

Policy Title: Academic/Professionalism, Grading and Assessment 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: 2/16/2024

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 for Academic/Professionalism

Individual module, course, or clerkship directors, with their faculty, define the criteria for acceptable academic performance in their respective module/course/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; professionalism, 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) may be given to students who fail a module/course/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/course/clerkship, and a (T) used as a “temporary grade” for performance that requires some additional work before the student progresses to the next academic year. Faculty may specify that some programs (selectives/electives/clerkships/courses/modules) can be graded using (H) honors, (HP) high pass, (P) pass, (F) fail grade designations using three or four tiers, 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, course, 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 will be provided with a deadline for completion of coursework by the Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (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. Additionally, the outstanding module/course/clerkship requirements for (I) grades must be addressed satisfactorily within one calendar year, or the grade will be converted to an F grade. Exceptions to the (I) grade completion time requirement must be granted by the SEPC. Minimal competency in each individual module/clerkship is achieved if a student earns an (A), (B) or (C) grade or Honors/High Pass/Pass grade.

A (T) entry identifies students whose performance, although within the passing score range, requires study and re-evaluation in one or more areas within the module/course/clerkship, for example, they have shown weak or marginal performance in one or more disciplines and/or on their individual medical knowledge. A (T) grade in the clerkship is given when the NBME Subject Exam is failed but other assessed components are passed. 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 final grade is reviewed by the SEPC (who may seek input from the Module/Course/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/course/clerkship grade when remediation is successfully accomplished in knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or behavior. Unsuccessful remediation may result in a failing grade. In addition, the overall performance of students receiving 2 or more (C) grades in a single academic year, with the exception of FIRE and Practice of Medicine, in either the M1 or M2 year will be reviewed by the SEPC to determine if remediation is required before advancement.

The final grade assigned for the module, course, or clerkship is recorded on the official transcript. While some Module/Course/Clerkship Directors will report scores 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.

Assessment Methods

Student competency is assessed across all the domains described in the program competencies, milestones, and objectives. A variety of assessment methods are used including multiple-choice questions, other written assessments, projects, objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), direct observation and other workplace-based clinical assessments. The M.D. Program Curriculum Committee approves the criteria for the awarding of grades, the format of the assessments, the role of examinations and other graded work used in the determination of the grades, which is communicated to students via the module/course/clerkship syllabus. Students must also meet established standards of medical professionalism (see section 4 below). Students are expected to take all assessments as scheduled. Students unable to take an assessment because of an emergency (e.g., significant illness, hospitalization, or death in the family) must notify the Office of Student Affairs and the module/course/clerkship director prior to the examination. Note: during the core M3 clerkships, a student who fails more than one National Board of Medical Examiners Subject Examination will be removed immediately from the clerkship in which the student is currently enrolled, until further review by the SEPC.

3. Grade Appeal Process

Basis for Appeal

A student may **only** appeal his or her module, course, or clerkship grade, or any component thereof (e.g., exam grade, narrative evaluation, project, etc.) if he or she alleges that 1) the grade was assigned in a manner not in accordance with the statement of policy distributed at the beginning of the module or clerkship, 2) there are errors in the application of the grading procedures, and/or 3) a grade was lowered for non-academic reasons, including discrimination.

Grade appeals are submitted to an Assistant Dean of Medical Education. Appeals may not be initiated directly with other faculty or staff and attempts to do so may be considered a professionalism issue. The established module or clerkship grading policies themselves may not be appealed. Formative assessment

given within a module, course, or clerkship that is not part of the final grade may not be appealed. Note: the Student Evaluation and Promotions Committee does not hear grade or assessment appeals and only bases its recommendations on grades after any appeals have been exhausted.

Guidelines for Submitting a Grade Appeal

Grade appeals are submitted via an online form, available via the GPS website. Note that the timeframe for initiating an appeal varies by academic year. The time periods for submission and consideration of appeals given below represent standard operating procedures but can be modified under exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs:

- M-1/M-2 Years: the grade appeal process must be initiated within **ten (10) business days** of receipt of the grade.
- M-3/M-4 Years: the grade appeal process must be initiated within **twenty (20) business days** of grades posted in the student portal (myUCF).

First Level of Appeal to the Assistant Dean(s) of Medical Education

- I. 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 the Assistant Dean of Medical Education (M-1 and M-2). The Associate Dean for Students and Registrar must be copied on all communications regarding grade appeals.
- II. The Assistant Dean of Medical Education will review all relevant information to this point and may confer with the student, involved faculty members, and the Module/Course/Clerkship Director. The Assistant Dean of Medical Education will provide a written response within ten (10) business days of receiving a written appeal, with a copy to the Associate Dean for Students and Registrar. The student should be notified of this decision in writing, and the Associate Dean for Students and Registrar should be copied on all communication regarding the appeal.

Final Level of Appeal to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

- I. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved when appealing grades, the student may appeal to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. A student wishing to appeal to the Associate Dean must make a written appeal request by email, with a copy to the Associate Dean for Students and Registrar, within ten (10) business days of receipt of written notification of the first appeal response. The Associate Dean may discuss the case with the student, any involved faculty members, the Module/Clerkship Director, the Assistant Dean(s) of Medical Education, and the Associate or Assistant Dean for Students. Acting as the Dean's representative, the Associate Dean shall make a final decision on the matter within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the student's request for review. The decision of the Associate 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, Registrar, and the SEPC.

4. Student Professionalism

Medical Professionalism

UCF COM defines medical professionalism as the daily expression of the desire to help people and society as a whole by providing quality health care to those in need, reflected in a promise to society that physician trainees will be engaged and committed in their learning and will strive to bring to bear exactly what is necessary to provide the most appropriate care for each patient in every situation. Demonstrating competence in medical professionalism requires the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values, and reflection in daily

practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served. Domains of competence in medical professionalism that must be demonstrated or practiced include:

- Respect, compassion, accountability, dependability, and integrity when interacting and communicating with patients, families, teachers, colleagues, and teams; including in the use of social and electronic media.
- Sensitivity and responsiveness to the diverse ways patients, other learners and populations define their culture and other aspects of identity.
- Selflessness (altruism) when responding to patient needs while attending to essential self-care.
- A commitment to ethical principles, including upholding the student code of conduct, maintaining patient confidentiality and appropriate boundaries, responding to medical errors, and using electronic communications, including social media, appropriately.
- A commitment to addressing societal health care disparities appropriate to their level of training in the context of their medical education.

Assessment Methods for Medical Professionalism

Students learn about the College of Medicine's definitions and expectations for medical professionalism during orientation to medical school. The major tenets of medical professionalism are taught early in the M-1 year and are reinforced throughout the formal curriculum. Every module, course, and clerkship monitors student professionalism as part of a student's overall academic evaluation. Multiple methods that are based on observation of student behaviors during all educational and patient care settings are used to assess professionalism. Methods include the use of direct observation rubrics with behavioral subcomponents, reflective exercises, narrative feedback, and oral feedback. Respectful communication to all members of the community, reliability in the completion of assigned tasks, timely attendance at mandatory events, fulfillment of patient care responsibilities, ability to receive feedback, taking responsibility for errors, and showing high levels of engagement are common surrogate measures of professionalism. Adherence to all COM policies including excused absences, research protocols, HIPAA, and conflict of interest are further indicators of professionalism.

UCF COM uses a centralized online system to receive reports of unprofessional behavior that can relate to activity both inside and outside of the formal M.D. curriculum. The following list is not intended to be exhaustive but provides examples of unprofessional behavior leading to an academic professionalism citation:

1. Persistent documented lateness to mandatory classes
2. Not adhering to the excused absence policy when unable to attend required classes or clinical encounters
3. Failure to fulfill core patient care responsibilities including unexcused absence for on-call duty
4. Unauthorized absence from the medical education program
5. Lack of required preparation for mandatory sessions
6. Negative demeanor or behavior conveying lack of engagement
7. Appearance not meeting guidelines for professional dress posted on the *Good Place to Start* website for classroom or clinic settings
8. Unwillingness to give or receive feedback or to respond to constructive instruction from instructors
9. Being unavailable or unresponsive to communication (e.g., respond to email within 2 business days or within 10 business days of SEPC communications)
10. Missing deadlines for assignments or arrival late for required National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) assessments

11. Failure to document extracurricular activities (clinical or research) with the Office of Student Affairs to confirm appropriate permissions and faculty supervision
12. Failure to contact preceptors or research mentors as required in course syllabi or failing to notify them if unable to attend meetings
13. Not following written or oral instructions from faculty or College of Medicine officials during assessments or clinical encounters
14. Not submitting required credentialing documentation in a timely manner
15. Not completing other requirements in a timely manner (e.g., Careers Curriculum modules)
16. Not assuming responsibility for mistakes in a mature and honest manner
17. Failure to report breaches in the Student Code of Conduct
18. Failure to treat cadaveric and other scientific material with respect
19. Non-adherence to research protocols (IRB, institutional policies)
20. Breaches in patient confidentiality

(NOTE: Items in categories 18-20 may be regarded, at the discretion of the SEPC, as “severe,” – see policy 9.9.2, Appendix A)

Reporting Procedures for Academic/Professionalism Concerns

Reports are only submitted by a Module/Course/Clerkship Director or by an Assistant Dean of Medical Education. There are two levels of report: 1) *General Feedback Only*, which is for less serious issues, and not subject to appeal, though the student may provide a response to the feedback and 2) *A Citation Report*, which is subject to student appeal and does enter an evaluation pathway to determine consequences. All reports are collated by the COM Office of Assessment via a secure online portal. Whenever written documentation is submitted about a student’s behavior, the student will receive copy of this written documentation by email with a copy to the Associate Dean for Students. Each citation report is reviewed by an Assistant Dean of Medical Education in order to determine the correct evaluation pathway (see Policy 9.9.0).

The Module/Course/Clerkship Director is the supervising faculty member for unprofessional behavior or misconduct that is observed within their curricular module, course, or clerkship. The Director meets with the student and any other involved parties to determine the merit of the citation. If the issue is deemed to have merit, the Director files their written report with the COM Office of Assessment as either *General Feedback Only* or as a *Citation*. If the Director personally observes unprofessional behavior or misconduct, then he or she can make the report directly.

The relevant Assistant Dean of Medical Education (M-1/M-2 dean for an M-1/M-2 student; M-3/M-4 dean for an M-3/M-4 student) is the supervising faculty member for unprofessional behavior that is observed outside of the formal curriculum. He or she follows the same procedure described above to determine the merit of the issue, before deciding whether to file a report with the COM Office of Assessment. The Assistant Deans have a further responsibility to longitudinally monitor all reports to assess patterns of behavior. The Assistant Deans may escalate the general feedback report to a citation if in their judgement an escalation is merited. In cases where a student is accumulating *General Feedback Only* reports across time, they may escalate this to a full *Citation*. In such cases the student will receive a copy of the citation noting the reason and collection of documented concerns.

Impaired Students

If a student’s behavior presents a direct threat to the health and safety of patients, the community or others (e.g. suspected intoxication, mental health crisis, etc.), the Associate Dean for Students may, in addition to other concurrent processes, temporarily withdraw the student with immediate effect from educational and/or clinical activities, and will call for an emergency meeting of the Student Evaluation

and Promotions Committee to determine next steps. The same procedure is followed if the COM receives notification that a student was admitted to a medical facility under the Baker Act or Marchman Act. Refer to UCF COM Policy 9.9.5: Impaired Students and Substance Abuse See Section 3 - Interim Action in Policy 9.9.3A.

5. Professionalism Citation Appeal Process

A student may **only** appeal a citation if: 1) The student believes the citation was not given in accordance with the *Grading and Assessment* policy, 2) The student wishes to provide information directly related to the citation that was not previously available, or 3) The student believes the sanction to be extraordinarily disproportionate to the violation.

To appeal the Professionalism citation the students will follow the grade appeals process in Section 3.

3.0 Definitions:

N/A

4.0 Responsibilities:

The faculty, Assistant Deans for Medical Education, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs are responsible for enforcing 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 9.9.0: Policy Overview: Standards for Promotion and Graduation, Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee, Academic/Professionalism, and Student Code of Conduct, Review Process and Appeals

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 9.9.3A: College of Medicine Student Code of Conduct, Review Process and Appeals

UCF COM Policy 9.9.4: Leave of Absence

UCF COM Policy 9.9.5: Impaired Students and Substance Abuse

UCF COM Policy 9.9.6: Good Standing

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
V3	6/19/2019 by CCoM	Streamlined grade appeals process Defined reasons for appeals

		Revised appeals process timelines
V4	6/19/2020 by CCoM	Added information on professionalism citations Streamlined grade and professionalism appeals processes Introduced Hearing Committee for appeals process for professionalism citations
V5	6/25/2021 by CCoM	Modification to align with university policy
V6		Clarification of associate dean role
V7	11/19/2021 by CCoM	Clarification of grade appeal process
V8	5/15/2022 by CCoM	Clarification of T-grade
V9	2/16/2024	Modifications to align with university regulations

9.0 References:

N/A

Responsible Office: Office of Academic Affairs

Policy Contact: Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; Associate Dean for Students

Supersedes: Version 8