

## **Policy Title:** Grading Policy and Appeals Process

**Policy Number** (relate to LCME Element as applicable): UCF COM Policy 9.9.3

**Applies to:** All medical students at the University of Central Florida College of Medicine (UCF COM).

**Date:** 5/1/2017

### **1.0 Purpose:**

This policy relates to LCME Element 9.9 which states that: “medical education program has a single standard for the advancement and graduation of medical students across all locations.”

### **2.0 Policy Statement:**

The purpose of this policy is to define fair and consistent criteria for advancement of medical students, including grading policies and processes, and appeals process.

#### **1. Policies, Procedures and Due Process**

Individual module or clerkship directors, with their faculty, define the criteria for acceptable academic performance in their respective module/clerkship. Evaluation of academic performance may include, but is not limited to: measuring the student’s knowledge; measuring how the student applies such knowledge to specific problems; evaluating the judgment a student employs in solving problems, and assessing the quality of the student’s psychomotor skills; professional conduct, ethical behavior; and interpersonal relationships with medical colleagues, patients, and patients’ families. All grade options for the program are approved by the M.D. Program Curriculum Committee.

#### **2. Grading Policy**

Students’ performance in academic course work is evaluated by assignment of letter grades of (A) Excellent Performance, (B) Good Performance, (C) Passing Performance, in order of excellence. The (F) grade (Unacceptable Performance) is given to students who fail a module/clerkship, who demonstrate inappropriate professional behaviors, or who fail to attend or participate in required course activities. Other grade actions include an (I) showing incomplete work, a (W) indicating that a student withdrew from the module/clerkship, and a (T) used as a “temporary grade” for performance. Faculty may specify that some programs (selectives/electives/modules) can be graded using a (P) pass/(F) fail or (H) honors/(P) pass/(F) fail grade designation, if approved by the M.D. Program Curriculum Committee.

The instructor assigns an I (incomplete grade) when a student is unable to complete a module or clerkship due to extenuating circumstances, and when all requirements can clearly be completed in a short time following the close of regular classes. When a student receives an (I) grade, the student and faculty member must complete an agreement that specifies how and when the incomplete grade will be made up, which will be considered by the appropriate SEPC. All students receiving financial assistance (federal and institutional loans), will be cautioned that the terms of the assistance require that the (I) grade must be made up by the agreement date. Minimal competency in each module/clerkship is defined as an A, B or C grade or Honors/Pass.

A (T) entry identifies students whose performance, although within the passing range, requires study and re-evaluation in one or more areas within the module/clerkship. A (T) is used as a “temporary grade” for module/clerkship grades when students have achieved an overall score that would indicate a passing

grade, but they have shown weak or marginal performance in one or more of the traditional subject areas that are included in the overall module/clerkship. Assigned (T) grades with annotations are used by the SEPC in its review of an individual student. The overall performance of students receiving a (T) in lieu of a grade is reviewed by the SEPC with the module/clerkship director to determine how the student may improve their fund of knowledge in the identified subject area(s). The (T) grade is replaced by the final module/clerkship grade when remediation is successfully accomplished in knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or behavior. Unsuccessful remediation may result in a failing grade.

The final grade assigned for the module or clerkship is recorded on the official transcript. While some module/clerkship directors will include grades in Webcourses during the course of a module or clerkship, the student should check the student portal (<https://my.ucf.edu>) for the final official letter grade. All final grades and evaluation reports become the permanent academic record maintained in the Office of the M.D. Registrar.

### **Evaluation Methods for Years One and Two**

Students are evaluated using multiple methods of assessment. Examinations are given at periodic intervals during the pre-clerkship portion of the curriculum. The content and time of each examination is established by the module directors and coordinated by the assistant dean of medical education. The questions are generally multiple-choice and computer graded, but may include other formats (e.g., including laboratories, small group and team-based learning activities, projects and other formats). There are opportunities for self- and peer assessment of performance that are supplemented by written narratives from faculty. It is the responsibility of each module director to establish the criteria for the awarding of module grades, the format of the examination, the role of examinations and other graded work in the determination of the grades, and the communication of this information to students on the first day of each module. Any concerns relative to individual examination questions, criteria for module evaluation or final grades should be directed to the appropriate module director within ten business days of receipt/notification of the final module grade.

Students are expected to take examinations as scheduled. Students unable to take an examination as scheduled because of an emergency situation (e.g., significant illness, hospitalization or death in the family) must notify the Office of Student Affairs and the module director prior to the examination.

### **Evaluation Methods for Years Three and Four**

Student evaluation in the clerkship portion of the curriculum includes written examinations, as well as other forms of evaluation. The format of clerkship examinations may include multiple choice exams obtained from the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCE), simulation exams, presentations, projects or other formats. Some clerkships may use oral examinations administered by faculty, or faculty and house staff together. In addition, attending faculty and house staff evaluate clinical performance. It is the responsibility of each clerkship director to establish the criteria for the awarding of clerkship grades, and to communicate these criteria to students on the first day of the clerkship. Examples of these evaluation areas include:

- Patient Care – medical interviewing; clinical practice; procedural skills
- Medical Knowledge – fund of knowledge; clinical reasoning
- Professionalism – team relationships; humanism and ethics
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills
- Systems Based Learning
- Practice-Based Learning and Improvement – application of evidence; initiative and interest

Students are expected to take examinations as scheduled. Concerns regarding forms of evaluation, as well as final grades, must be directed to the appropriate clerkship director, within six weeks of receipt/notification of the final clerkship grade. Evaluation of students in the selectives and electives may or may not include a written examination. The evaluation method is established by the clerkship or elective director and is provided to the student on the first day of the rotation/block.

### **3. Grade Appeal Process**

#### **Basis for Appeal**

A student may appeal his or her module or clerkship grade, or any component thereof (e.g., exam grade, narrative evaluation, project, etc.) if he or she feels that the grade was assigned in a manner not in accordance with the statement of policy distributed at the beginning of the module or clerkship. The established module or clerkship grading policies themselves may not be appealed. An appeal is initially directed to the module or clerkship director and then to the assistant dean(s) of medical education for resolution. The associate dean for students must be copied on all communications regarding grade appeals.

If resolution of the issue is not made to the student's satisfaction, then an appeal is made in writing to the Office of Faculty and Academic Affairs stating the reasons for the appeal. The associate dean for faculty and academic affairs will recommend disposition of the appeal.

A student wishing to appeal to the dean concerning the recommendation must make a written request within 10 business days of receipt of written notification of the recommendation from the Office of Faculty and Academic Affairs. Acting as the university president's representative, the dean of the College of Medicine shall make a final decision on the matter within 15 business days of receipt of the student's request for review.

#### **Guidelines for the Appeal Process of an Assigned Grade**

The following procedure provides guidelines for the grade appeal process. All persons concerned with this process should make every attempt to adhere to the time schedule outlined in the following description. Please note that the time frame for initiating an appeal to the faculty member or module/clerkship director varies by academic year:

- M-1/M-2 Year: the grade appeal process must be initiated within 10 business days of receipt of the grade.
- M-3 Year: final clerkship grades are available by the end of the next clerkship rotation (six weeks), and the student has until the end of the following clerkship rotation to initiate the grade appeal (at the end of the next six week rotation). For example, the grade for rotation 1 is available at the end of rotation 2. Any appeals of the rotation 1 grade must be made prior to the end of rotation 3.
- M-4 Year: final block grades are available eight weeks following the completion of the block and the student has until the end of the following block to initiate the grade appeal. For example, the grade for block 1 is available at the end of Block 3. Any appeals of the block 1 grade must be made prior to the end of block 4.

***Appeal to the Faculty Member***

- I. Within the timeframe specified above, the student may submit a written appeal to the appropriate module/clerkship director via e-mail, with a copy to the associate dean for students, regarding any assigned grade that they dispute. The module/clerkship director will direct the appeal to the responsible faculty member, who will review the grading policy with the student to ensure that the process is understood and has been followed. If it is found that the assigned grade is incorrect in the judgment of the faculty member, he or she will initiate the appropriate change with the module/clerkship director, who is then responsible for implementing a grade change. If the change is made at this point, the matter is concluded.
- II. If the faculty member concludes that the student's grade is correct as assigned, the faculty member will respond in writing to the student, with a copy to the associate dean for students, within 10 business days of receipt of the student's written request for review.
- III. If the faculty member is no longer with the university, the student then appeals the grade to the module/clerkship director who will represent the faculty member who issued the grade.

***Appeal to the Module/Clerkship Director***

- I. If the question of the assigned grade cannot be resolved between the student and the faculty member, the student may appeal to the module/clerkship director. This appeal must be made in writing within 10 business days following receipt of the initial faculty member review, with a copy to the associate dean for students. The student shall include all relevant information with the appeal to the module/clerkship director. After receiving such an appeal from the student, the module/clerkship director shall review with the faculty member the substance of the student's appeal and seek to determine its validity.
- II. If the module/clerkship director determines that the assigned grade was in his or her judgment assigned in a manner not in accordance with the statement of policy, the module/clerkship director will recommend to the faculty member to change the grade or pursue another appropriate remedy. If this action resolves the matter, the module/clerkship director will initiate the appropriate changes. The module/clerkship director will respond in writing to the student within 10 business days of the student's request for review, with a copy to the associate dean for students.

***Appeal to the Assistant Dean(s) of Medical Education***

- I. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved with the module/clerkship director, the student may appeal to the assistant dean of medical education within 10 business days of receipt of the written decision of the module/clerkship director, with a copy to the associate dean for students. For appeal of grades in the M-1 or M-2 years, the appeal is directed to the assistant dean of medical education (M-3 and M-4). For appeal of grades in the M-3 or M-4 years, the appeal is directed to assistant dean of medical education (M-1 and M-2). The assistant dean of medical education will review all relevant information to this point and confer with the faculty member, student and module/clerkship director. The assistant dean of medical education will provide a written response within 10 business days of receiving a written appeal, with a copy to the associate dean for students. If the student is not satisfied with the response from the assistant dean of medical education and elects to continue with an appeal, copies of all relevant information mentioned above shall be sent to the associate dean for faculty and academic affairs.

***Appeal to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs***

- I. If the grade is not changed to the satisfaction of the student at the module/clerkship director and the assistant dean of medical education levels, the student may appeal the assigned grade, in

writing, to the associate dean for faculty and academic affairs, with a copy to the associate dean for students. This appeal must occur within 10 business days of receipt of the written decision of the assistant dean of medical education. The appeal shall be prepared in writing by the student, who may seek guidance from the assistant or associate dean for students of the College of Medicine. The associate dean for faculty and academic affairs may discuss the case with the student, the faculty member, the module/clerkship director, the assistant dean(s) for medical education, the associate or assistant dean for students and the chair of the SEPC.

- II. Following these discussions, the associate dean for faculty and academic affairs may make a recommendation to the module/clerkship director and the student. If this results in an acceptable solution to all parties, the matter is concluded. If not, a Hearing Committee will be appointed. The associate dean for faculty and academic affairs may, if he or she chooses, appoint a Hearing Committee upon receiving the initial appeal. The appeal will be handled as expeditiously as possible by the associate dean for faculty and academic affairs.
- III. When the decision is made to establish a Hearing Committee to investigate an appeal, the associate dean for faculty and academic affairs shall convene an ad hoc committee comprised of three members of the faculty of the College of Medicine who have not previously been involved in issuing the grade or in the appeal process. This committee shall elect a chairperson and hold a hearing concerning the appeal at a time acceptable to all participants. At this hearing all material relevant to the appeal shall be presented by the student, the faculty member, the associate or assistant dean for students, the assistant dean(s) medical education and the module/clerkship director. Others may be requested to assist the committee. The student may request to have another individual present for support. Such supporting individuals may not participate directly in the hearing or act as the student's attorney.
- IV. The Hearing Committee will submit to the associate dean for faculty and academic affairs a written report containing a recommendation for a specific course of action regarding the student's grade appeal. If the committee cannot reach a recommendation, a written report will be submitted to the associate dean for faculty and academic affairs who will consider the reason(s) why the committee failed to reach a recommendation. Hearing committee reports are to be submitted within five business days following the hearing.
- V. The associate dean for faculty and academic affairs will then recommend a solution, which may or may not contain some or all of the recommendations of the Hearing Committee. If this recommendation satisfactorily resolves the matter, the issue is concluded. The associate dean for faculty and academic affairs will provide a written response to the student, with a copy to the associate dean for students.

#### ***Appeal to the College Dean***

- I. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the student may appeal to the dean of the College of Medicine. A student wishing to appeal to the dean concerning the recommendation must make a written appeal request, with a copy to the associate dean for students, within 10 business days of receipt of written notification of the response from the Office of Faculty and Academic Affairs. Acting as the university president's representative, the dean of the College of Medicine shall make a final decision on the matter within 15 business days of receipt of the student's request for review. The decision of the dean is final and not subject to appeal. This decision will be communicated to the student in writing, with a copy to the associate dean for students.

**3.0 Definitions:**

N/A

**4.0 Responsibilities:**

The Student Evaluation and Promotion Committees are responsible for adherence to this policy.

**5.0 Monitoring Procedures:**

The application of this policy is monitored by the M.D. Registrar's Office and the Associate Dean for Students.

**6.0 Related Policies:**

UCF COM Policy 9.9.1: Standards for Promotion and Graduation

UCF COM Policy 9.9.2: Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee

UCF COM Policy 9.9.4: Leave of Absence

**7.0 Key Search Words:**

Promotion	Advancement	Graduation
Grading	Due process	Appeal

**8.0 Revision History:**

Version	Date Approved	Modifications
V1	2009	Original
V2	6/30/2017	Minor edits

**9.0 References:**

N/A

**Responsible Office:** Office of Faculty and Academic Affairs

**Policy Contact:** Associate Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs; Associate Dean for Students

**Supersedes:** Version 1