

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON SYSTEM
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE**

SUBJECT: Grading Policies (Student Performance and Advancement Committee)
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I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- A. To inform the working of the Student Performance and Advancement Committee.
- B. To inform the UH College of Medicine students, staff, and faculty of the guidelines for evaluation of student performance and advancement in the medical education program.
- C. To ensure the UH College of Medicine complies with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) standards for the medical education program, including LCME Standard 9.9.

II. BACKGROUND

The responsibility for evaluation of students rests with the faculty of the University of Houston College of Medicine. The UH College of Medicine faculty award passing grades only to those students who have demonstrated mastery of the course material and shown behavior and conduct consistent with professional standards and suitable for the practice of medicine. These practices further ensure the academic integrity of the medical education program. As such, faculty shall be clear as to the expectations for each course and how passing grades will be earned. Course requirements specific to each course will be clearly displayed in the course syllabus.

The faculty of the UH College of Medicine has the responsibility for recommending students for promotion and graduation. This responsibility is administered through the Student Performance and Advancement Committee (SPAC) that represents the faculty at large. Principles of fairness and due process apply when considering actions of the faculty or administration that might adversely affect the students. Comments, questions, and concerns should be directed to the Office of Student Affairs.

III. STUDENTS COVERED BY THIS POLICY

These grading and promotions policies apply to students enrolled in the courses necessary to complete the requirements for the Doctor of Medicine degree in the UHCOM.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Admissions and Outreach (ADSAAO) is responsible for monitoring the progress of medical students during their course of study in order to provide or refer students to the appropriate academic or personal counseling services, if applicable. The office of Student Affairs will provide staff support to the SPAC and will maintain permanent minutes of SPAC actions. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Admissions and Outreach (ADSAAO) serves as advocate for due process for students.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPAC

The SPAC is a committee elected by the faculty and is charged with the responsibility to review and evaluate the academic and behavioral progress of each medical student enrolled at UHCOM. It is not a policy making body but rather applies the policies that are approved through the Curriculum Committee.

The committee shall be responsible for reviewing the progress of all students and determining the status of each student's academic progress. The committee shall also be responsible for the review of student conduct. The purview of the committee includes but is not limited to:

- A. Promotion to the next academic year

- B. Academic remediation or dismissal
- C. Unprofessional conduct
- D. Behavior that may jeopardize the safety or well-being of any patient or others
- E. Demonstration of any unethical or illegal behavior or activity
- F. Violation of the UHCOM Code of Professional Conduct
- G. Recommendation of policies regarding student performance and conduct

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEAN

The Dean or their designee, has the final responsibility for actions taken regarding a student. The initial recommendation and subsequent action for each student are delegated to the SPAC. However, the Dean or their designee is responsible for executing the appeals process in which a final decision is made.

VII. STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

- A. The voting members of the Student Performance and Advancement Committee consists of nine (9) faculty from UHCOM, (3–4 basic scientists and 5–6 clinicians).
- B. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Admissions and Outreach (ADSAAO) and the Associate Dean for Medical Education (ADME) serve as ex-officio members, with voice but without vote.
- C. Other non-voting members include the Director of Academic Support and the Assistant Director of Scholarships and Financial Aid.
- D. The Chair and Vice-chair are elected by the committee.
- E. The proceedings of all meetings are held confidential in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. The proceedings and decisions of the SPAC are privileged information. SPAC members may not discuss specific cases or the outcome with anyone outside the SPAC.
- F. All committee decisions requiring a vote are determined by a simple majority vote with the Chair as a voting member. Five (5) members of the committee constitute a quorum at a regular or called meeting. In urgent cases the Chair and Vice-chair may, after consulting with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs make a decision regarding an emergency leave of absence for a student in academic difficulty, without a vote of the committee. The Chair, Vice-Chair, and Associate Dean will set the conditions for return from a leave of absence, with approval of the Dean or their designee.

VIII. REVIEW OF PRE-CLERKSHIP COURSEWORK

- A. All courses for the pre-clerkship phase at UHCOM are Pass/Fail. Please consult the individual course syllabi for specific grading/evaluation criteria for each course.
- B. Progress of students will be reviewed by the SPAC at the end of each course and at the end of the academic year in the context of course work, student’s professionalism, evidence of progressive improvement and personal circumstances. The SPAC may place a student on a remedial course if there are concerns regarding professionalism. If a student has recurrent professionalism issues, they may be included in the MSPE (Medical Student Performance Evaluation) narrative of professional performance or receive a notation of a “Sanction” on their MSPE.
 - 1. First Semester: The first semester delivers foundational principles that are essential to building knowledge for the subsequent phases of the curriculum. Therefore, failure of these courses has added significance. The Committee will review all students who have:
 - a) Failure of Clinical Anatomy and Human Development alone
 - b) Failure of Clinical Anatomy and Human Development AND Scientific Foundations of Medicine
 - c) Faculty concern
 - d) Professionalism concern
 - 2. Subsequent semesters: See Table 1
 - a) Failure of courses

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- b) Faculty Concern
- c) Professionalism concern
- 3. Year Review of Progress: See Table 1
 - a) Failure of courses
 - b) Faculty concern
 - c) Professionalism concern
 - d) Comprehensive Basic Sciences Examination (CBSE) requirement (end of pre-clerkship phase)
 - Students must reach the required score on CBSE to progress to the clinical phase of the curriculum.
 - If a student scores below the required CBSE score they will be reviewed by the SPAC for recommendation for remedial coursework to rectify knowledge gaps before retaking CBSE and advancing to the core clinical curriculum.
- 4. Completion Deadline for Remediation:
 - a) Year 1 students—July 1 after completion of Year 1 (or prior to orientation of next Year 1)
 - b) Year 2 students—Prior to beginning clerkship phase
 - c) Student must be available for scheduled remediation and may not attend off campus school related activities until they have successfully completed their requirements.
 - d) The first two (2) years of medical school (pre-clerkship phase) must be completed within three (3) years including leaves of absences or repeating of the year.

Important Notes:

Remediation is recommended by the course director and agreed to by the SPAC.

Table 1: Grading Results and Subsequent Possible SPAC Actions

Pre-clerkship phases	Recommended action by SPAC	Standing*
First Semester		
Fail Clinical Anatomy and Human Development <u>OR</u> Scientific Foundations of Medicine <u>OR</u> Physicians, Patients, and Populations (PPP)	May remediate at end of fall semester	Academic watch
Fail Clinical Anatomy and Human Development <u>AND</u> Scientific Foundations of Medicine	Restart the year or dismissal	Academic warning
Fail PPP & Clinical Anatomy <u>OR</u> Fail PPP & Scientific Foundations of Medicine	Remediation, restart of the year, or dismissal	Academic warning
Beyond first semester:		
Fail one (1) or two (2) courses within a semester	Remediation (only able to remediate 2 courses in a year)	Academic watch
Fail three (3) courses within semester	Repeat of year or dismissal	Academic warning
Year		
Fail two (2) semester courses across the year	Remediation, repeat of year or dismissal	Academic warning
Fail three (3) semester course across year	Repeat of year or dismissal	Academic warning
Fail CBSE	Delay of clinical phase until meets required score	Academic watch

*See policy on Academic Standing

All Grades will be reflected on the transcript.

- C. Remediation tests will be given on a scheduled date following completion of other courses by the Office of Medical Education. If the remediation exam is passed, there will be a notation on transcript of successful remediation. Failure of a remediation exam requires that the student return to SPAC for consideration of repeat of the year or dismissal.

IX. GRADING & PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE (SPAC) REVIEW OF CLINICAL YEARS

- A. All courses for the clinical years (Spring Year 2, Year 3 and 4) at UHCOM are Honors/Pass/Fail. Honors designation will not be given for Longitudinal Primary Care course which will be Pass/Fail for all 4 years.
- B. Progress of a student will be reviewed by the SPAC after each semester in the context of all course work, student's professionalism, evidence of progressive improvement and personal circumstances. The SPAC may place a student on a remedial course if there are concerns regarding professionalism. If a student has recurrent professionalism issues, they may receive a notation of "Sanction" on their MSPE (Medical Student Performance Evaluation).
- C. Student Performance and Advancement Committee Review for Clinical years - *PENDING*
The remedial work will not be counted as elective time in satisfying the conditions for graduation.
- D. Student Performance and Advancement Committee Review for Year 4 – *PENDING*

X. TRANSCRIPT NOTATION

- A. All grades will be retained on the student's transcript.
- B. When a student receives a failing grade in a semester course that does not require a repeat of the year, a grade of "F" (Fail) will be entered in the transcript. A second course listing will be added when the remediation is complete with a notation of "Successfully Remediated".
- C. If a student repeats an entire academic year, the new grades are recorded on the transcript in addition to the original ones.

XI. DOCUMENTATION OF STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

All grades will be recorded in eMedley and PeopleSoft for each student and will be available in the student's electronic portfolio located on eMedley. UH Office of the University Registrar maintains the official transcript of all students.

XII. PROMOTION POLICIES

- A. Normal progression through the UHCOM curriculum requires that a student demonstrate a consistently satisfactory level of performance and professional behavior. Students will be expected to complete the medical school curriculum within four (4) years of the initial date of matriculation.
- B. The curriculum may be extended due to 1) a leave of absence, 2) academic difficulty requiring repetition of an academic year as per this policy. However, inability to complete Years 1 and 2 of the curriculum in three (3) years and/or the entire curriculum within six (6) years inclusive of leaves of absence will result in dismissal.

XIII. GENERAL ISSUES

- A. The committee is not bound solely by categorical or arithmetic assessment of student performance but rather reviews each student in the context of their academic achievement and any other circumstances that may influence performance. If a student exhibits conduct or behavior inconsistent with or in violation of the UHCOM Code of Professional Conduct in a

course or clerkship a grade of Fail may be given. Such conduct or behavior that occurs beyond the boundaries of a class or rotation may also be considered by the SPAC.

- B. Failure to successfully remediate a course in Years 1 and 2 according to course standards before the start of the next academic year will result in repetition of the entire year in which the failure occurred.
- C. Final grades will be reviewed at the end of each course and semester. Students who receive a grade of Fail shall meet with the SPAC to discuss their academic performance and possible actions by the committee.
- D. Students who are required to repeat an academic year may not take courses from the next academic year during the period of repetition.
- E. Students reviewed by the SPAC will be notified in writing prior to the review an again after the SPAC decision with any stipulations for continuation in the curriculum.
- F. A final grade in each course or clerkship may be derived from the component scores. The components for evaluation are defined by each course or clerkship.
- G. Repetition of the clerkship and remedial work will not be counted as elective time in satisfying the requirements for graduation.
- H. The completion of the medical school curriculum within the above standards and the approval of overall performance by the SPAC are required for graduation. The Student Affairs Office will annually present a list of candidates for receipt of the Doctor of Medicine Degree based on the above to the Faculty Council and the Dean or his/her designee. The approved list will then be sent to the Office of the Registrar

XIV. NOTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Students with satisfactory progress will proceed through the curriculum with no formal notice of promotion. The Office of Student Affairs will notify students in writing if there are issues which require them to meet with the SPAC and the outcome of their deliberations.

XV. DELIBERATIONS OF SPAC

- A. Each student who has demonstrated unsatisfactory progress in the curriculum as defined above will be subject to the courses of action as previously set forth in this policy. When meeting with a student on an issue related to academic performance, the SPAC shall also consider a prior history of academic performance or sanctions for misconduct.
- B. Conflict of interest – As delineated in the SPAC committee charge, conflicts of interest, will be queried prior to the start of each meeting. If present, the committee member will remove themselves from the discussion and voting for that student. Conflicts of interest include but are not limited to SPAC members who:
 - 1. Previously awarded a failing grade in a course/clerkship
 - 2. Serve as the advisor or Learning Community Mentor for the student
 - 3. Are identified by the student for another stated reason. In this instance, conflict of interest to be determined by the remaining members of the committee.
- C. At a hearing with the SPAC, the student will be expected to discuss their academic performance and to propose a course of action to address the academic deficiencies. All deficiencies that committee is considering must be discussed with the student.
- D. Following the hearing with the student, the SPAC may then vote for a course of action. With a quorum present, the committee action will be determined by a majority vote. The committee's deliberation and vote shall be conducted in private.
- E. The determination and stipulations arising from the actions of the SPAC will be communicated in writing by the Chair of the SPAC to the student and the Dean or their designee. The student may appeal a decision by the SPAC under Sections XVII.

In the case of repetition of a year or dismissal, the Office of Student Affairs, Admissions and Outreach will notify in writing Scholarship and Financial Aid, Office of University Registrar and other pertinent UH offices

XVI. DISMISSAL

A student shall be dismissed if the SPAC determines that the student has not performed satisfactorily in academic pursuits, is not competent to pursue the assigned course of study, or has been deemed by the SPAC, for just reason, unfit to continue the study of medicine. The student shall be notified in writing of the action of the SPAC.

XVII. APPEALS PROCEDURE

- A. A student may appeal the decision of the SPAC. This appeal must be made to the Dean or their designee of the UH College of Medicine within five (5) business days, must be in writing, and must cite the specific reasons for the appeal. Grounds for an appeal may only be based on a claim that SPAC policies and procedures were not followed.
- B. The Dean or their designee may issue the decision alone or may appoint an Appeals Committee
- C. If there is an Appeals Committee, the Appeals Committee will be convened by the ADSAAO within five (5) business days after appointment to consider determining whether a basis for appeal exists.
 - 1. It will be comprised of three (3) members of the faculty The ADSAAO and the Chair of the SPAC (or designee) will serve as ex officio members.
 - 2. The student shall notify the ADSAAO three (3) days in advance of the hearing if they are to be accompanied by an attorney or other representative. An attorney or representative may appear only in an advisory capacity and may not address the Appeals Committee.
 - 3. Should the student be accompanied by an attorney, the UH College of Medicine shall be represented by the Office of General Counsel. If necessary, the appeal hearing may be delayed up to five (5) business days of the scheduled date if needed to allow personnel from the Office of General Counsel to attend.
 - 4. The student may present a statement to the Appeals Committee relative to the appeal. The Appeals Committee may request additional information.
 - 5. Both the Appeals Committee and student may call witnesses relevant to resolution of the appeal. Should information or witnesses be either repetitious or not relevant, the Appeals Committee shall act to expedite the proceedings.
 - 6. The Appeals Committee shall meet in private to decide upon the recommendation to make to the Dean or designee. Deliberations of the Appeals Committee are strictly confidential.
 - 7. After the hearing, the Appeals Committee shall forward its recommendation to the Dean or their designee. If the recommendation is not unanimous, any minority view will be appended.
 - 8. After reviewing the Appeals Committee recommendation (if applicable) the Dean or their designee will make a final decision.
- D. The decision of the Dean or their designee is final. The student and the Chair of the SPAC Committee will be notified in writing by the Dean or their designee.
- E. Unless suspended for some justifiable reason, the student shall remain on the class roll and may pursue appropriate course work until the appeal is resolved.

XVIII. POLICY REGARDING USMLE STEP I EXAM

- A. To become fully licensed to practice medicine in the United States, individuals must have passed all 3 USMLE Step exams – Step 1, Step 2 Clinical Knowledge, , and Step 3. Each state’s medical

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licensing board determines the number of attempts individuals may make at each step in order to remain eligible for licensure. In Texas individuals are limited to three (3) attempts on each Step.

- B. Students are expected to take Step 1 following completion of the core clinical clerkship (longitudinal integrated curriculum) during a dedicated block. If a student had a low CBSE score at the end of the pre-clerkship phase, they may be placed in a remedial course to rectify knowledge gaps before retaking CBSE and advancing to the core clinical curriculum. Such students will be granted an extension of the due date of the initial attempt of Step 1. If a student is unsuccessful in Step 1, they will be removed from clinical experiences (at the end of current rotation) until they pass the test. Students are expected to pass Step 1 of USMLE in order to continue advanced clinical rotations (Year 4).
- C. Inability to pass Step 1 within three (3) attempts will result in review by the SPAC and probable dismissal.

XIX. POLICY REGARDING USMLE STEP II EXAM

- A. Passage of Step 2 Clinical Knowledge will be required for graduation. Initial attempt at Step 2 must be taken by October 31 of the year preceding graduation. Students who fail to do so will not be allowed to participate further in clinical rotations/electives until these exams are taken. Passing scores must be documented no later than May 1 of the year graduating. Failure to document a passing score by May 1 may result in a delay in graduation.
- B. Failure of Step 2 CK after three (3) attempts will be grounds for referral to the SPAC and probable dismissal.

XX. PROCEDURE FOR AMENDING OF SPAC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- A. A proposal to amend the policies and procedures may be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Curriculum Committee (CC) by any person or group who believes a need for revision exists. The proposal shall be considered by the full committee for review and discussion.
- B. Clarification or non-substantive rewording of policy may be performed by the SPAC. The clarification will be reviewed by the Office of General Counsel and copies forwarded to the CC.

Approval History		
<i>Approver</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Date</i>
Transitional Curriculum Committee	Approved	August 7, 2019
Curriculum Committee	Approved	April 8, 2020
Review by UH Office of General Council	Approved	October 12, 2020

Document History	
Date Created	July 2019
Date Last Modified	June 15, 2021
Responsible Office	Student Affairs
Next Scheduled Review Date	May 2022
Stakeholder Communication Method and Date	
Revision History/Purpose	Revision regarding licensure: June 15, 2021