



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 each odd-numbered fiscal year by the Student Promotions and Professional Conduct Committee. Revisions will be forwarded to the Office of the Dean for approval and 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 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 blocks, 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 SOM Student Handbook (available at <http://www.ttuhschool.edu/medicine/studentaffairs/>) and encompass the following documents:
 - 1) Student Honor Code
 - 2) Compact between Teachers and Learners of Medicine
 - 3) TTUHSC Code of Professional and Academic ConductThe faculty of the School of Medicine has the responsibility for recommending students for promotion and graduation. This responsibility is administered through the Student Promotions and Professional Conduct Committee (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 Office of Student Affairs.
 - b. Students covered by this policy: These promotions policies apply to students enrolled in the courses necessary to complete the requirements for the Doctor of Medicine degree in the TTUHSC School of Medicine. These policies do not cover the course work done for the other degree programs in which the student is enrolled, for instance the dual degree programs with the TTUHSC Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (MD/PhD, MD/MS and MD/MPH

programs), Texas Tech University (TTU) Rawls College of Business Administration (MD/MBA program), or TTU School of Law (MD/JD program).

- c. Responsibilities of the SPPCC: The SPPCC is appointed by the Faculty Council Executive Committee. The SPPCC is charged with the following responsibilities:
- 1) Formulate and modify promotions policies.
 - 2) Review and evaluate the academic and behavioral progress of each medical student enrolled at TTUHSC School of Medicine.
 - 3) Determine the conditions for promotion, reinstatement, or dismissal for each student in accordance with the policies and procedures described herein.

All policies of the SPPCC are subject to approval by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Council and referred to the Dean of the School of Medicine for final approval.

- d. Responsibilities of the Office of Student Affairs: The Office of Student Affairs is responsible for monitoring 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. It will provide staff support to the SPPCC and will maintain permanent minutes of SPPCC actions. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs or their designee serves as advocate for due process for students. The Office of Student Affairs will provide students appearing before the SPPCC all information pertaining to their meeting at least 5 business days prior to the scheduled meeting.
- e. Responsibilities of the Dean: The Dean, as the Chief Academic Officer, has the final responsibility for actions taken regarding a student. The initial recommendation and subsequent action for each student are delegated to the SPPCC. However, the Dean is responsible for executing the appeals process in which a final decision is made.

3. Curricular Progression and Length.

- a. Normal progression through the School of Medicine curriculum requires that a student demonstrate a consistently satisfactory level of performance. Course grades generally serve as indicators of performance. Students are expected to complete the medical school curriculum within four (4) years of the initial date of matriculation. This does not include time spent in course work for other degree programs, for example the joint degree programs with the TTUHSC Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (MD/PhD program), the TTU Rawls College of Business Administration (MD/MBA program), or the TTU College of Law (MD/JD program).
- b. 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, 3) request for decompression of the medical school curriculum related to an established disability as noted in the Standards for Curricular Completion or 4) request for decompression of the medical school curriculum due to academic reasons. However, inability to complete Years 1 and 2 of the curriculum in three years or Years 3 and 4 of the curriculum in three years will result in a recommendation for dismissal by the SPPCC.
- c. The completion of the medical school curriculum is required for graduation. The Office of Student Affairs will annually present to the Dean 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 School of Medicine 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 Office of Student Affairs will notify students in both Year 1 and Year 2, in writing, regarding satisfactory progress and promotion to the next academic year.
- b. Promotion from Year 1 to 2 requires satisfactory performance in all blocks that constitute the Year 1 curriculum (see Table 1).
- c. Promotion from Year 2 to 3 requires satisfactory performance in all blocks that constitute the Year 2 curriculum (see Table 2). In addition, students must have achieved a passing score on the USMLE Step 1 exam.
- d. Students in Year 3 and Year 4 are evaluated on a continuous basis. Unless problems arise, students will proceed through the clinical curriculum 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 grades of Fail in Year 1 or Year 2 courses
 - (2) Fail more than one individual exam in Year 1 and Year 2 courses
 - (3) Obtain a grade of Fail or In Progress (PR) in Year 3 clerkships and courses (Note that one clerkship NBME can be remediated within an academic year without penalty).
 - (4) Obtain a grade of Fail in Year 4 clinical activities.
 - (5) These students will be reviewed by the SPPCC Executive Committee, which will determine the appropriate action for each student based on these policies.
- b. The SPPCC Executive Committee will use the guidelines presented in Tables 1 and 2 below to determine the appropriate action step for each student and will prepare documentation for each student whose academic performance warrants a meeting with the SPPCC. The Office of Student Affairs will provide this information to each identified student and will 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 have passed all four USMLE Step exams – Step 1, Step 2 Clinical Knowledge, Step 2 Clinical Skills, 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 by June 30 prior to the start of Year 3 (or an earlier date if necessary due to the date of MS 3 orientation), unless a delay is approved by the SPPCC. Students may request a delay in taking Step 1 if they are remediating a course, do not have the requisite score on the NBME Comprehensive Basic Science Exam (CBSE), or have extenuating circumstances that prevent them from taking Step 1 and proceeding into the MS 3 year on schedule.
- 2) In order to be approved to take USMLE Step 1 on schedule (by June 30 or earlier if necessary due to scheduling of MS 3 orientation), students must have achieved a minimum score on the NBME Comprehensive Basic Science Examination (CBSE) that is predictive of a passing score on USMLE Step 1. This minimum score is established annually by the Office of Curriculum 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 MS 3 year are described in the following section, and diagrammatically in the appendix.

Students who obtain the requisite score on the CBSE will:

- Take Step 1 by or on June 30 (or an earlier specified date, if necessary).
- Begin MS 3 on schedule in period 1 (unless on Leave of Absence).
- Complete MS 3 after passing Step 1.

Students who take Step 1 by or on June 30 but do not pass at the first attempt will receive counseling from the Office of Student Affairs to either:

- Complete the Period 1 clerkship, then enroll in Independent Study (IDS) during Period 2 to prepare for retake, **OR**
- Drop the Period 1 clerkship and enroll in one period of IDS to prepare for retake.
- Note that in either option, the student must obtain a passing score on USMLE Step 1 before re-entering the curriculum. USMLE scores are generally reported on a Wednesday 3-4 weeks after taking the exam. Thus, in practice, an 8-week delay provides only 4.5 weeks of preparation time.

Students who are not approved to take Step 1 before June 30 (or an earlier specified date, if necessary) will:

- Enroll in IDS for at least one clerkship period to continue Step 1 preparation
AND
- Take and submit scores on the NBME Comprehensive Basic-Science Self-Assessment (CBSSA) or other instruments that predict Step 1 performance
AND
- Obtain a passing score on Step 1 in order to return to curriculum.

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

USMLE Step 2:

- 1) Students are required to pass USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge and Step 2 Clinical Skills for graduation.

- 2) Students must have completed all requirements for Year 3, including the remediation of any academic or professionalism issues, before taking USMLE Step 2CK. Students must take at least one Comprehensive Clinical Science Examination (CCSE) to demonstrate readiness to take Step 2CK. Students must achieve a pre-determined requisite score in order to be approved to take USMLE Step 2CK. This minimum requisite score is established annually by the Office of Curriculum based on national and local data. Any student who does not achieve the requisite score will receive counseling on appropriate preparation for Step 2CK, including information about alternative assessment methods that can be used to demonstrate readiness.
- 3) Students may not take USMLE Step 2CS until three weeks after the last day of the All Campus Longitudinal Clinical Skills Exam (LCSE) and must be participating in their last clerkship of Year 3. Results from the LCSE are used to counsel students on their readiness to take and pass Step 2CS, and any students considered at risk of failing will receive counseling on appropriate preparation for Step 2CS.
- 4) Students must take both Step 2 exams by October 31 of the year preceding graduation. Off-cycle students may delay taking either or both of the exams by the amount of time they are off-cycle. For example, a student who is off cycle by one clerkship period must take Step 2 exams by December 31. Students who fail to meet these deadlines will be referred to the SPPCC.
- 5) Passing scores must be documented no later than March 1 of the year of graduation. Failure to document a passing score by March 1 may result in a delay in graduation. It is the responsibility of each student (particularly off-cycle students) to monitor the reporting dates of USMLE exams to ensure that their score is received by the March 1 deadline.

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

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 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 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 Failing 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 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

Table 2: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in Year 2

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 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 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 Failing 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 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
<i>Procedures related to taking and passing USMLE Step 1</i>		
Failure to meet criteria for promotion to Year 3 within three years of their date of matriculation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure to achieve the requisite score after three attempts on the CBSE (this refers to CBSE 1, 2 and 3 but does not include CBSE0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request permission to provide alternative methods for satisfying requirement (e.g., CBSSA) or permission to delay start of Year 3 	<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 Year 3

ACADEMIC CONDITION	COURSE OF ACTION FOR STUDENT*	POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR SPPCC**
Failure of a single clerkship NBME exam in an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate one clerkship NBME without penalty
Failure of a single clerkship OSCE in an academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remediate OSCE
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 OSCE exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review by SPPCC to determine if student should continue on schedule
Failure to remediate clerkship NBME or OSCE at the second attempt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of clerkship
Failure of NBME AND OSCE in a single clerkship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of clerkship
Failure of any three major components within the core clinical clerkships (subject exam, OSCE, clinical evaluation), inclusive of all work undertaken after initial matriculation into Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetition of academic year Dismissal

Table 4: Guidelines for Actions by SPPCC for students in Year 4

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 Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request extension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal Approval of extension
Failure to pass USMLE Step 2CK after three attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal
Failure to pass USMLE Step 2CS after three attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Withdraw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dismissal

* Students may appeal decisions of the SPPCC. The mechanism for appealing these decisions is described in Section 11.

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

9. Repetition of Year 1 or 2.

- a. Students in either Year 1 or Year 2 who are granted the opportunity to repeat that curricular year due to unsatisfactory academic performance (see Table 1) will be enrolled in Independent Study versions of any remaining courses in that year.
- b. Students who are granted the opportunity to repeat either Year 1 or Year 2 for a reason other than unsatisfactory academic performance will not be expected to enroll in IDS.

- c. Students who have been approved to repeat an academic year may request a final grade of W (withdraw) of a single course, even if they have an average score below passing.

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. A student may appeal the recommendation 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 committee decision, must be in writing, and must cite grounds for the appeal. The appeal may be submitted through the office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.
- b. 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 Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Chair of the SPPCC (or designee) will serve as ex-officio members of the Appeal Committee.
- c. The Appeals Committee will be convened by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs within ten (10) business days after appointment to consider the student's appeal.
- d. 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.
- e. Except for extraordinary circumstances, the student shall remain in the curriculum and may pursue appropriate course work until the appeal is resolved.
- f. The Appeals Committee will report their recommendation to the Dean within 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.