



**SOM OP:** 30.01, **Grading Policy**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this School of Medicine (SOM) policy and procedure is to define the methods used for assigning grades to students in courses administered by the SOM.

**REVIEW:** This SOM Policy and Procedure shall be reviewed within each even-numbered fiscal year by the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee. Revisions will be forwarded to the Office of the Dean for publication.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

1. **General.** This policy is intended to provide guidelines for faculty, staff, and administrators concerning procedures to be employed in assigning and recording student grades. It has been developed to help ensure the SOM maintains compliance with Liaison Committee on Medical Education standard 9.
2. **Grade Categories.**
  - a. Except where specifically noted in the SOM Syllabus, grades are recorded on the transcript as follows:
    - 1) *Phase 1/Year 1 and 2. Pass (PA) and Fail (FA)*
    - 2) *Phase 2/Year 3. Honors (HO), High Pass (HP), Pass (PA), and Fail (FA)*
    - 3) *Phase 3/Year 4. Pass (PA), and Fail (FA) unless otherwise indicated in the syllabus*
  - b. Credit (CR) may be assigned in two situations:
    - 1) *Students who have fulfilled the equivalent of required medical courses at another school or as a graduate student at TTUHSC. This may require placement testing in addition to the prior course work experience. Transfer of credits toward the Doctor of Medicine degree is made by recommendation of the appropriate course directors through the Office of Student Affairs.*
    - 2) *Students who successfully remediate a grade of fail in a block in Phase 1/Years 1 and 2 or who complete an Independent Study course approved by the Student Promotions and Professional Conduct Committee.*
  - c. In-Progress (PR) is recorded only when a student has been unable to complete the full course of study at an acceptable level in the allocated time. It is not used as a substitute for an earned failing grade. The Offices of Academic/Student Affairs will request reasons for the grade and for a description of the work remaining to be done. When a "PR" remains for one year without action on the part of the student, it will be changed to a failing grade.
3. **Documentation of Student Academic Performance.**
  - a. Copies of grade reports for all courses are collected by the Offices of Academic/Student Affairs as soon as possible after course grades are determined to allow timely entry of final grades.
  - b. A Final Grade Form is prepared for each student at the completion of each clerkship rotation. This form or a summary narrative is included in the student's permanent file.

- c. Students are assigned a grade at the completion of each course. A grade, once recorded, cannot be changed without written approval of the course director.
- d. Block or clerkship directors (or their designees) will enter final grades into the institution's data recording computer system.

**4. Grade Assignment in Phase 1/Years 1 and 2.**

- a. A Final grade of Pass in all required blocks is required for completion of the Phase 1 curriculum.
- b. Block Directors will use categories defined by the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee in determining final Block grades.
- c. Block components that have numerical grades will be converted to categorical grades as defined by Education Operations Committee.
  - 1) *Pass*
  - 2) *Fail*
- d. Final numerical grades will be rounded following standard mathematical procedures before conversion to categorical grades. For example, a score of 69.49 would be rounded down to a 69, while a score of 69.50 would be rounded up to a 70.
- e. Individual exam grades and final grades will be calculated and determined by Block Directors in accordance with the unique characteristics and educational components utilized in the Block.
- f. Block Directors will define methods for grade calculation and determination in the Block Syllabus including but not limited to; adjustment of exams for discarded questions, percent value of graded components, methods for grading quizzes and special projects, and attendance.
- g. For students who request and are granted a leave of absence after the mid-point of each course, course averages up to the point of leave will be considered in the same way as final course grades for purposes of this policy. Exceptions to considering course averages in this manner must be requested in writing within five (5) business days of the leave being granted and will be considered on an individual basis.
- h. Block grades must be released within six weeks of block/course completion.
- i. Students must remediate any failed exam during the year as described in SOMOP 30.01:Grading Policy, Appendix C.

**5. Progression from Phase 1 to Phase 2**

Passage of USMLE Step 1 is required for progression to Phase 2. In practice, students must have taken USMLE Step 1 (with prior approval from the SoM), in order to begin Phase 2, as described in SOMOP 40.04.

**6. Grade Assignment in Phase 2/Year 3**

- a. A Final grade of Pass is required in all clerkships and other required courses for completion of the Phase 2 curriculum.
- b. A final grade in each clerkship will be derived from the component scores. The major components for assessment are:
  - 1) Clinical performance

- 2) Clerkship Clinical Examination (CCE)
- 3) NBME subject exams

Additional modes of assessment and required activities are utilized in each clerkship and are consistently utilized on all campuses. Specifically, all students must complete two observed history and physical examinations, complete a minimum number of patient notes, make a minimum number of patient presentations and participate in a specific set of clinical encounters. These expectations are defined in each course syllabus. These components cannot elevate a student's final grade above that determined by the major components, although failure to complete these additional components can negatively impact a student grade. Progression through Phase 2 and 3/Years 3 and 4 of the curriculum requires that all components of each clerkship/course be satisfactorily completed.

- b. Each component of the clerkship (clinical assessment; oral, written, and/or departmental exam; NBME subject exam, etc.) must be passed with a minimum score of Pass or better.

**Minimal Passing Scores for Each Component:** Each student must score at or above a minimal passing score on each component to meet expectations for passing each clerkship without remediation as listed in Table 1 below. These are as follows:

**Clinical Performance:** A minimum score developed using a modification of the Angoff (Nedelsky L. Absolute Grading Standards for Objective Tests. Educational and Psychological Measurement. 1954;14(1):3-19. doi:10.1177/001316445401400101) method for standard setting. These minimum scores represent the average score on all items on the clinical assessment form and increase as a student progresses through the six core clerkships. These scores will be updated annually and can be found in SOMOP 30.01: Appendix G.

**CCE:** A score of 70% is required for passing the CCE.

**NBME:** A score at or above the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile based on the average of national performance measures reported by the NBME.

- c. Student must meet expectations for professional behavior to complete each clerkship and course as described in SOMOP 30.01:Grading Policy, Appendix B. Passing grades will not be assigned to students with unremediated concerns about professional behavior even if their numerical grade is above the minimum passing score.
- d. The method for calculating a final grade in clerkships is described below and numerical values for each grading category are shown in Appendix H. This procedure will be reviewed and updated by the Clinical Education Operations Committee on an annual basis. The Clerkship Director in each department is responsible for ensuring that grades are assigned in a timely manner to ensure that students receive final grades within six weeks of clerkship completion.

$(\text{Clinical assessment grade} \times 0.5) + (\text{CCE} \times 0.15) + (\text{NBME equated percent correct} \times 0.35)$   
(see SOMOP 30.01A)

- e. If a student experiences academic difficulty in a single clerkship as defined in Table 1, the initial course of action will be as described.

**Table 1: Guidelines for Grade assignment in MS3 Clerkships**

Academic Condition	Course of Action
Failure of single component other than clinical performance (i.e., NBME exam or CCE)	Assign grade of PR and repeat component. A four-week elective for credit in Phase 3/Year 4 concluded by repeat of component is recommended but not required. Failure to remediate a failed component will result in assignment of a final grade of FA and referral to the SPPCC.

Failure of clinical performance OR failure of two or more components (including failing the same subject exam on two separate occasions)	Assign clerkship grade of FA and refer for review by campus SPPCC Phase 2/3 / Year 3/4 subcommittee with options for courses of action as described in <u>SOM OP 40.04, Student Promotion</u> .
Failure of overall clerkship (for example due to unprofessional behavior)	Assign clerkship grade of FA and refer for review by campus SPPCC Phase 2/3 / Year 3/4 subcommittee with options for courses of action as described in <u>SOM OP 40.04, Student Promotion</u>

- f. If a student is required to take a “PR” (In-Progress) in a clerkship (due to failure of NBME or CCE), the transcript will show “PR” until the student meets the standards for successful completion. At that time, the “PR” will be removed and the transcript will show a final grade of PA. If a student fails a total clerkship with an overall grade of FA, the grade will be shown on the transcript and the notation “*successfully remediated*” will be added if and when the clerkship is successfully remediated.
- g. Clerkship grades must be released within six weeks of clerkship completion.

**7. Grade Assignment in Phase 3/Year 4.**

- a. A Final grade of Pass is required in all courses for completion of the Phase 3 curriculum
- b. Final grades are assigned based on student performance in each rotation. These grades are determined by completion of Year 4 rotation forms.
- c. The Phase 3/Year 4 Director in each department is responsible for ensuring that grades are assigned in a timely manner. Grades should be submitted to the Office of Student Affairs within twenty-one (21) days of the completion of the rotation.
- d. In the event that a student receives more than one Phase 3/Year 4 Rotation Evaluation form for a single rotation, the Phase 3/Year 4 Director will be responsible for reviewing the forms to ensure that there are no disparities between the assigned grades. If different final grades are recommended for the same student, the Phase 3/Year 4 Director will determine the final grade for this rotation.
- e. Some students may receive a grade form from another school after completing a rotation away from TTUHSC School of Medicine. If this form assigns a final grade that is not used by the School of Medicine in Phase 3/Year 4 (for example: High Pass), then the appropriate Phase 3/Year 4 Director will be consulted in order to define the appropriate final grade for this rotation.
- f. Passage of USMLE Step 2CK is a graduation requirement for the SoM.

**8. Remediation.**

- a. Phase 1
  - 1) Students who fail a single block in Phase 1/Years 1 and 2 may be allowed by the SPPCC to remediate that block in order to progress to the next academic year. The Block Director of the failed block will determine the remediation activities.
  - 2) Students who fail individual exams within blocks in the pre-clerkship curriculum will follow procedures outlined in SOMOP 30.01C.
  - 3) If a student successfully remediates a grade of FA in Phase 1, the student will be registered for an Independent Study version of the course in the semester following

completion of remediation and will be assigned a grade of CR (this is necessary to ensure that the student has sufficient credit hours for graduation).

- 4) Failure to successfully remediate a block or exam in Phase 1 before the start of the next academic year may result in repetition of the entire year in which the failure occurred (see SOM OP 40.04, Student Promotion, Table 1: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in Years 1 and 2/Phase 1).

b. Phase 2

- 1) Students may remediate a failed NBME Clerkship Subject Examination by repeating the NBME exam (see paragraph 5.e.). Passing the exam on the second attempt will serve to remediate the PR grade. The method for assigning a percentile ranking for the score obtained in the repeated exam is described in Section 10, Calculation of Grades for Clerkships. A final grade of PA will be assigned if the percentile ranking is 10% or greater. Note that final grades of HO or HP cannot be assigned after remediation. Students who receive a passing grade on an NBME Subject Exam at the first attempt may not repeat the exam in an attempt to improve a final grade.
- 2) Students may remediate a failing grade on a clerkship CCE by completing a remediation CCE as determined by the clerkship director. In general, this will occur at the time of the next administration of that clerkship CCE. A final grade of PA will be assigned to students who successfully remediate a clerkship CCE.
- 3) *Exception:* Students who obtain a single failing score on an NBME or CCE within the Phase 2 clerkships can retake that exam and have the second score used in calculating their clerkship grade. If the score on the retaken exam is above the minimum passing score, the student will be assigned a final grade of Pass. The first and second exam scores will be stored in the student's academic record. The first score will be used in determining percentile ranking for graphs used on the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).
  - (a) Note that this exception only operates for students who have a single failing grade on a clerkship NBME Subject exam or CCE. Any student who fails more than one NBME subject exam, more than one CCE or an NBME Subject Exam and an CCE will not be eligible for this exception, even if they have already retaken one clerkship NBME subject exam or remediated an CCE. In such cases, the original score will be reported and the student's record will be reviewed according to SOMOP 40.04:Promotions Policy.

a. Phase 3

- 1) Students may remediate a failed elective or selective by retaking the course or as determined by the SPPCC.

**9. Repetition of all or part of an Academic Year.**

- a. The SPPCC may recommend that a student repeat all or part of an academic year due to academic difficulties. The SOM may limit the number of students who can repeat an academic year.
- b. Students who are repeating an academic year will take all courses required for other students in that academic year unless otherwise specified by the SPPCC. If a student has received a prior grade of HO in a particular course, that course director has the option of requiring repetition of the course or substituting other work in that discipline. If the course director opts for the latter, that decision must be communicated in writing to the SPPCC and a grade will be given for this work.

- c. If a student repeats an entire academic year or part of an academic year, the new grades are recorded on the transcript in addition to the original ones.
- d. If a student is required to repeat one or more clerkships, they will be graded according to the policy in effect when they take the first repeated clerkship.
- e. If a student is required to repeat 2-5 clerkships, they will be graded in each clerkship according to number of clerkships they have completed. For example, if a student is required to repeat three clerkships, they will be graded as the student's fourth, fifth and sixth clerkships.
- f. Students who are required to repeat an academic year may not take courses from the next academic year during the period of repetition.
- g. Repetition of a clerkship and remedial work, as defined and prescribed above, will not be counted as elective time in satisfying the conditions for graduation.

**10. Assignment of Credit Hours.** The SOM assigns credit hours for blocks, clerkships and rotations based on the formula that one week of coursework equals one credit hour, with the following exceptions:

- a. Pre-clinical Curriculum:
  - 1) *One Contact Hour* = one scheduled hour of faculty instruction in classroom, laboratory, small group, or clinical setting and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student preparation. Examinations and optional sessions (e.g., review sessions) are not included in calculation of credit hours. (No differential based on instructional method as methods are purposefully selected to meet educational goals and objectives and all require preparation and review on the part of learners.)
  - 2) *Twenty contact hours* = one credit hour.
- b. Clinical Curriculum: Credit hours for required clerkships and electives in the clinical years of instruction are calculated based on the number of weeks of scheduled instruction/clinical experience with one (1) week = one (1) credit hour.
- c. Courses such as Basic Medical Spanish and the Integration Seminar are zero credit courses.

**11. Clerkship Grading–Detail.**

- a. Individual Clerkship NBME Subject Exam

Clerkship NBME grades will be converted to percentile rankings based on three years of prior data from the NBME. The Office of Curriculum prepares a set of tables prior to each academic year listing the scores that correspond to a specific percentile rank for each clerkship period, see Appendix A, [SOM OP 30.01.A, Clerkship NBME Grading Tables](#). These data will be updated in June of each year and will include the most recent annual data provided by the NBME.

\*Note: The rationale for using this procedure for assigning Clerkship NBME percentiles in this way is based on the observation that student scores tend to increase over an academic year, meaning that students who took a clerkship earlier in an academic year might be at a disadvantage in terms of obtaining a particular grade.

NBME Subject Exam percentiles impact final grades as described in section 5b above. A student must score at or above the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile to pass this component.

The timing for the NBME retakes will be determined by the CEOC and may occur in January (prior to the beginning of the first clerkship of the Spring semester) or after the end of the Phase 2/MS3 year, whichever occurs earlier).

b. CCE

As described in section 5b, a minimum score of 70% is required for satisfactory performance on the CCE component. The procedure for remediation of the CCE, including the timeline for an CCE retake, is described in SOMOP 30.01F.

## **APPENDICES**

SOM OP 30.01.A – Clerkship NBME Grading Tables

SOM OP 30.01.B – Assessment of Professional Behavior in Clerkships

SOM OP 30.01.C – Grading Policy Detail for Phase 1 / Years 1 and 2

SOM OP 30.01.D – Grading Policy for Professionalism in Phase 1 / Years 1 and 2

SOM OP 30.01.E. – Adhering to Fair and Timely Grade Assignments

SOM OP 30.01.F. – Grading Policy for CCE

SOM OP 30.01.G. – Grading Policy for Clinical Assessments

SOM OP 30.01.H. – Final Grade determination in Clerkships