POLICY ON ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Objective: The purpose of this policy is to promote student academic achievement, maintain academic and professional standards (knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors) and achieve fairness and consistency in decisions regarding students with academic or professional deficiencies. It is the policy of the School of Medicine to give every qualified and committed student the opportunity to graduate; however, the School reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to make judgments about who has or has not demonstrated the necessary qualifications to earn a degree and to practice medicine competently.

Outline of Policy: All academic deficiencies, patterns of unprofessional behavior and egregious violations of professionalism shall be presented to the Academic Standards and Achievement Committee (ASAC) that acts on behalf of the faculty of the School of Medicine. This policy specifies how the ASAC will deal with student academic deficiencies in courses, clerkships, electives, and the Clinical Practice Examination (CPX) as well as with failures on the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 and Step 2 examinations, including compliance with the Standards for Academic Standing (see end of the document).

Definition of Academic Deficiency: The courses and electives in the pre-clerkship and post-clerkship phases of the Next Generation Curriculum, and the family medicine clerkship, the perioperative medicine clerkship and the surgical subspecialties are graded as pass/fail (P/F), and each F constitutes a deficiency. The other clerkships are graded with letter grades (A, B, C or F). A score of 70% or higher is required for successful completion of each course and clerkship. A score lower than 70% constitutes an F. Each F constitutes a deficiency. Failure to complete any course or clerkship requirement also constitutes a deficiency.

Professionalism: Professional attitudes and behaviors are components of the 12 Competencies Required of the Contemporary Physician that enable the independent performance of the responsibilities of a physician and therefore are a requirement for the successful award of the degree of Doctor of Medicine. The School of Medicine’s Professionalism Objectives (http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/education/medical-students/UMEd/elements/Professionalism%20objectives%20clerkships3.pdf/view) establish general standards applicable to all students in the School of Medicine. However, it is the responsibility of the faculty and the ASAC, as appropriate, to interpret and apply the general Professionalism Objectives to specific situations in which concerns are raised about student performance.

Evaluation of professional attitudes and behaviors is an integral part of a student’s assessment and generally is accomplished through observation and narrative recording. “Praise/Concern” Cards and written narratives are assessment tools used to describe behaviors in areas of altruism; honesty and integrity; caring, compassion and communication; respect for others; respect for differences; responsibility and accountability; excellence and scholarship; leadership and knowledge and other skills related to professionalism. These professional attitudes and behaviors are monitored and recorded throughout undergraduate medical education.

Any breach of professionalism resulting in a recorded observation, e.g., Professionalism Concern Card, letter, written report, etc., must be addressed with the student by his/her College Dean and documentation of the discussion must be recorded. If a student receives three or more written observations of concern or is cited for a single egregious breach of professionalism, notice will be sent to
the ASAC for review. A student identified as having a pattern of unprofessional behavior may be directed to further counseling and/or supportive remediation and/or placed on academic probation, or if the professional violations are severe, a student may be dismissed from school even if he/she has passing grades in all courses. The ASAC will assess the severity of the problem, the management and the consequences, including possibly reporting the behaviors in the student’s Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE). Egregious behaviors, e.g., assault on or threat to a patient, patient’s family member, student, GME trainee or faculty member, conduct that may constitute a felony, etc., regardless of whether criminal prosecutions are initiated or pursued, will be referred immediately to the ASAC, irrespective of whether previous observations of concern exist, with the recommendation for dismissal from school.

**Grading during the Pre-clerkship phase:** The pre-clerkship phase of the Next Generation Curriculum occurs during the first three semesters of the educational program. It consists of five graded courses. Integrated Systems I (first semester), Integrated Systems II (second semester), Integrated Systems III (third semester), Clinical Performance Development 1 (all three semesters and designated as CPD-1 A, CPD-1 B and CPD-1 C), and Social Issues in Medicine (either semester one or two during the first year). Each of these courses assigns a pass/fail grade.

Integrated Systems I consists of the following course components or “systems”: Cells to Society, Foundations of Medicine, Cells, Tissues and Mechanisms of Disease and Microbes and the Immune System. Integrated Systems II consists of the following course components: Musculoskeletal-Integument System, Gastrointestinal System and Mind, Brain and Behavior. Integrated Systems III consists of the following course components: Cardiovascular System, Pulmonary System, Renal System, Endocrine-Reproductive System and Hematology. In order to receive a passing grade for an integrated system course, a student must have an average score for all components/systems of 70% or above, and must achieve an average score of 60% or above for each component/system.

Clinical Performance Development 1 (CPD-1) is a three semester course with the designations of CPD-1 A, B or C. Performance is assessed during each semester and each student is provided formative narrative feedback and opportunities for remediation if skills are not developing at an appropriate and expected pace. Each student will receive a single P/F grade at the end of the third semester (CPD-1 C).

Social Issues in Medicine is a one semester course that occurs during the first two semesters with half of students taking the course in the first semester and half in the second semester. A single P/F grade is assigned at the end of the first year.

In order to progress to the third semester of the curriculum, a student must have demonstrated professional behavior, and have achieved 70% or higher on Integrated Systems I and Integrated Systems II, and have passed each component of these two courses with a score of 60% or higher, and have received a P for Social Issues in Medicine, and be progressing satisfactorily in CPD-1. Failure to meet any one of these criteria will result in a referral to the ASAC for review and action. Any requirement for remediation must be completed prior to the beginning of the third semester.

Successful completion of the third semester requires a score of 70% or higher in the Integrated Systems III course, a score of 60% or higher on each of the components/systems of Integrated Systems III, and a
grade of P in CPD-1. Failure to meet any one of these criteria will result in a referral to the ASAC for review and action. Any requirement for remediation must be completed successfully prior to sitting for USMLE Step 1.

**Summative Examinations:** A passing score on a summative examination within a course is 70%. This applies to multiple choice assessments as well as anatomy practical examinations. Students achieving less than 60% on a summative assessment or on an anatomy practical examination will be referred to the ASAC with the recommendation from the respective System Leader for remediation. Generally, if the student is in good standing professionally, has done well formatively, and has no other academic deficiencies, the student may be allowed to take a reexamination. The reexamination grade, if passing, will be an additional grade factored into the cumulative total. If the summative examination is failed the second time, the ASAC will review the student’s performance again and decide either to allow the student to make a third attempt at the reexamination or repeat the course. The final decision regarding reexamination rests with the ASAC. Failure to pass a summative on the third attempt constitutes a failure of the system and therefore failure of the course. If a student fails an anatomy practical examination with a score of less than 60% and the ASAC determines that the student may take a reexamination, it is the decision of the anatomy faculty whether the reexamination will be conducted with a preserved specimen or a comparable electronic examination. Summative reexaminations must be retaken in the semester break immediately following the course in which the failure occurred.

One component of the CPD evaluation within the first 18-month curriculum is the Observed Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). The OSCEs for CPD-1 A and CPD-1 B are formative. Students will receive formative narrative feedback regarding their performance. A low performance on either formative OSCE may result in an individualized educational plan for the student. The OSCE for CPD 1C is summative and a passing grade is required to pass CPD-1 and begin clerkships. CPD has a process for remediation and retesting. A student required to repeat the summative OSCE must complete the second examination prior to the end of the third semester. A second failure results in an F in CPD-1, and the student will be referred to the ASAC for review and action.

**Promotion to Clerkships:** Students demonstrating professional behavior and who achieve a passing grade in Integrated Systems I, Integrated Systems II, Integrated Systems III, CPD-1 and SIM are eligible to sit for USMLE Step 1. Once a student passes USMLE Step 1, he/she may progress to clerkships.

**Remediation of Academic Deficiencies in Clerkships:** A passing cumulative numerical score of 70% must be achieved in order to pass a single clerkship. This correlates to assigned possible letter grade of A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C or C-. Earning less than 70% constitutes a failure and requires repeating the clerkship and all its requirements. Even if a student numerically achieves a passing grade of 70%, the Clerkship Director may refuse to pass a student based upon poor clinical performance and/or concerning issues of professionalism. In this circumstance, the Clerkship Director should make a recommendation to the ASAC regarding his/her concerns with appropriate documentation. If clinical failure is upheld by the ASAC, then likewise remediation should include repeating the clerkship. When a clerkship requires repeating, the student’s transcript should show two enrollments in the same course with two separately determined and reported grades.

**USMLE Subject Examinations:** A passing score on individual subject or shelf examinations will be set by the annual National Hofstee Recommended Passing Score for each subject examination as determined by the National Board of Medical Examiners. Any student not meeting this set score constitutes a failure of the examination and therefore a deficiency for the clerkship. The student will be assigned an
Incomplete on his/her transcript until the deficiency is removed by a passing grade on the shelf examination. Students achieving less than a passing score on a shelf examination will be referred to the ASAC with the recommendation from the Clerkship Director for appropriate remediation. Generally, if the student performed well clinically and is in good standing professionally, the student would be able to take a reexamination unless the score on the subject examination is so low that removing the deficiency still will result in a failure. The reexamination grade, if passing, will remove the deficiency from the course. It will not be factored in numerically to the final grade. The final grade for a clerkship is calculated with the original shelf examination score. This final grade will then replace the Incomplete on the transcript. A second failure of the shelf exam will be referred to the ASAC for review and action. Should the ASAC permit the student to take the shelf examination a third time and the student passes, the clerkship deficiency will be satisfied and the final grade calculated from using the score from the first shelf examination. Failure to pass a shelf examination on the third attempt constitutes a failure of the clerkship and will be referred to the ASAC for review and action. Shelf reexaminations will occur at the completion of the student’s third year. Depending upon the timing of the clerkship with the deficiency, a student with an outstanding deficiency in a single clerkship may be allowed to continue into the elective portion of the curriculum but will not be allowed to take an elective in the discipline of the clerkship deficiency until the deficiency has been remediated. All core clerkships (Geriatrics is not included in the core) must be passed before a student can register for USMLE Step 2.

Remediation of Academic Deficiencies in Geriatrics and Advanced Clinical Electives (ACEs): A passing cumulative score of 70% must be achieved in order to pass the Geriatric Clerkship in fourth year. Earning less than a 70% constitutes a failure and requires repeating the clerkship and all its requirements. The ACE is a required single 4 week clinical experience selected by the student and is graded pass/fail. Students must achieve a passing grade in this course to receive credit. Remediation of a deficiency in an ACE is required. A student must pass the Geriatric clerkship as well as their selected ACE in order to meet graduation requirements.

Remediation of Academic Deficiencies in Electives: Remediation of a deficiency in an elective is not required; however, the student will not receive credit toward the MD degree for that elective. A student must complete all required electives and meet the elective credit requirements in order to meet graduation requirements.

Incompletes and Withdrawals: An Incomplete will be assigned to a course or clerkship on a student’s transcript if a deficiency (as defined above) for that course or clerkship exists. When the deficiency is remediated, the Incomplete will be removed and replaced by the course or clerkship grade. Only in the case of a failed examination will this information need to appear in a student’s MSPE.

Should a student need extended time off from medical school, interrupting a course or clerkship, the student must withdraw per University policy. If and when the student is readmitted, the ASAC will determine how much, if any, of the course or clerkship will need to be repeated.

Graduation: In order to receive the recommendation from the ASAC for graduation and conferral of the MD degree, a student must satisfy all academic and professionalism graduation requirements with no outstanding deficiencies. In addition, passing scores on the USMLE Step 1, USMLE Step 2 clinical knowledge (CK) and the USMLE Step 2 clinical skills (CS) are required for graduation.

Steps 1 and 2 of United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE): In order to advance to the clerkships, a student must successfully complete the pre-clerkship curriculum and must have taken
USMLE Step 1. A student may begin the clerkships pending notification of Step 1 score. If notification of a failing score on Step 1 is received when a clerkship is in process, the student may be allowed to complete that clerkship. The student then will discontinue clerkships in order to work toward retaking and successfully passing Step 1. The Step 1 examination may be taken no more than three times. Three failures of Step 1 will result in the student’s dismissal from medical school, without recourse to the appeals process. Students in combined MD/PhD degree programs must take Step 1 prior to entering the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and must pass Step 1 to continue in their graduate programs. After successful completion of the core clerkships, the student must take both parts of Step 2 of the USMLE (2 CK and 2 CS). Passing both Step 2 CK and Step 2 CS is required for graduation.* Students are allowed a total of three attempts to pass each of the two Step 2 examinations; failure to pass either Step 2 examination for a third time will result in dismissal from medical school, without recourse to the appeals process. Students must complete successfully all required clerkships and then take USMLE Step 2 CS and 2 CK no later than November 1 of their last academic year in medical school to ensure an opportunity for remediation prior to residency match and graduation should a failure occur.

Clinical Practice Examination: Students are required to take and pass the Clinical Practice Examination (CPX) after the completion of the clerkships. This is a requirement for graduation. Students failing the CPX are required to review their performance and address their deficiencies with an assigned attending.

Overall Time Limits: All of the requirements for graduation, including passing Steps 1, 2 CK and 2 CS of the USMLE, must be completed within 6 years from the date the student matriculated in the School of Medicine. A student in the combined MD/PhD degree program must complete the graduation requirements for both degrees in a maximum of 8 years from the date of matriculation. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the ASAC.

Procedure for Handling a Deficiency:
- The Course, System or Clerkship Director notifies both the student and Office for Student Affairs/College Dean of deficiencies.
- The student is withdrawn from clinical responsibilities (if applicable).
- The student is contacted by the Office for Student Affairs and required to meet with his/her College Dean. At this meeting, the Policy on Academic and Professional Advancement is discussed and the student is notified of the next ASAC meeting. The ASAC meetings are scheduled monthly.
- The student is added to the agenda for the ASAC.
- Students may submit a written statement, the results of a drug test, the results of a Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) screening or other relevant data to the Committee and/or request to meet in person with the Committee.
- All students subject to dismissal or who may be required to repeat an academic period shall be offered the opportunity to meet with the Committee.
- The ASAC reviews each student’s academic record, takes into account any recommendations from a Course or Clerkship Director and determines remediation or other action based upon the Policy on Academic and Professional Advancement.
- The Chair of the Committee notifies the student in writing of the Committee’s decision.
- The Office for Student Affairs schedules the remediation required by the ASAC in collaboration with Course and Clerkship Directors.
- In the cases where a student is asked to repeat an entire segment of the curriculum or is dismissed from medical school, the student can appeal the decision of the ASAC using the Appeals Process described below, with the exception of a failure to pass Steps 1, 2 CK or 2 CS of the USMLE.
**Academic Appeals Process:**

- If the ASAC requires a dismissal from the School of Medicine or repetition of an academic period, the notification to the student will provide the option of an appeal and a description of the appeals process. This option will not be granted to those students failing to pass Steps 1, 2 CK or 2 CS of the USMLE within three attempts. The student may formally request that the Associate Dean for Student Affairs appoint an ad hoc Appeals Committee to review the decision of the ASAC. The student must file his/her appeal no later than 14 days from receipt of notification or lose the right to appeal.
- The three-person ad hoc Appeals Committee is drawn from a pool of 10 faculty members named by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, none of whom are current members of the ASAC. The student selects one member, the Senior Associate Dean for Education selects one member, and the Dean of the School of Medicine selects the third member (who chairs the ad hoc Appeals Committee). The Associate Dean for Student Affairs serves as staff liaison, ex officio, without vote. The student is permitted to inspect his/her entire medical school file, including any material upon which the decision of the ASAC was based.
- The student is permitted to have counsel, to submit affidavits and exhibits and to summon witnesses at the Appeals Committee hearing. Legal counsel may be present to provide advice, but legal counsel will not be permitted to participate actively in presentation of testimony, examination/cross examination of witnesses or oral arguments.
- The Appeals Committee is to conduct a hearing as soon as possible (ordinarily within 14 days) and will uphold, modify or reverse the decision(s) of the ASAC.
- The Appeals Committee will provide the student with all the evidence against him or her, including the academic grades and written evaluations, and will base its recommendations upon the evidence presented at the hearing.
- The Appeals Committee will send its decision, along with a written record of its proceedings, to the Dean of the School of Medicine.
- The decision of the Appeals Committee will be final.

**General Operational Procedures:** The ASAC will schedule monthly meetings and will also meet on an as-needed basis (within 10 days of a report, e.g., egregious behavior) to address immediate issues. The ASAC may be superseded by University policy or legal action.
Standards for Academic Standing:

A student is in “good academic standing” if the student makes satisfactory progress, defined as progressing at a pace of completion allowing the student to meet academic requirements to achieve the Doctor of Medicine degree within a six-year limit (150% of the program length) set from matriculation.

A student receives a warning or probation of “not in good academic standing” if making inadequate academic progress that threatens their ability to achieve the Doctor of Medicine degree within a six-year limit set from matriculation as determined by the Academic Standards and Achievement Committee.

The following are standards for each phase of the curriculum used to make the measurements determining whether or not students are maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).

Pre-clerkship Phase:
The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she has failures or an unsatisfactory in any course or system that are not successfully remediated at the time of the first day of class, third semester.

The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she has >2 course Incompletes and/or Withdrawals and if the Incompletes or Withdrawals are not remedied at the time of the first day of class, third semester.

The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she has failures or an unsatisfactory in any course that are not successfully remediated at the time of the first day of period one of the clerkships.

The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she has >2 Incompletes and/or Withdrawals and if the Incompletes and/or Withdrawals are not remedied at the time of the first day of period one of the clerkships.

The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she does not pass USMLE Step 1 on the second attempt.

Clerkship Phase:
The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she has >2 deficiencies (failing 2 or more clerkships with an “F”) and if the deficiencies are not remediated at the time of four months from the end of the 48-week clerkship period.

The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she has >2 Incompletes or Withdrawals and if the Incompletes and/or Withdrawals are not remedied at the time of four months from the end of the 48-week clerkship period.

The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she fails to pass the CPX by November 1 (a prerequisite for USMLE Step 2 CS, a graduation requirement) of year prior to graduation.
**Post-clerkship (Elective) Phase:**
The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if not making adequate academic progress to achieve the Doctor of Medicine degree within the six-year limit set from matriculation.

The student is declared “not in good academic standing” if he/she receives two or more unsatisfactory elective evaluations.

**Endnotes:**
5. “Praise/Concern” cards are modeled after the Praise/Early Concern Note (American Board of Internal Medicine, 1996, Project Professionalism, pg 25-26) designed for residents and fellows. Modifications were made by the University of Virginia Office for Medical Education to make the card suitable for undergraduate medical students and for easy access via the web.
6. Academic probation is a specified period in which the student remains enrolled and whose academic progress is closely monitored with periodic required reviews by appointed faculty. If deficiencies are not rectified according to the remediation plan set by the ASAC within the specified period of time, the student is subject to dismissal from the University.

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* Students graduating in 2016 are exempt from the requirement to pass USMLE Step 2 CS for graduation.*