

**UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
MEDICAL CENTER
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE**

**Student Evaluation Committee
Guidelines**

2017 - 2018 Academic Year

Class of 2021

These guidelines do not constitute a contract, either expressed or implied, with the University of Nebraska College of Medicine (COM) and the University reserves the right at any time to change, delete or add to any of the provisions at its sole discretion. Furthermore, the provisions of this document are designed by the University to serve as guidelines rather than absolute rules, and exceptions may be made on the basis of particular circumstances.

CHARGE, STRUCTURE AND ACTION OF THE STUDENT EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Student Evaluation Committee (SEC), a standing committee of the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Medicine, has the responsibility of determining whether students are making satisfactory progress in the medical curriculum. The College of Medicine has a shared responsibility with each individual student to produce excellent physicians. To that end, the College of Medicine is committed to helping students achieve the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to be successful physicians.

The criteria set forth in this document are guidelines for determining a student's fitness to earn the M.D. degree. Each student case reviewed by the SEC will be considered on its own individual merits.

Role: The primary responsibility of the SEC is the evaluation of student academic performance, which includes, but is not limited to cognitive, professional, attitudinal, and skill acquisition and performance. The SEC is charged with the responsibility to consider a student's progress and assess fitness for continuation in the College of Medicine curriculum. Secondary responsibilities include providing annual student performance feedback to the Admissions, Clerkship and Curriculum Committees as well as reviewing a candidate's fitness for degrees and honors programs upon graduation.

Composition: The Student Evaluation Committee consists of the committee chair and at least 4 representative faculty members along with at least one student member from the M3 and/or M4 class. One or more representatives from the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs (OASA) will be invited to attend meetings for consultative and recording purposes and will be non-voting members. Additionally, phase, block and clerkship directors, the Assistant Dean for Medical Education, and the Director of the Student Counseling Center may be invited to attend meetings for consultative purposes and will be non-voting members. A quorum for voting purposes will be at the discretion of the committee chair.

Considerations: In evaluating student performance and progress, the SEC reviews a student's cumulative academic record. The SEC's considerations include, but are not limited to, difficulties with fund of knowledge, the ability to organize and logically present information, test-taking skills, understanding and judgment, clinical skills, problem solving, and professional behavior.

While reviewing a student's professional or academic difficulty, the SEC may seek clarification about the student's personal and psychological adjustment. To obtain appropriate information the SEC may conduct a separate investigation, in coordination with the OASA, of circumstances leading to a student's difficulty.

Objectives: The SEC's objective is to identify students with 'at risk' performance as early as possible in an academic period and assist those students to achieve success. Some of the mechanisms used to achieve these objectives may include meeting with the Director of the Student Counseling Center, the OASA. Assistance may include, but is not limited to, tutoring, enrollment in the Academic Success Program, or formal counseling.

Reporting Procedure: The SEC will meet at intervals necessary to evaluate student progress. All actions (academic probation, termination) of the SEC will be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs and the Dean of the College of Medicine for review.

Student Responsibility: Students selected for admission are expected to take responsibility for successfully fulfilling the COM Educational Program objectives. Students who experience personal health or psychosocial problems that may interfere with academic or clinical performance are personally responsible for notifying the OASA and/or other appropriate College officials. Ultimately the goal of this reporting is to facilitate timely and appropriate assistance. Students who experience academic or professional difficulty must comply with SEC directives or risk termination from the M.D. program.

GUIDELINES

GRADES:

- Phase 1: the grading system is as follows: Pass (P), Fail (F), or Incomplete. Grade assignments during Phase 1 are completed through collaboration between the block director and grading committee.
- Phases 2 and 3: the grading system is as follows: Honors (H), High Pass (HP), Pass (P), Fail (F), or Incomplete. The clerkship or elective directors complete grade assignments during Phases 2 and 3.

INCOMPLETE:

- Phase 1: Block requirements that have not been satisfactorily completed by the end of the block, but in which a block director has deemed satisfactory progress has been achieved, may be reported as Incomplete (I). A grade of Incomplete cannot be used as a method of remediation for a failing performance in a block. A block issuing a grade of Incomplete will indicate, in writing, with a copy to the student and to the SEC, how the Incomplete is to be removed. The block director and student must enact a plan that can be completed by the end of Phase 1. All Incompletes must be remediated by the end of the subsequent semester of Phase 1. Failure to resolve an Incomplete will result in the grade of Incomplete being converted to Fail. Block directors may petition the SEC to make individual exceptions to this rule.

- Phases 2 and 3: Clerkship or elective requirements that have not been satisfactorily completed at the end of the clerkship/elective, but in which the clerkship/elective director has deemed satisfactory progress has been achieved, may be reported as Incomplete (I). A grade of Incomplete cannot be used as a method of remediation of a failing performance in a clerkship/elective. A clerkship/elective issuing a grade of Incomplete will indicate, in writing, with a copy to the student and to the SEC, how the Incomplete is to be removed. The clerkship/elective director and student must enact a plan that can be completed by the end of the subsequent semester of Phase 2 or 3. Failure to remove the Incomplete will result in the grade of Incomplete being converted to Fail. Students will not be allowed to graduate with an Incomplete.
- Incompletes (I) are not the same as dropping a course. Please refer to the COM drop/add policy for clarification.

FAILING GRADE REPORTING PROCESS:

- Phase 1: The grading committee, or the non-voting SEC member sitting on the grading committee, will provide the SEC with a written description of the decision-making process used to assign a grade of Fail. The description should include information given to students during the course of the block, examination and grading policies, and any additional information used in the decision-making of final grade assignment.
- Phases 2 and 3: The clerkship/elective director will provide the SEC with a written description of the decision-making process used to assign a grade of Fail. The description should include information given to students during the course of the elective/clerkship, examination and grading policies, and any additional information used in the decision-making of final grade assignment.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS:

Each student will demonstrate, and be assessed on, professionalism behaviors and skills. Professionalism expectations include, but are not limited to, attendance at regularly scheduled instruction, relating well to patients, establishing sensitive and professional relationships, and responding to criticism with appropriate behavior modification. Additional expectations include effective interprofessional interactions with faculty, peers, and other members of the health care team. Students will also demonstrate, and be assessed on, honesty, courtesy, and integrity in all aspects of interaction with patients and staff, including the responsible use of social media. As integral member of a medical team, students are expected to be punctual and dependable, receptive to instruction by faculty and staff, all while exhibiting grooming, dress and hygiene commensurate with these responsibilities. Students will demonstrate, and be assessed on, medical ethics and private health information, confidentiality knowledge, and behaviors expected of a health care professional.

HEALTH INSURANCE and PORTABILITY and ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (HIPAA) and PATIENT CONFIDENTIALITY:

All students must follow HIPAA when participating in clinical activities. The Privacy Rule protects individually identifiable health information, called PHI, held or transmitted by a covered entity or its business associate, in any form, whether electronic, paper, or verbal. The United States Government takes compliance seriously and an offense may lead to fines and prison. Compliance violations may range from fines to imprisonment (HIPAA, 1996). It is incumbent on the student to understand and follow HIPAA. Ignorance of the law is not an excuse for non-compliance in the eyes of the United States Government. Students are not exempt from these potential punishments. If a HIPAA violation is felt to have occurred the SEC will investigate, however, there may be a separate and parallel investigation completed at any HIPAA covered clinical entity. The process described below only reflects the policies and procedures of the College of Medicine.

Maintaining patient confidentiality is of critical importance for medical students and physicians alike. Medical students are privileged to learn information that patients share only with healthcare professionals. In turn, keeping this important medical information confidential is a key component of medical professionalism for medical students to learn.

Ensuring patient confidentiality, at times, may appear to conflict with other activities important to the delivery of patient care and other important American laws and values such as academic freedom, and freedom of speech. When these values clash, it may give rise to difficult and complex ethical issues. In confronting these issues students are expected to be proactive, seeking assistance as they would for any other academic or patient care issue. Many resources are available through the medical school including academic advisors, faculty, house staff, and the office of student affairs to name a few.

When concerns of a breach of HIPAA/patient confidentiality arises, the medical school, through the OASA, will initiate a process to assess the validity of the claims. The matter will also be forwarded to the University Compliance Office for a separate and parallel investigation. If no violation of patient confidentiality is found by the OASA, no further action will be taken. If patient confidentiality has been violated, the OASA may elect to refer the case to the SEC. In making this determination the OASA may take into consideration the significance of the confidentiality breach and other relevant information. The focus of this process is to create an educational experience to help the student remediate.

If the case is referred to the SEC, the committee (or a smaller subcommittee which would subsequently report back to the committee at large) will determine if patient confidentiality has been violated and the significance of the confidentiality breach. Important in the deliberations will be if any private health information

was shared inappropriately, with whom it was shared, and the manner in which it was shared. Based on all the facts available to include the student interview, the committee may recommend remediation and/or probation, or termination.

NOTICE OF CONCERN:

A student whose academic performance or professional behavior is below expectations, will be notified by the OASA. Academic issues may include, but are not limited to, a poor or failing performance on a single examination and/or a poor or failing performance in a block, clerkship, or elective.

Disciplinary/citizenship issues indicating a deficit in professional behavior would include those items discussed in the professional behavior section of the SEC guidelines, HIPAA violations, and any additional concerns noted on a clinical evaluation. Students receiving a notification will be required to discuss any difficulties with the OASA. This initial process will not become part of a student's permanent academic record. Students may also be referred by the OASA to the SEC for further evaluation, which could result in a recommendation for remediation, and/or probation or termination, an action, which would become a part of the student's permanent academic record.

PROBATION:

The SEC may impose Probation in any instance in which academic work and/or professional conduct has been or is unsatisfactory. The performance of students on Probation will be reviewed at the end of the probation period or at the end of the current Phase. Probation may be removed at the discretion of the SEC if improvement in academic and/or professional performance has been demonstrated. Students will not be recommended for graduation while on Probation.

LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS:

USMLE Step 1:

Passage of USMLE Step 1 is a requirement for graduation from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine. All students must take the examination before entering the required clerkship phase (Phase 2) of the curriculum.

First Time Failure: First time failure of the examination will result in Academic Probation and automatic review by the SEC. Possible actions may include remediation of a block, participation in a board review course, or repetition of the academic year. Students will be expected to outline their plan for re-taking USMLE Step 1 with the OASA. A student may be removed from a clerkship. Removal from a clerkship will be dependent upon the student consultation with the OASA and the clerkship. This action may result in a delay of graduation.

Second Time Failure: Second time failure of the examination will result in the student being removed from clinical rotations for a period of up to six months,

and/or placed on a leave of absence. Students in this situation will be strongly urged to enroll in a board review course.

Third Time Failure: Third time failure of the examination will result in termination of enrollment.

Students enrolled in a special program that requires a passing score on USMLE Step 1, as a condition for advancement into that medical curriculum (e.g. oral surgery), must meet the requirements for passing the examination as prescribed by the program.

OSCE (Phase 3 Students):

Passage of the Phase 3 OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examination) is a graduation requirement. Students who fail the Phase 3 OSCE have an opportunity for a make-up examination. Students who fail to pass the make-up Phase 3 OSCE must remediate the failure by a proposed course of study that meets the approval of the SEC.

CONSEQUENCES OF LOW ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:

The SEC considers the following criteria as primary justifications for requesting a student to complete additional activities to demonstrate minimal mastery of block, clerkship, or elective academic requirements or professional standards.

Remediation of One Block/Clerkship/Elective:

- Phase 1: If the grading committee or the block director identifies low academic performance or unprofessional behavior in a block, the student may be required to complete additional activities of remediation prior to a final grade assignment. The grading committee, or the non-voting SEC member sitting on the grading committee, will provide the SEC with a written description of the decision-making process used to identify the low academic performance or unprofessional behavior. The block director, in concert with the grading committee and the OASA will design a program to fulfill the requested process. The program should include any information given to students during the course of the block, examination and grading policies, and any additional information used in the decision-making process. The process will be completed during the break immediately following the involved block's semester. "No Report" will be recorded on the transcript until such a time that successful completion of the block has been accomplished, at which time the "No Report" will be modified to reflect the final grade. More than one "NO Report" in a semester may be grounds for Phase repetition or termination of enrollment. Failure to complete the remediation will result in a grade of Fail.
- Phases 2 and 3: If the clerkship/elective director identifies low academic performance or persistent unprofessional behavior in a clerkship or

elective, the student may be required to complete additional activities prior to a final grade assignment. The clerkship/elective director should be prepared to provide the SEC with a written description of the decision-making process used to identify the low academic performance or persistent unprofessional behavior. The clerkship/elective director, in concert with the OASA, will design the program to fulfill the requested process. The program should include any information given to students during the course of the block, examination and grading policies, and any additional information used in the decision-making of final grade assignment. The remediation will be completed in a timely fashion as determined by the clerkship/elective director and the OASA. "No Report" will be recorded on the transcript until such a time that successful completion of the block has been accomplished, at which time the "No Report" will be modified to reflect the final grade. More than one "NO Report" in a semester may be grounds for Phase repetition or termination of enrollment. Failure to complete the remediation will result in a grade of Fail.

CONSEQUENCES OF A FAILING GRADE PERFORMANCE

The SEC considers the following when determining consequences for a failing grade performance:

- Phase 1: In the case of a Fail in a single block, the block will be remediated/repeated after SEC review and approval. One block repetition per academic year, without repeating a semester, academic year, or Phase 1 may be allowed. Upon receipt of a grade of Fail in a second block in an academic year during Phase 1, the SEC will review the student's overall academic performance for consideration of block, semester, academic year, or Phase 1 repetition or student enrollment termination. A remediation/repetition of a Phase 1, academic year 1 block will be completed during summer break or prior to the Phase 1 year 2 academic year. A remediation/repetition of a Phase 1, academic year 2 block will be completed by the end of Phase 1 but prior to taking USMLE Step 1.
- Phases 2 and 3: In the case of a single grade of Fail in a clerkship or elective, the clerkship or elective must be remediated within one year (Phase 2 students) or six months (Phase 3 students) with departmental and SEC approval. No student will be allowed to graduate with a grade of Fail that has not been successfully remediated.
- A grade of Fail upon repetition is not acceptable. If a grade of Fail is received, student enrollment will be reviewed for possible termination.
- Grades of Honors or High Pass are available for repeated clerkships/electives.

The following are guidelines for students who are required to repeat a block, clerkship, elective, or semester outside of the normal course schedule.

1. The student must re-register for the block, clerkship, elective or semester to be repeated and will be charged tuition at the current graduate rate.
2. The grade for the repeated block will be permanently recorded on the student's transcript along with the original grade for the block, clerkship, or elective.

Repetition Guidelines:

The SEC considers the following for determining the need for repetition:

1. A grade of Fail in Phases 1, 2 or 3 may result in repetition of a block, clerkship, or elective as previously outlined.
2. Specifically for Phase 1, if the SEC recommends semester/academic year repetition, the students will be withdrawn from the current Phase 1 semester/academic year and rejoin the semester/academic year when offered again. For example, if the Fail occurs in the second academic year, a student would have to withdraw from courses and rejoin the following year in academic year two.
3. Evidence of sustained or repeated unprofessional behavior may result in repetition of a semester, clerkship, or elective.
4. Repetition of a semester, clerkship, or elective will require re-enrollment in the repeated semester, clerkship, or elective. All students must earn a grade of Pass in all blocks, clerkships, or electives during the repetition process or they will be subject to enrollment termination.

TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT:

The SEC considers the following as primary justifications for recommending termination of enrollment:

1. Phase 1: Three or more block failures.
2. Failure to obtain a grade of Pass in a remediated block, clerkship or elective.
3. Failure to obtain a grade of Pass in all blocks, clerkships or electives during repetition of an academic period (semester, academic year, or Phases 1, 2, or 3).
4. A third failure on USMLE Step 1.
5. Documentation of a single serious unprofessional behavior event and/or persistent unprofessional behavior.

EXTENDED COURSE OF STUDY:

The normal medical curriculum is to be completed in four years. An extended course of study is not intended as an elected alternative pathway for the medical curriculum. The course of study to complete the M.D. degree is limited to five years. Extension beyond the five-year limit will be permitted only under unusual circumstances. Extension beyond the five-year limit will not be considered for students on Academic Probation. **This does not necessarily apply to dual-degree Programs.**

Students, who are in good standing, but because of family, personal or financial problems, are unable to complete the normal curriculum, may be moved from the regular program to an extended course of study only with prior approval of the Student Evaluation Committee.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

Students may be granted a Leave of Absence (LOA) from medical school. Leaves of Absence are granted for academic, medical or personal reasons by the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

The following guidelines apply to all requests for a Leave of Absence. The student must request the Leave of Absence in writing. The request should describe, in detail, the rationale for requesting the Leave of Absence and should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

Any such Leave of Absence granted shall be solely based upon the merits of the request, and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Students who are considering requesting a Leave of Absence should discuss this request with their academic advisor and with the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs or Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

Requests for a Leave of Absence from students who are not in good standing may be referred to the SEC. This would include any student on Academic Probation or students with failing grades in block examinations, Phase 2 clerkships or Phase 3 electives. If the SEC grants such a Leave of Absence, it may require specific actions to be completed by the student as a condition for return to classes at a later date.

In the case of a medical Leave of Absence, the SEC may require documentation from a physician stating the student's fitness to return to the medical curriculum, before the student is allowed to return.

A student who is the subject of an involuntary dismissal from medical school for any reason, including, but not limited to, academic performance or disciplinary action, is ineligible to invoke the procedures contained in the Leave of Absence policy.

The student is responsible for initiating determination of the financial consequences of taking a Leave of Absence. Financial obligations regarding tuition payment and loan repayment need to be reviewed with the Director of Financial Aid.

If a Leave of Absence is granted, the student will be required to return no later than the beginning of the next academic period, unless a shorter time is specified. It will be up to the discretion of the block, clerkship or clinical elective director to assign a grade of Withdraw Passing (WP) or Withdraw Failing (WF) if the Leave of Absence occurs before the end of a block, clerkship or clinical elective. Extension of a Leave of Absence for longer than one year will require a request, in writing, directed to the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs or Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. Approval will depend upon the strength of the rationale for the request.

Students who have been granted a Leave of Absence are responsible for notifying the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs of their intentions to return to classes on the appointed date no later than two months before the start of classes. If not so notified, the student's place in the class will be forfeited. Re-entry into the College of Medicine would require re-application through the usual admissions process of the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS).

Students who withdraw from the College of Medicine during an official Leave of Absence will be required to approach the college through the regular admissions/application process, i.e., through AMCAS.

Students who withdraw from the College of Medicine in poor academic standing or are dismissed from the College of Medicine by the SEC are not eligible for re-admission to the College of Medicine.

Upon re-enrollment following a Leave of Absence, the student will be subject to all rules and regulations that pertain to the class being joined. In the case of mid-year graduates, i.e., December, the student is considered part of the class of the calendar year in which the student graduates. The rules, regulations and graduation requirements may differ from those for the class into which the student initially matriculated.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE BEFORE THE COMMITTEE:

Any student with academic difficulty manifested by grades of less than Pass, failure of USMLE Step 1, and/or questionable behavior, will be subject to thorough review by the SEC.

The expectation to appear before the full Committee, or subcommittee of the SEC, will be extended to any student whose academic deficiencies are of major proportions. This includes students for whom such actions as termination of enrollment, repetition of an academic year or other major alterations in progress are likely possibilities. In less severe cases, written statements provided by the student or supplied by others to clarify extenuating circumstances may be sufficient for the review process.

All student appearances before the Committee shall be arranged by the Office of Admissions and Students Affairs and are confirmed in writing, or by E-mail, prior to the meeting. Likewise, the presence of an advisor or counselor for the student is permitted if prior arrangements with the Chair of the SEC have been made. The purposes of providing the student access to the Committee are to guarantee that all information required by the Committee is provided and to reassure the student that the Committee's actions will be careful and deliberate.

APPEAL PROCEDURES:

Students recommended for probation, dismissal, or to repeat an academic period by the Student Evaluation Committee for failure to meet academic and/or professional behavior standards, have the right to appeal the decision to an Appeal Board appointed by the Dean of the College of Medicine. An appeal must be made, in writing, within two weeks after receiving notification of the recommendation of the SEC. Pending an appeal, a student may not participate in block classes and/or clerkships.

The Appeal Board shall consist of four members of the faculty from the College of Medicine and one medical student, all with equal voting status. The Board shall not include current members of the SEC or other individuals who might have a conflict of interest.

The members of the Appeal Board shall select one of the members as Chairperson in a manner agreed upon by the members. The Chairperson shall, in all cases, vote as a member of the Board.

If a student requests a personal appearance before the Appeal Board, the request shall be granted. The student requesting an appeal will be given at least ten days' notice about the time and place of the hearing, the membership of the Appeal Board and the procedures to be followed.

An advisor of choice may accompany the student wishing to appear personally before the Appeal Board. The name of the advisor must be provided to the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs at least one week before the hearing. Unless the Chairperson of the Board specifically permits, the role of the advisor shall be limited to assisting the student. In addition, legal counsel may also accompany the student. In this case, the student must provide this information to the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs at least one week in advance of the hearing. The Appeal Board may have the assistance of counsel for the University to advise the Board on procedural and other matters.

The Chairperson of the Appeal Board shall determine the order of the hearing, will direct questioning of the student, if present, and any other witnesses, if present, and ensure that the student and an advisor, if present, and any other individuals appearing before the Appeal Board are treated fairly.

The Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, who is a non-voting member of the Appeal Board, shall act as Secretary to the Board. The secretary shall keep minutes of the Board's proceedings. Although it will not be necessary to provide a verbatim transcript of testimony before the Board, either the student or the Appeal Board may request that the proceedings be audio recorded. Requests by students must be made one week before the meeting. If the Appeal Board requests an audio recording of a meeting, the student shall be notified prior to the meeting. If a request for an audio recording of the meeting is made, the secretary shall arrange for audio recording of the student's testimony and the testimony of any other witnesses and also prepare a digest of the hearing. Deliberations of the Appeal Board will not be audio recorded. The student shall have access to the recording of the testimony and the testimony of any other witnesses that appear before the Board and to the digest.

The student must show by a preponderance of the evidence that the action was improper or unfair. After consideration of all the presented written and/or oral testimony, the Appeal Board shall determine by secret ballot, either to sustain the original recommendation of the SEC or recommend its abrogation or modification. The decision of the Appeal Board, which will be based solely on the results of the investigation and, if a hearing has been held, the evidence presented at the hearing, shall be presented to the Dean of the College of Medicine as a recommendation. The Dean shall make the final decision.

In cases in which a student is reinstated as a result of the Appeal Board recommendation, a program of remediation or repetition to meet the academic and/or professional behavior expectations of the faculty shall be developed by the Student Evaluation Committee. The proposed program may come from a recommendation of the Appeal Board and also may become part of the action recommended by the Dean. Further appeal by the student to the Dean shall be limited to matters of procedure and fairness, and shall not involve merits of the case.

Approved by the Student Evaluation Committee
Date: 1 August 2017