes is the cumulative result of knowledge, skills, and abilities gained through the MAIS curriculum. Satisfactory demonstration of the program-learning outcomes by graduating students is one measure of institutional and MAIS mission and goal accomplishment. Other outcomes that are considered are what the graduate of RGS does post-graduation, whether they go on for further studies in a doctoral or other terminal professional degree program or obtain professional employment using the knowledge gained in the RGS degree.

The faculty and Board Educational Effectiveness Committee review the results of the assessments against graduate achievements which are published on the RGS Achievements webpage along with other institutional statistics starting in July 2026. By July 2028 the complete three-year assessment system will have completed one cycle.

General Degree Requirements

1. 36 graduate-level credits that meet the core and elective course requirements of the MAIS program.
2. A cumulative GPA of at least 2.3
3. To earn a passing grade and course credit, a grade of C+ or above is required. Core courses in which the student does not earn at least a C+ must be taken again in order to earn course credit. Elective courses in which the student does not earn at least a C+ may be re-taken for a higher grade, or another elective may be taken.
4. No more than 6.0 credits of independent study may be included in the MAIS program.

Grade Policy

A student who earns a grade below C+ shall be deemed to have failed the graduate-level course and is required to repeat the course.

Computation of Grades

At the completion of a course, each student is assigned a letter grade based upon the appropriate scale below:

Letter Grade	GPA	Percentage
A	4.0	94-100
A-	3.7	90-93
B+	3.3	87-89
B	3.0	83-86
B-	2.7	80-82
C+	2.3	77-79
C	2.0	75-76
C-	1.7	70-74
D+	1.3	67-69
D	1.0	64-66
D-	0.7	60-63
F	0.3	0-59

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

Maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is required of all students at RGS. At RGS, Satisfactory Academic Progress is officially checked at the end of each term (fall, winter, spring, and summer). Satisfactory academic progress consists of two components, qualitative and quantitative: Grade point average (GPA) and the pace of course progression. A student must meet the standard of both components in order to make satisfactory academic progress.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Students who fail to maintain at least a 2.3 G. P. A. (RGS' minimum graduation requirement) with respect to their cumulative work are not considered to be making satisfactory academic progress. Students who receive a scholarship from RGS are expected to maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA.

Students who fall below the required GPA in a particular semester are granted a semester on academic probation to reach the required GPA.

Pace

There is a maximum timeframe by which students must complete their program. RGS expects students to complete the Master's degree within 6 academic years of their admission to RGS.

Students who have an approved Leave of Absence may be granted additional time. See the Leave of Absence Policy.

Full-Time vs. Part-Time Study

To maintain full-time status at RGS, students must register for 9.0 credits per semester. Part-time students must complete at least 3 credits per academic year.

Core Course Exemptions: Credit by Exam

Students can be exempt from the courses of MAIS 501 (Qur'anic (Classical) Arabic I: Knowledge of Word Structures-3 credits) and MAIS 502 (Qur'anic (Classical) Arabic II: Knowledge of Sentence Structures-3 credits) if they pass the Exemption Exams as described under "Program of Study" in the Catalog. They will earn 3 credits by exam if they achieve the required score on the exemption exam.

In special circumstances and with reasonable justification demonstrated, the Dean of Academics may exempt a student from a core course and allow a course substitution for the core course.

Transfer of Credits

1. A maximum of 9 transfer credits of graduate coursework related to the field of Islamic Studies taken at another institution with a grade of B- or better may be included in the MAIS program.
2. A maximum of 12 credits taken at RGS before being officially admitted to the program may be included in the MAIS program, provided the student has scored a grade of B- or better.

Credit Transfer Policy

General Matters

1. Prospective applicants are advised to visit RGS to discuss their potential programs with faculty, staff, and students.
2. Applicants who wish to transfer credits from previous graduate-level studies should review RGS' "Transfer of Credits" policy (see below). The "Transfer of Credits Form," obtained from the Registrar, must be submitted to the Dean of Academic Affairs. The transfer is not complete unless the Dean of Academic Affairs approves it.
3. Applications are considered incomplete until all documents are received by the Registrar's Office. Applicants who complete the application procedure will receive a letter from the Admissions Officer/Registrar regarding the decision by the Admissions Committee in a timely manner.

Transfer of Credits

Transfer credit requests are possible if they fall under one of the following categories:

1. From another institution: A maximum of 9 transfer credits of graduate coursework related to the field of Islamic Studies taken at another institution with a grade of B- or better may be included in the MAIS program. Transfer credits from Islamic non-accredited seminaries may be available after the Dean of Academics determines whether the curriculum is transferable.
2. From RGS before being an official student: A maximum of 12 credits taken at RGS before being officially admitted to the program may be included in the MAIS program provided the student has scored a grade of B- or better.
3. From RGS' MAIS program from 2015 to 2018: Students who were officially registered in the MAIS program from 2015 to 2018 (when RGS offered MA credits with degree-granting authority from Pennsylvania State) can transfer all successfully completed credits. The credits marked with "I" (Incomplete) are not transferable.
4. From the RGS-ISRA-CSU partnership MAIS program: Students who are officially registered in the MAIS program run by the collaboration of RGS, Islamic Studies and Research Academy of Australia (ISRA), and Charles Sturt University of Australia (CSU) can transfer up to 8 courses

(equivalent to 24 credits), provided they enroll in the CSU and obtain an official transcript. The mutual agreement between these three institutions allows for such a transfer, as ISRA and CSU accepts the transfer of 8 courses taken at RGS.

Applicants interested in transferring credits that fall under one of these categories should submit the “Transfer of Credits Form” to the Admissions/ Registrar Office. The transfer is subject to approval by the Dean of Academics.

Important Note: Credits from a completed MA in Islamic Studies program with a successful graduation cannot be transferred.

Graduation Walk Policy

Purpose: This policy outlines the eligibility criteria and financial requirements for students wishing to participate (“walk”) in the RGS Graduation Ceremony.

Graduation Fee

Starting in the Academic Year 2025-2026, graduating students will be charged a fee of \$200. in their last semester of study before their graduation.

Eligibility to Walk

To be eligible to participate in the Commencement Ceremony, students must meet the following conditions:

Completion of Academic Requirements and Research Paper:

1. The student must have successfully completed their Final Research Paper and completed Research Defense with the Academic Committee.
2. Students who have been granted permission for minor revisions after the defense may still be eligible to walk, provided that the revisions are approved and documented by the advisor and academic committee.
3. Students completing post-defense revisions must sign an Agreement on Revision confirming that all revisions will be submitted and finalized no later than August 15th of the same academic year.

Financial Requirements

Full Payment of Tuition and Fees:

1. All tuition, fees, and outstanding balances must be paid in full prior to participation in the Commencement Ceremony.
2. Students enrolled in an approved payment plan must have fully completed the plan and obtained verification of completion from the Business Office before they may walk at graduation.

Verification and Approval

1. The Registrar's Office will verify academic eligibility in coordination with the student's advisor and committee.
2. The Business Office will confirm that all financial obligations have been met.
3. Final approval to participate in the Graduation Ceremony will be issued only after both academic and financial verifications are complete.

Any exceptions to this policy must be requested in writing and approved jointly by the Dean of Academics and the Registrar one month prior to the ceremony

Payment of Tuition and Fees Policy

Tuition and fees payments are due by the last day of the second week of classes unless the student has established a payment plan with the Business Office.

Students who do not pay their tuition and fees by the last week of classes will not be able to take their final exams or submit final course requirements, will not be able to see their grades, and will not be able to register for the following semester until they pay what is owed or make and keep written payment arrangements with the Business Office.

The Business Office of RGS tries to work with any student in financial difficulty by offering reasonable payment plans and reasonable timeframes for payment.

If a student does not respond to the Business Offices' efforts to secure payment due or does not abide by the payment plan arranged with the Business Office, a notification of intent to turn the account over to a collection agency will be sent by certified mail to the student's mailing

address on file. The student will have another chance to rectify the account. If no action is taken by the student, the account may be turned over to a collection agency. Students should be aware that such action may harm their credit rating.

Late Fees Policy

Purpose: This policy outlines the rules and procedures for assessing late fees when students fail to meet payment deadlines for tuition, fees, or other charges. The goal is to encourage timely payments, ensure fairness, and maintain the financial stability of the College's graduate program.

Payment Due Dates

1. All tuition and applicable fees must be paid in full by the published due date each semester, as stated in the Academic Calendar and Billing Statement.
2. Students receiving financial aid, tuition assistance, or scholarships must ensure all required documentation is submitted and processed before the payment deadline to avoid late fees.

Late Fee Assessment

1. A late fee of \$50 will be charged to the student's account if payment is not received by the due date.
2. If the balance remains unpaid 14 calendar days after the due date, an additional late fee of \$50 will be applied.
3. No more than two late fees will be charged per semester for the same outstanding balance.

Holds on Student Accounts

1. Accounts with an unpaid balance 30 days after the due date will have a financial hold placed.
2. A financial hold will prevent:
 3. Registration for future courses
 4. Release of transcripts or diplomas
 5. Participation in graduation ceremonies

Exceptions and Appeals

1. Students experiencing financial hardship or extraordinary circumstances may submit a Late Fee Waiver Request to the Office of Student Accounts within 10 business days of the late fee being posted.
2. Approval is at the discretion of the College's Operations Manager or Chief Financial Officer.

Communication of Late Fees

1. All late fees will be posted to the student's account and visible in the College's online billing portal.
2. The College will notify students of late charges by email; however, it remains the student's responsibility to monitor their account.

Payment Methods

1. Payments may be made online via the student portal, by mail, or in person at the Office of Student Accounts.
2. Payments must be received (not just mailed) by the deadline to avoid late fees.

Refund Policy

100% of tuition and fees paid will be refunded if a student withdraws from a course by the last day of the second week of classes.

Students who withdraw during the third week of classes will receive a 75% refund of tuition and fees paid.

Students who withdraw during the fourth week of classes will receive a 50% refund of tuition and fees paid.

After the last day of the fourth week of classes, students who withdraw will not receive any refund of payments made and are liable for the full tuition and fees charged.

In one-week intensive courses during the Winter or Summer term, refunds are only possible if a student withdraws by the end of the second day of classes. Otherwise, the student is liable for full payment of fees and tuition.

Withdrawal Policy

A student may withdraw from a course until the last day of the 11th week of classes with a transcript notation of W. Even if the student withdraws, the student is liable for full tuition and fees owed.

Students who do not withdraw by the last day of the 11th week of classes by 5:00 PM will receive the grade earned.

Add/Drop Policy

Students may add or drop courses until 5:00 PM on the last day of the second week of classes in a fall or spring 15-week semester.

Students who drop a course during the second week of classes in a 15- week semester will not have a transcript notation for courses dropped. Students who drop a course after the second day of a one-week intensive course will not have a transcript notation for the course.

A student who does not drop a course by 5:00 PM of the second week of classes in a 15-week semester or the second day of a one-week intensive course, but withdraws from a course after this time, will have a transcript notation of W.

Full tuition and fees charged are due and payable after the last day of the fourth week of classes. See the Refund Policy above for percentages of refunds for withdrawals in the first four weeks of classes.

Leave of Absence Policy and Procedure

Students who find it necessary to interrupt their planned program of study due to serious life difficulties (medical, family, employment, etc.) may request a leave of absence by submitting a Leave of Absence Form to the Admissions Officer/ Registrar. Leaves of Absence are not granted for more than one academic year.

Students who have not registered for classes for four consecutive academic semesters and have not been granted a Leave of Absence will be removed from the program with notification. They may reapply if they wish to resume their studies, but will be subject to the program requirements at the time of re-admission.

Absentee Policy

Students are expected to maintain regular class attendance and to be prepared through completing assigned readings and other requirements to be able to participate in discussions during the class sessions. Each faculty member shall state his or her attendance policy in the course's syllabus. If the instructor allows makeup work, students who miss a class session should contact the instructor to plan to complete any coursework.

Academic Probation

A cumulative grade point average of less than 2.3 results in academic probation. Students have one semester to raise their cumulative GPA to 2.3.

Costs, Fees, and Financial Assistance

Tuition and Fees

Tuition

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

Course tuition (3 credits): \$1500.

Net cost of the 36-credit MAIS program: \$19,400.

Fees

Administrative Fee: \$100

Late Payment Fee: \$50

Library and Student Support Fee: \$25 per course Technology Fee: \$50 per course

Audit Fees

Each Course: \$400

Alumni: \$300

Seniors (60+): \$300.

Transcript Fee: Transcripts may be requested to be sent either electronically or through USPS (hard copy) to the student or to other institutions or organizations at the student's or alumnus'/a's request. Each transcript costs \$10.

Scholarship Policy and Procedure

Application Procedure

Students applying for a scholarship are required to submit an online scholarship application form with a statement of career goals explaining their educational background and professional objectives, and how this degree and financial aid will help them achieve their goals.

All applicants, after completing their application process, will receive a letter from the Admissions officer regarding the financial aid decision. Applications may be submitted through the RGS website.

General

1. Scholarships are allocated based on the economic status of the student (i. e. need based Scholarship)
2. Scholarships are allocated based on students' academic ability and future aspirations (i. e., merit-based scholarship)

Timeline

Applications will have a specified due date depending on the program start date and will be evaluated in a timely manner. Funds will be allocated before the program start date as determined by the scholarship.

Eligibility of Applicants

A student may apply for more than one scholarship, although there may be restrictions which are described in the application or by the Admissions Officer-Registrar.

Immediate family members and grandchildren of the individuals in any of the following groups are not eligible for any scholarship in a particular year:

1. Individuals directly involved in the selection process, including the current members of the Scholarship Selection Committee.
2. Current members of the Board of Trustees of RGS.
3. Full-time employees of the RGS.
4. Scholarship Selection Committee ("the Committee")

Scholarship Committee voting members are composed of:

1. One full-time staff member of the RGS
2. Two faculty members

The primary responsibility of the Committee is to evaluate applications for scholarships and to select recipients for those awards. The Committee may also recommend changes to the scholarship applications and/or the policies that govern the overall management of the scholarships.

Membership of the Scholarship Committee

Members should have familiarity with the current pool of applicants. The Committee will vote based on a simple majority. Votes may be taken by electronic means (e. g., email, telephone). The Committee will meet as necessary to accomplish its tasks. Committee members may attend by electronic means (e. g. , via a voice or video connection). The Committee's choice of recipient for a scholarship will not be subject to approval by the President's Cabinet or the full Board of Trustees.

Applications

Applications for scholarships are available on the RGS website. Scholarships may be publicized in other media channels. When submitted, applications become the property of RGS. They will be treated in a confidential manner and will be seen only by the Committee and the Admissions Officer, who processes the applications and notifies students of decisions of the Scholarship Committee. Portions of an application will be released to others outside RGS only with the applicant's permission or in accordance with rules specific to a particular scholarship.

General Conditions:

1. Scholarships are available to both part-time and full-time students, whether enrolled in-person or at a distance.
2. Full-time students are those who maintain a course load of 9 credits per semester.
3. Part-time students are those who maintain at least 3 credits per semester.
4. Satisfactory Academic Process Requirement: Scholarship students must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA at RGS. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 are put on Scholarship Probation and will be given one semester to bring their cumulative GPA up to 3.0. If a cumulative GPA of 3.0 is not achieved within one semester, the scholarship may be withdrawn. The Registrar oversees follow-up on Scholarship Probation.

Need-Based Scholarship:

Need-based scholarships are awarded according to the student's enrollment status and demonstrated financial need.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Have a GPA of 3.0 or above.

2. All applicants must demonstrate financial need to be considered for any level of scholarship. Applicants must clearly explain their financial circumstances, provide documentation, and express how the scholarship will assist them in continuing their studies.

Application Requirements:

Each applicant must submit a Scholarship Statement detailing:

1. The reason they are requesting financial assistance.
2. Any supporting factors (family, work, or personal obligations) that affect their ability to pay tuition.
3. How receiving the scholarship will support their academic and professional goals.

The applicant must also provide at least one letter of recommendation supporting their application for a scholarship.

If the scholarship is granted, the student must maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA at Respect.

Scholarship Award Levels

Scholarship amounts are determined based on enrollment type and mode of study, as follows:

Merit-Based Scholarships

Merit-based scholarships recognize students with exceptional academic performance and previous achievements. These scholarships are highly competitive and awarded based on GPA, academic background, and scholarly accomplishments.

Eligibility Criteria:

To apply for a merit-based scholarship, applicants must meet at least one of the following:

1. Have a GPA of 3.8 or above (undergraduate or graduate study).
2. Hold a previous master's degree or equivalent advanced qualification.
3. Demonstrate significant academic achievements, such as publications, awards, or community service in education or research.

Application Requirements:

1. Submit a detailed essay explaining why you deserve the scholarship, outlining your academic accomplishments and future goals.

2. Provide at least one letter of recommendation supporting your merit-based qualifications.
3. Maintain a minimum GPA of 3.5 or above in all semesters to retain the scholarship.

The Graduate Assistant Scholarship:

Respect Graduate School is proud to offer the Graduate Assistant Scholarship, a prestigious award designed to support students in their academic and professional growth.

Eligibility and Stipends:

The Graduate Assistant Scholarship at RGS is available exclusively to students who qualify for full tuition coverage, and an annual stipend of \$17,800 to cover living expenses. To be eligible, students must meet the following criteria:

1. Maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 in the MAIS program and maintain satisfactory academic progress.
2. Demonstrate a background that adheres to the teachings of Fethullah Gulen.

Graduate assistants will be required to work up to 15 hours per week on campus, primarily within the Academic and/or Student Services Departments. These tasks are designed to enhance the academic and scholarly development of the student, under the guidance of the deans or their designees.

Academic Responsibilities:

Graduate assistants are expected to actively participate in a variety of academic activities, including:

1. Book discussions and book clubs
2. Seminars and symposiums
3. Conferences and other scholarly events

These activities will be assigned by the Dean of Academics and faculty members to enrich the academic experience of the students.

Additional Responsibilities:

Beyond academic tasks, graduate assistants may also be called upon to:

1. Work in the Admissions Office/Recruitment

2. Assist with RGS conferences and events
3. Support projects led by the Academic Dean, Student Dean, or CFO
4. Assist with library projects
5. Participate in institutional research projects

Duration of Assignments:

The duration of the Graduate Scholarship is three consecutive full-time semesters. Assignments may extend beyond the fall and spring semesters to include winter and/or summer terms, based on the needs of RGS and the nature of the projects. In such cases, a specific signed agreement will be developed prior to the commencement of the extended assignment.

Contract and Supervision:

Each graduate assistant will receive a contract before the start of each year, outlining their duties and obligations. This contract must be signed to confirm the assistant's commitment to fulfil the required work. The Dean of Students will provide details on the specific duties for the semester. A weekly timesheet must be submitted to the supervisor to ensure proper documentation of work performed. Performance Evaluation and Consequences for Non-Compliance: Performance evaluations will be conducted at the end of each semester. It is imperative for graduate assistants to meet all assigned duties and maintain high standards of performance. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in serious consequences, including a reduction in stipends or the loss of the scholarship, as determined by the Academic Affairs Committee.

This scholarship offers a unique opportunity for students to advance their academic careers while contributing to the RGS community. We encourage all eligible students to apply and take advantage of this exceptional opportunity.

Process

Receipt of applications

The Admissions Officer-Registrar will receive applications in electronic form and bring them forward to the Scholarship Committee. Applicants must indicate the type of scholarship they are requesting (Need, Merit-based, or Graduate Assistant Scholarship) when filling out the application.

Evaluation of applicants and selection of recipients

After an application's due date has passed, the Scholarship Committee will meet as needed to review and evaluate the applications for scholarship

Notification of recipients

On or before a scholarship's notification date, the RGS will notify the recipients of scholarships in writing or by some other method of the RGS's choosing.

Preservation of records

The originals of all applications, the original redacted applications, and (if desired) the Committee's worksheets will be preserved in the RGS archives on SharePoint for a normative period of time.

Presentation and payment of the scholarship

The presentation of a scholarship will be in accordance with the policies and practices of RGS. RGS will determine the timing, amounts, and payees for scholarship funds.

Academic Resources

Respect Library (RL)

The mission of the RL is to acquire, organize, preserve, interpret, and provide access to information resources that support the teaching, research, and service missions of the RGS. In this respect, the RL acquires new and out-of-print materials and preserves current holdings in consultation with the Dean of Academics. Moreover, it organizes and preserves current holdings and new acquisitions of published materials, in accordance with the mission of the library. It also provides and maintains the electronic infrastructure for the library in the form of an online catalog/circulation system. The RL effectively acquires, organizes, preserves, interprets, and provides access to digital collections using the online catalog. Similarly, it provides access to the periodicals collection.

Online Access for Faculty and Students

The primary mission of the RL is to provide easy, fast, and convenient access to the research resources for the faculty and the students of RGS. An important aspect of this mission will be carried out through online access service that the RL will provide. To accomplish this mission, the RL

uses software called *Populi*. *Populi* is a web-based college learning and information management software which serves as the base for the operations of the library as well.

Populi catalogs the library holdings, imports the MARC records, and provides online access to the catalog for staff, faculty, and students. This is accomplished through automatic patron privileges by the creation of a unique profile for each patron so that the RL can track the loans, holds, and fines. *Populi* can also operate as an online bookstore. It gives an opportunity for the RL staff to customize their own categories and featured items and generates Buy Now links for any item placed on the bookstore.

The *Populi* subscription is continuously maintained and updated by responsive, knowledgeable, and honest customer support. This feature of the whole system provides smooth online access to the library for the whole the RGS community.

The Respect Library Physical Resources

RGS provides a large main hall for the physical holdings of the library, and which has access to a private reading yard that gives a pleasant, natural environment for the students to read and study. In addition to this main hall and reading yard, another large room is also provided right across from the library as a study room. The study room provides RGS students with a physical environment for their personal and collaborative study. Permanent assignment of the room will not be made to any student, faculty, academic group, or social organization. Students will use the room on a first come first served basis unless it is reserved on a short-term basis by any party of the RGS community.

The Respect Library Technological Resources

The RL is also equipped with both computers and printers capable of printing, scanning, copying, and faxing. Scanning and faxing (local) are provided free of charge. However, there will be charges for copying and printing.

WiFi

Respect Unplugged is the wireless internet service for the RGS community. It provides fast speed and encrypted traffic for the users authenticated with a Respect Network ID (RID) from multiple locations across campus with no limits on what the user can access.

The RL Print Holdings

The RL has been established to address the needs of students as well as faculty members, for both teaching and research purposes. After researching similar programs, reviewing the holding lists of several universities, consulting with Islamic Studies and Middle Eastern Studies bibliographers and interacting with faculty, RGS has assembled a list of reference materials and books.

Currently, the RL holds around 12,000 volumes. They are held in the main library on the first floor, in the Reference Library of the first-floor conference room nearby, and in the Archive Library on the second floor.

The RL Digital Holdings

JSTOR: Religion & Theology: The JSTOR Religion & Theology Collection covers the history and philosophy of religious thought spanning traditions, periods, and critical approaches. The collection contains numerous titles, drawn from existing JSTOR Arts and Sciences collections. It supports religious studies research as well as scholarship in archaeology, literature, philosophy, and more.

In addition to JSTOR, numerous open access electronic databases have been reviewed and linked to the student's Populi account.

Since some essential works of Islamic Studies have existed for centuries, for instance, works on Tafsir, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence and other Islamic classical sciences, a tremendous number of books are available in the public domain. Aware of this fact, the RL has done extensive research to gather digital content from the public domain. As a result of this work, the RL has gathered more than 30,000 PDF files of books in Islamic Studies. Combined with other formats of e-books, such as CHM, e-Pub, and doc files, the RL currently possesses more than 40,000 files of electronic material related to Islamic, Middle Eastern, Near Eastern and Religious studies. A vast majority of these materials are in Arabic, but there are also Turkish and English publications.

The RL's CD Inventory

In order to enhance the computer-based scholarly resources, The RL has an Arabic CD inventory that covers primary sources for Islamic Sciences. This inventory is as follows:

- *Al-Mudawwanah Version 1.0*: This is a classical work on Islamic jurisprudence by Imam Malik.

- *Al-Mughni Version 1.0*: This is a comparative study of Islamic law by one of the leading Muslim Jurists, Ibn Qudamah.
- *Al-Umm*: This is the first book penned in Islamic History about Islamic jurisprudence.
- *Economic Fatwas (Legal Opinions in Economy) Version 3.0*: This CD includes questions that are addressed to contemporary Muslim Jurists from all schools of thought and their answers to these questions. It contains more than 500 titles.
- [Fatawa Ibn Taimiah](#) (*Legal Opinions of Ibn Taimiah*): This CD is about the scholarly inheritance of the prolific writer and Muslim scholar Ibn Taimiyah. The CD includes all writings of this pioneer figure of Islamic history. The written material by Ibn Taimiyah amounts to over 17,000 pages.
- *Hadith Encyclopedia Version 2.1*: This CD includes the major hadith encyclopedias and the explanatory books that are written about them. The CD includes more than 62,000 hadith and their explanations in more 7,000 subtitles. The CD is user-friendly and provides the researcher with all the possible tools that a computer program can offer.
- *History of Islam Version 1.0*: This CD includes a classical encyclopedia for the history of Islam, al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, by Ibn Kathir. The CD also includes a contemporary encyclopedia regarding the history of Islam by Dr. Abd al-Salam al-Tarmanini. The complete name of the encyclopedia is History of Islam in its chronological order.
- *Islamic Dictionary Version 2.0*: This CD covers the meanings of over 55,000 Islamic terms in English, French, Malay, and Indonesian.
- *Islamic Gallery Version 1.0*: This CD introduces the subject of fine arts throughout Islamic history.
- *Jurisprudence of Inheritance Version 3.1*: This CD includes an extensive inventory regarding the jurisprudence of inheritance. The CD provides versions of the texts in Arabic, Turkish, English, German, Indonesian, Malay, and Spanish.
- *Pioneers of Islamic Civilization 2.0*: This CD introduces about 70 Muslim scientists who greatly influenced the human history, and their writings.

- *Rights in Islam Version 1.0*: This CD includes the jurisprudential books about the subject of human rights from an Islamic perspective.
- *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala Version 2.0*: This CD includes the famous encyclopedia of biographical history by Dahabi. It offers over 2,000 biographies of Muslim scholars.
- [Tahfizh al-Qur'an](#) (*Words and Phrases of the Qur'an*) Version 1.0: This CD is a user-friendly lexicon for the words and phrases of the Qur'anic text.

For Reference Help or General Questions: Contact library@respectgs.us

Library Sharing Arrangements

Respect Graduate School supplements the physical and electronic holdings of the RL through an agreement with the Reeves Library of Moravian College in Bethlehem. As part of this cooperative agreement, RGS students can borrow the physical holdings of Reeves Library. 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, students should present their RGS student ID at Reeves Library. Students should observe and adhere to the borrowing policies set forth by Reeves and maintain a good standing on their library account.

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, enabling students to track their loans, holds, fines, and renewals.

Computer/Copier/Printer Info

The Respect Library currently provides computers for students to use. The Respect Library is also equipped with a black-and-white printer capable of printing, scanning, and copying.

Respect Unplugged is the wireless Internet service for the RGS community. It provides fast speed and encrypted traffic for users authenticated with a Respect Network ID (RID) from multiple locations across campus, with no limits on what the user can access.

Library Services

Research and Writing Assistance

Respect Graduate School offers writing assistance with research and writing to its students through the Dean of Students, the faculty, and the librarian.

The Dean of Students and faculty offer Writing Workshops each semester. The Dean also offers regular office hours in the Spring and Fall semester during which she assists students with their writing assignments. Students may make appointments with the Dean of Students through Teams to get individualized assistance. Writing Workshop topics include defining terms, thesis and argument formation, formatting papers according to the Chicago Manual of Style, locating and evaluating scholarly resources, citing sources properly, and creating a bibliography.

The library also offers online writing and reference services, e-mail and in-person support. Students may e-mail their instructor or the librarian for assistance with research and writing at library@respectgs.us. There are also writing resources online through Populi.

Library Policies Borrowing

All currently enrolled RGS students, faculty, staff, administration, alumni, affiliates of other area colleges, and non-affiliated members of the community may borrow items from Respect Library. See details below.

Respect Graduate School Students

Students currently enrolled for classes may borrow up to 20 items (books, videos, and audio CDs, etc.) for a period of four weeks. Items may be renewed three times. Borrowers must display a valid RGS ID card to borrow materials.

Faculty, Staff, Administration

Faculty, staff, and administration may borrow an unlimited number of items for a period of four months. Items may be renewed twice. All borrowers must display a valid RGS ID card to borrow materials.

Respect Graduate School Alumni

Alumni may apply for a free alumni library card. Alumni may borrow a total of 10 items for a period of four weeks. Items may be renewed once.

Students/Faculty at Area Colleges

Students and faculty from Moravian College who are currently enrolled for classes may borrow up to 5 items for a period of three weeks. These items may be renewed once. Both groups of borrowers (students and faculty) must display a current validated ID card from their home institution to obtain a Respect Library card and borrow materials. (Note: RGS students and faculty also have borrowing privileges at these institutions.)

Non-affiliated Community Members (paying customers)

Members of the community may receive a library card for a \$25.00 annual fee. Community members may borrow a total of 5 items at one time. Books circulate for three weeks. Items may be renewed once.

Request/Hold Resources via Library Catalog

Resources currently checked out may be placed on hold through the library's online public access catalog. The librarian will hold these resources for pickup for two days upon return.

Fines and Fees

All students (RGS and non-RGS), alumni, and paying customers are subject to late fees for overdue materials.

The fine schedule is as follows: Books, DVDs, CDs, CD-ROMs: \$10. 00 each per week following the date due. The maximum fine is \$80. 00 per item.

Lost Item Replacement Fee: Once an item is 60 days past due it is considered lost. A lost item fee of \$15. 00 will be added to the borrower's library account. The borrower will be responsible for all overdue fines that have accrued, the \$15. 00 lost item fee, and the replacement cost of the item.

Suspension of borrowing privileges: Students are permitted to carry a balance of \$80. 00 before borrowing privileges are suspended.

Student Academic Services

Academic Advising

Students are encouraged to develop regular contact with their faculty advisor from their first semester. The academic advising of students is an integral part of RGS faculty's teaching obligations. Students should request appointments with their academic advisor by phone or on Teams. Students should feel free to ask questions and seek academic guidance to facilitate successful completion of the degree. Faculty offer appointments to their students and advisees during the office hours posted in their syllabi.

Advising Before Enrollment

The Respect Graduate School website provides accurate, up-to-date information to students about its degree program, its cost, financial aid from RGS, the academic background and research interests of the faculty, and degree requirements. Students can also find information about the average time for the completion of a degree, the average amount and types of financial aid available, and the record of our graduates' post-degree achievements. Prospective students should contact the Admissions Officer with their questions at . The Admissions Officer advises prospective students on the application and scholarship processes and may refer them to the Dean of Academics or faculty for more in-depth information. admissions@respectgs.us

Advising New Students

New students are advised on the courses they should take during their first semester. The Dean of Academic Affairs assigns a faculty member to be the academic advisor to each student. The advisor's primary duty is to help advisees assess their academic strengths, weaknesses, and interests, and assist them in choosing courses.

Advising Continuing Students

Advisors evaluate their advisees' progress and performance each semester and assist them in choosing their courses. They offer suggestions, support, and advice as needed.

Advising and Supporting Graduating Students

Faculty advisors help graduating students find future employment or pursue further graduate study. This assistance includes helping students prepare successful applications, including résumé-writing

and curriculum vitae (CV) preparation, and interviewing; providing information about employment and study opportunities; helping students obtain letters of recommendation for job applications or doctoral programs or other educational opportunities; and encouraging student participation in, or awareness of, networking possibilities.

Additionally, RGS offers workshops to students on the difference between building a brief résumé for a job application vs. a curriculum vitae (CV) for a doctoral program application, writing statements of purpose, and other skills such as interviewing.

Workshops by working professionals on employment options for which the MA in Islamic Studies is useful are regularly offered through the Dean of Students Office.

The formation of an Alumni Association is underway in 2026. The Alumni Association will be another source of advising and support for RGS students.

Advising of Final Research Paper Students

The final research paper advisor ensures that each graduating student initiates the final paper research; schedules regular meetings with their advisees to discuss their research and writing and returns comments on drafts in a timely manner. They may also clarify co-authorship publication practices. They take primary responsibility for ensuring that the student submits their final research paper and defends it timely.

Career Advising and Professional Development of Students

The Dean of Academics, the faculty, and the Dean of Students provide career advising and counseling to students and offer a variety of career development workshops:

Doctoral Workshops: These workshops are designed for students who intend to enroll in doctoral degrees. These workshops are given by invited speakers on topics of interest to students aiming to apply to various types of doctoral programs. The goal of these workshops is to provide guidance for acceptance to Ph.D. programs, perseverance in doctoral programs, and opportunities in the field of Islamic Studies and related fields.

Workshops on Leadership Positions in Muslim Non-Profit Organizations

Workshops on Careers requiring Islamic Studies backgrounds

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, RGS is creating 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.

Physical Health Counseling and Services

Respect Graduate School does not have its own Physical Health Counseling or Services. However, there are several nearby hospitals with emergency departments which students can access. St. Luke's University Hospital - Bethlehem and Lehigh Valley Hospital–Muhlenberg are the primary hospitals with 24/7 emergency departments serving Bethlehem, PA. St. Luke's features a Level 1 Trauma Center, while LVH–Muhlenberg offers a Level II Trauma Center, both providing comprehensive, round-the-clock emergency care for severe injuries and illnesses.

St. Luke's University Hospital – Bethlehem (Emergency Room)

Location: 801 Ostrum St, Bethlehem, PA 18015

Details: 24/7 emergency care, Level I Trauma Center, Certified Stroke Center, and a Quick Care program for minor injuries.

Lehigh Valley Hospital – Muhlenberg (Emergency Room)

Location: 2545 Schoenersville Rd, Bethlehem, PA 18017

Details: 24/7 emergency care, Level II Trauma Center, and comprehensive cardiac and surgical care.

Both locations provide comprehensive care for severe symptoms such as chest pain, severe injuries, or acute illnesses.

For emergency care, injuries, and illnesses, RGS students may also be directed to the Airport Road Emergency 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.

Extracurricular Activities and Student Council

Extracurricular and Co-curricular Life

Extracurricular and cocurricular activities at RGS greatly enhance the value of the RGS experience. Students can establish clubs and interest groups. Faculty work with staff and students to offer co-curricular events such as lecture series and conferences, both on and off-campus. 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 the RGS mission, vision, and mandates. Clubs such as the Alchemy of Knowledge (academic lectures provided by both internal and external scholars), the Enlightened Circle (Quran and Tafsir Club), and Beyond the Frame (film club) are some of the clubs that students have established. Students interested in establishing a new club or reviving a past club are encouraged to connect with the SC President and the Dean of Students to learn the process and procedure and access a budget to start a club. The Dean of Students is to be informed about, and to approve, the formal establishment of a student group.

Student Council

The student organization which represents students and their interests in RGS governance is the Student Council. The SC is composed of the students and their elected representatives. The purpose of the SC is to provide a forum for student needs and concerns, to facilitate and organize activities, and to encourage mutual cooperation. All students enrolled at RGS will be members of the SC and will be eligible to vote on matters presented to the student body. Officers, elected annually by the members, lead the SC and represent the voice of the students.

Student Participation in Institutional Governance

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 SC. Students are encouraged to attend Student Council meetings to share their views and concerns on topics of interest with their elected officers. The President or Vice President of the Student Council represents student views at meetings of RGS committees such as search committees, graduation committees, strategic planning, and at meetings of the Board of Trustees.

Student Recreational and Cultural Opportunities

Respect Graduate School encourages students to participate in 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 in general is a significant cultural area. The Bethlehem and Allentown Public Libraries are free and

open to student memberships. Excellent art museums and galleries can be found, both as free-standing institutions and institutions affiliated with the area's colleges and universities.

Support of Student Well-being

The Dean of Students aims to support student well-being by offering weekly office hours online according to student schedules. The Dean of Students may be contacted by email with any issue of interest or concern. The Dean responds to requests for meetings outside of regular business hours to meet student needs.

Students who experience any type of challenge or difficulty in life are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support. The Dean of Students is available to students to help resolve academic issues but also to be an active listener regarding a student's family or financial issues, physical or mental health issues, spiritual or religious issues.

The Director of Religious Services is a chaplain and imam who is available to students for personal and spiritual guidance. The imam conducts the Friday Congregational Prayer at mid-day and leads several of the daily congregational prayers. Students may make appointments with him directly. The Dean of Students may refer students as needed to him or to our female chaplain director of the English Marriage and Family School.

Students who have experienced a crime or abuse may directly access the free services of the Crime Victims Council of Lehigh Valley through their hotline at (610) 437-6611 or they may access the free services of Turning Point through their hotline at (610) 437-3369. The Dean of Students may refer students to either of these agencies for support if they would like to take advantage of the services offered.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Respect's commitments include the protection of students' rights to fair policies, procedures, and practices in the areas of academic rights (access to catalog, syllabi, grades, academic standing); procedural Rights (grievance procedures, disciplinary due process); privacy Rights (FERPA protections, confidentiality of records); reasonable rights to accommodation (disability accommodations process); and non-discrimination Rights (equal access to programs and services). These rights are delineated throughout the policies and procedures in this catalog and the student handbook.

By enrolling in RGS, the student signifies agreement to abide by the established institutional 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.

Student Rights Related to Educational Records

Although Respect Graduate School does not participate in federal financial aid under Title IV nor does it receive any federal financial support, it aims to adhere to the general regulations related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 and its amendments as a best practice. As such, RGS has a records retention practice, which is based on the published American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers' (AACRAO) Retention of Records Management: Guide for Retention and Disposal of Student Records (2019 Edition) . RGS retains written documents submitted to its archives in Sharepoint.

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

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

1. 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
2. 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 because of RGS attendance, e. g., tutors and work-study students, are educational records
3. 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*)

4. 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
5. 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:

1. 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
2. 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 their rights under FERPA. RGS does not require waivers, and no institutional service shall be denied to students who fail 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:

1. 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
2. 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, permission to transfer educational records is implicit in the request
3. Officials of other schools in which the student is currently enrolled
4. Persons or organizations providing student financial aid, to determine the amount, eligibility, or conditions of an award and to enforce the terms of an award
5. Accrediting organizations carrying out their functions
6. 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
7. State and federal officials to whom disclosure is required by state statute adopted prior to November 19, 1974
8. 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
9. Persons in compliance with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena, if a reasonable effort is made to notify the student
10. 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 able to deal with the emergency

Institutional Records of Disclosure

Respect Graduate School 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

Respect Graduate School 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 Students. 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 settles such challenges is made up of the Dean of Academics, the Vice President of Operations and Finance, 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 may remove or dispose of materials in student records when they are no longer accurate, relevant, or needed. For example, letters of recommendation may be discarded after they have served their intended purpose.

Student Grievance Policy

Respect Graduate School encourages the promotion and informal resolution of grievances as they arise and provides recourse to orderly procedures for the satisfactory resolution of complaints. A grievance can include, but is not limited to, a complaint, misinterpretation, or inequitable application of stated or implied policies, regulations, or expectations.

The basics of the student grievance procedure is as follows: If a student has a grievance against another person, she or he should first speak directly to that person and then, if the matter is not resolved, he/she may refer the matter to that person's immediate superior and, if necessary, to proceed through the chain of responsibility all the way up to the Dean of Students' office.

If it is necessary to file a written complaint and to process a grievance through the formal chain of responsibility, the full process is explained below.

Student Grievance Procedure

The student shall prepare and submit a formal grievance to the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students shall meet with the individual(s) involved and shall make a ruling on the complaint. Once the ruling has been rendered, it will be given to the student orally and later in written form. If the student ascertains that satisfactory resolution was not made, the Dean of Students shall appoint and convene a Student Grievance Committee composed of a faculty member, a staff member, and a student. Any faculty or staff member involved in the complaint will not be appointed to the committee. This committee shall conduct its hearings and report its actions within 60 days of the initial report of the grievance.

Once the committee is appointed, the members will be given a copy of the student's written complaint and a summary of the meeting(s) convened by the Dean of the Students in order to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

Once the committee members have had an opportunity to review the materials provided, a meeting shall be arranged with the individual(s) and the committee involved. The Dean of Students is to arrange and chair the meeting(s). At the meeting, the student may present evidence supporting his or her grievance. It is the responsibility of the committee members to ask the students and the other persons involved in the complaint questions to clarify the information provided in the written complaint and/or the summary of the previous meeting(s).

Once all the evidence has been reviewed, the committee, using a simple majority vote, will make a ruling on the complaint. If the grievance involves a grade rendered by a faculty member, the grade appeals process should be initiated as described elsewhere in this handbook.

Decisions made by the committee will be given to the student orally and, later, in written form.

If the student perceives that a satisfactory resolution of the complaint has still not been resolved, a complaint may be filed with the President of RGS. The President can involve any appropriate school personnel in the process to resolve the complaint. The decision of the President and/or the assigned designees is final. The final resolution is to be filed with the Dean of Students' office.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment is prohibited. 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. It also includes if 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 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:

1. Unwelcome sexual advances or propositions (whether or not they involve unwelcome physical touching)
2. 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
3. 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
4. Stalking, cyber-stalking or general intimidation of a sexual nature
5. Sexual innuendo, sexually suggestive comments, or the use of sexually explicit or vulgar language
6. Sexually oriented teasing or practical jokes; "humor" about gender-specific traits
7. Suggestive body language or gestures
8. Displays or transmission of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, posters, cartoons or other printed or visual material,
9. Leering, whistling or physical contact, such as unwelcome touching, patting, pinching, or brushing against another's body
10. Continued requests to socialize, on or off duty, on or off campus, when a community member has indicated rejection or lack of interest
11. Continued writing of sexually suggestive notes or letters when it is known or should be known that the addressee does not welcome them
12. Derogatory or provocative remarks relating to an employee's sex or sexual orientation

Harassment Investigation Procedure

The President shall appoint a Harassment Hearing Team on an as-needed basis to address any complaints of harassment that may arise during the academic year. The Hearing Team shall be composed of a minimum of three (3) trained members, consisting of at least one faculty member and at least two staff members.

The composition of the Hearing Team shall reflect diversity of perspectives and shall be formed in a manner consistent with applicable federal and state nondiscrimination laws. All members of the

Hearing Team shall receive appropriate training related to harassment investigation, due process, confidentiality, and trauma-informed practices.

The names of appointed Hearing Team members shall be communicated to the relevant parties at the time a complaint is initiated, in accordance with institutional procedures and privacy requirements.

1. Several options are available to an individual to informally address an incident of alleged harassment.

- a. The individual may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the alleged harasser. Should the individual not be comfortable initiating a discussion on her or his own, she or he may discuss the issue confidentially with any member of the Harassment Hearing Team and receive guidance and support for attempting to resolve the matter directly with the alleged harasser.
- b. The individual may report the incident of alleged harassment to the supervisor (in the case of students, to the Dean of Students) in an effort to resolve the matter.
- c. In the event that these informal efforts to resolve the complaint by the individual may not be wise, appropriate, or successful, the individual may request that the Harassment Hearing Team attempt to resolve the issue ~~informally~~. A record of the complaint and its resolution will be maintained in the minutes of the Hearing Team, which shall be kept confidential and on file with Human Resources.

2. Formal Proceedings: If an informal resolution does not seem possible or is not successful, and if the matter is not settled within fifteen (15) working days, the complainant and the Harassment Hearing Team will institute formal proceedings immediately. These will include the following steps:

- a. Gather oral and written statements from the parties involved in the alleged harassment, and from others who may have pertinent information, such as witnesses, qualified professional consultants, etc. The respondent may appear before the Hearing Team and present witnesses on his or her behalf.
- b. Determine actions appropriate to resolve the matter; these may include the following:
 - i. If the finding is that harassment has occurred, the Harassment Hearing

Team shall call upon the appropriate body or officer of the school to take action. Such action may include one or more of the following:

- A formal written reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior
- Recommending or requiring remedial action, such as, but not limited to, psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling or treatment, and education
- Probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined
- Suspension or dismissal from the Institution

ii. If the finding is that no harassment has occurred:

- The supervisor, if involved, and members of the Hearing Team, shall contact only those persons whose participation ~~is~~ was necessary to investigate the complaint and shall otherwise keep the facts of the investigation confidential.
- A written summary of the Hearing Team's proceedings will be maintained in their minutes and filed with the HR office or with the Dean of Students or both, which shall always be kept confidential

3. Appeal Process:

- a. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the Hearing Team, he or she has the right to appeal in writing, within 30 days, to the President of the school, who may review and affirm or alter the disposition.
- b. The President will resolve the matter, with the discretion to consider any further evidence that he may deem necessary before making his final determination. The decision of the President is final.

Procedures for Resolving Student Allegations of Discrimination

Nondiscrimination Policy

Respect Graduate School is a welcoming community. We embrace and value the diversity of all members of the campus community. RGS does not discriminate 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, mental or physical disability, use of guide or support animals and/or mechanical aids, or on any other basis protected by applicable local, state, and federal laws.

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

Informal Procedures

The student should discuss the matter with the person whom they believe has treated them in a discriminatory way first, and if the issue is not resolved, they may discuss it with their advisor or the Dean of Students.

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 by filing a Student Grievance. See the procedure above under Student Grievance Policy and Student Grievance Procedure.

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 who the target is. A timely written report will enable the institution to respond rapidly in investigating the allegations and 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 of Operations and Finance or the President.

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 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.

Judicial Authority

Responsibility for the administration of the disciplinary process rests with the Dean of Students. Upon a complaint or allegation of student misconduct, a judicial body may be appointed by the Dean of Students 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 Students 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 Students, consisting of a faculty member, an administrator, and a student appointed by the president of the Student Council.

In cases where a violation is admitted, a clear precedent exists, and there are no complicating factors, a decision shall be issued by the Dean of Students 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.

Rights of the Respondent

If the need for a hearing arises, the respondent has the right:

1. To have the hearing within a reasonable period of time after a charge is filed
2. To receive notice of the time and place of the hearing and of specific charges
3. 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

4. To elect not to attend a hearing; in such cases, the hearing shall be conducted solely on the basis of the evidence available
5. To refuse to answer or make a statement; however, decisions will be based on the evidence available
6. To have at the hearing a member of the faculty, administration or SGA 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
7. To receive written documentation of the outcome of a hearing and any sanctions imposed
8. To request an appeal of the outcome of a hearing

Rights of the Complainant

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

1. To be treated with dignity and seriousness
2. To be free of intimidation that may occur because of a case
3. In a case of sexual assault, to be informed of the status and outcome of the case
4. 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
5. 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 Dean of Students, or their designee. Any charge should be submitted as soon as possible after the event occurs.

The Dean of Students or their designee shall determine the appropriate judicial body for hearing the case.

The hearing process shall include:

1. Written or other appropriate notice of the hearing for the accused student

2. Notice of the charges
3. The opportunity for the person charged to defend against the charges and to present witnesses having direct testimony concerning the charges
4. 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
5. 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 (because 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:

1. **Warning:** a notice in writing that a regulation has been violated.

2. **Restitution:** compensation for loss, damage, or injury, in the form of appropriate service, monetary or material replacement, or both.
3. **Developmental Sanctions:** work assignments, service to RGS, reflection papers, counseling sessions, etc.
4. **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 activities 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.
5. **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.
6. **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 Students within five class days of receipt of the original hearing verdict. The Dean of Students 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 Students are heard by an Appeal Board, which is appointed by the Dean of Students. The Appeal Board is composed of a faculty member, a staff member, and a student who are different from those who heard the original case. They can modify a sanction or call for a rehearing 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:

1. To determine whether the original hearing was fair in its proceedings,
2. To determine if a decision was made contrary to the evidence presented
3. To evaluate the appropriateness of the sanction

4. 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,

The process for appeal of a course grade is as follows:

1. The student is to confer with the faculty member who gave the grade. That discussion is to be a face-to-face opportunity (which includes a Teams or Zoom meeting) 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 Academic Affairs and to state the reasons for requesting such a change. The Dean of Academic Affairs 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 Academic Affairs.
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 Academic Affairs 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 they 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 Academic Affairs in writing of its decision to either sustain the evaluation(s) or grant the appeal.
6. If the student contests the Review Committee's decision, s/he may petition the Dean of Academic Affairs for a decision. The student is to furnish the Dean with the same materials given to the Review Committee and reasons for rejecting the decision of the Review Committee. The Dean's decision will be final.

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

Standards of Confidentiality of Student Records

Respect Graduate School has a retention schedule, which is based on the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers' (AACRAO) Student Records Management: Retention, Disposal, and Archive of Student Records (2019 edition).

RGS retains written documents submitted to the archives indefinitely. Electronic documents are kept on the RGS computer systems indefinitely.

Jurisdiction of the Institution

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

If the activities of students result in violations of the 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 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.

Anti-Hazing Policy

Adopted pursuant to 24 P.S. §5352 et seq. and 18 Pa.C.S. Chapter 28

Policy Statement

Respect Graduate School prohibits hazing in all forms. Hazing is incompatible with the mission, values, and community standards of the Seminary. This prohibition applies to all students, employees, organizations, and other persons associated with RGS, regardless of whether conduct occurs on or off campus. Consent of the victim is not a defense to hazing.

This policy is adopted and maintained in accordance with the Pennsylvania Anti-Hazing Law, 24 P.S. §5352 et seq., and the Timothy J. Piazza Antihazing Law, 18 Pa.C.S. §§2801–2811. Both statutes apply to all institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, irrespective of federal funding status.

Definitions

Hazing (24 P.S. §5352)

“Hazing” means any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a person, or which willfully destroys or removes public or private property, for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, any organization. The term includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) Any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, drug, or other substance, or any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health and safety of the individual;
- (b) Any activity which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as sleep deprivation, forced exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual;
- (c) Any willful destruction or removal of public or private property.

For purposes of this definition, any activity as described above upon which the initiation,

admission, affiliation, or continued membership in an organization is directly or indirectly conditioned shall be presumed to be “forced” activity, the willingness of an individual to participate notwithstanding.

Hazing Offenses Under the Timothy J. Piazza Antihazing Law (18 Pa.C.S. §2802)

Under the Pennsylvania Crimes Code, a person commits the offense of hazing if the person intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly, for the purpose of initiating, admitting, or affiliating a student into or with an organization, or for the purpose of continuing or enhancing a student’s membership or status in an organization, causes, coerces, or forces a student to do any of the following:

- (d) Violate federal or state criminal law;
- (e) Consume any food, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug, or other substance which subjects the student to a risk of emotional or physical harm;
- (f) Endure brutality of a physical nature, including whipping, beating, branding, calisthenics, or exposure to the elements;
- (g) Endure brutality of a mental nature, including activity adversely affecting the mental health or dignity of the individual, sleep deprivation, exclusion from social contact, or conduct that could result in extreme embarrassment;
- (h) Endure brutality of a sexual nature;
- (i) Endure any other activity that creates a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to the student.

Aggravated Hazing (18 Pa.C.S. §2803)

A person commits the offense of aggravated hazing if the person commits hazing that results in serious bodily injury or death and: (a) the person acts with reckless indifference to the health and safety of the student, or (b) the person causes, coerces, or forces the consumption of an alcoholic liquid or drug by the student. Aggravated hazing is a felony of the third degree under Pennsylvania law.

Organization

“Organization” means any fraternity, sorority, association, corporation, order, society, corps, club, or service, social, or similar group, whose members are primarily students or alumni of the organization, an institution, or secondary school, or a national or international organization with

which such a group is affiliated. At RGS, this includes but is not limited to any student group, cohort, study group, ministry team, or other formal or informal association of students recognized by or operating in connection with the Seminary.

Limitation

Hazing does not include reasonable and customary athletic, law enforcement, or military training, contests, competitions, or events.

Prohibited Conduct

No student, employee, organization, or other person associated with RGS shall plan, encourage, or engage in hazing, or acquiesce in hazing while in the presence of or having knowledge of hazing, whether occurring on or off campus. Specifically:

- (j) No person shall engage in any act of hazing as defined in Section 2 of this policy;
- (k) No person shall solicit, direct, aid, or attempt to aid another in hazing;
- (l) No person shall knowingly permit, condone, or tolerate hazing;
- (m) No organization shall permit, condone, or tolerate hazing by its members or by any other person associated with the organization.

Consent is not a defense. Under both 24 P.S. §5352 and 18 Pa.C.S. §2806, it is not a defense that the consent of the student was sought or obtained, or that the conduct was sanctioned or approved by the institution or the organization.

Reporting

Any person who witnesses, experiences, or has knowledge of hazing or suspected hazing should report it immediately to one of the following:

1. **Dean of Students:** 610-419-1751
2. **Director of Operations and HR:** 610-419-1751
3. **Bethlehem Police Department:** 610-865-7187 (non-emergency) or 911 (emergency)

Reports may be made in person, by phone, or in writing. Anonymous reports will be accepted and investigated to the extent possible. All reports will be handled promptly and with discretion. No

individual who makes a good-faith report of hazing shall be subject to retaliation.

Enforcement and Sanctions

Pursuant to 24 P.S. §5354, RGS shall enforce this policy and impose appropriate sanctions for violations. The Dean of Students, or designee, is responsible for the administration and enforcement of this policy.

Individual Sanctions

Students or employees found responsible for violating this policy may be subject to one or more of the following institutional sanctions, depending on the severity of the violation:

1. Formal warning
2. Disciplinary probation
3. Suspension
4. Dismissal or expulsion
5. Termination of employment
6. Withholding of diploma or transcripts pending compliance or payment of fines
7. Imposition of fines

Organizational Sanctions

Organizations found responsible for hazing may be subject to rescission of permission to operate on campus or under the recognition of RGS, suspension or revocation of recognition, probation, fines, or other appropriate sanctions.

Relationship to Criminal Proceedings

Institutional sanctions imposed under this policy are separate from and in addition to any criminal penalties that may apply under 18 Pa.C.S. Chapter 28 or any other applicable law. RGS may refer matters to the Bethlehem Police Department or other law enforcement agencies as appropriate. Hazing under Pennsylvania law may be charged as a summary offense, third-degree misdemeanor, or third-degree felony, depending on the severity of the conduct and its consequences.

Safe Harbor Provision

Under 18 Pa.C.S. §2810, an individual may not be prosecuted for a hazing offense if the individual placed a 911 call or contacted campus security or emergency services in good faith, based on a reasonable belief that another individual was in need of immediate medical attention to prevent death or serious bodily injury. RGS strongly encourages individuals to seek emergency assistance when a hazing-related medical emergency occurs. The Seminary will take the safe harbor provision into consideration when determining institutional sanctions.

Institutional Reporting

Pursuant to 18 Pa.C.S. §2809, RGS shall maintain a report of all violations of this policy and of any federal or state laws related to hazing that are reported to the institution. Reports shall be updated biannually (January 1 and August 1), shall not contain personally identifying information, and shall be posted on the RGS publicly accessible website. Reports shall be retained for five years.

Education and Prevention

Respect Graduate School is committed to the prevention of hazing through education. All new students will receive a copy of this policy during orientation. This policy will be distributed to any student organization recognized by or operating in connection with RGS. RGS will provide information about the nature and dangers of hazing and the resources available to individuals who experience or witness hazing.

Policy Availability

In accordance with 18 Pa.C.S. §2808(a)(3), this policy is posted on the RGS publicly accessible website. A copy of this policy, including applicable rules, penalties, and RGS program of enforcement, shall be provided to any student organization operating under the sanction of or recognized by RGS.

Academic Policies and Procedures

The Respect Graduate School Credit Hour Policy

1. The US Department of Education (34 CFR Section 600. 2) defines “credit hour” as: “...an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

- a. one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or,
- b. at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including internships, practica, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.”

2. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (22 Pa. Code Section 31. 21) states that a “semester hour represents a unit of curricular material that normally can be taught in a minimum of 14 hours of classroom instruction, plus appropriate outside preparation or the equivalent as determined by the faculty.”

3. RGS complies with the above standards for the assignment of credit hours as established by the U. S. Department of Education and by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In addition, RGS is in compliance with policies set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on the assignment of credit hours.

4. The number of credits for each course is included with the course description in the RGS Catalog and on the website. All MAIS courses at Respect are 3-credit courses. Information about the number of credits for any course, meeting dates and times, classroom location, and mode of delivery is published online and made available to students prior to registration.

5. Unit of Measurement: All RGS graduate courses are assigned credits as a unit of measurement for curricular material, regardless of time frame or mode of delivery. A credit is the equivalent of one hour (50 minutes) of face-to-face classroom instruction per week for a semester of approximately 15 weeks or equivalent if a course meets for a different number of weeks. There is an expectation of two hours of outside study by the student for each hour of classroom instruction.

6. Academic Period and Instructional Time: The traditional academic year consists of a fall and spring semester that are approximately 15 weeks, including a week for the final summative assessment activity. As stated above, one credit is awarded for one hour (50 minutes) of classroom instruction per week for the semester of approximately 15 weeks, with a minimum of 14 hours of instruction. If a course meets for three 50-minute class periods or two 75-minute class periods per week, or one 150-minute class period per week, it is said to be a three-credit course and has a minimum of 42 hours of classroom instruction with an additional 3 hours in the 15th week for a summative assessment such as an exam or final paper.

Verification of Student Identity in Distance and Hybrid courses

A student who enrolls in a Respect Graduate distance education (both online and hybrid) course is given a secure login and password. This method of verifying student identity protects the privacy of student information. The student is not charged a fee for this verification of student identity. Each user of RGS' learning management system is responsible for maintaining his/her secure login and password, which may not be given to or shared with anyone else.

From February 2026, students are required to upload their state-issued ID with a photo into their Populi account for verification of student identity.

The Registrar under the Office of the Dean of Students is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Respect Student Identity Verification policy in all the institution's credit-bearing courses. The Dean reviews the policy annually with the assistance of the Registrar and Department of Information Technology (IT) to ensure continuing compliance with the federal regulations and to revise the policy as necessary.

Support for Students with Disabilities

Respect Graduate School 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 Students is responsible for assisting in providing reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities enrolled in RGS courses and serves as a resource for other RGS departments serving individuals with disabilities, as needed.

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 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and who are considered otherwise qualified for the MAIS program and provide appropriate documentation of their disability. Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Students for further assistance and information.

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. The RGS campus has ramps, large restrooms, and classrooms that can accommodate wheelchairs. The Dean of Students is the ADA Coordinator of RGS and is responsible for providing all necessary accommodation for students with special needs, in accordance with ADA guidelines.

Accessible classroom setups, alternate testing, physical 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, provide the necessary documentation, and request accommodation through the Dean of Students.

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:

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

The student is responsible for requesting the 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 it is needed and must be made personally by the student to each professor from which the accommodation is 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 the 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 by the Code of Conduct procedures, 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.

If 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 Students who is to confer with the faculty member. Failing that route, the student may file a complaint and initiate the related Code of Conduct procedures stated in this handbook.

Copyright Infringement

All students should recognize that information obtained through electronic methods might be protected by copyright laws of the United States (Title 17 U. S. Code), the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (H. R. 2281), and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). As such, any student in violation may be prosecuted under the terms of the law. It is the student's responsibility to understand the laws pertaining to copyright infringement

Class Recording Policy

The Respect Graduate School Class Recording Policy provides guidelines for audio and/or visual recordings in RGS classes. The goal of this policy is to protect the rights of students and faculty intellectual property and to ensure compliance with federal law concerning approved accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

These guidelines limit the recording of classes and the dissemination of those recordings to:

1. protect student and faculty dignity and privacy;
2. respect the integrity and effectiveness of the classroom experience; and
3. comply with copyright and other pertinent laws.

Who may initiate Class Recordings?

The purpose of recording class is to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes and/or educational access, as a teaching/learning tool. Class recordings may be initiated by a course instructor or, in the case of an approved accommodation, by the Dean of Academics in keeping with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other pertinent laws.

Students are prohibited from initiating recordings unless advance written permission is obtained from the class instructor. An instructor may give permission to an entire class as part of the course syllabus or, alternatively, grant permission to select individuals. The instructor may rescind previously granted permission to record at any point during the course, provided that doing so does not compromise an approved accommodation. Instructors will not be required to permit recording except under requirements of law.

Who can access Class Recordings?

Access to class recordings created by the institution is restricted to the students in the recorded class who have been given permission by the instructor or for whom recording has been approved as a reasonable accommodation by the Dean of Academics. Instructors may retain a recording on the condition that all identifying student audio and images are edited out of the recording.

Classes recorded by the instructor will be controlled via our secure course management platform and other password-protected systems. Access will be restricted to students as specified above and the instructor. Students will only have access to these recordings during the period of time the course is in session.

Dissemination of Class Recordings

Class recordings may not be reproduced, transferred, distributed, or displayed. Students may not share authorized recordings from class with anyone outside the class. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. sharing recordings with other students.
2. sharing recordings with parents or guardians.
3. sharing recordings with friends.

4. sharing recordings through social media.
5. posting recordings online.
6. e-mailing recordings to anyone; and
7. retaining downloaded recordings.

Permission to allow class recording is not a transfer of any copyrights in the recording or related course materials. Materials contained within the class recordings, including but not limited to videos and other web-based media, may also have their own copyright protection for which there may be separate prohibitions under the law against dissemination.

Consequences of Policy Violations

Distribution of class recordings or other course materials may constitute copyright infringement in violation of federal or state law, or institutional policy. Violation of this policy may subject a student to disciplinary action, including but not limited to failing the class under the RGS' Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy, in addition to any legal consequences that may apply.

Faculty must comply with current federal law regarding approved accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Statement for Syllabi

By registering for or attending RGS courses, individuals consent to the recording of classes within the scope of the RGS Class Recording Policy.

Definition of Terms

Approved Accommodation: Institutions of higher education are required to provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations. Students must provide appropriate documentation for the diagnosis of disabilities prior to receiving accommodations based on that disability. Reasonable accommodations will be determined and approved by the Dean of Academics.

Class: A class is defined as a regularly scheduled time(s) when students meet with an instructor for instruction, learning, and/or assessment.

Course Materials: Lecture notes, outlines, slides, PowerPoint presentations, readings, or other content made available to students by the instructor or presenter via Populi or Teams, in-class handouts, and the like.

Documented Disability: The ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requires that accommodations be developed on a case-by-case basis, in a deliberative process between the institution and the person with disabilities. Recent and appropriate documentation of the disability and related functional limitations for which they are requesting accommodations must be provided to the Office of the Dean of Students. The Office of the Dean of Students will approve reasonable accommodation based on appropriate documentation and will consult with the Dean of Academics to finalize an accommodation plan.

Recording: A video or audio replication or photographic image recorded on devices including, but not limited to, audio recorders, video recorders, phones, digital cameras, media players, computers, Smart Pens, and other handheld devices that record images and/or sound.

Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy

Respect Graduate School assumes and expects that students will be honest on examinations and in acknowledging sources used in all assignments. With respect to academic work and other Institution business, the Institution expects students to represent themselves and their work honestly to their instructors and other Institution representatives.

Breaches of the Institution's standards for Academic Honesty include but are not limited to cheating on examinations or papers; plagiarism; misrepresenting the nature and extent of one's own research; offering work done by others as one's own; employing words and/or ideas originating with others without proper acknowledgment]; and/or submitting the same work for more than one course without the clear prior consent of all instructors. Further details on "Consequences of Violating the Academic Honesty Policy".

Consequences of Violating the Academic Honesty Policy

Any violation of this policy may result in a range of penalties, depending on the severity and frequency of the offense, including a lower grade, failure of the assignment, disciplinary action, or academic suspension. Any suspected violation of this policy will be investigated by the appropriate authorities, and students may be required to provide additional evidence or information.

A faculty member who suspects a student of violating the academic honesty policy regarding 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; and

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:

- a. 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.

- b. 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.

- c. 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.

If 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. If the student does not incur any further violations of the academic honesty policy while at RGS, the notation will be removed and destroyed.

If the student appeals the faculty member's decision, the Dean of Academics shall consult with the student and their academic advisor, advising them of the procedures involved. 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:

1. Membership of the hearing committee will include two RGS faculty members who are not the involved faculty member and a staff member.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. If 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 failing grade in the course.
5. If 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.
6. If a student who has incurred a 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 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 decision of the President will be final, and the President will notify the student of the decision within two business days.

Computer Use Policies

Respect Graduate School is committed to providing computing services to support the needs of students, faculty, and staff of the Institution.

The policies below are: (1) to ensure the security and integrity of computer resources available on campus, (2) to ensure that users have reasonable access to the facilities, and (3) to ensure that the action of any one user will not adversely affect any aspect of the work of another.

The Institution reserves the right to control, evaluate, and monitor all student computers and electronic telecommunications, except as may be prohibited by federal or state laws.

The following activities constitute unauthorized use of computer resources and are expressly prohibited.

1. **Unauthorized access:** Attempting to gain access to another user's programs or account without that user's express permission.
2. **Passwords:** Sharing the student ID or password with any other person.
3. **Harassment:** Using the Institution's computer resources to harass or annoy others or prevent them from legitimately using the facilities. Note: Using electronic mail to send other users unsolicited messages of obscene, demeaning, and/or menacing content constitutes harassment.
4. **Changing settings on Institution computers:** Altering system software or hardware configurations without authorization or disrupting or interfering with the delivery or administration of computer resources in any way. Copying, renaming, altering, examining, or deleting the files or programs of another person without permission.
5. **Games:** Using the Institution's computing facilities for non-academic purposes. Academic work always takes precedence over recreational use. An individual must desist from playing computer games, writing non-academic email, using the Internet or any other non-academic computer activity when any person is waiting to use any computer intended for student/public use.
6. **Compliance with federal, state, and local laws:** Using any part of the computer resources of the Institution for any activity that violates federal, state, or local laws.

7. **Commercial use:** Using the Institution's computing resources for personal business or commercial use, such as the posting of commercial web pages and the distribution of unsolicited advertising.

8. **Tampering/creating viruses, worms, or other malware:** Deliberately attempting to tamper with, disrupt, delay, or endanger the regular operation of the Institution's computing resources. Creating or propagating computer worms, viruses, or other malware, or distributing electronic mail or software intended to replicate or do damage to another user's account, hardware, software, or data.

9. **Network Monitoring:** Monitoring of any network traffic, passwords, email, or any other network communications.

10. **Using or distributing pornographic material:** Using the Institution's computing resources to view or transmit material with prurient content. For purposes of this document, "prurient content" is defined as material unrelated to a legitimate academic purpose and intended for the arousal of the sexual thoughts or desires of the recipient and/or the sender.

Access to the Institution's computing facilities and resources is a privilege, and student responsibilities accompany that privilege.

All students affiliated with the Institution, or those guests using library services, are expected to use good judgment when using computing resources, including Internet access and e-mail. This also includes appropriate personal behavior while using the computers.

Being granted access to the Institution's computing resources does not provide the user with a guarantee or warranty of any kind regarding system reliability, nor does it guarantee or provide a warranty for the user that any information obtained from its electronic communications system is correct and free of errors. The Institution is not responsible for any personal damage as a result of loss of data, inaccuracy of data, delays in processing data or non-delivery of data over its electronic communications system.

Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones must be turned off during classes, special lectures, and in the library. In no case may cell phone communication be made in any of these contexts.

Use of the Institution's Name and Logo on Stationery, Publications, and Websites

The name "Respect Graduate School" is the property of Respect Graduate School, Inc. (the "Institution") and may not be used by other individuals or organizations without its consent. Stationery used by students or student groups should not have the name of the Institution printed on letterheads or envelopes, unless this is preceded by the name of the student or student organization or by some other indication that this is not the official stationery of the institution. Official stationery may not be used for personal use.

The Institution's logo is important to the overall image of the Institution. Any use of the logo must be approved by the Vice President of Operations and Finance. Publications or items bearing the logo must be approved by the Vice President of Operations' office prior to printing. Graphic images of the logo are available for approved purposes. Official student organizations may use the Institution's resources to create websites for their groups. Those wishing to build a web presence must work with the appropriate RGS staff to create a site. Student organizations are to abide by the rules set forth by the policy for creating new or updating old websites. Maintenance of the site is the direct responsibility of the student organization. Any site in violation of other Institution policies (Computer Usage, Racial and Sexual Harassment, etc.) may be terminated.

Student Contact Data

All students must keep their addresses, phone numbers, and emergency contacts up to date. This includes regularly checking and updating both permanent and local addresses and phone numbers. If students temporarily move to a location that is not easily commutable to campus or if it is not a permanent change, they should report it. Students should promptly update these details in the Populi LMS System whenever there are changes.

Official Communication through Respect Graduate School email and Populi

The official way to communicate with RGS departments/units/accounts is through an RGS email account with the extension @respectgs.us and through the Student Information System, Populi.

Students are required to check their RGS email daily. If a student does not check his/her RGS email or Populi, it does not excuse or exempt him/her from any actions that RGS requires.

Event Policy for Student Organizations

Student organizations must follow the guidelines set forth in the RGS Student Council Policy for their organizational structures and event procedures. Students interested in holding an event on campus or forming a club should contact the Student Activities Coordinator and the SC President.

Facilities Use

Student organizations should adhere to the Facilities Use Requirements in the RGS Student Council Policy. To use facilities, they are expected to follow the guidelines on the RGS Conference and Events Services webpage.

Parking

Students may park in the campus parking lot. There is no pass or sticker required.

Political Activity

Students must adhere to the rules outlined in the SC Policy regarding political activities on the RGS campus. Off-campus students are free to engage in any lawful political activity they wish.

Posting

Posting or distributing printed materials in or on college buildings shall be done with the necessary permissions obtained from the Operations and HR office.

Smoking

The RGS campus is a smoke-free environment. Smoking is prohibited on the RGS campus, including its buildings and parking lot, and at any RGS-sponsored event in another location.

Use of ID

Students who come to campus must be able to show a valid RGS identification card (ID) which is found in their Populi account. The RGS ID card is for the student's use only and cannot be transferred to others. If asked by faculty or staff, to see a student's ID in Populi, the student must comply with the request.

Use of College Funds and Solicitation of Funds

Student groups approved for RGS funding may either use the RGS credit card if it is provided by the Business Office, or their duly elected representatives must seek reimbursement for costs they have out-of-pocket expenditures for college-approved activities or items.

Use of College Name

No student or student organization can use the institution's name without written authorization from the Office of the Dean of Students. Students or student organizations are not allowed to state or imply the institution's approval or disapproval of any political or social issue.

The official letterhead stationery, logo, or seal of the College cannot be used in any publication, correspondence, or other printed or electronic material by the organization or its officers without prior submission and written permission from the HR department.

If the institution's name is used in a letterhead on organizational stationery, it must be placed below the organization's name, in small type, or at the bottom of the page.

The Fiscal Year, Academic Calendar, and Academic Year

The fiscal year (hereafter FY) begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the calendar year. The academic year (AY) begins in the last week of August and ends on or around August 15 of the following year. The academic calendar is posted by July 1 for the upcoming academic year. The current academic calendar can be found on the RGS website at www.respectgs.us

School Closings

In the event of weather advisories or emergencies, the Director of Operations and HR, in consultation with the President, makes the final decision on whether to close the school and determines when classes are to resume. Due notification is given by RGS email, and/or on the RGS website, and/or over regional television and radio stations. In addition, all members of the RGS community are made aware of this procedure through class syllabi, the RGS Catalog, handbooks, and the website.

Holidays Observed at Respect Graduate School

RGS is closed for the following holidays and religious observances: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day (December 25), New Year's Day (January 1), Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Memorial Day, and Independence Day (July 4). In the instances of the multi-day Eid celebrations, the Academic Calendar indicates the length of the school's closure.

Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. If absences occur, it is the student's responsibility to make up the work missed, if the instructor allows it. It is the responsibility of the instructor to state in the course syllabus at the beginning of a semester their 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 instructor's discretion. 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 case of an extended absence, students should notify the Dean of Students and the Dean of Academics.

Standards for Student Conduct

Respect Graduate School expects students to commit themselves to high standards of academic and community life. Honesty, respect for others, and care for the quality of community life are expected in all matters. For the sake of clarity, the standards for student conduct are divided into two categories: Academic Honesty and Personal Conduct.

Personal Conduct Policy

The Institution expects persons to show respect for one another. Such respect includes care for the personal well-being and faith development of others. It involves sensitivity to personal differences, including racial, sexual, ethnic, and religious diversity. Such respect also extends to respect for the property and privacy of others.

In order to maintain the standards of this community of learning and to ensure just and fair dealings with all persons, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Whenever possible, individuals are strongly encouraged to negotiate the resolution of any problem directly with the person(s) involved.
2. When direct negotiation is unable to resolve an issue, individuals are encouraged to seek informal institutional help or advice. The Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Students, and other faculty and staff are available for such assistance.

If an issue cannot be resolved informally, the aggrieved person may bring it to the Dean of Students.

When appropriate, the Dean of Students will convene a meeting of the student(s) involved and any other appropriate persons, including persons chosen by the student(s).

The goal of this meeting will be to negotiate a consensus regarding appropriate action.

If no consensus can be reached, either the Dean of Students or any of the parties directly involved may make a written request to the President for the convening of the Standards Committee.

Alcohol and Drug Policies

Respect Graduate School is committed to maintaining a safe and drug-free environment for all its students, faculty, and staff. The use of alcohol and illegal drugs by students, faculty, and staff is prohibited at RGS. RGS has established a policy on drug testing and searches under the Dean of Students' responsibility. All disciplinary communication with students regarding violations of the Alcohol and Drug policy will be made in written form. This policy aims to deter drug use, identify individuals who may need assistance in addressing alcohol and substance abuse problems, and comply with all applicable state and federal laws.

Random Drug/Alcohol Testing

Respect Graduate School may conduct or request random drug testing on students. Students who refuse to submit to drug testing may face disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion.

Reasonable Suspicion

Respect Graduate School may require drug/alcohol testing of a student if there is reasonable suspicion of drug/alcohol use. Reasonable suspicion may include:

1. Observable phenomena, such as direct observation of drug use or possession and/or the physical symptoms of being under the influence of a drug or alcohol;
2. A pattern of abnormal conduct or erratic behavior in the school;
3. Information provided by reliable and credible sources regarding the individual's violation of this policy. The school will follow all applicable laws and regulations when conducting reasonable suspicion drug/alcohol testing.

Drug/Alcohol Testing Procedures

Respect Graduate School will recommend the use of a reputable laboratory to conduct drug/alcohol tests, the cost/fees to be borne by the student. The tests will be conducted in a confidential and professional manner. The school will provide students with information about the testing process and their rights and responsibilities regarding drug testing.

Searches

Respect Graduate School reserves the right to search students' lockers, desks, and other personal property on school premises if there is reasonable suspicion of drug/alcohol use. Reasonable suspicion may include physical symptoms, behavior changes, or other indicators of substance use. The school will follow all applicable laws and regulations when conducting searches. RGS operations/facilities employee(s) may conduct a body search (with clothing remaining on) in another school official's presence. At no point will RGS request or condone a strip search. Students may be referred to law enforcement for any escalation of drug/alcohol related matters.

Search Procedures

Searches will be conducted in a respectful, professional, and confidential manner. The school will notify the student of the search and the reason for the search. The student may be present during the search, but if the student is not present, the search will be conducted in the presence of another school official. Any items found during the search that violate school policies will be confiscated.

Guidelines

Prohibited Substances

Respect Graduate School prohibits the possession, use, sale, or distribution of illegal drugs, as well as the misuse of prescription drugs and other controlled substances.

Reporting Drug/Alcohol Use

Students who are concerned about their own drug/alcohol use or the drug/alcohol use of others are encouraged to seek assistance. The Dean of Students can help students find resources to deal with addiction or substance abuse issues. Students who report drug use will not face disciplinary action unless they violate school policies.

Confidentiality

Respect Graduate School will maintain the confidentiality of drug/alcohol test results and search findings to the extent permitted by law.

Disciplinary Action

Violations of this policy may result in investigation, disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion. RGS may also refer students to law enforcement if a crime has been committed.

Anti-Hazing Policy

Adopted pursuant to 24 P.S. §5352 et seq. and 18 Pa.C.S. Chapter 28

Policy Statement

Respect Graduate School prohibits hazing in all forms. Hazing is incompatible with the mission, values, and community standards of RGS. This prohibition applies to all students, employees,

organizations, and other persons associated with RGS, regardless of whether conduct occurs on or off campus. Consent of the victim is not a defense to hazing.

This policy is adopted and maintained in accordance with the Pennsylvania Anti-Hazing Law, 24 P.S. §5352 et seq., and the Timothy J. Piazza Antihazing Law, 18 Pa.C.S. §§2801–2811. Both statutes apply to all institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, irrespective of federal funding status.

Definitions

Hazing (24 P.S. §5352)

“Hazing” means any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a person, or which willfully destroys or removes public or private property, for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, any organization. The term includes, but is not limited to:

1. Any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, drug, or other substance, or any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health and safety of the individual;
2. Any activity which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as sleep deprivation, forced exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual;
3. Any willful destruction or removal of public or private property.

For purposes of this definition, any activity as described above upon which the initiation, admission, affiliation, or continued membership in an organization is directly or indirectly conditioned shall be presumed to be “forced” activity, the willingness of an individual to participate notwithstanding.

Hazing Offenses Under the Timothy J. Piazza Antihazing Law (18 Pa.C.S. §2802)

Under the Pennsylvania Crimes Code, a person commits the offense of hazing if the person intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly, for the purpose of initiating, admitting, or affiliating a student

into or with an organization, or for the purpose of continuing or enhancing a student's membership or status in an organization, causes, coerces, or forces a student to do any of the following:

1. Violate federal or state criminal law;
2. Consume any food, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug, or other substance which subjects the student to a risk of emotional or physical harm;
3. Endure brutality of a physical nature, including whipping, beating, branding, calisthenics, or exposure to the elements;
4. Endure brutality of a mental nature, including activity adversely affecting the mental health or dignity of the individual, sleep deprivation, exclusion from social contact, or conduct that could result in extreme embarrassment;
5. Endure brutality of a sexual nature;
6. Endure any other activity that creates a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to the student.

Aggravated Hazing (18 Pa.C.S. §2803)

A person commits the offense of aggravated hazing if the person commits hazing that results in serious bodily injury or death and: (a) the person acts with reckless indifference to the health and safety of the student, or (b) the person causes, coerces, or forces the consumption of an alcoholic liquid or drug by the student. Aggravated hazing is a felony of the third degree under Pennsylvania law.

Organization

"Organization" means any fraternity, sorority, association, corporation, order, society, corps, club, or service, social, or similar group, whose members are primarily students or alumni of the organization, an institution, or secondary school, or a national or international organization with which such a group is affiliated. At RGS, this includes but is not limited to any student group, cohort, study group, ministry team, or other formal or informal association of students recognized by or operating in connection with RGS.

Limitation

Hazing does not include reasonable and customary athletic, law enforcement, or military training, contests, competitions, or events.

Prohibited Conduct

No student, employee, organization, or other person associated with RGS shall plan, encourage, or engage in hazing, or acquiesce in hazing while in the presence of or having knowledge of hazing, whether occurring on or off campus. Specifically:

1. No person shall engage in any act of hazing as defined in Section 2 of this policy;
2. No person shall solicit, direct, aid, or attempt to aid another in hazing;
3. No person shall knowingly permit, condone, or tolerate hazing;
4. No organization shall permit, condone, or tolerate hazing by its members or by any other person associated with the organization.

Consent is not a defense. Under both 24 P.S. §5352 and 18 Pa.C.S. §2806, it is not a defense that the consent of the student was sought or obtained, or that the conduct was sanctioned or approved by the institution or the organization.

Reporting

Any person who witnesses, experiences, or has knowledge of hazing or suspected hazing should report it immediately to one of the following:

1. Dean of Students: 610-419-1751; info@respectgs.us
2. Director of Operations and HR: 610-419-1751; info@respectgs.us
3. Bethlehem Police Department: 610-865-7187 (non-emergency) or 911 (emergency)

Reports may be made in person, by phone, or in writing. Anonymous reports will be accepted and investigated to the extent possible. All reports will be handled promptly and with discretion. No individual who makes a good-faith report of hazing shall be subject to retaliation.

Enforcement and Sanctions

Pursuant to 24 P.S. §5354, RGS shall enforce this policy and impose appropriate sanctions for violations. The Dean of Students, or designee, is responsible for the administration and enforcement of this policy.

Individual Sanctions

Students or employees found responsible for violating this policy may be subject to one or more of the following institutional sanctions, depending on the severity of the violation:

4. Formal warning
5. Disciplinary probation
6. Suspension
7. Dismissal or expulsion
8. Termination of employment
9. Withholding of diploma or transcripts pending compliance or payment of fines
10. Imposition of fines

Organizational Sanctions

Organizations found responsible for hazing may be subject to rescission of permission to operate on campus or under the recognition of RGS, suspension or revocation of recognition, probation, fines, or other appropriate sanctions.

Relationship to Criminal Proceedings

Institutional sanctions imposed under this policy are separate from and in addition to any criminal penalties that may apply under 18 Pa.C.S. Chapter 28 or any other applicable law. RGS may refer matters to the Bethlehem Police Department or other law enforcement agencies as appropriate. Hazing under Pennsylvania law may be charged as a summary offense, third-degree misdemeanor, or third-degree felony, depending on the severity of the conduct and its consequences.

Safe Harbor Provision

Under 18 Pa.C.S. §2810, an individual may not be prosecuted for a hazing offense if the individual placed a 911 call or contacted campus security or emergency services in good faith, based on a reasonable belief that another individual was in need of immediate medical attention to prevent death or serious bodily injury. RGS strongly encourages individuals to seek emergency assistance when a hazing-related medical emergency occurs. RGS will take the safe harbor provision into consideration when determining institutional sanctions.

Institutional Reporting

Pursuant to 18 Pa.C.S. §2809, RGS shall maintain a report of all violations of this policy and of any federal or state laws related to hazing that are reported to the institution. Reports shall be updated biannually (January 1 and August 1), shall not contain personally identifying information, and shall be posted on the RGS publicly accessible website. Reports shall be retained for five years.

Education and Prevention

Respect Graduate School is committed to the prevention of hazing through education. All new students will receive a copy of this policy during orientation. This policy will be distributed to any student organization recognized by or operating in connection with RGS. RGS will provide information about the nature and dangers of hazing and the resources available to individuals who experience or witness hazing.

Policy Availability

In accordance with 18 Pa.C.S. §2808(a)(3), this policy is posted on the RGS publicly accessible website. A copy of this policy, including applicable rules, penalties, and RGS program of enforcement, shall be provided to any student organization operating under the sanction of or recognized by RGS.

Policy and Procedure for Involuntary Leave

If there is strong evidence that a student is engaging in, or likely to engage in, behavior that endangers the health, safety, or well-being of themselves or anyone in the RGS community, or if their behavior disrupts the learning or working environment for others, the College may need to remove the student from the institution and its facilities.

The Vice President of Operations and Finance oversees the assessment of potential serious risks to the health, safety, security, and well-being of the campus community. In coordination with the Dean of Students at RGS, they may recommend measures such as involuntary leave, suspension, or expulsion to address these risks.

Procedures

1. If actions are identified that could pose a significant threat to the safety and well-being of any campus community member, the Director of Operations and HR, in consultation with the Dean of Students, considers whether to implement involuntary leave or another measure to mitigate the risk.
2. In urgent safety situations, the Director of Operations and HR may confer with the Vice President of Operations and Finance and the Dean of Students and may temporarily remove a student from the campus until a final decision on involuntary leave is reached. If this action is necessary, the student will be notified, in addition to the notice that they are being considered for involuntary leave, as outlined below.
3. If a student is being considered for involuntary leave, the Vice President of Operations will provide written notice to the student explaining that their actions are under review for possible involuntary leave, along with the reasons for considering such action.
 - a. The notification will explain the implications and procedures related to involuntary leave, and a copy of this Policy will be given to the student.
 - b. The notice will inform the student that they can respond to the Vice President within seven business days with any relevant information or, if appropriate, request a voluntary leave of absence.
 - c. Whenever possible and appropriate, the Vice President will encourage the student to take a voluntary leave of absence. In either case, the student will be provided with written advice on any conditions or procedures for returning to campus.
4. In all cases of involuntary leave consideration, the Operations and HR department, in consultation with the Deans of Students and Academics, will conduct an individualized risk assessment.
 - a. The department will consider risk factors, including the impact of the student's behavior on the institution's academic and extracurricular environment.
 - b. Relevant materials will include observable evidence, available medical information, and any information provided by the student.

c. The department will also consider measures that may reasonably be implemented to mitigate the need for involuntary leave.

5. Following the assessment, the Operations and HR department will provide a written recommendation to the Vice President.

6. The Vice President will review the recommendation and then provide a written decision to the student and/or their parent or guardian, if applicable. If the decision is for involuntary leave, the letter will include details on the leave's duration and clearly outline conditions and procedures for returning to campus.

7. The student may appeal an involuntary leave decision within seven business days by contacting the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students will present the decision to the Vice President, and his/her decision, issued within seven business days, is final.

8. The student can request an early return to campus before the specified date in the involuntary leave notice. The Operations and HR department will review the request, provide a written recommendation to the Vice President, and make a decision.

9. If the decision is not to impose involuntary leave, the student may be required to sign and comply with a behavioral plan or participate in identified processes or programs based on the Operations and HR department's individualized risk assessment and recommendations.

10. The Vice President will inform relevant deans and others with a legitimate need to know about student restrictions and the requirement of confidentiality.

Confidentiality

RGS will keep all information about involuntary leaves confidential according to federal, state, and local laws, while ensuring the processing of such leaves. The Vice President of Operations and Finance will notify personnel affected by the student's behavior and those responsible for ensuring the student abides by decisions and directives. Relevant public safety agencies may be informed of the student's behavior outside the campus community if it poses a risk. All records related to involuntary leaves are confidential and retained by the Vice President of Operations. Access to these records is limited by federal, state, and local law.

The Code of Conduct

The purpose of The Code of Conduct is to foster the moral, spiritual, and civic development of our students. Additionally, the Code seeks to safeguard the college's property, processes, and community members, ensuring a secure and healthy learning environment.

Values

At RGS, students are expected to embrace the institution's values, purpose, and goals outlined in the Mission Statement and Goals. This involves not only reading and understanding these values but also accepting them as guiding principles for their conduct and engagement with the academic community. RGS emphasizes diligence, sincerity in pursuing learning, and a commitment to academic excellence. Students are encouraged to be honest and demonstrate integrity in all aspects of their lives. Service to others and the community, and a sense of responsibility beyond individual success, are encouraged. Additionally, students are guided to grow spiritually, preparing not just for a career but for life. Appreciating diversity, being open-minded, and respecting one's body are integral values at RGS. Students are encouraged to develop a strong sense of self, define their ethical and spiritual values, and build meaningful friendships based on self-appreciation and respect for others.

Jurisdiction

The Code regulates prohibited behavior on or related to RGS property, during official college functions, and at college-sponsored programs away from the campus. The Dean of Students may also apply the Code to prohibited conduct off campus.

Student Conduct Records

RGS complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Student records created by the Office of the Dean of Students are managed and disclosed broadly in line with FERPA regulations, although we are not yet bound by federal law to do so as we do not qualify for or accept federal financial aid or any other type of federal funding.. Any finding of responsibility and assigned sanctions will not be included in the student's permanent academic record but will become part of the student's confidential disciplinary record kept in the Office of the Dean of Students. This confidential record will be erased seven (7) years from the date the finding of responsibility becomes

a final decision. However, records related to College Expulsion and Suspension and Hazing are exceptions and will be retained permanently in the office of the Dean of Students. Release of student records from the Office of the Dean of Students to third parties is only done in accordance with FERPA guidelines.

Participation in the Student Conduct Process

Only members of the RGS community may participate in the Student Conduct Process. Reporters who provide information about the prohibited conduct might be an exception.

Revisions to the Code of Student Conduct

The College has the authority to make changes to the Code of Student Conduct at its discretion. Students are expected to read and follow the rules outlined in the current Student Handbook.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Appeal: The process through which a student requests a review of a disciplinary decision, typically based on claims of procedural errors, new evidence, or perceived unfairness.

Appeal Outcome Letter: A written communication to the student detailing the results of the appeal process, including any changes to the original disciplinary decision.

Appeal Panel: A group of individuals responsible for reviewing appeals, often composed of faculty, staff, or administrators who were not involved in the initial disciplinary decision.

Appeal Panel Chair: The individual who leads and facilitates the appeal panel proceedings.

Code of Student Conduct: The document outlining the rules, expectations, and consequences governing student behavior within the RGS community.

Complainant: The individual or entity filing a complaint or report alleging a violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

Conduct Charge: The formal accusation that a student has violated a specific provision of the Code of Student Conduct.

Executive Director of Student Conduct: The administrative leader responsible for overseeing the implementation and enforcement of the Code of Student Conduct.

Final Decision: The official resolution of a disciplinary matter, usually reached after the completion of the student conduct process, including any appeals.

Finding: The determination of whether a student is responsible or not responsible for the alleged conduct violation.

Hearing: A formal meeting during which evidence and statements are presented to determine if a student has violated the Code of Student Conduct.

Hearing Notice Letter: A written communication to the student providing details about the date, time, and location of the disciplinary hearing.

Hearing Outcome Letter: A written communication to the student detailing the results of the disciplinary hearing, including any sanctions imposed.

Hearing Panel: A group of individuals responsible for conducting a disciplinary hearing, often composed of faculty, staff, or administrators.

Hearing Panel Chair: The individual who leads and facilitates the disciplinary hearing proceedings.

Incident Report Form: A document used to report alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct.

Reporter: The individual or entity submitting an incident report or complaint.

Appeal Form: A document used by a student to formally request an appeal of a disciplinary decision.

Respondent: The student accused of violating the Code of Student Conduct.

Sanction(s): The consequences or penalties imposed on a student found responsible for violating the Code of Student Conduct.

Student(s): Individuals enrolled in or attending RGS.

Support Person: An individual chosen by the respondent or complainant to provide support during the student conduct process. This person is typically not a legal representative.

The Student Conduct Process: The step-by-step procedures followed in addressing and resolving alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct.

Institutional Property: The physical and virtual spaces owned or operated by the college.

Witness: An individual with relevant information about an incident who may provide testimony during a disciplinary hearing.

The terms “shall” and “will” are used in the imperative sense, whereas the term “may” is used in the permissive sense in the code of conduct.

Prohibited Conduct

It is a violation of the Code of Conduct to engage in any of the following Prohibited Conduct:

Alcohol and Other Drugs: violation of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy by engaging in any of the following:

- a. Using, having, or sharing alcohol on campus, including in a vehicle.
- b. Using or having narcotics or controlled substances, except as allowed by law and by your physician’s prescription. Smelling or sniffing a controlled substance is treated the same as actual use.
- c. Medical marijuana is not allowed on campus.
- d. Having items connected to controlled substance Violation: Alcohol & Other Drug Assessment, \$200 fee, Disciplinary Probation (1 Academic Year).

Bullying: a form of aggressive behavior characterized by the repeated use of force, coercion, or intimidation to control or harm others. It involves a power imbalance, where the person engaging in bullying behavior has real or perceived power over the target. Forms of bullying include verbal, physical, social, and cyber bullying.

Breach of Peace: Behavior or actions that disrupt public order, peace, or safety.

Coercion: Refers to the act of using force, threats, intimidation, or manipulation to compel someone to do something against their will or better judgment. It involves exerting pressure or control to influence the behavior or decisions of another person. Coercion can take various forms and may be applied in different situations.

Computer Misuse: Misuse of RGS computers.

Conduct System Abuses: engaging in any of the following:

- a. Not following the instructions of a Hearing/Appeal Panel or RGS Official during the Student Conduct Process,
- b. Purposefully providing false, distorted, or misleading information before a Hearing/Appeal Panel,
- c. Causing disruption or interference with the orderly process of the Student Conduct,
- d. Starting the Student Conduct Process without a valid reason,
- e. Trying to discourage someone from properly participating in or using the Student Conduct Process,
- f. Trying to influence the decision of a member of a Hearing/Appeal Panel,
- g. Retaliating against someone for participating in the Student Conduct Process,
- h. Influencing or attempting to influence another person to misuse the conduct system, and/or
- i. Not following the sanctions imposed by a Hearing/Appeal Panel.

Damage to RGS Property: attempting to, or causing actual damage to property of RGS, property of a member of the RGS community, or other personal or public property.

Discrimination and/or Bias Related Conduct: refers to actions or behaviors that unfairly treat or target individuals or groups based on certain characteristics, often related to their identity. These characteristics can include race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, or other categories by federal, state, or local statute.

Dishonesty and Misrepresentation: refer to behaviors that involve deception, untruthfulness, or providing false information with the intent to mislead or gain an unfair advantage.

Disorderly or Disruptive Conduct: Engaging in disorderly or disruptive conduct. Involves behaving in a manner that unreasonably hinders RGS or community activities, as well as the legitimate pursuits of any RGS community member. This includes attempting to disrupt or obstruct teaching, research, administration, meetings, or community living.

Putting the Health or Safety of another Person at risk: taking or threatening to take action that risks the safety, physical or mental health, or life of any person, and/or creating a reasonable fear of such action.

Endangering the Health or Safety of the Campus Community: engaging in conduct which endangers the health or safety of the campus community by starting a fire; causing an explosion, false reporting of a fire, bombs, and/or emergencies, tampering with or misuse of fire safety or security equipment; dropping, throwing, or propelling objects from windows, roofs, and/or balconies; setting off fireworks; failure to exit a building during a fire drill or alarm; possession of a prohibited fire hazard item and/or obstruction of the free flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic at RGS property.

Failure to Comply: Disobedience to official directives and the rules, regulations, or guidelines established by the college.

Gambling: participating in gambling in any form on campus.

Hazing: any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a person, or which willfully destroys or removes public or private property, for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, any organization. See Hazing policy above.

Disrespectful behavior through speech or conduct: participating in disruptive, ill-mannered, disrespectful, or offensive behavior.

Inappropriate or obscene conduct: engaging in lewd, indecent, or obscene behavior.

Misuse of Keys: improper or unauthorized use of keys that belong to the institution by unauthorized access; copying keys without authorization; duplicating RGS keys without proper approval; using keys for unauthorized purposes or failure to return keys.

Physical Altercation/Fighting: engaging in an argument or altercation that involves force or physical aggression.

Public Disorder, Group Violence: disruptive and potentially violent behavior that poses a threat to public safety and order within the institutional community. This may include disruptive protests; riots group violence; unlawful assemblies; and mass disturbances.

Sexual Misconduct: acting in violation of the Sexual Harassment Policy (PL.S.10) policies of RGS.

Smoking on campus is prohibited in all its forms including vaping.

Using drones on RGS property is prohibited unless with written permission from the Director of Operations and related to an RGS sponsored activity

Engaging in unauthorized sales or solicitation in RGS buildings

Stalking: Engaging in a pattern of unwanted, obsessive, and repeated attention, harassment, contact, or any other behavior directed at a specific person that causes the target to feel threatened, fearful, or harassed. This may include behaviors such as unwanted communication; following; surveillance; monitoring a person's activities, either physically or using technology, without their consent; unwanted gift-giving; threats or Intimidation and online stalking through the use of social media or online platforms.

Theft of Property: attempting to or engaging in actual theft of RGS property.

Sexual Harassment: action as defined by RGS Policy on Sexual Harassment.

Unauthorized Entry to RGS Property: refers to accessing, entering, or remaining on RGS property, facilities, or restricted areas without proper authorization, permission, or institutional approval.

Unauthorized Posting on RGS Property: refers to placing, distributing, displaying, or disseminating materials on RGS property or through RGS-controlled communication channels without required approval or in violation of institutional guidelines. This conduct is governed by Posting Policy (PL.T.15) and Use of the Institution's Name and Logo Policy (PL.T.16).

Violating Laws and/or RGS Policies and Procedures: includes any action or omission that violates applicable local, state, or federal laws, or fails to comply with RGS policies, procedures, standards, or institutional directives.

Visitation/Guest Policy Violation: A visitation or guest policy violation occurs when individuals or their guests fail to comply with institutional requirements governing visitors' presence, access, supervision, or conduct on RGS property.

Acting Against RGS Weapons on Campus Policy: defined in Weapons Policy (PL.O.6) and Respect for Policies Concerning Weapons (PL.I.11).

Sanctions, Suspension, Expulsion, and Refunds Policy

The following sections 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:

Apology: The student involved is required to express regret or remorse for their actions, typically in a written or verbal format.

Disciplinary Probation: Placing the student on a probationary status, during which they must meet specific conditions and adhere to behavioral expectations. Any further violations during this period may lead to more severe consequences.

Educational Projects/Classes: Requiring the student to engage in additional educational activities or classes aimed at addressing and correcting the behavior that led to the disciplinary action.

Expulsion: The most severe consequence, involving the permanent removal of the student from the institution. This typically means the student is no longer allowed to attend the institution's courses, programs, or sponsored activities, whether on campus or elsewhere, including digital events.

Fines/ Fees: Imposing financial penalties or charges as part of the disciplinary action, which the student is required to pay.

Intervention: Implementing measures to intervene and address problematic behavior. This involves counseling, mentoring, or other support services.

Loss of RGS Student Privileges: Revoking specific privileges that the student may have within the institution, such as participation in certain activities or access to certain facilities.

No Contact Order: Directing the student not to have any form of contact with the institution or other students, ensuring a separation to prevent further conflicts.

Restitution: Requiring the student to make amends or compensate for any harm or damage caused, often in a material or financial form.

Suspension: Temporarily removing the student from the institution for a specific period. During this time, the individual is not allowed on campus or to participate in RGS activities. The following applies in the case of suspension:

1. The Student shall not be allowed to take any courses at RGS on campus or online, participate in RGS activities off-campus or online, or as part of a study abroad experience,
2. The Student is not permitted on RGS property,
3. The Student will not be considered for employment at RGS.
4. The Student will not serve as an elected or appointed leader or officer in a Registered Student Organization, and
5. The Student will not attend RGS events except as otherwise specified.

Suspension becomes effective when the appeal process concludes. Suspension ends if it is waived or the time limit expires. During the suspension, a student is considered "not in good standing" with the institution. If a student is suspended for engaging in Prohibited Conduct during a semester, they may be eligible for a tuition credit applied to the next semester. The credit amount is determined by the tuition refund schedule for a voluntary withdrawal and the tuition rate of the semester in which the Prohibited Conduct occurred. The date of the Prohibited Conduct that led to the suspension is used to calculate the tuition credit. If not used in the next semester, the tuition credit is forfeited.

Written Reprimand: Issuing a formal written statement expressing disapproval of the individual's actions. This serves as an official record of the reprimand and may be considered in future disciplinary matters.

Request for the Removal of the Disciplinary Record

A student, after being found responsible for minor offenses, can ask the Dean of Students to erase the violation from their disciplinary record. This is possible if, in the two academic semesters following the violation, the student does not get involved in any other prohibited conduct according to the Student Code of Conduct. If a request is made, the student might need to share details about past violations, even those already removed from their record. It is important to note that RGS will keep and report crime-related information as mandated by the Clery Act.

The Student Conduct Process

Overview

The student's email account is the institution's primary method of communicating official information. Therefore, students are responsible for checking their email regularly to stay informed about official matters.

Students are allowed to be accompanied by one support person at all stages of the Student Conduct Process.

A decision regarding a student's accountability for engaging in Prohibited Conduct, as well as the result of an appeal by a complainant and/or respondent, is determined by the preponderance of evidence standard, indicating that it is more probable than not.

If the Code of Student Conduct specifies a time limit, it designates days as either business days or calendar days. It is important to note that days when the College is closed for breaks and/or holidays are not considered as business or calendar days for the purposes of the specified periods.

No conversations or meetings, including phone calls, with the Dean of Students should be recorded by either the student or the institution. The only exception is during the Hearing in the Student Conduct Process, where the institution, not the student, will make the recording. The university retains ownership of the recording until it is eventually destroyed.

The Student Conduct Process can take place before, during, or after civil or criminal proceedings. Outcomes and/or penalties will not be altered based on whether a lawsuit has been filed against a student or the resolution of criminal charges, regardless of whether they were dismissed, reduced, or resolved in favor of or against the student.

If a student decides to withdraw from the College after the Student Conduct Process has begun but before a Final Decision is made, the case will be deemed inactive. The records in the Office of the Dean of Students for a student who withdraws before a final decision will note the outstanding charge(s) against the student, as applicable. These records will be kept in the Office of the Dean of Students indefinitely and may be disclosed in accordance with FERPA. If the student wishes to re-enroll at the institution, they typically will need to go through the Student Conduct Process again.

Under specific circumstances, a student may be placed on involuntary leave, even during the Student Conduct Process. Moreover, the Vice President of Operations and Finance, at their discretion, may suspend a student from the institution and/or any of its properties. To ensure the safety and well-being of students, RGS has the authority to implement non-punitive interim and supportive measures, including temporary or long-term room reassignments.

If multiple students face charges for engaging in Prohibited Conduct stemming from the same situation, the Dean of Students has the discretion to decide whether the Student Conduct Process and, if applicable, the Hearing/Appeal should proceed jointly or separately.

Incident Report Forms should be submitted promptly following the alleged Prohibited Conduct, preferably within three (3) months of the incident. While there is no strict deadline for submitting an Incident Report Form, delays may hinder the ability to effectively manage the Student Conduct Process, especially if considerable time has elapsed or if the involved students have graduated. The Dean of Students will use their discretion in deciding whether to accept conduct charges submitted after three (3) months.

Initiating the Student Conduct Process

A Complainant or Reporter fills out an Incident Report Form, which is accessible on the RGS website or in paper form from the Dean of Students' Office. Once the Incident Report Form is received, the Dean of Students will ask to meet with both the Reporter and the Complainant to gather additional details about the reported incident. During this meeting, the Dean will also discuss the Complainant's preferences regarding participation in the conduct process, including whether they want to file a Conduct Charge against the Respondent.

In certain cases, if the Complainant chooses not to file a Conduct Charge against the Respondent, the Dean of Students may decide that it is necessary for the institution to take on the role of the Complainant and initiate Conduct Charge(s) against the Respondent. When the institution acts as the Complainant and the case advances to a hearing, the Hearing Panel will only receive the written file from the Dean of Students; there will not be a representative from the institution present to speak on its behalf during the Hearing.

Respondent Notification

Once a Conduct Charge is brought forward, the Dean of Students will reach out to the Respondent, providing enough information about the Charge to allow for a response. Additionally, the Dean will ask to meet with the Respondent to discuss the Conduct Charge and hear their perspective.

Option to Accept Responsibility

Typically, in the meeting between the Dean of Students and the Respondent, the Dean will explain the option for the Respondent to admit responsibility. If the Respondent expresses interest in this choice, the Dean will provide a draft Letter of Responsibility containing the assigned sanctions. If the Respondent agrees to take responsibility, he/she must sign and return the Letter within 5 business days of receiving it. If the Respondent does not return the signed Letter by the deadline, the Dean will assume the Respondent does not want to accept responsibility and will move the matter to the fact-gathering stage. Alternatively, the Respondent can inform the Dean in writing of their decision not to accept responsibility, and in such cases, the matter will proceed to the fact-gathering stage.

If the Respondent accepts responsibility, the Complainant will receive written notification of the Respondent's admission. This admission is final and cannot be reversed. Additionally, if the Respondent admits responsibility at this stage, there is no option for an appeal in the Student Conduct Process.

The Dean of Students retains the right to forego the option of accepting responsibility and instead choose to proceed with a Hearing.

If the Respondent is not interested in admitting responsibility and chooses not to do so after receiving the proposed Letter of Responsibility, the next step in the Student Conduct Process is fact gathering.

Fact Gathering

In the fact-gathering phase of the Student Conduct Process, before the Hearing, the Dean of Students may ask to meet with relevant Witnesses and request documentary, photographic, and/or physical evidence from the Complainant, Respondent, and Witnesses, as necessary.

Hearing

Hearings are scheduled within one month after the receipt of the Incident Report Form.

Before the hearing: The Dean of Students will compile information gathered from meetings with the Complainant, Respondent, and Witnesses, along with all evidence, into a file for sharing with the Hearing Panel. Both the Complainant and the Respondent will receive a Hearing Notice Letter from the Dean of Students. If a party plans to present Witnesses at the Hearing, they must inform the Dean of Students in writing no later than seven business days before the hearing. Witnesses not identified in writing by this deadline will not be allowed to attend the Hearing. Also, the Complainant and Respondent must give the Dean of Students the name of the Support Person they intend to bring to the Hearing, in writing, and no later than seven business days before the hearing.

Conditions of the Hearing: The Hearing will be conducted in private. The only parties present at the Hearing are the Complainant, the Respondent, the Complainant's Support Person as applicable, the Respondent's Support Person as applicable, Witnesses while presenting, the Hearing Panel, and the Dean of Students. All Process questions are subject to final decision by the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students may suspend the Hearing while procedural questions are considered. The Hearing will be audio-recorded by the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students may, in their discretion, accommodate concerns for the personal safety, well-being, and/or fears of confrontation of the Complainant, Respondent, or Witnesses during the hearing by providing alternate means of participation. The Hearing will proceed under the direction of the Hearing Panel Chair. The Hearing Panel Chair may limit the scope and time devoted to each matter or item of discussion during the hearing.

The Hearing Process: At the hearing's start, the Hearing Panel Chair will facilitate introductions among all parties involved. Subsequently, the Chair will read the Conduct Charge(s) to the Respondent, who will respond with either "responsible" or "not responsible" to each Charge.

The Complainant will then present their opening statement to the Hearing Panel, followed by a round of questioning from the Panel. The Respondent will also deliver an opening statement, followed by questioning from the Panel. Witnesses for both the Complainant and Respondent, if any, will be called individually after the parties' opening statements to present information and answer questions from the Panel.

The Complainant and Respondent can suggest written questions for each Witness, and the Panel may choose to ask some, all, or none of them at their discretion. The Hearing Panel will then have a second opportunity to question the Complainant before they present a closing statement. Similarly, the Panel will question the Respondent before their closing statement.

Following the Hearing, the Panel will deliberate privately before reaching a determination of responsibility. Only the members of the Hearing Panel, excluding the Dean of Students, will be present during these deliberations. The Dean of Students will notify the Complainant and Respondent in writing, via a Hearing Outcome Letter, about the Panel's Findings and any applicable Sanctions within seven business days.

Appeal

Both the Complainant and the Respondent retain the right to appeal against a decision made by the Hearing Panel. The following conditions apply to any appeal:

Timeliness: An appeal must be submitted to the Dean of Students within seven business days of receiving the Hearing Outcome Letter. Failing to do so within this period forfeits the right to an appeal, and the Hearing Panel's Finding and any Sanctions become a Final Decision.

Nature of Appeal: An appeal is not a rehearing, and it cannot be filed based on a disagreement with the Hearing Panel's Finding or Sanctions.

Appearance and Witnesses: The Complainant and Respondent will not appear before the Appeal Panel, and witnesses will not be called.

Grounds for Acceptance: An appeal application is considered for evaluation only if there were significant procedural defects in the Student Conduct Process that hindered the appealing party's ability to prepare and present their information to the Hearing Panel. Additionally, there must be new evidence sufficient to alter the original Finding, and this evidence must not have been known or discoverable at the time of the Hearing.

Submission Requirements: The Appeal must include a completed Request for Appeal Form, available on the Office of the Dean of Students website, a written statement explaining the basis for the Appeal based on the specified grounds, and copies of any documents supporting or clarifying the Appeal.

Notification: Upon filing an Appeal, the Dean of Students will inform the other party.

Limited Review: An Appeal is restricted to reviewing the record and Appeal documents. No interviews with parties or witnesses will be conducted by the Appeal Panel.

Decision: After reviewing the record, the Appeal Panel may deny the Appeal or, if granted, determine the appropriate remedy. This may involve sending the matter back to The Dean of Students with instructions for resolving the Appeal.

Notification of Decision: Both parties will be notified of the Appeal Panel's decision through an Appeal Outcome Letter.

Recording: Appeal Panel proceedings are not recorded.

Review for Suspension or Expulsion: If a Respondent is sanctioned with suspension or expulsion, they may request a review by the Vice President of Operations. This request must be in writing and submitted within five business days of receiving the Appeal Outcome Letter. The Vice President of Operations has the authority to uphold, vacate, modify, or remand a new Hearing at their discretion, and their decision is final.

Hold on Decision: The original Hearing Panel's Finding and Sanctions, if any, are put on hold until the completion of the Appeal or the expiration of the deadline for submitting an Appeal.

Rights and Responsibilities of the Complainant, Respondent, and Institution During the Student Conduct Process

The Complainant holds the right to initiate a Conduct Charge if they believe Prohibited Conduct has taken place. The Respondent is entitled to receive notice of charges and the chance for a hearing in alignment with the Student Conduct Process. Both the Complainant and Respondent share the right to file an Appeal. Also, both parties have the right to review all materials that will be considered by the Hearing Panel before the actual Hearing.

Unresolved complaints

Any student who is unable to resolve a complaint at RGS through the procedures described in this handbook may make a complaint to the PA Department of Education at

Students Complaints (pa.gov) (OR (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Postsecondary-Adult/CollegeCareer/Pages/Students-Complaints.aspx>))

Accommodations and/or interventions that would facilitate access to the RGS experience with a rationale for each request

The student is responsible for requesting the 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 and must be made personally by the student to each professor for whom the accommodation is 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 the 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 by the Code of Conduct procedures, 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.

If 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 Students who is to confer with the faculty member. Failing that route, the student may file a complaint and initiate the related Code of Conduct procedures stated in this handbook.

The items below constitute examples of acceptable and unacceptable use of computer resources and other technologies..

Computer Use Policies

Acceptable Use

1. Use is consistent with the mission of RGS
2. Use for purposes of, or in support of, education and research
3. Use related to administrative and other support activities considered consistent with the mission of RGS

4. Personal communications, as long as these do not interfere with the mission of RGS or overload system or network resources

Unacceptable Use

1. Use of institutional computers or networks that violates local, state, or federal laws or statutes
2. Providing, assisting with, or gaining unauthorized or inappropriate access to RGS's computing resources
3. Use of institutional computers or networks for unauthorized or inappropriate access to systems, software, or data at other sites
4. Installing on the network unauthorized network devices and network services, such as wireless access points, internet address resolution servers, hubs, routers, and switches
5. 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
6. 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
7. Activities that interfere with the ability of others to use institutional computing resources or other network-connected services effectively
8. Activities that result in the loss of another person's work or unauthorized access to another person's work
9. Connecting one's personal computer to the RGS network without active and current anti-virus, anti-spyware, and adware protection
10. Distribution of obscene, abusive, or threatening messages via electronic media such as e-mail, social media, or instant messaging
11. Distribution of chain letters or broadcasting to lists of individuals in a manner that might cause congestion of the network
12. 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:

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

RGS's 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's 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

Guidelines on Personal Records

Upon admission, a personalized record is initiated for each student and is housed on SharePoint. This file encompasses the application for admission, featuring biographical details, test scores, duplicates of all official correspondence, and the current contact information of parents, guardians, or spouses. The provision of information regarding religious and political preferences and activities is voluntary and will be retained in the folder with consent from the student. It's also important to note that these folders exclude confidential counseling records generated by any staff member.

Transmission of information from student records to potential employers is prohibited unless explicit consent is obtained from the concerned student. Additionally, students have the option to waive their right to access confidential statements. Individuals approached to provide recommendations for a student will be notified if the student has chosen to waive their right of access.

Guidelines on Academic Records

Details regarding a student's academic performance will be accessible online to the student and his/her academic advisor. The release of academic information to other parties will adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in Section: Principles of Student Record Confidentiality. Grade point averages will only be disclosed to groups in which a student is a member or seeking membership, with the explicit written consent of the individual. The RGS will confirm only whether the student has met the minimum standards of the group. Furthermore, academic transcripts will be retained indefinitely.

Records on Student Conduct

Records of conduct decisions will be kept on file in the Dean of Students' office. Conduct records are primarily intended for internal purposes and will typically not be disclosed to individuals outside the institution unless formally requested by the involved student. Conduct actions will not be noted on academic transcripts. Within the institution, access to these records will be limited to the Dean of Students, administrative hearing officers, and related appeals boards, only as necessary for the fulfillment of their duties.

Guidelines on Financial Assistance/Scholarship Records

In the process of seeking financial assistance, every student is typically obligated to submit a Scholarship Application. This statement and any additional materials related to a student's financial status will be stored in a distinct file, accessible solely to individuals directly involved in financial assistance matters. Details regarding scholarships, grants, and loans awarded are treated as confidential and will not be disclosed to unauthorized individuals.

Guidelines on Health and Counseling Records

Medical and psychological records are considered privileged information. Access to these records is granted to the student, and the release of information derived from these records will only occur upon the student's explicit request. Exceptions to this policy include conditions, diseases, or injuries that a licensed healthcare provider is legally obligated to report. Upon the student's request, a copy of the entrance physical examination and relevant information from the student's medical record may be forwarded to other educational institutions. Similarly, these materials may be sent to

prospective employers, other physicians, insurance companies, or other individuals or organizations, as requested by the student.

Complaints and third-party comments for MSCHE candidate institutions

MSCHE accepts complaints and third-party comments for institutions engaged in the applicant and candidacy processes. MSCHE provides an online form for the submission of complaints or third-party comments on the Complaints page of its website <https://www.msche.org/complaints/>. Please visit MSCHE's website at www.msche.org for more information.

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. Note: Currently, Respect is not bound by FERPA as we do not participate in any type of federal funding, but Respect voluntarily follows FERPA as best practice.

Unresolved complaints

Any student who is unable to resolve a complaint at RGS through the procedures described in this handbook may make a complaint to the PA Department of Education at

Students Complaints (pa.gov) (OR (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Postsecondary-Adult/CollegeCareer/Pages/Students-Complaints.aspx>))

Amending the Handbook

Policy Statement

The institution maintains handbooks, policies, and procedures to ensure effective governance, operational clarity, and regulatory compliance. These documents may be amended as necessary through a defined review and approval process to maintain accuracy, consistency, and institutional integrity.

Policy

Minor Revisions

Editorial, formatting, clerical, or non-substantive revisions that do not alter the intent, scope, or application of a handbook, policy, or procedure may be made administratively without formal review under this policy.

Proposal of Amendments

Substantive amendments to handbooks, policies, or procedures, along with a written rationale, may be proposed by faculty, staff, administrators, or governing board members and submitted to the designated administrative authority.

Review and Consultation

The designated administrative authority shall coordinate a review of proposed amendments with appropriate stakeholders. This process may include consultation, discussion, and revision to ensure institutional alignment and compliance.

Approval Process

1. Handbooks and Policies: Following review, proposed amendments to handbooks and institutional policies shall be submitted to the governing body or its designee for consideration.
2. Procedures: which implement approved policies, may be reviewed and approved by the designated administrative authority unless otherwise required by governing body action.

Incorporation and Documentation

Upon approval, amendments shall be formally incorporated into the applicable handbook, policy, or procedure, with appropriate documentation of the approval date and authority.

Publication and Implementation

Approved amendments shall be communicated to affected stakeholders and published through official institutional channels. Amendments shall take effect on the date specified in the approval unless otherwise stated.

Policy on Policy Development and Implementation

This policy applies to all of the RGS's divisions for the development of subsequent policies.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all of the policies of the RGS are formally approved and consistent with the mission, goals, commitments, and initiatives. Furthermore, all policies and procedures are to be written clearly, in compliance with legal requirements and published so as to be available and accessible in print and electronic formats to the RGS constituents and general public.

Definitions

Policies are guiding or governing principles, formally approved to provide assistance in the conduct of the affairs of the RGS constituent groups. Such policies are published in appropriate handbooks.

Procedures are statements that provide for the orderly implementation of established policies through specific, prescribed actions to be taken.

Administrative policies describe the terms or conditions of affiliation of administrators, faculty members, staff members, students, the use of the facilities (i.e., buildings, grounds, and equipment), and other matters of a general nature.

Academic policies are policies that relate to the educational process and the academic portfolio of the RGS.

Student life policies concern the terms or conditions affecting student life within the RGS community.

Board of Trustees policies are those by which the Board of Trustees operates and governs itself, and policies involving the relationship of the Board to the President of the RGS as Chief Executive Officer.

Presidential Responsibilities

While the Board of Trustees of RGS is ultimately responsible for the control and function of RGS, the President is empowered with the authority to manage the operation of the RGS. The President manages RGS, in part, through his or her oversight of the creation and implementation of the policies. The RGS policies are developed in the context of a transparent system of shared governance, which

involves the RGS's aforementioned constituents. In this manner the campus community is able to work together to resolve issues that face RGS.

The RGS Policy Development Committee

The RGS Policy Development Committee (the "PDC" or the "Committee") proposes policies and procedures related to the development, review, revision, and elimination of RGS policies. In addition, the Committee coordinates the regular policy review process in consultation with the President, ensuring that all policies are reviewed and communicated on a regular cycle. The Committee also serves as a source of advice about the appropriate scope (departmental, divisional, Institutional) of existing and proposed policies, and about the appropriate review and consultation processes for proposed policies.

Committee Membership

The committee consists of the Vice President of Operations, the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Students, and the President of the SC.

Procedures

Initiation

A request for a new policy, or revision of an existing policy, may come from any member of the Institution's constituent groups or community. A request does not guarantee that a policy will be developed by the PDC.

Development

The PDC reviews the proposal and determines whether, appropriately, it should move forward to the next step in the development process.

The policy development process includes both an initial and a final review period, during which RGS's constituent groups have the opportunity to comment on each policy. Following its final review, the PDC recommends the proposal as it stands to the President of RGS or recommends it to the President with comments for possible revision. Upon receiving a proposed policy from the PDC, the President may conduct his or her own independent review and study of the issue. The President may also consult with the advising constituencies of RGS, which provides a mechanism for the President to

discuss possible outcomes and to consider the overall effects of the proposed policy on the RGS as a whole.

Approval

The President submits the final draft of any policy changes for approval to the Board of Trustees.

Dissemination

If the policy or revision is approved by the Board of Trustees, the President of RGS initials the final draft and sends it to the Secretary of the RGS, who sees that it is published in the appropriate handbooks of RGS and notifies the constituent groups of the approval and the effective date.

If the policy or revision is not approved, the President of the RGS returns it with comments to the Secretary of RGS, who notifies appropriate persons of the status of the proposal.