

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE
ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM**

SUBJECT: Grading Criteria in Pre-clerkship Courses

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- A. To provide UH College of Medicine students and faculty with guidelines related to grading criteria for pre-clerkship courses, excluding CFS courses.
- B. To ensure the College of Medicine complies with Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) accreditation standards for the medical education program, including LCME Standards 9 & 9.7.

II. BACKGROUND

As stated in the policy entitled *Timely Grade and Mid-Course/Clerkship Feedback Reporting*, the responsibility for assessing students rests with the faculty of the UH College of Medicine. Faculty have an obligation to the students, to the college, and to the larger society to set standards of achievement and award passing grades only to those students who have demonstrated mastery of the course material. In addition to assessment of students' knowledge and skills, the faculty have the obligation to determine whether students' behavior or conduct is consistent with professional standards and suitable for the practice of medicine. Furthermore, it is also the responsibility of the faculty to ensure students are clear as to the expectations for each course and how passing grades will be earned. This document, created by the Office of Medical Education and approved by the Curriculum Committee, outlines the grading criteria for UH College of Medicine pre-clerkship courses to ensure clarity and equity while awarding grades based on demonstration of mastery of content, not accumulation of points.

III. POLICY

Pre-clerkship Courses will have **two sets of course requirements**: (1) course assessments (both summative and formal formative) and (2) course professionalism (both attendance and conduct). Final grades for UH College of Medicine Pre-clerkship courses will be “Pass” or “Fail” based on fulfilling course requirements for (1) course assessments (both summative and formal formative), with no persistent or egregious issues for (2) course professionalism (both attendance and conduct). See chart below.

Course Assessments*	Description	Determination of “Pass”	Remediation
<p>Summative Assessments Individual assessments for performance grades (quantitative)</p>	<p>Exams <i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSCE • Written exam (MCQ) 	<p>Performance grade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUST PASS cumulative assessment $\geq 70\%$ • All other assessments $\geq 70\%$ 	<p>Remediation re-test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take and pass comparable cumulative assessment

Formal Formative Assessments	Required assignments	Performance feedback	Remediation activities
Individual assessments for formal feedback in terms of "Meets expectations," "Borderline," or "Does not meet expectations" (qualitative)	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz • Simulation lab • SP checklist • Scholarly project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than X "Does not meet expectations" ratings without remediation activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each "Does not meet expectations" rating will result in a meeting with the Course/Clerkship Director to identify deficits and determine appropriate remediation activities and Student Affairs referrals

*Students must pass requirements for both summative and formal formative assessments to pass the course.

Professionalism**
Student Attendance Students must know and adhere to the UH College of Medicine Attendance Policy (located in UH College of Medicine Student Handbook), which includes showing up on time for course activities and submitting an Absence Report Form and emailing the Course/Clerkship Director as soon as students know that they will miss course activities.
Student Conduct Students must know and adhere to the UH College of Medicine Code of Conduct (located in UH College of Medicine Student Handbook), which includes participating appropriately in all course activities.

**Students may fail a course due to persistent or egregious professionalism issues despite passing requirements for both summative and formal formative assessments.

A. Course Assessments - Summative

1. Purpose of summative assessments
 - a. Summative assessments are required and graded critical assessments/exams to demonstrate students' mastery of content.
2. Structure for summative assessments
 - a. Summative assessments can be multiple choice exams (MCQs), short-answer questions, essay questions, Observed Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs), laboratory practicals, or a combination.
3. Grading for summative assessments
 - a. Students will earn performance grades (points or percentages) on summative assessments
 - b. If the final summative assessment is cumulative [i.e., includes topics throughout course ($\geq 15\%$) and/or course material in which later information is dependent on knowing earlier information], students must earn a passing grade on the cumulative final to show mastery of course material.
 - c. If there is no cumulative final summative assessment, students must earn a passing grade for each summative assessment to show mastery of material throughout the course.
4. Determination of passing requirements for summative assessments
 - a. Course Directors will define the criteria for passing summative assessments as (1) earning $\geq 70\%$ on the final exam as well as EITHER (2a) earning $\geq 70\%$ on every other summative assessment or (2b) earning $\geq 70\%$ across all summative assessments.
 - b. All quantitative grades will be reported to the hundredth decimal point. A score of 0.01-0.49 will be rounded down to the nearest whole number; a score of 0.50-0.99 will be rounded up to the nearest whole number. Thus, a score of 69.50 should be rounded up to a passing 70. A score of 69.49 should be rounded down to a failing 69. There are no exceptions.

5. Remediation for summative assessments
 - a. Faculty must meet with students who fail a summative assessment within three school days to identify deficits and determine appropriate remediation activities and Student Affairs referrals, and faculty must complete a Faculty Assessment Report for documentation.
 - b. After failing a course related to summative assessments, remediation in terms of taking and passing a cumulative summative re-test may be available (see SPAC policy).

- B. Course Assessments - Formal Formative
 1. Purpose of formal formative assessments
 - a. Formal formative assessments are required assignments throughout the course to provide student formal formative feedback for quality of performance while learning.
 2. Structure for formal formative assessments
 - a. Formal formative assignments can include case-based learning (CBL), problem-based learning (PBL), team-based learning (TBL), small group, lab activity, homework, MCQ quiz, standardized patient checklist, simulation lab, student presentation, student project, or any combination.
 - b. Formal formative feedback can be verbal, written, categorical, or numerically scored with designated minimums for “meets expectations,” “borderline,” or “does not meet expectations” and will be consistently applied and documented for all students within courses at least once and by mid-course (see policy, *Timely Grade and Mid-Course/Clerkship Feedback Reporting*).
 - Structured indices such as categorizing scores for feedback is easiest for showing consistent, objective, individual student feedback in relation to each assessment and over time (better, worse, variable)
 - c. Faculty can provide students with informal opportunities for formative assessment (i.e., not required or graded) such as on-the-spot feedback, ungraded preparatory work, or individual self-assessments throughout courses, but these will not be considered formal formative feedback nor considered in the final course grade of “Pass” or “Fail.”
 3. Grading for formal formative assessments
 - a. For each formal formative assignment, students will not receive a quantitative grade, instead they will receive formal formative feedback in terms of ratings for “meets expectations,” “borderline,” or “does not meet expectations.”
 - b. The embedded feedback system in the gradebook of the UH College of Medicine learning management system will send an alert when a student has received a “does not meet expectations” rating to the student, the Course Director, and designees in UH College of Medicine Student Affairs.
 - The parties who receive these reports will have the responsibility for acting on this information to include determining appropriate remediation activities and documenting meetings with the student.
 - c. The following actions should be performed for formal formative feedback.
 - Meets expectations: Students should contact the Course Director if they have any questions/comments
 - Borderline: Students should make appointment with Course Director if they want to discuss any learning deficiencies
 - Does not meet expectations: Students must make an appointment with the Course Director within three school days. The purpose of this meeting is for the Course Director and student to identify student deficits in learning and to determine

appropriate remediation activities and Student Affairs referrals. The Course Director must complete a Faculty Assessment Report for documentation. Course Directors are not required to follow-up on student remediation activities.

- 4. Determination of passing requirements for formal formative assessments
 - a. Course Directors will define the criteria for passing formal formative assessments as having no more than “X” performance ratings of “does not meet expectations” with no accompanying remediation activities for either (a) each type of formative assessment (e.g., X for quizzes and X for TBLs), or (b) across all formative assessments.

C. Students must pass the requirements for both summative and formal formative assessments to pass the course.

D. Professionalism

1. Student Attendance

- a. The Office of Medical Education (OME) will be responsible for documenting student attendance for course activities.
- b. OME will address violations of the UH College of Medicine Attendance Policy (located in the UH College of Medicine Student Handbook) with students and make the determination for excused or unexcused absences.
- c. If faculty note or discuss attendance violations with students, faculty must complete a Faculty Assessment Report for documentation.

2. Student Conduct

- a. UH College of Medicine is committed to developing physicians who demonstrate professional behavior as outlined in the UH College of Medicine Attendance Policy and UH College of Medicine Medical Student Code of Conduct.
- b. Faculty should address specific student conduct issues in their courses/clerkships. Faculty who note or discuss conduct violations with students must complete a Faculty Assessment Report for documentation. Faculty may refer persistent and egregious violations of the UH College of Medicine Code of Conduct to the Office of Student Affairs (see *SPAC policy*).
- c. The Office of Student Affairs and the SPAC committee will address egregious and persistent violations of the Student Code of Conduct (see *SPAC policy*).

3. Independent of academic performance, persistent or egregious violations of professionalism can result in sanctions by the Student Performance and Advancement Committee (See *SPAC policy*) to include remediation activities or failure of the course.

IV. MONITORING OF THIS POLICY

- A. Course Directors are responsible for listing course requirements, which include both summative and formal formative assessments, on the syllabus (see policy for *Timely Grade and Mid-Course/Clerkship Feedback Reporting*).
- B. The Assistant Dean for Assessment will ensure Course Directors have both summative and formal formative assessments listed on course syllabi prior and will make use of both summative and formal formative grades by courses for program evaluation.

V. DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.	
Summative assessment	Required and graded critical assessments or exams to show mastery of content

Performance grade	Points or percentages earned for summative assessments
Formal formative assessments	Required assignments to provide uniform individual student feedback for quality of performance while learning
Feedback for formal formative assessment	Feedback may be categorical or numerically scored with designated minimums for, and provision of, one of the following feedback categories: "Meets expectations," "Borderline," or "Does not meet expectations"
Remediation	Assessment of student deficits and suggested activities for correction of deficits

Approval History		
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