

GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION AND PROMOTION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS AT LSU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE IN NEW ORLEANS

The faculty of the academic departments or teaching units of the School of Medicine have the responsibility of evaluating the medical students. Each department or teaching unit has an obligation to the student, the school, the medical profession, and the public to award passing grades only to those students who have demonstrated mastery of at least a minimum of the knowledge deemed essential in a particular course, clerkship, or elective. In addition to evaluating a student's knowledge and skills, the faculty have the responsibility to determine whether a student's behavior and professional attributes are suitable for the practice of medicine. This responsibility exists throughout the entire medical curriculum. A passing grade may not be given to a student when unacceptable behavior in the classroom setting or in the treatment and care of patients has been observed, even if grades on examinations and other evaluations are acceptable.

I. ATTENDANCE:

Students are expected to abide by the attendance policies of the LSU School of Medicine – New Orleans, which are provided by the office of Undergraduate Medical Education (UME).

II. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR:

In addition to the requirements of adequate knowledge, skills, and judgment, a medical student must demonstrate the personal qualities which are essential components of the profession. Students are expected to adhere to all school and institutional policies, including student responsibilities as outlined in CM-56. Students are also expected to communicate appropriately with patients, peers, faculty, and staff and to exhibit honesty and integrity at all times. Promotions Committees may evaluate a student's professional behavior as it relates to the student's achievement of professionalism standards that are part of the course or clerkship requirements.

Students who demonstrate lapses in professional behavior may also be referred to the Council on Student Professional Conduct for additional investigation.

Students may be placed on probation or dismissed for unprofessional behavior.

III. STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS:

The standard of performance will be provided in course syllabi and include an explanation of how grades are derived and a description of the student's responsibilities in the course, including attendance at all course activities and requirements of the course that must be met.

IV. GRADING AND EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE:

The department or teaching unit determines the type and form of examinations to be used. They may be written, oral, practical, or a combination of these forms. A single final grade is assigned to a student upon completion of the course work. The single final grade includes meeting an acceptable standard of professionalism.

V. GRADING SCALE:

Official permanent final grades to be recorded for each student upon completion of a course are: Honors, High-Pass, Pass, Fail and Withdrew.

H (Honors) is given to students whose quality of performance is considered to be excellent and who have demonstrated a degree of understanding and ability that is considerably above the level of adequacy required for passing status.

HP (High Pass) signifies that all work in a given course has been completed satisfactorily, but below that of honors.

P (Pass) is indicative that all the requirements of a course have been completed satisfactorily and that the minimum requirements for promotion have been met.

F (Fail) is the grade assigned to students whose performance does not meet the minimum course requirements. The grade signifies a degree of deficiency that makes them ineligible to be promoted or, in some instances, to continue in school without appropriate remedial action. A grade of F will remain on the transcript (even after remediation).

W (Withdrew) will be issued to those students enrolled in a course and who are unable to complete their coursework prior to the final examination.

A grade of temporary significance that may be issued by a department, but which is not recorded on the student's permanent record is **I (Incomplete)**.

A grade of *Incomplete* is assigned when the student has been unable to complete the course requirements in the usual time or manner. On completion of the required course work, the grade of *Incomplete* will be changed to the appropriate final grade.

Students with a grade of *Incomplete* in a course must finish all required work in a manner specified by the department involved. In general, this should be done in a reasonably short period after the regular termination date of the course. The department may allow a longer period for reasons that are considered appropriate. A student cannot be promoted until all *Incomplete* grades have been removed. Unless there is an acceptable reason for further delay, an *Incomplete* grade that is not removed by the date for registration for the next school year will be recorded as *Fail*.

VI. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DECISIONS REGARDING PROMOTIONS AND GRADUATION:

Consideration of academic performance and decisions regarding promotions are undertaken by the Pre-clerkship Student Promotions Committee (for first- and second-year students) and the Clerkship Student Promotions Committee (for third- and fourth-year students), described herewith as the appropriate Promotions Committee.

A. Satisfactory Academic Performance:

1. Requirements for Advancement with Class:

A student must pass all courses in the curriculum in a given academic year, as defined by the faculty. Passing all courses will result in the student's automatic promotion to the next year, providing the student's attitude and behavior are deemed professional and appropriate.

2. Promotion to the senior (fourth) year:

In order to be promoted to the senior year, a student must successfully complete all first, second- and third-year course requirements and achieve a minimum passing score on the USMLE Step 1 examination as defined by the NBME (see below).

3. Requirements for Graduation:

The degree Doctor of Medicine will be conferred upon all students who have:

- a. Filed satisfactory evidence of having complied with the admissions requirements.
- b. Completed four years of medical school instruction, the last two (or equivalent) of which must have been spent at the Louisiana State University School of Medicine.
- c. Attended the instruction in all departments or teaching units and satisfactorily completed all course work and examinations (including passing Steps 1 and 2 (CK) of the United States Medical Licensing Examination, as required by the faculty).
- d. Completed a standardized patient examination at the end of the third year.
- e. Met all financial requirements of the School of Medicine.

B. Unsatisfactory Academic Performance:

In the instance of unsatisfactory academic performance, students will be considered for remediation or dismissal. The decision for such resides with the appropriate Promotions Committee.

1. Probation Definition: Probationary status will be assigned by the appropriate Promotions Committee when a student is repeating a course, clerkship, or entire academic year. Probation may be assigned for a semester or academic year. A student on probation who fails a course, repeated course, clerkship, or any course in the repeat of an academic year will be considered for dismissal.
2. Remediation of Deficiency: A grade of *Fail* in any course is indicative of an academic deficiency. All academic deficiencies must be remediated before a student is eligible for promotion. This requires additional work or some corrective action on the part of the student. Permission to remediate a deficiency on probation is granted to the student by the appropriate Promotions Committee. The manner in which a deficiency may be remediated and the length of time to be allowed for the remediation of a deficiency is to be specified by the department or faculty of the course in which the deficiency has occurred and/or the appropriate Promotions Committee. The completed work is indicated on the student's record as REM (remedial). Remediation of individual pre-clinical courses, not part of a repeated year, are graded as *Pass / Fail*. Remediation of individual clinical clerkships are graded as *Honors / High Pass / Pass / Fail*.

3. Reexamination or Repeating a Course/Clerkship/Elective:

YEAR ONE

a. One Failing Grade:

In year one a student who receives one failing grade in an academic year will be given consideration to either repeat the course or take a reexamination in the course. Repetition of the course will be required if one is available in a summer school program offered by a LCME-accredited US medical school, and/or approved by the department or teaching unit involved. If a course is not available, the student may take a reexamination in the subject after a period of self-study of the course material.

b. Two Failing Grades (year one only):

A student who fails two courses in a single year will be considered for repeating the academic year on probation. The option to resolve the two deficiencies by doing remedial summer work will be considered if one of the courses is less than 50 hours of credit. However, a careful review of the academic performance in all coursework completed during the academic year will be made before deciding whether the student can remediate the deficient courses, repeat the entire academic year on probation, or be considered for dismissal.

YEAR TWO

c. In the second year, a student can receive a grade of *Fail* in a course in one of two ways:

- i) A student whose final average, including all graded components, is less than 69.5 will receive a grade of *Fail*.
- ii) A student who receives a grade of *Fail* on all of the quizzes and examinations (Questionmark and NBME) will receive a grade of *Fail* for the course regardless of the student's final average.

d. If a student fails the NBME final subject exam but passes all other requirements in one of the second-year courses, the student will receive a grade of *Incomplete* in that course, regardless of their final course average. In this case, the student has one opportunity to re-take the final NBME subject exam on a scheduled date, without the need for action by the Pre-clerkship Promotions Committee. If the student passes the exam, they will receive a final grade of *Pass* for the course at the end of the academic year.

e. If a student fails the final customized NBME subject exam in two or more classes resulting in *Incomplete* grades, the Pre-clerkship Promotions Committee will review their entire academic performance regardless of the status of the *Incomplete* grades. The committee may recommend repeating the entire academic year on probation. Any *Incomplete* that has not been remediated will be converted to *Fail*.

f. If a student receives a grade of *Fail* in one second year course, they will be referred to the Pre-clerkship Promotions Committee for discussion regarding remediation. The student *may* be allowed to remediate the course. If the student is allowed to remediate, they must pass the NBME subject exam in addition to the other requirements determined by the course directors in order to pass the remediation. If the student fails remediation, they *may* be required to repeat the second year on probation.

g. If a student receives a grade of *Fail* in two or more second year courses, or if a student receives a grade of *Fail* in one course and a grade of *Incomplete* in another course, they will be referred to the Pre-clerkship Promotions Committee for discussion regarding remediation. The student *may* be required to repeat the second year on probation, or the student *may* be allowed to remediate both deficiencies prior to starting the junior year. If the student is allowed to remediate the courses, they must pass the NBME subject exams in addition to the other requirements determined by the course directors.

YEARS THREE AND FOUR

h. One Failing Grade:

In the third year, a student who is not on probation and who fails a single clerkship will be allowed to repeat the clerkship. In the fourth year, a student who is not on probation and who fails a single course will be allowed to remediate as determined by the course director and by the department.

i. If a student fails the NBME final subject exam but passes all other requirements in one of the third-year clerkships, the student will receive a grade of *Incomplete* in that clerkship. In this case, the student has one opportunity to re-take the final NBME subject exam on a scheduled date. If the student passes the exam, they will receive a final grade of *Pass* for the clerkship. If they fail the exam, they will receive a final grade of *Fail* for the clerkship.

j. Two Failing Grades:

Students incurring deficiencies in two clerkships/ electives in either the third or fourth year will be given consideration for repeating the entire academic year on probation

4. Repetition of the Academic Year:

a. Permission to repeat a year in the curriculum will be considered for those whom the appropriate Promotions Committee believes have sufficient ability but may have been slow to adapt to the schoolwork, may have been inadequately prepared, may have had health problems that interfered with performance, or may have had other problems that the committee considers relevant.

VII. UNITED STATES MEDICAL LICENSING EXAMINATION - STEP 1 and Step 2:

In order to begin any senior rotations (excluding Flex blocks), a student must successfully complete all first-, second-, and third-year course requirements and achieve a minimum passing score on the USMLE Step 1 examination as defined by the NBME.

A. Students must pass USMLE Step 1 within one calendar year of the first attempt (exclusive of leaves of absence). Students who fail to meet this deadline will be considered for dismissal.

B. Students who fail USMLE Step 1 for the first or second time may be allowed to complete their third year clinical rotations. These students must retake and pass the exam before starting senior rotations (excluding Flex blocks).

C. Students who fail USMLE Step 1 for a third time will be dismissed.

D. If a student desires to take USMLE Step 1 for a fourth time they must apply to the Pre-clerkship Promotions Committee for reinstatement to be allowed to retake the examination. Application for reinstatement must occur within one calendar year of dismissal. Per USMLE guidelines, the student must wait at least six months after their most recent attempt to retake the Step 1 examination. To be considered for reinstatement, the student must demonstrate readiness to take the examination, including producing minimum passing scores on two consecutive USMLE practice tests. If a student successfully passes the examination on the fourth attempt, the student may return to clinical rotations with a schedule that is considered based on their previous clerkship performance and the time elapsed while on leave. When the student re-enters their clinical rotations, they will be placed on academic probation. If the student fails their fourth attempt at USMLE Step 1, they will be dismissed.

E. Students must pass USMLE Step 2 CK for completion of the fourth year and graduation. Per USMLE guidelines, students may not take this examination more than three times within a 12-month period. If a student fails the examination three times, they will be dismissed.

F. If a student desires to take USMLE Step 2 CK for a fourth time they must apply to the Clerkship Promotions Committee for reinstatement to be allowed to retake the examination. Application for reinstatement must occur within one calendar year of dismissal. Per USMLE guidelines, the student must wait at least six months after their most recent attempt to retake the examination. To be considered for reinstatement, the student must demonstrate readiness to take the examination, including producing minimum passing scores on two consecutive USMLE practice tests. If a student successfully passes the examination on the fourth attempt, the student may return to clinical rotations to complete their requirements. When the student re-enters their clinical rotations, they will be placed on academic probation. If the student fails their fourth attempt at USMLE Step 2 CK, they will be dismissed, and no degree will be awarded.

VIII. APPEAL OF FINAL GRADES:

A student who is of the opinion that their final course grade or evaluation is unjust or inaccurate may appeal that decision to the course director informally by meeting with the course director and discussing the basis of the appeal. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of this informal appeal, they may appeal the final grade or evaluation formally in writing within ten working days of receiving the grade or evaluation. Failure of the student to formally appeal within the ten working days indicates acceptance of the grade or evaluation. There are two levels of appeal, one to the course director and teaching unit head and the second to the school's administration.

At the first level, after receiving a written appeal stating the basis for the dissatisfaction, the course director, in consultation with the department head or administrative head of the teaching unit, shall, within a period of five working days, review the appeal, meet with the student, and formulate a written response which shall be given to the student.

If the student remains dissatisfied with the grade or evaluation after the appeal is completed by the course director, a final appeal may be made in writing to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) within five working days of the department's or teaching unit's decision. The written appeal must include the basis for the dissatisfaction. The Associate Dean may establish an ad hoc committee of three faculty members; none of the ad hoc committee members will be from the department in which the appeal has been registered. The task of the committee will be to decide (1) whether the evaluation or grading procedure used in that case was essentially the same as used for other students in that course and (2) whether evidence of sufficient bias or error warrants referral of the case back to the department for reassessing the student's competence. The committee must make a decision within five working days of the appeal. If the result of the appeal requires changes in an official university record, the faculty of the department or teaching unit must comply with all university regulations and procedures necessary to accomplish the change. The decision of the appeal reached by the ad hoc committee appointed by the Associate Dean for UME represents the final grading decision.

IX. ACADEMIC DISMISSAL:

- A. Students who fail two or more courses in an academic year (years one or two) will be considered for dismissal.
- B. Students who fail two clerkships/electives in the third or fourth years of the curriculum will be considered for dismissal.
- C. Students who fail a reexamination or a repeated course/clerkship/elective will be considered for dismissal.
- D. Students who fail a remediation course while on probation will be considered for dismissal.
- E. Students who fail a course during the repeat of an academic year on probation will be considered for dismissal.
- F. Students who demonstrate unprofessional behavior, a poor attitude, or significant difficulties in interpersonal relations, integrity and other personal qualities will be considered for dismissal.
- G. Students must complete the preclinical years of study in no more than three calendar years. Students must complete the clinical years of study in no more than three calendar years. Leaves of absence will not be included in this time period. Students unable to complete these requirements will be dismissed.
- H. Students who fail USMLE Step 1 for the third time will be dismissed.
- I. Students who fail USMLE Step 2 CK for the third time will be dismissed.

Appeal: Student appeal of an adverse decision (dismissal or repeating a year)

1. A student has the right to appeal an adverse decision of the Promotions Committee, provided such appeal occurs within 15 calendar days of notification of the decision. The appeal must be directed in writing to the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty and Institutional Affairs who will convene an ad hoc faculty committee of 3 members who are not members of the relevant promotions committee.
2. The ad hoc committee reviews relevant information, including any additional information provided by the student, and relays a decision on the appeal to the Senior Associate Dean.
3. If a student wishes to appeal the decision of the ad hoc committee, they may direct the appeal to the Dean of the School of Medicine. The decision reached by the Dean represents the highest level of due process available in the School of Medicine.

X. DISCIPLINARY ACTION:

For a student who has engaged in cheating, unprofessional conduct, or other improper behavior, occurring within or outside the confines of the teaching programs, dismissal or other specified disciplinary action may be recommended after a review by the appropriate committee and school official.

Accusations against students are to be submitted in writing to any member of the Council on Student Professional Conduct (CSPC). Further processes are specified as per the CSPC guidelines.

(http://www.medschool.lsuhscc.edu/student_affairs/conduct_rules.aspx).

XI. LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

A leave of absence, often for a short period of several weeks and up to one year, may be granted to a student in good standing, subject to the discretion of the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Records, because of illness or other appropriate reasons. Students taking short-term leaves of absence of less than one week must make acceptable arrangements with the faculty involved for completion of course work and other assignments which will be missed. A leave of absence of a longer duration may be granted students in good standing for reasons of a personal nature or to participate in a special program of research or other activity designed to augment the student's academic training. Specific arrangements must be made on an individual basis with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs before beginning a leave of absence. The University policies governing the processing of leave of absence are applicable.

XII. WITHDRAWAL:

Students are permitted to withdraw from the School of Medicine at any time. If they wish to be considered for reinstatement, they must file a request for reinstatement. .

XIII. REINSTATEMENT PROCESS:

Students who have voluntarily withdrawn from the School of Medicine or who have been dismissed may elect to apply for reinstatement one time within three years of dismissal or withdrawal. The appropriate Promotions Committee (representing the phase from which the student withdrew or was dismissed) will review the request and make a decision whether or not to reinstate the applicant. To enable the Promotions Committee to accurately appraise the applicant for reinstatement the applicant is requested to:

- A. Write a letter to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Records summarizing reasons for withdrawal or dismissal from the School of Medicine and the steps undertaken to resolve these reasons.
- B. Provide evidence supporting the summary letter above, including transcripts of all academic programs, letters of recommendation from faculty or other individuals with whom the student has worked, and documentation of any other specific experiences which are relevant to the situation. This supporting evidence should be sent directly to the Office of Student Affairs and Records under separate cover by the responsible individual.
- C. Review the basis for reinstatement with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Records at a time two to four weeks preceding the upcoming meeting of the Promotions Committee.
- D. Be available to make a personal appearance before the Promotions Committee to answer any additional questions which may be considered.

Application for reinstatement should occur no later than March 1 of the year during which reinstatement is requested. Under no circumstances will a student who has been dismissed for disciplinary action be permitted to apply for reinstatement.

If a student's request for reinstatement is denied by the Promotions Committee, the student may appeal the decision to the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty and Institutional Affairs, as outlined in section IX. If the decision is upheld through the appeals process, the student has the option to reapply for admission to the medical school through the Admissions Office.