



April 17, 2015

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Dear Prof. Hippisley:

As you may know, in 2011 the College of Medicine changed its grading scheme from a traditional letter-grade system to simply assigning a numeric grade (i.e., 88.5, 92.1) (SR 5.1.2.3). The University Registrar's office staff recently notified the Office of Medical Education that the numeric grading policy rules as codified in the Senate Rules contain errors and language that contradicts other College of Medicine-applicable Senate Rules.

On close reading, I noted several problems with 5.1.2.3, all of which appear to be editorial in nature (deletion of any references to grades, deletion of references to "quality points" which are not applicable to a numeric grading system). Further, the change in the grading policy directly impacted the promotion and retention criteria outlined in 5.3.3.3 where references to grade-point averages remain in the rule. The changes I have made in the attachment reflect the practices of our Student Progress and Promotions Committee since 2011.

Sheila Brothers suggested that I submit the information to you so that you could conduct an initial review of the matter before referring to the Rules Committee. Please see the attached file for details on the needed editorial changes.

If you have questions or concerns about the numeric grading policy and its impact on promotion and retention criteria, please contact me so that we can discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chipper", written over a white background.

Charles "Chipper" Henry Griffith, III, MD, MSPH  
Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education

Attachment

## 5.1 GRADING SYSTEMS

### 5.1.1 GENERAL GRADING SYSTEM

### 5.1.2 EXCEPTIONS TO THE GRADING SYSTEM

#### 5.1.2.3 College of Medicine [US: 3/10/86; 5/9/2011]

All professional program (MD degree) courses in the College of Medicine will determine a minimum level of competency. Courses taken for grade will reflect student performance with a numeric value of three significant digits between ~~0.700 and 1.00~~ (70.0%-100%) for those students achieving minimum competency. The course performance will be valued at the achieved numeric performance for each credit hour. Students failing to achieve minimum competency will may receive one of the grades below. For courses taken on a pass/fail basis, the achievement of minimum competency will be the only determination.

Class rank will be determined by multiplying the numeric value assigned for each course by the total number of credit hours for that course and normalizing by the summing of all courses taken for grade. The numeric average is reported to three significant digits. Pass/Fail courses will not contribute to determination of class rank.

~~E — Represents failure to achieve minimum competency and unacceptable performance in a numerically graded or pass/fail course. It is valued at zero (0) quality points for each credit hour.~~

**P** Represents achievement of minimum competency and a passing grade in a course taken on a pass/fail basis. ~~It is not used in quality point calculations.~~

**W** Denotes withdrawal from the college or from an elective course. W must be approved or recommended by the Student Progress and Promotion Committee. Withdrawal from a required course is not permitted, except when a student withdraws from the college. A student may withdraw from an elective and the W will remain on the record.

~~**U** Represents unsatisfactory performance in a specific area of course requirements. It is conferred instead of an E grade when evidence exists that the student might earn a passing grade (0.700 or above) upon completion of make-up work. In the interim the U will be valued between 0.600 and 0.699 depending on student performance for each credit hour. The temporary grade must be replaced with a permanent grade before the student can be promoted to the next year of the curriculum. The quality point calculation will then utilize the numeric grade conferred after the make-up. Failure to satisfactorily make-up the work will result in the assignment of an E grade as described above. [US: 3/18/96; US: 5/9/2011]~~

**I** Represents incomplete work at the time grades are submitted for courses. It is conferred only when there is a reasonable possibility that ~~a grade of C or better will be earned~~ the student can demonstrate a minimum level of competency upon completion of the work. All I grades in required courses must be replaced by a passing grade before a student can be promoted to a subsequent year. If a student later withdraws from the College, an outstanding 'I' grade can revert to a W grade at the discretion of the Student Progress and Promotion Committee.

### **5.3.3.3 College of Medicine [US: 3/10/86]**

#### **A. Assessment of Student Learning**

The College of Medicine is charged with the education and training of competent physicians. Competence must be assured not only in the students' fund of knowledge and technical expertise, but also in their standards of personal and professional conduct. Student progress shall be carefully monitored to certify that students have acquired appropriate knowledge, skills, behavioral characteristics, and ethical principles. To this end, students are responsible for conforming to all rules and regulations specified by the *Health Care Colleges Code of Student Professional Conduct*, the "Technical Standards" detailed in the *College of Medicine Bulletin*, and the academic standards established in these *University Senate Rules*.

The Student Progress and Promotion Committee (SPPC) is charged with the monitoring of student progress through the curriculum. The SPPC regularly reviews each student's performance and makes recommendations to the Dean on such actions as graduation, promotion, remediation, dismissal and leaves of absence. Final authority on all matters of student progress and promotion is vested in the Dean of the College of Medicine except as otherwise provided below.

#### **Assessment Criteria**

- 1.** Student work is assessed by the faculty through the assignment of grades upon completion of all required courses and clerkships. Basic science grades are based upon such measures as written and oral examinations, laboratory practicals, and case write-ups. In the clinical years, grades are accompanied by detailed descriptive comments reflecting the instructors' impressions of each student's knowledge, attitudes, and technical skills.
- 2.** Departmental faculty determine the level of student competence in the course or clerkship for which they are responsible. Within four weeks of the termination of each course, every department shall submit to the Office of Medical Education a grade, and where possible, written comments on each student's performance. The Office of Medical Education will promptly provide every student a copy of this grade sheet.
- 3.** Because of advanced academic pursuit in a biomedical discipline, some students may wish to bypass a particular first or second year course. With permission of the Instructor of Record and the SPPC, a student may sit for an "opt-out" examination. The course director will determine the appropriate level of performance for bypass privileges.

4. Passing scores are required on both the Step 1 written examination (taken at the end of Year 2) and Step 2 written examination and clinical skills examination. Students have from the end of their third year through December 31 of their fourth year to sit for both parts of the Step 2 examination. Students have three attempts to pass each part of the examination before dismissal, with appeals. Students are not required to take Step 2 examinations in any particular order. [US: 4/12/2004]

5. Students will be required to pass a Clinical Performance Examination (CPX) prior to graduation. Students who do not initially pass the examination will be required to participate in remediation activities and pass a retest. [US: 3/18/96]

## B. Promotion and Retention Criteria

The education of a physician is a complex process, longitudinal in character, with many incremental steps. To assure that students graduating from the College of Medicine have the necessary knowledge, skills, demeanor, and ethical principles essential to professional competence, the following procedures will be used to evaluate and promote students:

1. **General.** At regular intervals the SPPC will review the academic record of each student and make specific recommendations addressing promotion, remediation, or dismissal. Beyond these recommendations, potential actions include but are not limited to the adjustment of academic load, repetition of curriculum segments, and participation in counseling sessions.

2. **Promotion** to sequential semesters or years in the curriculum is contingent upon attaining the expected level of performance as prescribed by the Faculty of the College of Medicine. Students attaining a numeric average of 93.0% or higher in their current academic year will be promoted to the subsequent year **With High Distinction**. Students attaining a GPA of 3.7 or higher attaining a numeric average of 90.0% to 92.9% in their current academic year will be promoted to the subsequent year **With Distinction**. This accomplishment will be noted in their academic records and on their transcripts.

Commencement honors of High Distinction and Distinction will be awarded at graduation for students who attain the appropriate GPA-numeric average achievement, i.e., 3.70-93% for High Distinction, ~~3.50-3.69~~ 90.0% to 92.9% for Distinction. [US: 3/18/96]

3. A **non-promotional category** will identify students who are not being promoted due to unfulfilled requirements. These students may be involved in remediation activities, be working to complete an "I" grade, or be retained for not passing the CPX. Students in the non-promotional category will be promoted upon satisfactory correction of the deficiency or dismissed.

4. A **non-routine promotion** category will identify students ~~receiving marginal grades~~ receiving a numeric average of 76.1% to 79.9% in their current academic year. It will indicate marginal performance and ~~whose performance warrants~~ warrant close monitoring. Marginal performance may indicate the need for remediation or repetition of curriculum segments. Continued marginal performance may be justification for dismissal.
5. A student receiving a numeric grade of "U" or "E" below 70.0% has performed at an unacceptable level. To redress the grade, the SPPC will review both the student's academic record and the recommendations of the Instructor of Record. The SPPC will determine a plan of action which may include remediation, repetition of all or a portion of the course, clerkship, or curriculum year, or dismissal from the College.
6. The Student Progress and Promotion Committee determines how many repeat attempts are allowed. **Unlimited** opportunity to repeat courses, clerkships or curriculum sequences is neither feasible nor desirable.
7. A **probation category** ~~encompasses~~ identifies those students who ~~earn a GPA of less than 2.50~~ attain a numeric average of 70.0% to 76.0% for any academic year. ~~or those students who earn any "U" or "E" grades.~~ Students promoted while on probation must improve their academic performance in the subsequent academic year or risk dismissal.
8. **Dismissal** from the College of Medicine **will** result when students have an annually ~~calculated cumulative GPA of less than 2.00; earn two or more "E" grades; earn three or more "U" grades in any academic year; earn a "U" or "E" grade while on academic probation; or fail either Step 1 or Step 2~~ calculated numeric average of 69.9% or below; receive two or more numeric course grades below 60.0%; receive three or more numeric course grades between 60.0%-69.9% (inclusive); receive a numeric course grade below 70.0% while on academic probation; or fail any of the comprehensive standardized examinations on three attempts. At the discretion of the SPPC and the Dean, students **may** be dismissed if they ~~earn two "U" grades~~ receive two numeric course grades below 70.0%.

### C. Leaves of Absence

Students are normally expected to complete the curriculum in four consecutive years. Under compelling circumstances, leaves of absence may be approved by the SPPC. The request for a leave of absence must be submitted in writing to the Associate Dean for Medical Education. Return from a leave must be approved by the SPPC, may necessitate an amended curriculum, and is subject to the availability of space in required courses. The following three categories of leave may be recommended by the SPPC and approved by the Dean:

**1. Academic Leave of Absence** is available to a student who wishes to undertake specialized academic pursuits in a defined field of study. Students must be in good academic standing. Approval will not be given for intervals in excess of one year without reapplication.

**2. Personal Leave of Absence** is initiated at the student's request. A student must be in good academic standing. Leaves in this category may range from a number of weeks to a maximum of one year.

**3. Medical Leave of Absence.** Illness can seriously disrupt or impede student progress through the course of study. A student anticipating an absence of ten (10) days or more must secure a medical leave of absence. Application for this type of leave may be requested through the Office of Medical Education and must be accompanied by a letter from the student's attending physician.

**(a)** Processing and approval of a medical leave by the SPPC may require a review of the student's pertinent medical records by a specially appointed committee of physicians with relevant medical expertise. The length of the medical leave of absence will be determined by the SPPC in consultation with the student, the student's attending physician, and the ad hoc committee of physicians. Request for reentry must be accompanied by a statement from the student's attending physician which addresses the student's ability (mental and physical) to carry a full academic load. At this juncture, the SPPC may again require review of the student's medical records and/or a medical assessment, at the student's expense, by a physician with relevant clinical expertise.

**(b)** Absences due to acute illness do not require a medical leave of absence. However, for absences which encompass a major performance examination or more than five days of a clinical clerkship, the student is responsible for notifying the Office of Medical Education as soon as possible. Further, a supporting statement from an attending physician must be filed with the Office of Medical Education prior to returning to class.

#### **D. Other Considerations and Restrictions**

**1.** The demands of the study of Medicine consume the entire efforts of medical students. Therefore, upon acceptance to the program of study students are required to sign a statement indicating that they will not have outside employment during the academic year. For the exceptional case, permission may be granted by the SPPC upon petition by the student.

**2.** Due to curricular requirements, Saturday examinations are frequently scheduled. Allowances will be made for students who religious beliefs prohibit participation in Saturday examinations.

**3.** Clinical responsibilities during the third and fourth year will necessitate night and weekend work.