

Policy Title: PROGRESS AND PROMOTIONS (formerly called Academic Requirements for Promotion of Medical Students)
UAMS COM Undergraduate Medical Education Policy 3.1.3
Section: Student Progression, Promotion, and Graduation
LCME Element(s): 9.9 Student Advancement and Appeal Process; 10.3 Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress, and Their Dissemination
Approved By: UAMS COM Curriculum Committee
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The Student Promotions Committee

Overall Charge: The Student Promotions Committee (SPC) is charged by the College of Medicine bylaws with evaluating and monitoring the progress of each student in the College to ensure that each student is performing at an acceptable level of performance for progression in the curriculum. The SPC reviews all students' academic progress and discusses students who may not be making adequate progress. The SPC makes decisions as to whether each individual student can advance based on the promotions criteria below. The SPC is authorized to make exceptions to the promotions criteria when appropriate while ensuring that the criteria are applied in a fair and equitable manner to all students. The SPC has jurisdiction over academic progress of students, decisions relating to academic dishonesty (such as cheating or plagiarism), and professionalism issues not addressed in the UAMS Student Code of Conduct (UAMS Academic Affairs policy 2.2.14). Issues relating to the Student Code of Conduct will be handled as described in policy 2.2.14 rather than by the SPC.

Certification for Graduation: The SPC also has the special responsibility of reviewing the entire academic records of senior medical students to ascertain that each student has successfully completed the requirements for the M.D. degree. Following that review, the SPC will recommend students for graduation to the Council of Department Chairs, which is responsible for certifying that all students have met the requirements for the degree. This certification serves as the validation presented by the Dean of the College to the University President and the Board of Trustees in the Commencement Ceremony.

Composition, Quorum, and Meetings: The selection and composition of the SPC is set in the College of Medicine bylaws. It is composed of 12 members of the full-time teaching faculty. The Executive Associate Dean appoints the chair of the SPC. When a member is unable to attend a meeting, the Executive Associate Dean may appoint another member of the full-time teaching faculty to serve on the SPC for that meeting to ensure that a quorum is present. The Regional Associate Dean for the NW campus (or designee) will be invited to attend SPC

meetings as a non-voting guest when a NW campus student is being considered by the SPC for not making adequate progress in the degree program.

The SPC shall meet at least once/year, but a meeting can be called at any time at the request of the chair or the Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to evaluate issues bearing on student status. A quorum shall consist of at least 8 members. A decision to dismiss a student from the College shall require a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of members present (6 if 8 members are present, 7 if 9 members present, 8 if 10 members present, 9 if 12 members present). A simple majority is required to pass all other motions.

Conflict of Interest

Any member of the SPC who feels that he/she has a conflict of interest concerning any student being considered by the SPC is required to recuse him/herself from discussion and vote on that student. Examples of conflicts of interest include:

- Serving as that student's academic or career advisor
- Serving as course/clerkship director for a course that the student has failed
- Having a first degree family relationship with the student or a business/financial relationship with the student.

Conduct of meetings

Meetings of the SPC are chaired by the chair of the committee. Any student who will be considered by the SPC due to inadequate academic performance will be notified of the date, time, and place of SPC meeting and will be invited to attend the meeting by the Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The notification of the student will be sent to them using UAMS email and via certified US Mail. However, the student is not required to be present for the SPC to consider their academic situation and take action.

When an individual student is to be considered by the SPC, that student will be invited into the meeting room. The information relating to the academic status of the student will be presented by either the Chair or the Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The student then may make a statement to the SPC. The student may also present any written materials they want the SPC to consider. After the student statement, if any, the SPC members and student engage in a period of discussion. When that discussion is complete, the student is asked to leave the meeting room. The SPC then discusses the matter further and considers motions about student status, remediation, repetition of coursework or academic years, and/or dismissal. The SPC will consider both Scholastic Cognitive and Professionalism assessments in the evaluation of student status.

The student may be accompanied by one individual to serve as a support person (such as a trusted mentor or faculty member), but that person does not participate in the statement or discussion unless recognized for comments by the chair of the SPC. This support person is not to be attorney providing legal representation.

After the SPC meeting, the Executive Associate Dean (or designee) will inform the student of the outcome of the SPC meeting. This may be done in-person immediately following the meeting, by phone, or by subsequent email and certified US Mail letter.

Appeal of Promotions Committee Decision

A student has the right to appeal any decision of the SPC to the Dean of the College of Medicine. A written appeal must be sent to the Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs within 14 calendar days after the SPC decision. The written appeal will be forwarded to the Dean. The following are the only grounds for appeal:

- An error in procedure that reasonably could have affected the outcome of the SPC decision;
- New evidence or information that was not available to the SPC at the time of their decision; or
- A SPC decision that is manifestly unreasonable or unfair

The Dean, after reviewing the student's petition and pertinent records and documents, may at their discretion:

- 1) Affirm the decision of the SPC and deny the appeal;
- 2) Grant the appeal and set in motion a means of redress; or
- 3) Appoint an Ad Hoc Appeal Committee to evaluate the basis for and the merits of the appeal. This Ad Hoc Appeal Committee would consist of three members of the full-time teaching faculty who are not members of the SPC. They may review the written student appeal, any other relevant records, and may meet with the student and any relevant school official. The Ad Hoc Committee then makes a recommendation to the Dean to either grant or deny the appeal and the Dean makes the final decision.

Grading System

Grading System: Scholastic Cognitive Grades

These grades are based on the academic performance in a given course or clerkship. The grading system varies by academic year as follows:

- M1 and M2 year: Pass (P) means satisfactory performance representing a cumulative score of 70% or above; each course/module (except for POM 1 and POM 2) is required to have a minimum of 85% of the points for the final grade coming from summative/major exams. Fail (F) means unsatisfactory performance and failure of the course.
- M3 year: For required clerkships: A represents outstanding performance; B represents very good performance; C represents satisfactory performance; D represents marginal performance; and F represents unsatisfactory performance and failure of the clerkship/course. For POM3 and selectives, grading will be P (indicating satisfactory performance) or F (representing unsatisfactory performance).

- M4 year: Pass (P) representing satisfactory performance and Fail (F) representing unsatisfactory performance with no credit given.

In all years of the curriculum, an Incomplete (I) indicates that there is some portion of the course work that has not been completed. The I grade is temporary and must be removed and replaced by the final grade according to either clerkship or University policy.

In addition to the letter grades noted above, a narrative evaluation of the student's performance must be submitted in all courses in which there is sufficient contact with the student to enable such comments.

Grading System: Professionalism Grades

These grades are based on scholastic professionalism performance and assess certain characteristics that are important for individuals preparing for a career in medicine. These include: attentiveness, demeanor, maturity, cooperation, responsibility, etc. Students may receive a grade of either "Outstanding" or "Inadequate" on a Student Professionalism Assessment form. The lack of either grade indicates that the student has been judged to have demonstrated the professional characteristics. Assessments may be made by faculty members in coursework in which the student is enrolled or a faculty member who has contact with the student. These assessments will be submitted to the Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee). Any conduct described on the Student Professionalism Assessment form that falls into the UAMS Student Code of Conduct (academic affairs policy 2.2.14) will be addressed under the provisions of the Code of Conduct policy rather than this policy.

Criteria for Promotion and Graduation

For promotion from the M1 to M2 year:

A student successfully passing all courses in the M1 year shall be promoted in good standing into the M2 year.

A student failing one course shall repeat/remediate that course with permission of the SPC. If the student fails the repeat/remediation course, he/she shall be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards. This course repetition/remediation may occur at UAMS as directed by the relevant course director; or may be done at another LCME accredited medical school if the course is approved by the relevant UAMS course director.

A student failing two or more courses in the M1 year, but less than 50% of the credit hours for the year shall be required by the SPC to repeat the entire academic year with no failing grades or they shall be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards.

A student failing more than 50% of the credit hours in the M1 year shall be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards.

If a student fails 5 or more summative/major exams in a given academic year (M1 or M2), that student will be required to repeat that academic year even if they pass all individual courses.

For promotion from the M2 to M3 year:

A student successfully passing all courses in the M2 year and having passed the POM2 OSCE exam shall be promoted in good standing into the M3 year.

A student failing M2 one course shall repeat/remediate that course with permission of the SPC. If the student fails the repeat/remediation course, he/she shall be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards. This course repetition/remediation may occur at UAMS as directed by the relevant course director; or may be done at another LCME accredited medical school if the course is approved by the relevant UAMS course director.

A student failing two or more courses in the M2 year shall be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards.

If a student fails 5 or more summative/major exams in a given academic year (M1 or M2), that student will be required to repeat that academic year even if they pass all individual courses.

For promotion from the M3 to M4 year:

A student who passes all M3 clerkships shall be promoted into the M4 year. Given the nature of clinical clerkship and senior elective scheduling however, students may take M4 electives even if they have not passed all M3 courses and been officially promoted to the M4 year.

A student who fails one M3 course/clerkship shall be required to repeat that course/clerkship and attain a grade of C or better (or a P for P/F graded courses). A student who earns a grade of lower than C (or an F in P/F M3 courses) in the repeat clerkship shall be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards.

Junior students who have more than one D grade will be considered by the SPC and may be required to repeat such clerkships. The grades attained in any such repeated courses must be a C or better or the student will be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards. A student who fails more than one M3 course/clerkship shall be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards.

For graduation with the M.D. degree:

For graduation, a student must have completed all of the coursework as described above; and in addition, must:

- Pass 34 M4 credit hours, including the residency preparation course, the geriatrics clerkship, and an acting internship
- Pass USMLE step 1 and step 2CK (see separate USMLE policies)
- Beginning with the class of 2026, passing score on the end of M3 year graduation OSCE or a successful remediation

If a senior student fails a required M4 course, they must repeat that course and achieve a passing grade; otherwise they will be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards. If a student fails an elective M4 course, they may still graduate so long as they meet the requirements above; the failing grade for the elective will be recorded on the transcript.

Graduation for students in the Accelerated 3-year primary care track:

Students in the accelerated 3-year primary care track must complete all of the criteria listed above for M1, M2, and M3 students. They do not have to complete the M4 course requirements, but they must pass USMLE step 1 and step 2CK. In addition, they must successfully pass the Introduction to Primary Care course in the M1 year and the Primary Care clerkship in the summer between M1 and M2 years.

Class Rank

The College of Medicine does not calculate traditional grade point averages. A class rank is calculated by adding the final percentage score in each required course and clerkship multiplied by the number of credit hours of the course and then dividing by the total number of credit hours for the year or period. Class rank is NOT used by the SPC to determine promotion or academic status. It is reported on the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE or dean's letter) which is used in residency applications. However, class rank on the MSPE is only reported by quartile, not by specific numerical rank. In addition, students who are in the top 10% of the class will have that recorded on the MSPE as well.

Leave of Absence as it relates to Student Promotion

When a student takes a Leave of Absence (LOA) from the College, the coursework required when they return is decided by the SPC using the following guidelines (subject to SPC discretion and modification):

- If a student returning from a LOA in the M1 or M2 year had a failing grade in any course they year the leave was taken or was failing the course he/she was taking at the time of the leave, he/she will be required to begin that academic year again and take all M1 or M2 coursework as any other beginning M1/M2 student. Such students must pass all courses in the repeat year, even courses they had previously passed; otherwise they are to be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards. All grades earned in the first attempt at the M1/M2 year will be expunged except failing grades.

- If an M3 or M4 student had failed a required course/clerkship or was failing one at the time of the LOA, the student will be required to repeat that failed or failing course/clerkship on return and must pass it with a grade of C or better (or P for P/F courses) or be dismissed for failure to maintain academic standards.
- If any student had passed all courses taken and was passing the course being taken at the time of the LOA, the student will complete only the courses not yet completed when the student returns.

Professionalism Assessments

Unprofessional behavior by students is reported via an Areas for Improvement (AFI) form. AFIs are a mechanism to provide early formative feedback to students who have challenges meeting the professionalism expectations of the medical education program. Since the AFI is formative, the process allows students to receive feedback in a non-threatening manner that is not part of their permanent file. The AFI is an opportunity to intervene early in identifying unprofessional behavior and provide the student with the opportunity for coaching. The AFI details the behavior that was considered unprofessional and how the student can improve that behavior. It also mandates a timeline to document improvement.

AFIs are completed by the faculty supervising the student or the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. If residents or staff members witness unprofessional behavior, they should report it to the supervising faculty or the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, who may complete the form. The AFI will be reviewed with the student in person or via Zoom, sometimes by the person issuing the AFI, and always by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or the Associate Dean for NW Campus or designee.

AFI forms are maintained in the Associate Dean for Student Affairs files but will not go on the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE, or Dean's letter) or anywhere else unless the behavior continues. Behaviors that warrant an AFI include but are not limited to:

- No show/no call to clinic or required events
- Repeated tardiness to clinic or required events
- Disrespectful attitudes or communications with fellow classmates, staff, faculty, or patients/family
- Sleeping through required events
- Wearing headphones or earbuds throughout class or during rounds

If a student does not improve and receives a second AFI about similar behavior, a negative or inadequate Student Professionalism Assessment (SPA) is completed. The SPA forms, like the AFI, require a remediation plan. If a student receives a second AFI about unrelated behavior (i.e. one about timeliness and a second about unprofessional communication with another individual), it will not necessarily result in a negative SPA. However, a pattern of repeated unprofessional behavior will result in a negative SPA.

SPAs are formal documentation of unprofessional behavior and will be sent to the EAD and placed in the student record. A negative SPA is required by the National Residency Matching Program to be noted in a student's MSPE when applying to residency programs. This may negatively affect the student's ability to match at their preferred programs. Of note, the COM is also contractually obligated to amend and resubmit the students' MSPE if something changes (i.e. they get a negative SPA) after the initial submission.

Sometimes a behavior noted is so egregious that an AFI is skipped and it goes straight to a negative SPA. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Cheating on an exam
- Obvious biased, inflammatory, or threatening behavior to a colleague, patient, faculty, or staff
- HIPAA violations

If a student receives two negative SPAs concerning any behavior (or one incident if judged serious by the EAD), the EAD will notify the student in writing that they received the Inadequate grades and require that the student appear before the Student Promotions Committee. After discussion with the student and review of the record, the SPC may choose to do any of the following:

- Take no further action
- Counsel the student either orally or in writing
- Require the student to repeat either a single course/clerkship or the entire academic year
- Dismissal from the College

At any time, if a student's unprofessional behavior is deemed especially egregious, the EAD can escalate beyond an AFI to a negative SPA or beyond a negative SPA to requiring appearance before the Student Promotions Committee or the Code of Conduct Committee. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Physical violence
- Threats of physical violence
- Especially large or egregious HIPAA violations

If a SPA form shows Inadequate performance in an area covered by the UAMS Student Code of Conduct (academic affairs policy 2.2.14), then the SPC does not play a role in addressing the issue, and the process in the Code of Conduct policy is followed.

Course or clerkship directors can also complete a SPA to report a student's outstanding professional behavior. If a student receives a grade of Outstanding, the EAD will mail the student a congratulatory letter with a copy of the Student Professionalism Assessment. A note of the Outstanding performance will be noted on the MSPE.

Dismissal from the College

A student shall be subject to dismissal at any time during the academic year when College of Medicine policies call for dismissal; whether in this policy or in other College policies, such as the USMLE step 1 policy. It is not necessary for the SPC to wait until the end of the academic year. After a review of a student's academic record, and after offering the student a chance for a session of informal give and take with the SPC, the SPC may dismiss any student at any time for what they believe to be an inferior academic performance, inconsistent with the possibility of ultimate graduation from the College of Medicine or may place the student on probation at any time.

When an academic policy described above calls for an action of dismissal, the action may be applied administratively without the need for a SPC meeting; however, the student must be given the opportunity to ask to meet with the SPC to appeal the administrative dismissal. The student may also choose to withdraw rather than be dismissed. In situations where an administrative dismissal is to be applied, the student will be notified by UAMS email and certified US Mail. The student will have a minimum of 7 working days from the date the notification is made to ask for a SPC meeting before the administrative dismissal is affected. If the student requests to meet with the SPC, then the dismissal is placed on hold until the SPC meeting and decision.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Graham", written in a cursive style.

James Graham, Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Date: June 1, 2026