Academic Evaluation and Promotion

Students are evaluated through examinations, both oral and written, and by direct observations in laboratories, discussion groups, and in the clinical setting. Summative evaluation results in a grade for each course, and may also include a narrative evaluation of the student. All of the clinical clerkship grades are accompanied by a narrative. Basic science courses may include a narrative if the amount of personal contact between the faculty and student allows knowledgeable assessment of performance that is not otherwise captured by the course grade.

Each course director will make a sincere effort to provide counsel to students whose academic performance, attitude, or personal qualities suggest they will not be successful in passing a particular course, or in pursuing the Doctor of Medicine degree. The course director should discuss the evaluation directly with the student. Each course director is further urged to counsel students early, assist them to achieve success, and to detect academic difficulties prior to the final grade.

Promotion or failure, especially in clinical disciplines, may depend as much upon non-cognitive personal factors as upon the acquisition of factual knowledge. Thus, the assessment of a student’s ability to relate to patients and colleagues, honesty, attitude, and professionalism may affect grades positively or negatively.

The College may terminate enrollment at any time for due cause. This includes deficient academic performance, clinical incompetence, or unprofessional personal behavior as judged by the Academic Review Boards, or for inappropriate conduct as judged by the Judicial Board (see Student Code of Conduct and Judicial Policies). Promotion from one academic year to the next depends upon a student’s entire academic record rather than solely upon performance in individual courses. The Academic Review Board for each class makes decisions regarding promotion, graduation, probation, or dismissal.

Grading System

Years 1 & 2: All required courses and electives taken in the first two years of medical school will be graded as pass/fail:

- **Pass (P)** - Successful completion of all requirements for the course.
- **Credit (CR)** - The CR grade is assigned whenever credit is awarded for work completed at another institution or another college within the Upstate Medical University. [The exception to this is when a student repeats a course at another institution (see remediation below).]
- **Fail (F)** - Failure to meet all the requirements of the course successfully.
- **Conditional (C)** - A failure requiring specific remedial work for part of the course requirements that was not successfully completed in a first attempt. Standards for remediation attempts for a conditional grade should not vary from original requirements.
- **Incomplete (I)** - The requirements of a course have not been completed.
- **Withdrawal (W)** - Withdrawal from a course prior to the completion of 50% of the allotted time for the course.*
- **Withdrawal/Passing (WP)** - Withdrawal while passing from a required course after 50% completion.*
- **Withdrawal/Failing (WF)** - Withdrawal while failing from a course after 50% completion or not officially withdrawing from a course. The "WF" is considered an academic deficiency and is subject to review under the rules of promotion and graduation.*
- **Fail (Academic Dishonesty) (XF)** - Student was found guilty of academic dishonesty by judicial process.

*Withdrawal forms are available in the Office of the Registrar, Room 203, CAB.

**Years 3 & 4**
In addition to the grades above, honors and high pass grades are awarded in the 3rd and 4th year.

Clinical Years: The grading system evaluates a student's academic performance on a Honors/High Pass/Pass/Fail system utilizing norm-referenced, criterion grading
- **Honors (H)** - Outstanding performance in the subject area, far exceeding the requirements of the course. Criteria for Honors score in each clerkship will be set based on previous years historical data points in that clerkship.
- **High Pass (HP)** - For performance significantly above expectations, but not qualifying for honors. Criteria for High Pass score in each clerkship will be set based on previous years historical data points in that clerkship.

**Class Rank**
In the first two years, grades are earned and reported as Pass/Fail. At a student's request of the Dean of Student Affairs, class rank can be provided for specific and limited purposes, such as for scholarship applications. For the first two years of the medical school curriculum, class rank will be calculated based on the weighted cumulative average of the percentile scores earned in all required courses. Actual numeric rank from the first two years will not be released as class rank is reported in percentile categories (e.g. top 10%, top 20%, etc.)

In the clinical years of the curriculum, grades are earned and reported via a tiered system as outlined above. Class rank is calculated based on the weighted cumulative average of the actual grade earned where numeric values are assigned to the letter grades as follows: Honors = 4; High Pass = 3; Pass = 2; Conditional or Conditional/Pass = 1; and Conditional/Fail, Fail - Academic Dishonesty = 0. Actual numeric rank from the clinical years will not be released, as class rank is reported in percentile categories (e.g. top 10%, top 20%, etc.).

Medical School Performance Evaluation Class Rank:
1. Class Rank solely will be based on required third year courses and rotations.
2. Grades from years one and two will not be factored into class rank.
3. Electives and acting internships will not be factored into class rank but grades and narratives will be included in the Medical School Performance Evaluations for residency applications.

This policy will be implemented fully beginning with the Class of 2017.
Class of 2016: Because this class had one year (2012-2013) of H/HP/P grading, those grades WILL be included on the academic transcript, but they will not be factored into the class ranking for the Medical School Performance Evaluation.
Class of 2015: Class year was graded on the H/HP/P grade scale, and therefore grades of required courses for both the basic science years and the clinical years will be used to determine class rank. Separate ranks are calculated for the basic science years, the clinical years, and overall.

**Commendation**
Commendation may be awarded to students for outstanding performance in the required clerkships. To qualify, a student must earn at least 24 credits of honor in any of the required clerkship courses and have no deficient grades in the required clerkships. Regardless of the number of credits of honor earned, a student may not be commended if the transcript records any violations of the Student Code of Conduct or if there have been concerns about unprofessional behavior. A student who earns Commendation will receive a letter from the Dean of the College of Medicine and a permanent notation will be recorded on the academic transcript.

**Incomplete Grade**
A grade of Incomplete may be changed to a passing grade by satisfying the course requirements within a time span specified by the course director, not to exceed one year. If the Incomplete grade is not removed satisfactorily within the time span specified by the course director, or within one year, it is converted to a Fail grade and recorded on the student's official transcript. A student in the fourth year of medical studies must remove any incomplete grade in order to be eligible for graduation. If a student accumulates three or more Incomplete grades in one academic year, this will necessitate a student delaying graduating by a year. The student will be required to take a leave of absence and/or to decompress the curriculum until such time that the student may re-enter the curriculum and complete those courses in which the Incomplete grades were earned.

An Incomplete grade is not considered a deficient grade for calculating Commendation or Graduation Honors, but the outstanding work must be completed before such honors will be granted.

**Deficient Grades**
Deficient grades are Conditional, Withdrawal/Failing, Fail Academic Dishonesty or Fail (see Explanation of Grades). The department issuing the deficient grade must submit a narrative to the Office of the Registrar, describing its recommendations and requirements for remediating the grade to Pass. For Conditional grades, this report may describe a period of supervised study, followed by evaluation, re-examination at an appropriate time, or other measures not requiring repeating the entire course. A grade of failure means the student must retake the entire course, or in the case of an XF, complete the specific remediations outlined (See Guidelines for Remediation of Deficient Grades).

**Combination of Incomplete & Deficient Grades**
No more than a total of two incompletes/deficiencies can be remediated over the break between class years. This means that a student may only remediate two incompletes or two deficiencies or one incomplete and one deficiency during a break between class years.
Guidelines for Remediation of Deficient Grades
These guidelines must be followed when a student receives a deficient grade:

1. The student must be notified by the course director at the time of completion of the course that performance in a particular course is considered deficient (conditional or failure) and what is expected in order to remediate the deficient grade. A student who is on academic probation will not be eligible for remediation of deficient grades prior to review by the Academic Review Board. Students who are not on probation and who incur a single deficiency during an academic year may remediate that deficiency without approval of the Academic Review Board. Students not on probation who incur a second deficient grade during an academic year will not be eligible for remediation without approval of the Academic Review Board.

2. Course directors must contact the Registrar to determine a student’s eligibility for remediation prior to arranging remediation with the student. The Registrar will also provide the dates when remediation is possible. Make-up work cannot be attempted during a time when the student is enrolled in another course, except in special circumstances by appeal to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education and approval of the concurrent course director.

3. **A failure (F) can only be remediated by repeating the entire course.** In the case of clinical courses, this can be accomplished by successfully completing the same course at the Upstate Medical University. Syracuse students must remediate at the Syracuse Campus and Binghamton Clinical Campus students at the Binghamton Clinical Campus. Remediation of basic science courses can be accomplished by successfully retaking the course at Upstate Medical University, successfully completing an approved summer school course (if approved by the Upstate course director), or, if none available, then successfully participating in an equivalent academic experience as defined by the department and approved in advance by the Academic Review Board. When a failure is remediated by repeating the course, the student is eligible to receive the grade earned. Each attempt will be listed separately on the transcript, regardless of when they are taken during medical school. The above policies will apply to courses remediated at Upstate Medical University only. Those successfully repeating a course at another institution will be eligible only for a Pass grade on the Upstate Medical University transcript.

Remediation for an XF grade will be determined by course faculty in consultation with the Chair of the Academic Review Board, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education or designee, and the Dean of Student Affairs. It may include repeating the entire course, or it may include more limited and specific remediation targeted to the reason for the failure.

4. A student may be allowed to remediate no more than two deficiencies in the summer between their first and second year of medical school or between their second and third year of medical school. A student who has to remediate a fail grade or two conditional and/or fail grades between their second and third year of medical school will be required to postpone their first clerkship and delay Step 1 to allow adequate study time. Under no circumstances may a student begin the clinical curriculum without successfully completing all basic science (or foundational science) requirements. Remediation of more than two deficiencies in the first or second year of medical school will necessitate that the student be required to take a leave of absence and/or to decompress the curriculum until such time that the student may re-enter the curriculum and successfully remediate all deficiencies prior to being promoted to the next year of the curriculum.
5. If a student fails to successfully remediate the Conditional (C) grade, a Fail (F) shall be assigned and the student must repeat the course. The F is attached to the conditional grade and will appear as C/F.

6. When a Conditional grade (C) is remediated and accepted by the Academic Review Board, a grade of Pass (P) is assigned. The P is attached to the conditional grade (C) and will appear as C/P. Students with a conditional grade are not eligible for Honors (H) or High Pass (HP) grades when they remediate the partial failure/conditional grade.

7. A student must finalize a remediation plan with the Course Coordinator, Clerkship Director, or designee within 45 days of the deficient grade being recorded, or in the case that the Academic Review Board must approve the remediation, within 45 days of being notified that the Academic Review Board has approved a remediation plan. Finalizing a remediation plan may involve scheduling a subject examination date, schedule the retake of the clerkship, or otherwise finalizing how and when the remediation will occur. Students should know that opportunities to remediate a course may be limited by predetermined subject examination dates, the student's schedule, and in the case of clerkships, the limited capacity of the clerkship to accommodate students. Any remediation of a clerkship should occur as early as possible and must be completed by the October/November period of the MSIV year.

8. Any deviation from or failure to follow the policy on remediation may result in a report of professionalism or a review by the Academic Review Board.

Grade Appeal Process
The purpose of the grade appeal process is to protect the rights of both the student in earning a grade and the faculty in assigning a grade. Whereas it is recognized that faculty have the right to use their professional judgment both subjectively and objectively in determining a student’s grade based on academic performance, faculty have the responsibility to award the grade in a uniform manner based on established expectations and criteria for academic (including clinical) performance. And, whereas it is recognized that students have the right to appeal a grade that has seemingly been awarded in an arbitrary and capricious manner, students have the responsibility to accept the faculty member's professional judgment about quality of work and to adhere to the guidelines set forth by the faculty and the University.

1. Scope
   a. The grade appeal process does not apply to concerns about the general conduct or instruction of the course.
   b. Grades assigned as a result of a found violation of the Student Code of Conduct cannot be appealed through this process. Rather, the appeal is through the process delineated in the Student Code of Conduct.
   c. Only final course grades can be appealed; however, individual assignments can be evidence if it can be shown that the grade earned on a given assignment resulted in a lower final grade.

2. Application - Students may appeal a grade based on the following reasons:
   a. The grade awarded is based other than upon academic or clinical performance as outlined in the syllabus.
   b. The grade awarded was not calculated according to the prior established guidelines set forth by the faculty and distributed to students.
   c. The standards for determining the grade were more demanding and rigorous than for other students.
   d. The grade awarded was calculated on false or erroneous information.
   e. The appeal must be made within 30 days after the grade has been recorded.

a. The burden of proof rests with the student to demonstrate that the final grade was awarded inappropriately.
b. A formal appeal cannot be accepted until the informal appeal has been exhausted.
c. Falsification or fabrication of information to support an appeal is subject to disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct.

4. Informal Appeal – the student meets with the Course, Clerkship, or Elective Director. If a resolution is reached, the Director submits a grade form to the Registrar’s Office to record the grade change. If no resolution is reached, the student may submit a formal appeal. In most cases the discussion between the student and the Director should suffice and the matter should not need to be carried further.

5. Formal Appeal - The formal appeal is submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education. That person, if he/she deems the appeal has merit, will discuss it with the Director. If the matter remains unresolved, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education will discuss with the Director and the Chair if applicable prior to convening a committee of 2-3 other faculty to review the appeal. The committee will determine whether a grade should be changed. If the committee determines there are compelling reasons to change the grade, the Director will be asked to do so. Should the Director decline, and the committee concludes it would be unjust for the original grade to stand, the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education will notify the Registrar in writing of the Committee’s decision. Should this occur, the Chair of the Director, if applicable, will also be notified of committee's decision.

Course Withdrawals

1. Required Courses: A student may withdraw from a required course upon written request. The student must submit a Course Withdrawal Form with approval of the course coordinator and the Advisory Dean. The form is submitted to the Registrar’s Office along with a late add/ drop fee. A "W" will be recorded on the student's official transcript if the withdrawal is prior to the completion of 50% of the allotted time for the course. A "WP" or "WF" will be recorded, according to academic status, if a student withdraws after completion of 50% of the allotted time of the course.

2. Elective Courses: A student may withdraw from an elective course by completing the Elective Drop/Add online. The course director is notified of the withdrawal and it will become official if the course director files no objection to it. Normally, no penalty will be incurred if the drop is completed two weeks prior to the beginning of the course. However, some electives may not be dropped within six weeks of the starting date and other electives may not be dropped without finding a replacement. These exceptions are identified in the College's Course Selection Book. Any student withdrawing from an elective course without filing an approved Drop/Add form (either a hard copy form or electronically) will receive a "WF" grade.