Standards for grading and promotion of MD students – Clerkship (Years 3 and 4)

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Introduction

These Standards serve as an adjunct to the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy and describe the practices of the MD program with regard to determining student grading and promotion in Clerkship (Years 3 and 4) and also apply to students registered in the MD Extended Clerkship. They are complemented by the MD Program’s Academic difficulty procedural guidelines and Student professionalism guidelines.

Standards

1. **Authority of the Board of Examiners:** All decisions related to a MD student’s grading and promotion are ultimately made by the Board of Examiners, a standing committee of the Council of the Faculty of Medicine. To inform these decisions, the Board of Examiners receives recommendations from the Clerkship Director (or designate) and/or and Faculty Lead, Ethics & Professionalism.

2. **Individual assessment marks and course grades:**
   
   a. **Individual assessment marks:** Marks for individual assessments are not subject to any formal approval, but rather serve as the basis for decisions about overall course standing. Individual assessment marks do not appear on transcripts or other documentation provided by the MD Program to external individuals or organizations.

   b. **Provisional (unofficial) course grades:** Course grades communicated through MedSIS or other means constitute an unofficial record; they are reserved exclusively for internal use and do not appear on transcripts or other documentation provided to external individuals or organizations. Provisional course grades are subsequently recommended to the Board of Examiners (see Sections 7 and 8).

   c. **Official course grades:** Upon approval of the Board of Examiners, course grades are loaded into the Repository of Student Information (ROSI), which is the official record and is used by the University to generate official transcripts. MD program course grades are transcripted as “Credit (CR)”, “No Credit (NC)”, “In Progress” (IPR) or “Incomplete” (INC).

3. **Standards of achievement on each type of assessment, other than professionalism:** It is the responsibility of each Clerkship course committee, in consultation with the relevant theme leads as well as the Student Assessment and Standards Committee (SASC), to define satisfactory completion of each type of assessment required during their course, in accordance with guidelines articulated below. (This section does not apply to the assessment of professionalism, which is addressed in the MD Program’s Student professionalism guidelines.)

   Specifically:

   a. **Assessment methods:** Course committees are responsible for establishing the assessment methods to be used in the course. These assessment methods are subject to periodic review by
the Student Assessment and Standards Committee (SASC) and/or Program Evaluation Committee. Changes to assessment methods must be brought to the attention of the Clerkship Director, in accordance with the MD Program’s Guidelines for making curricular changes.

b. Definition of a “clear pass”: For mastery exams and oral exams in all Clerkship courses, this threshold is 70%. For other marked assessments (excluding final clinical evaluations), this threshold is normally 70%, as determined by the course committee. Assessments on which a “clear pass” is achieved will be recorded as “CR” (“Credit”).

c. Definition of a “clear failure”: For every marked assessment in a Clerkship course (excluding final clinical evaluations), 60% is the universal threshold below which a student’s performance is deemed unsatisfactory (a “clear failure”). Assessments on which a “clear failure” is achieved will be recorded as “NC” (“No Credit”).

d. Definition of “borderline performance”: Numerical marks for individual assessments (excluding final clinical evaluations) that fall (i) at or above 60% and below 70% for mastery exams and oral exams or (ii) at or above 60% and below the “clear pass” threshold established by the Clerkship course for other marked assessments are deemed borderline. Borderline assessments will be recorded as “CR” (“Credit”), unless a Focused Learning Plan is assigned, in which case an interim standing of “IPR” (“In Progress”) on the assessment will be recorded.

e. Definition of “satisfactory completion”, “clear fail” and “borderline performance” for final clinical evaluations: An overall assessment of “meets expectations” or above on each final clinical evaluation in a course is required to achieve “satisfactory completion” of the clinical evaluation for that course. An overall assessment below “meets expectations” on any final clinical evaluation in a course is considered a “clear fail”. The overall assessment of final clinical evaluations requires a holistic judgement and does not represent an average of individual assessments. However, an overall assessment of “meets expectations” or above on a final clinical evaluation with one or more individual assessments scored as “unsatisfactory” is considered “borderline performance”. Such borderline assessments will be recorded as “CR” (“Credit”), unless a Focused Learning Plan is assigned, in which case an interim standing of “IPR” (“In Progress”) on the assessment will be recorded. Neither the individual nor overall assessments on final clinical evaluations are translated to a percentage.

f. Definition of an “incomplete” mandatory non-marked learning activity: Course committees are also responsible for identifying any mandatory non-marked learning activities (e.g. required encounters and procedures in the core clinical clerkship courses) that are required for successful completion of the course. Incomplete non-marked learning activities will be recorded as “INC” (“Incomplete”).

g. Definition of successful completion of the Clerkship OSCE: The standard for successful completion of the Clerkship OSCE is determined by the MD Program using a borderline regression method. A student who does not achieve this standard on their initial Clerkship OSCE attempt will be required to successfully complete a reassessment prior to promotion to Year 4 (see section 8.e). The reassessment expectations will be informed by the student’s performance on the initial attempt and will be communicated to the student. If the reassessment of the initial attempt is successful, the student will be assigned credit for the Clerkship OSCE. If the reassessment of the initial attempt is unsuccessful, a grade of No Credit (NC) will be assigned to the initial attempt, and the student may attempt a second and final reassessment. If the second reassessment is successful, the student will
be assigned credit for the second reassessment, with the grade of No Credit (NC) remaining for the initial attempt. If the second reassessment is unsuccessful, dismissal from the program will normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners.

h. Communication to students: Course committees are responsible for articulating the assessment methods and standards of achievement for their course in a course outline provided to students no later than the first day of the course. Any changes to the assessment methods after they have been made known to students must take place in accordance with the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy.

4. Definition and application of a Focused Learning Plan: Borderline performance on an assessment may lead to the assignment of a Focused Learning Plan, which is a short program of additional study, assignments, and/or clinical experience to ensure that the student has met the standards of the course. Course committees are responsible for establishing standards of Focused Learning Plans, informed by and consistent with the standard of achievement for the assessment in question. A Focused Learning Plan is assigned to a student at the discretion of the course director, in consultation with the Clerkship Director. If the student’s deficit is significant, a further assessment (e.g. repeat examination) may be required by the course director and Clerkship Director as part of the Focused Learning Plan to confirm the student’s improvement. If the Focused Learning Plan is successfully completed, the original mark achieved on the assessment will be allowed to stand. In the event that the Focused Learning Plan is not successfully completed, a program of formal remediation will normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners (see Section 8.b below).

5. Professionalism: Satisfactory professionalism competency is a requirement to achieve credit in every course, and assessment of professionalism competency is included in every course. Satisfactory professionalism competency is required to graduate from the program. Assessment of professionalism takes place through competency-based professionalism assessments. Professionalism incidents that require immediate action are addressed through critical incident reports. The MD Program's professionalism standards of achievement and procedures to address unsatisfactory progress with respect to professionalism are described in the Student professionalism guidelines.

6. Standards of achievement in a course as a whole:
   a. Determination of achievement: It is the responsibility of each course committee to define satisfactory completion of their course as a whole. Specifically:
      i. Additional expectations for marked assessments: For each Clerkship rotation, there is a requirement to achieve 60% on each mastery exam and oral exam, as applicable to the specific rotation.
      ii. Clinical evaluations: An overall assessment of “meets expectations” or above on each final clinical evaluation in a course is required to achieve “satisfactory completion” of the clinical evaluation for that course.
      iii. Mandatory non-marked learning activities: By their nature, mandatory non-marked learning activities are required in order to complete the course.
      iv. Professionalism: See Section 5 above.
7. **Definition of provisional course grades**: Provisional course grades differ in some respects from the final grades awarded by the Board of Examiners. Specifically:

   a. **CR (Credit)** is used to denote that all requirements in the course have been met. This is the grade that will be recommended to the Board of Examiners, barring the availability of new information that calls into question the student’s successful performance in the course, as described in Section 8.

   b. **NC (No Credit)** is used to denote that a student has not been successful in completing the course due to any of the reasons in Section 6a. The recommendation to the Board of Examiners will depend on the student’s history of academic difficulty, as described in Section 8. If formal remediation or probation is assigned by the Board of Examiners, an interim notation of NGA will be assigned to the course (see below).

   c. **IPR (In Progress)** is used to denote (i) that a student has been assigned a Focused Learning Plan that is pending completion or (ii) has not completed/submitted certain requirements in the course, as arranged with the course director. Upon successful completion of the Focused Learning Plan or deferred assessments, a provisional MedSIS course grade and final grade recommendation will be determined.

   d. **NGA (No Grade Available)** is used to denote that a student has been assigned formal remediation or probation that is pending completion. If remediation is successfully completed, the student will be assigned credit for the courses requiring remediation, subject to the approval of the Board. If probation is successfully completed, a grade of No Credit (NC) will be assigned to the course attempts requiring probation, regardless of the outcome of the probation on the subsequent attempts; the student will be assigned credit for the subsequent course attempts, subject to the approval of the Board.

8. **Principles governing recommendations to the Board of Examiners**: The Clerkship Director (or designate) and Faculty Lead, Ethics & Professionalism will be guided by the following principles in making their recommendations to the Board of Examiners:

   a. **Successful completion of a course**: A grade of “Credit (CR)” in a course will be recommended to the Board of Examiners if a student:

      i. has achieved 60% on each written mastery exam and oral exam required for the course, AND

      ii. has achieved an overall assessment of “meets expectations” or above on each final clinical evaluation required for the course, AND

      iii. has satisfactorily completed, as determined by the course, any marked assessments required for the course in addition to mastery exams and oral exams, AND

      iv. has performed satisfactorily on any non-marked learning activities in that course, including but not limited to professionalism, logging of clinical experiences and completion of required number of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), in courses where this is relevant, AND

      v. has satisfactorily completed, as established in advance, any Focused Learning Plan assigned at the discretion of the course director in response to borderline performance on an assessment.
b. **Remediation:** A program of formal remediation will normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners if a student:

i. has not achieved at least 60% on each written mastery exam and oral exam required for the course, OR

ii. has not achieved an overall assessment of “meets expectations” or above on each final clinical evaluation required for the course, OR

iii. has not performed satisfactorily on any non-marked learning activities of the course, including but not limited to logging of clinical experiences or completion of required number of Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), in courses where this is relevant, by the time of the Board’s meeting, OR

iv. has not satisfactorily completed, as established in advance, a Focused Learning Plan assigned at the discretion of the course director in response to borderline performance on an assessment.

In cases where a program of formal remediation is recommended to the Board of Examiners, the student should be provided with timely notice of the recommendation, disclosure of the evidence on which the recommendation is based (i.e. the reasons for the recommendation), and an opportunity to provide a response to the Board of Examiners.

If remediation is approved by the Board of Examiners, credit for the course will not be assigned unless and until the remedial program is successfully completed. If the remedial program is successfully completed, the student will be assigned credit for the course, subject to the approval of the Board.

If the remedial program is not successfully completed, failure in the course and probation will normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners. Probation will also normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners in cases where a student has not achieved credit on the first attempt in two or more courses in the same level of the program.

c. **Probation:** Probation will normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners if a student has:

i. not achieved a satisfactory score, as established in advance, on a program of formal remediation previously imposed by the Board of Examiners, OR

ii. not achieved credit on the first attempt in two or more courses (totaling at least 12 weeks in curriculum, or equivalent) in the same level of the program, as confirmed by the Board of Examiners.

Probation normally includes failure of the courses in question and delay in promotion to the next year or level of medical training, and re-registration in the same level of the program and repetition of those courses when they are next offered the following year. At the discretion of the Clerkship Director and/or course director(s), a recommendation may be made for a student to repeat all of the courses in the academic year in question or only the course(s) in which they experienced academic difficulty.

In cases where probation is recommended to the Board of Examiners, the student should be provided with timely notice of the recommendation, disclosure of the evidence on which the recommendation
is based (i.e. the reasons for the recommendation), and an opportunity to provide a response to the Board of Examiners.

If probation is approved by the Board of Examiners, a grade of No Credit (NC) will be assigned to the course attempts requiring probation, regardless of the outcome of the probation on the subsequent attempts. If probation is successfully completed, the student will be assigned credit for the subsequent course attempts, subject to the approval of the Board.

If probation is not successfully completed, failure in the repeated course(s) and dismissal from the program will normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners.

d. **Dismissal**: Dismissal from the program will normally be recommended to the Board of Examiners if a student has not successfully completed probation, as defined above, and/or has:

i. not achieved credit in one or more courses on his/her second attempt (“failed repetition”), as confirmed by the Board of Examiners, OR

ii. been required to re-register in the same level of the program on two separate occasions over the course of the program, as confirmed by the Board of Examiners.

In cases where dismissal from the program is recommended to the Board of Examiners, the student should be provided with timely notice of the recommendation, disclosure of the evidence on which the recommendation is based (i.e. the reasons for the recommendation), and an opportunity to provide a response to the Board of Examiners.

e. **Promotion**: Promotion from Year 3 to Year 4 will be recommended to the Board of Examiners if a student has achieved “Credit” in all Year 3 courses. Recommendations regarding promotion from Year 3 to Year 4 will be made no later than 60 days after the end of the Year 3 academic year. The timing of recommendations for promotion will be informed by applicant timelines for the first iteration of the residency match process. Students who have not been promoted from Year 3 to Year 4 may not be allowed to enrol in or complete Year 4 course or program requirements.

f. **Graduation**: Graduation at the next Convocation of the MD program will be recommended to the Board of Examiners if a student has been deemed to have successfully achieved credit for every program course and requirement, including the specified amount of approved and assessed elective time. Graduation from the MD Program also requires successful completion of the Clerkship OSCE, in accordance with the standard for successful completion determined by the Program.

9. **Deviations from normal practice**: Where the word “normally” is used in relation to recommendations to the Board of Examiners, the Clerkship Director, individual course directors, and Faculty Lead, Ethics & Professionalism may choose to deviate from the recommendation that is indicated in these Standards. In such cases, a rationale must be provided to the Board of Examiners for the deviation, and the Board of Examiners will take both the recommendation and the rationale under consideration.

10. **Appeals**: Students may appeal to decisions made by the Board of Examiners to the Appeals Committee, which is a standing committee of the Council of the Faculty of Medicine.