



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

School of Medicine

Operating Policy and Procedure

SOM OP: 40.04, **Student Promotion**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this School of Medicine (SOM) Policy and Procedure is to describe policies and procedures related to student promotion and progress through the School of Medicine curriculum.

REVIEW: This SOM Policy and Procedure will be reviewed within every year by the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee with input from the Student Promotions and Professional Conduct 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 and administrators on procedures that should be used in determining the status of students relevant to promotion through the curriculum. Information gathered in accordance with this policy should be used by the Student Promotions and Professional Conduct Committee (SPPCC) to identify and evaluate students deemed to be in academic difficulty.
2. **Introduction.**
 - a. The responsibility for evaluation of students rests with the faculty of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine. Faculty have an obligation to the students, to the school, and to the larger society to award passing grades to, and to promote to subsequent training experiences, only those students who have demonstrated mastery of the course material. For purposes of this policy, the term “course” includes the basic sciences courses, clinical clerkships, and other clinical rotations (selectives, electives), which must be successfully completed for promotion and graduation. In addition to evaluation of students' knowledge and skills, the faculty has the obligation to determine whether students' behavior or conduct is suitable for the practice of medicine. It is inappropriate to give a passing grade to a student when unacceptable behavior or conduct in the treatment and care of patients and/or in relationships with staff and peers have been established, even if grades on tests or other forms of evaluation have been satisfactory. Expectations for student behavior are described in the following documents:
 - 1) Student Conduct Policy (SOMOP 40.03, including the Medical Student Honor Code)
 - 2) Compact between Teachers and Learners of Medicine
 - 3) TTUHSC Code of Professional ConductThe SOM faculty has the responsibility for recommending students for promotion and graduation. This responsibility is administered through the SPPCC that represents the faculty at large. Principles of fairness and due process will be applied when considering actions of the faculty or administration that might adversely affect the students. Comments, questions, and concerns should be directed to the SOM Office of Student Affairs.
 - b. Students covered by this policy: These promotion policies apply to students enrolled or eligible to enroll in the courses necessary to complete the requirements for the Doctor of Medicine degree in the TTUHSC SOM. This includes prematriculated students, as well as students enrolled in the 4 year curriculum, and accelerated program (e.g., Family Medicine Accelerated Track), and all dual degree programs currently offered by the School of Medicine:

Partner School	Dual Degree Program
TTUHSC Graduate School of Biological Sciences	MD/PhD, MD/MS, MD/MPH
Texas Tech University Rawls College of Business Administration	MD/MBA
Texas Tech University School of Law	JD/MD
Texas Tech University Whitacre College of Engineering	MD/M Eng

Although this policy does not cover the course work done for other degree programs in which the student is additionally enrolled, the SPPCC will make recommendations about students continued participation in dual and accelerated programs. The SPPCC will also make recommendations regarding SOM enrollment and progression based on student conduct while a student is participating in other degree programs, regardless of their enrollment status in the SOM. Representatives from dual and accelerated programs may serve in ex-officio roles when students in those programs are required to meet with the SPPCC.

- c. Responsibilities of the SPPCC: The voting members of the SPPCC are appointed by the Faculty Council Executive Committee. The SPPCC is charged with the following responsibilities:
- 1) Formulate and modify policies within its purview.
 - 2) Review and evaluate the academic and behavioral progress of each medical student enrolled or eligible to enroll at TTUHSC School of Medicine.
 - 3) Implement policies related to promotion, reinstatement, or dismissal of individual students in accordance with the policies and procedures described herein.
- d. Responsibilities of the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Student Affairs: The Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Student Affairs are responsible for documenting the progress of medical students during their course of study in order to provide, or refer students to, the appropriate academic or personal counseling services, if applicable. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Student Wellness and Advancement, or a campus specific designee serve as due process advocates for students. The Office of Student Affairs provides staff support to the SPPCC and will maintain permanent minutes of SPPCC meetings. The Office of Student Affairs will provide students appearing before the SPPCC all information pertaining to their meeting at least five (5) business days prior to the scheduled meeting.
- e. Responsibilities of the Dean: The Dean, as the Chief Academic Officer, has final responsibility for actions taken regarding a student. Initial decision(s) and subsequent action(s) for each student are delegated to the SPPCC. The SOM Dean is responsible, however, for executing any appeals process regarding the decisions and actions of the SPPCC.

3. Curricular Progression and Length.

- a. Expected progression through the SOM curriculum requires that a student meet or exceed minimal standards of performance, including but not limited to exam or final course grades of "Pass", as described in SOMOP 30.01: Grading Policy. Students are expected to complete the medical school curriculum within three (3) or four (4) years of the initial date of matriculation based on the degree track in which the student is enrolled (an accelerated track or 4-year MD curriculum). This does not include time spent in course work for other degree programs, for example the dual degree programs listed above.
- b. Time in the curriculum may be extended due to 1) a leave of absence, 2) academic difficulty requiring repetition of an academic year as per this policy, or 3) request for decompression of the medical school curriculum. Failure to complete Phase 1 (Years 1 and 2) of the curriculum in three years or Phase 2 and Phase 3 (Years 3 and 4) of the curriculum in three years may result in a recommendation for dismissal.

- c. The completion of the medical school curriculum is required for graduation. The Office of Student Affairs will annually present to the Executive Committee of the SPPCC and HSC Registrar a list of candidates for receipt of the Doctor of Medicine Degree based on the policies described herein.

4. Grade Assignment and Tracking of Student Progress.

- a. Grades are assigned as described in [SOM OP 30.01, Grading Policy](#).
- b. The Office of Academic Affairs is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive database of student grades.
- c. The progress of each student enrolled in the SOM will be reviewed by the SPPCC on an annual basis, based on data provided by the Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Prescribed courses of action and decisions by the SPPCC will be based on the cumulative performance of the student.

5. Notification of Students with Satisfactory Progress

- a. The SPPCC will notify students of promotion as described in SOMOP 30.01: Grading Policy as follows:
 - 1) Promotion from Year 1 to 2 (during Phase 1) requires satisfactory performance in all courses that constitute the Year 1 (Phase 1) curriculum (see Table 1).
 - 2) Promotion from Phase 1 to Phase 2 requires satisfactory performance in all courses that constitute the Year 2 (Phase 1) curriculum (see Table 2). In addition, students must obtain a “Pass” result on the USMLE Step 1 exam for promotion to Phase 2 of the curriculum. (defined below).
 - 3) Students in Phase 2 and Phase 3 are evaluated on a continuous basis. Unless problems arise, students will proceed from Phase 2 to Phase 3 with no formal notice of promotion.

6. Notification of Students with Unsatisfactory Progress.

- a. The Office of Student Affairs will identify students with unsatisfactory academic performance on a continuing basis. Specifically, the Office of Student Affairs will identify students who meet one of the following criteria:
 - (1) Obtain final grade of “Fail” in any Phase 1 course.
 - (2) Fail more than one individual exam in a Phase 1 course.
 - (3) Obtain a final grade of “Fail” or interim grade status of “In Progress” (PR) in Phase 2 (Note – one clerkship NBME exam can be remediated within an academic year without penalty).
 - (4) Obtain a final grade of “Fail” in any Phase 3 course.
 - (5) Students in special programs (dual degree or accelerated curriculum) – Failure of two graded exams, a course, or a clerkship during Phase 1 – Phase 3.
- b. Students meeting any of the above criteria will be reviewed by the SPPCC Executive Committee which will determine the appropriate action for each student based on these policies.
 - (1) The SPPCC Executive Committee will use the guidelines presented in Tables 1 and 2 below to determine the appropriate action step for each student.
 - (2) The Office of Student Affairs will prepare documentation for each student whose academic performance warrants a meeting with the SPPCC, provide this information to

each identified student, and arrange for the student to attend a meeting of the appropriate subcommittee of the SPPCC (see SPPCC Bylaws).

- c. Students reviewed by the SPPCC will be notified in writing of the SPPCC decision and informed of stipulations for continuation in the curriculum.

7. USMLE Step Exams.

- a. In order to become fully licensed to practice medicine in the United States, individuals must pass all three USMLE Step exams – Step 1, Step 2 Clinical Knowledge, and Step 3. Each state’s medical licensing board determines the number of attempts individuals may make at each Step exam in order to remain eligible for licensure. Individuals must pass each Step exam within three attempts to be licensed in the state of Texas.
- b. USMLE Step 1:
- 1) Students are required to take USMLE Step 1 prior to beginning their core clerkship year (Phase 2). A delay in taking Step 1 may be approved by the SPPCC. A student may be delayed in taking Step 1 due to requirement for remediation of exams or a course, not demonstrating “readiness” to take Step 1, having extenuating circumstances that prevent the student from taking Step 1, or not passing Step 1.
 - 2) Demonstration of “readiness” to take Step 1 requires a student to achieve a requisite minimum score on a NBME Comprehensive Basic Science Exam (CBSE) that is predictive of a passing score on USMLE Step 1. This minimum score is established annually by the Office of Academic Affairs based on national and local data.
 - 3) Any student who takes USMLE Step 1 without prior approval of the SPPCC, or who does not take USMLE Step 1 by the specified date after receiving approval from the SPPCC will be referred to the SPPCC for review of professional conduct.
 - 4) The various pathways for promotion to the clerkship phase year (progression to Phase 2) are described in the following section, and diagrammatically in the appendix.
 - 5) Students who obtain the requisite score on a CBSE (demonstrate “readiness” to progress to Phase 2 of the curriculum) and take Step 1 prior to the start date of Phase 2 are eligible to begin the clerkship phase (Phase 2) of the SOM curriculum on schedule (unless on leave of absence).
 - 6) Students who take Step 1 but do not pass the exam on the first attempt will either:
 - Not start clerkships (Phase 2) if the “Fail” result is received prior to the start date of the clerkship curriculum.
 - Complete their current clerkship period, then be enrolled in Guided Study (GS) during the next period to prepare for and retake Step 1, **OR**
 - Drop the current period clerkship and be enrolled in GS to prepare for and retake Step 1.
- For any of the above options the student must obtain a passing score on USMLE Step 1 to be eligible to start or return to the SOM curriculum.
- 7) Students who are not approved (i.e., do not demonstrate “readiness” to take Step 1) to start the clerkship curriculum (Phase 2) prior to the 1st clerkship period (or an earlier date specified by the Office of Academic Affairs), in order to be eligible to start the clerkship curriculum will:
 - Enroll in an GS course for at least one clerkship period to continue Step 1 preparation;
 - Meet Office of Academic Affairs criteria for demonstrating readiness to

progress to Phase 2 of the curriculum; **and**

- Obtain a “Pass” result on the USMLE Step 1 exam.

Any student who fails to progress according to one of the scenarios described in items 5 – 7 above will be under the purview of the SPPCC on an ongoing basis.

c. USMLE Step 2:

- 1) Students are required to pass the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge exam to be eligible for graduation from the SOM.
- 2) Students must complete all Phase 2 requirements, including the remediation of any academic or professionalism issues, before being eligible to take the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) exam.
- 3) Students are expected take at least one Comprehensive Clinical Science Examination (CCSE) to demonstrate “readiness” to take Step 2 CK.
 - Students must achieve a pre-determined requisite score in order to be approved to take Step 2 CK. This minimum requisite score is established annually by the Office of Academic Affairs based on national and local data.
 - Any student who does not achieve the requisite score will receive counseling on appropriate preparation for Step 2 CK, including information about alternative assessment methods that can be used to demonstrate readiness.
- 4) Students must take Step 2 CK within 16 weeks of completing phase 2 curricular requirements. Students who fail to meet this deadline will be referred to the SPPCC.
 - A passing score for Step 2 CK must be documented prior to graduation. Failure to document a passing score by March 1 of a student’s last year in the SOM curriculum may result in a delay in graduation. It is the responsibility of each student to monitor Step exam reporting dates to ensure their score is received by the March 1 deadline.

d. Longitudinal Clinical Skills Examination:

- 1) Students are required to pass the Longitudinal Clinical Skills Examination (LCSE) to be eligible for graduation.

8. Student Performance and Progression through the Curriculum. Based on the ongoing review of student grades described above, individual students may be referred to the SPPCC. The SPPCC will use the guidelines in the following tables to determine the appropriate actions for each student.

Table 1: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in Year 1 of Phase 1

ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC**
All course grades of Pass or better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student will be promoted to next academic year
One final course grade of Fail with all others Pass or better for the academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to remediate the Failed course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediation Repetition of academic year
Two final course grades of Fail for the academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to repeat the year Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of the academic year Dismissal
Failure of 2-4 individual exams in an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate all failed exams at the first attempt achieving a final score of 75 or above on each exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion to the next academic year upon successful completion of remediation Repetition of year Dismissal
Failure of 5 or more individual exams in an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to repeat the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of academic year Dismissal
<i>Procedures during Remediation and Repetition</i>		
ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC**
Failure to successfully remediate a Fail course grade prior to the start of the next academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to remain in the curriculum Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of academic year Dismissal
Failure to successfully remediate a failed exam prior to the start of the next academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to remain in the curriculum Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of the year Dismissal
Failure of a course during a repeated year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure of more than one individual exam in a repeated course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure of more than one exam across all courses in a repeated year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate exams Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate exams Dismissal

Table 2: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in Year 2 of Phase 1

ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC**
All course grades of Pass or better and passage of USMLE Step 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student will be promoted to next academic year
One final course grade of Fail with all others Pass or better for the academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to remediate the Failed course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediation Repetition of academic year
Two final course grades of Fail for the academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to repeat the year Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of academic year Dismissal

Failure of 2-4 individual exams in an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate all failed exams at the first attempt achieving a final score of 75 or above on each exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion to the next academic year upon successful completion of remediation Repetition of year Dismissal
Failure of 5 or more individual exams in an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to repeat the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of academic year Dismissal
<i>Procedures during Remediation and Repetition</i>		
Failure to successfully remediate a Fail course grade prior to the start of the next academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to repeat year Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of academic year Dismissal
Failure to successfully remediate a failed exam prior to the start of the next academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to remain in the curriculum Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of the year Dismissal
Failure of a course in a repeated year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure of more than one individual exam in a repeated course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure of more than one exam across all courses in a repeated year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate exams Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate exams Dismissal
<i>Procedures related to taking and passing USMLE Step 1</i>		
Failure to meet criteria for promotion to Phase 2 within three years of student's date of matriculation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure to achieve the requisite score after the maximum number of attempts on the CBSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to provide alternative methods for satisfying requirement (e.g., CBSSA) or permission to delay start of Phase 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance of alternative measure(s) Approval of delay request Repetition of academic year Dismissal

ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC**
Failure to pass USMLE Step 1 after three attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal

Table 3: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in Phase 2

ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC**
Failure of a single clerkship NBME or Clerkship Clinical Examination (CCE) in an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate one clerkship NBME or CCE without penalty
Failure of Clinical Evaluation component of grading system in any clerkship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of clerkship
Failure of a total of two NBME and/or CCEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review by SPPCC to determine if student should continue progressing on schedule

Failure to remediate clerkship NBME or CCE at the second attempt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign final grade of Fail and repetition of clerkship
Failure of NBME AND CCE in a single clerkship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign final grade of Fail and repetition of clerkship
Failure of any three major components within the core clinical clerkships (subject exam, CCE, clinical evaluation), inclusive of all work undertaken after initial matriculation into Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to repeat academic year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of academic year Dismissal
<i>Procedures during Repetition of 1 or More Clerkships</i>		
Failure of single major component of a Clerkship (i.e., NBME, CCE, Clinical Performance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request Repetition of Component Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of Component Dismissal
Failure of two or more major Clerkship components. This could occur within a single Clerkship or across multiple Clerkships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure of overall clerkship (e.g. due to unprofessional behavior)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal

Table 4: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in Phase 3

ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC
Failure to meet criteria for graduation by June 1 of third year following entry into Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request extension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal Approval of extension
Failure to pass USMLE Step 2 CK after three attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure to pass LCSE after three attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal

Table 5: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in special programs (dual degree, accelerated programs) in Phases 1 and 2

ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC**
Failure of a single exam in Year 1 or 2 or of a single clerkship NBME or CCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review by SPPCC to determine if student should continue in special program
Failure of 2 or more exams or a course in Phase 1, 2 or more clerkship NBME or CCEs, a clerkship, Clinical Evaluation component in any clerkship, or USMLE Step Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review by SPPCC to determine if student should continue in special program Dismissal from dual or accelerated program.
Failure to progress as expected in dual degree or accelerated program (e.g., failure to enter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal from dual or accelerated program

* Students may appeal decisions of the SPPCC. The mechanism for appealing these decisions is described in Section 14.

** SPPCC options include, but are not limited to, the described actions.

9. Repetition of Year 1 or 2 (course work during Phase 1).

- a. Students in either Year 1 or Year 2 (Phase 1) who are granted the opportunity to repeat that curricular year (course work) due to unsatisfactory academic performance (see Table 1) may be enrolled in GS versions of any remaining courses in that academic year.
- b. Students who are granted the opportunity to repeat either Year 1 or Year 2 (coursework during Phase 1) for a reason other than unsatisfactory academic performance will not be expected to enroll in GS.
- c. Students who have been approved to repeat an academic year may request a final grade of W (withdraw) of a single in progress course, even if they have an average score below passing. This approval must be requested and granted at the time the student is approved to repeat the academic year.

10. Dismissal Policy. A student shall be recommended for dismissal if the SPPCC determines that the student has not performed satisfactorily in academic pursuits, is not competent to pursue the assigned course of study, or has been deemed by the SPPCC, for just reason, unfit to continue the study of medicine. The student shall be notified in writing of the action of the SPPCC.

11. Appeals Procedure.

- a. Students who meet with the SPPCC are notified in writing of the outcome of the meeting.
- b. A student may appeal the decisions of the SPPCC. This appeal must be made to the Dean of the School of Medicine within five (5) business days of written notification of the SPPCC decision, must be in writing, and must cite grounds for the appeal. The appeal may be submitted through the office of the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.
- c. The Dean will either issue a decision or appoint an Appeals Committee comprised of three members of the senior faculty within ten (10) business days of receipt of the written appeal. The Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Chair of the SPPCC (or designee) will serve as ex-officio members of the Appeals Committee.
- d. The Appeals Committee will be convened by the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs within ten (10) business days after appointment to consider the student's appeal.
- e. The student may appear in person and/or present a statement to the Appeals Committee relative to the appeal. The procedures for the committee hearing shall follow those of the Student Conduct Board described in the [TTUHSC Student Handbook](#).
- f. Except for extraordinary circumstances, the student shall remain in the curriculum and may pursue appropriate course work until the appeal is resolved.
- g. The Appeals Committee will report their recommendation to the Dean within five (5) business days. The Dean will take the Appeals Committee's recommendations under advisement and render a final decision. The student and the Chair of the SPPCC Committee will be notified of the outcome in writing by the Dean.