

**JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**  
**POLICY FOR THE**  
**ASSESSMENT OF MEDICAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

December 15, 2023

**A. STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

The John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) has the responsibility, as bestowed on it by the State of Hawai'i, the University of Hawai'i, the profession of medicine, and the community (society), to prepare students enrolled in JABSOM to become competent, caring physicians who shall exhibit and maintain high standards of professional and personal conduct. To accomplish this goal, students must make satisfactory academic progress in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which includes the behaviors of a medical professional, as judged by the faculty members of JABSOM. Student progress is monitored by the Evaluation, Remediation and Review Committee (ERRC), which may direct remediation for less than satisfactory performance, including referral to the Student Standing and Promotion Committee (SSPC). The status of the student in the curriculum, when the student is not meeting performance review and/or remediation expectations, is determined by the SSPC.

**B. STANDARDS FOR QUALIFICATION FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MEDICINE (GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS)**

In conferring the MD degree on a student, the faculty members assure that the student has demonstrated academic and professional competency in the skills of a physician, and possesses the intellectual and personal qualities of a competent physician. This is assured by satisfactory student performance with passing grades in all required elements of the curriculum including demonstration of consistent professional behavior and the ability to become licensed as a physician (that is, by successful passage of United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 1 and Step 2 examinations).

**C. STANDARDS FOR PROGRESS IN THE CURRICULUM (PROMOTION)**

In the pre-clerkship curriculum, a student may progress through the curriculum only after passing the courses in the preceding academic unit. A student may progress to the next course while awaiting finalization of the grade for the previous course, but may not complete the current course(s) if the grade for the preceding course was determined to be No Credit (NC).

Progression to clerkships requires a passing score on the USMLE Step 1 examination, in addition to successful completion of preceding courses. USMLE Step 1 must be taken prior to the start of Transition to Clerkship. If the student wishes to delay the taking of Step 1 beyond this time, the student must take off the entire next semester. In the instance where the USMLE Step 1 has been taken but the score is not available, a student may begin a clerkship; if a student already enrolled in a clerkship receives a failing grade for the USMLE Step 1 examination, s/he must take off the entire semester and must have a passing score on Step 1 before reentering the curriculum.

If a student receives a failing score on the USMLE Step 2 examination, the student may be allowed to complete the clerkship or elective in consultation with the clerkship director and Office of Student Affairs (OSA). The student may reenter the curriculum after obtaining a passing score on Step 2.

Each of the third-year clerkships must be successfully completed with a grade of Credit (CR), High Pass (HP), or Honors (H) prior to beginning senior (4<sup>th</sup> year) courses.

## **D. EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

Grades of No Credit and Incomplete are defined as unsatisfactory performance. All completed evaluations, including the narrative summary, will be sent to the OSA within 6 weeks of course/clerkship completion for review and placed in the student's academic file.

### **1. Pre-Clerkship Courses**

Student performance will be assessed in each course by the course director who, after collecting and reviewing student performance (including professionalism, faculty evaluations, and examinations for that course), will assign a grade. The grades for required or elective courses in years one and two of the curriculum that may be assigned are Credit (CR), No Credit (NC), or Incomplete (I).

A grade of Credit (CR) is assigned when performance on all required student assessments is satisfactory or a retake exam without remediation (following an initial exam failure) is granted and passed by the student within the time allotted per individual course guidelines. Retake exams are given in the same format as the original exam and are offered automatically with the following exceptions: failure due to unprofessional behavior, failure of two or more exams in the current course, or failure of exams in two or more prior courses. When a retake exam is not offered automatically, the Office of Medical Education (OME) Associate Director will decide if a retake exam will be offered. If a retake is not offered, the student may appeal this decision following the Procedures for Resolution of an Academic Grievance in the Academic Appeals Committee policy.

Exam reviews will not be conducted prior to the retake of examinations.

A grade of No Credit (NC) is assigned when performance on initial assessments was not satisfactory and no retake is offered, or performance on a retake exam granted by course directors is unsatisfactory. A grade of Incomplete (I) is assigned when a required element of the course (e.g., assignments) has not been satisfactorily completed within 6 weeks of the end of the course, and in the judgment of the course director, the delinquency was due to reasons beyond the control of the student, and not due to carelessness or procrastination. When the evaluation leading to Incomplete (I) is completed, either a grade of Credit (C) or No Credit (NC) will be entered into the transcript for that course. The notation of Incomplete (I) will be removed from the transcript if a grade of Credit (C) is awarded.

### **2. Third-Year Clerkships**

Students must receive a passing grade in each third-year clerkship before progressing to the senior academic year. The Clerkship Director of each of the required core clerkships (Family Medicine and Community Health, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Surgery) is responsible for evaluating student performance in the domains of knowledge, skills, and professionalism, in addition to submitting a narrative description of the student's performance in these domains. The grades which may be assigned in third-year clerkship courses are Honors (H), High Pass (HP), Credit (CR), No Credit (NC), or Incomplete (I).

A student who has not fulfilled clerkship requirements for the determination of a passing grade will be reviewed by each clerkship director. If it is expected that the student may

successfully complete the clerkship requirements in a timely manner as defined by each clerkship, then the student will be allowed to continue in the curriculum in the subsequent clerkship. Students who fail a single clerkship (shelf) exam or OSCE will automatically be offered one retake exam in the same format as the original, with the following exceptions: failure due to unprofessional behavior, failure of exams in two or more pre-clerkship courses, or failure of one prior clerkship exam (shelf or OSCE). A failed shelf exam must be passed before another shelf exam is taken.

Students who fail the retake (2<sup>nd</sup> attempt) of a single shelf exam must receive a minimum of 4-weeks of clinical remediation prior to a second retake (3<sup>rd</sup> attempt). The type of remediation, inpatient and/or outpatient, is at the discretion of the clerkship. When a retake exam is not offered automatically, the Office of Medical Education (OME) Associate Director will decide if a retake exam will be offered. If a retake is not offered, the student may appeal this decision following the Procedures for Resolution of An Academic Grievance in the Academic Appeals Committee policy.

If timely completion of a retake examination is not possible due to remediation or if the student requires a leave of absence, an Incomplete (I) will be assigned, and the student would not be permitted to continue in the curriculum. A grade of High Pass (HP) or Honors (H) will not be given to a student who has previously failed a clerkship exam and passed on a retake, or who had been given an Incomplete (I) grade for academic or professionalism concerns in that clerkship. When the remediation period is complete, a grade of Credit (C) or No Credit (NC) will be submitted. The notation of Incomplete (I) will be removed from the transcript if a grade of Credit (C) is awarded.

If a grade of No Credit (NC) is given, the student must pass this clerkship before continuing in the curriculum.

### 3. Senior (4<sup>th</sup> Year) Academic Courses

Students must receive a passing grade in each fourth-year clerkship/elective to be eligible for graduation. The grades which may be assigned in fourth-year clerkship elective courses are Credit (C), No Credit (NC), or Incomplete (I). The two required fourth-year clerkships (Emergency Medicine, Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine) may also assign grades of Honors (H) or High Pass (HP). The Clerkship Director of each of the required fourth-year clerkships is responsible for monitoring/evaluating student performance in the domains of knowledge, skills, and professionalism in addition to submitting a narrative description of the student's performance in these domains. Retake of examinations, and/or remediation for required fourth-year clerkships/electives follow third-year guidelines.

If a grade of No Credit (NC) is given, the student must pass this clerkship/elective before continuing in the curriculum.

### 4. Graduation Requirements

Students must achieve a satisfactory evaluation in all courses, electives, and required activities including, but not limited to the following: OSCEs, required autopsies, and learning community activities. Additionally, students must demonstrate professionalism, complete the required weeks of academic credit and pass USMLE examinations to meet the requirements for graduation. Failure to meet graduation requirements in a timely manner, or the receipt of any unsatisfactory grade in any senior course, will result in appearing before the Student Standing and Promotion Committee, with the possibility of a decision for dismissal.

## 5. USMLE Steps 1 and 2

As the only path to licensure in the United States, JABSOM students must pass United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) Step 1 and Step 2 examinations to qualify for the MD degree. A student will appear before the SSPC after any USMLE Step examination failure.

## 6. Unprofessional/Academic Misconduct

Students at JABSOM are expected to behave in an ethical and professionally responsible manner at all times. A student may be referred to the SSPC for unprofessional conduct or academic misconduct. Unprofessional conduct includes but is not limited to unprofessional student-patient, student-peer, student-instructor, or student-staff interaction; illegal activities; failure to comply with administrative directives; and any behavior judged to be unbecoming of or inconsistent with being a medical professional. This includes off-campus activities which violate the standards of conduct outlined in the University of Hawaii Systemwide Student Conduct Code ([http://www.studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct\\_code/](http://www.studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/)).

Academic and professional honesty are required of all faculty and students in JABSOM. Academic misconduct such as cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Referral to the SSPC for any of these situations may occur even in the absence of a failing grade.

A student who is absent from any academic period for more than 2 days of required academic activities without makeup or approval from the course directors and Office of Student Affairs will not receive credit for the course and will be referred to SSPC.

A student who fails to attend courses for which they are registered (without approval of, or being granted Leave of Absence by the OSA) will be referred to the SSPC.

## 7. Appeals Process

Students have the right to appeal a grade or evaluation no later than seven (7) calendar days following the end of the course or of receipt of evaluation, whichever is later. (See: Academic Appeals Policy, Procedure for Resolution of an Academic Grievance.)

Students have the right to appeal a SSPC decision no later than seven (7) days following notification of the decision (See: Academic Appeals Policy, Appeal of SSPC Decision.)

## 8. Medical Student Performance Evaluation

The Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE), also referred to as the Dean's Letter, summarizes a student's performance during medical school and is transmitted to residency programs during the MS4 year. The MSPE is used by residency programs to review applicants for interviews and potential selection. Course, Clerkship, and Elective performance summative statements are placed verbatim on the course evaluation section of the MSPE, including mention of exam failures. Additionally, OSA must provide the following information in a separate section, the Academic History section, for each medical student as required by the Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC):

- a. Dates of Matriculation and expected graduation,
- b. Any extensions, leave(s) of absence, gap(s), or break(s) in the student's educational program. This might include personal leave, academic leave due to course or USMLE Step 1 or 2 failure, medical leave, or a research year.
- c. Requirements to repeat or otherwise, remediate any coursework. In the MS1-MS2 years, failure and successful retake of examinations in two or more courses are annotated on the MSPE. In the MS3-MS4 years, failure and successful retake of two or more shelf examinations in two different clerkships or two retakes in the same clerkship are annotated in the MSPE. These annotations in the MS1-MS4 year are in addition to verbatim comments in the course evaluation section. USMLE Step 1 or Step 2 failures are annotated.)
- d. Any adverse action(s) by the medical school or its parent institution against the student. Placing a student on Probation by the SSPC would be the most common adverse action that would be reported. Being required to meet with the SSPC is not an adverse action and is not annotated.

#### **E. EVALUATION, REMEDIATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (ERRC)**

The ERRC is responsible for reviewing each student's evaluation at the end of each course; assessing the pattern of performance; directing arrangements for remediation when appropriate, or referring the student to SSPC when a pattern of malperformance has been identified, in either academic or professional competence.

1. The Committee will determine a remedial program, including a timetable, supervising faculty, and a method for re-evaluation. The OSA will ensure that remediation is implemented, and the student and his/her advisor are notified. These remedial requirements will be documented in the student's file. Unsuccessful completion of, or failure to participate in a recommended remedial program may result in the referral of the student to the SSPC.

Minutes of the meeting will be finalized by the Chair, and filed by the Office of Student Affairs.

2. The remediation plan for each student is at the discretion of the ERRC, and the ERRC will decide on an individual basis whether or not examinations will be required for students who must repeat a successfully completed course. If the committee decides that exams are required for a particular student, the scores will be reported to the ERRC, but grades of "pass" or "fail" will not be assigned to the exams. The ERRC will make recommendations moving forward based on all aspects of the student's performance during that unit.

#### **F. STUDENT STANDING AND PROMOTION COMMITTEE (SSPC)**

The SSPC will review the performance of any student who meets the criteria set forth in this Policy for appearance before the SSPC.

The Committee members will be appointed by the Dean in accordance with JABSOM Faculty Bylaws. Four students (one from each medical school class, elected by his/her respective class) shall serve as advisory, non-voting members of the Committee. The Director of the OSA shall provide administrative support to the Committee as needed. A

student brought before the SSPC may petition the Chair to excuse student committee members from attending his/her appearance before the committee. The Committee Chairperson will be responsible for identifying whether any conflict of interest(s) exist between any members of the committee and a particular student brought before the committee and excuse the member if needed. Any faculty members who evaluated the student, or who may have another cause for conflict must disclose the conflict of interest and recuse himself/herself. A student may be accompanied by one support faculty/staff/student of their choosing (excludes family or legal representation).

Decisions of the SSPC will be filed in the appropriate student's Academic File, and minutes of the Committee meetings will be filed in a separate SSPC file in the OSA.

#### 1. Conditions requiring appearance before the SSPC

A student will appear before the SSPC for a decision on his/her standing in JABSOM, which may include dismissal. The SSPC will review the entire academic/professional performance of the student before it. Any of the following requires that a student appear before the SSPC:

- a. failed exams and passed retakes without remediation in two or more courses, clerkships, or two or more failures in the same clerkship,
- b. grade of No Credit (NC),
- c. on referral from the ERRC or the Director of the Office of Student Affairs for any academic malperformance, academic misconduct, unprofessional behavior (may be a trend of concerning behavior or a single egregious event), or any unapproved student absence,
- d. failure of a USMLE step exam or failure to progress for any reason.

#### 2. Actions of the Student Standing and Promotion Committee

The SSPC shall make any one of the following decisions regarding a medical student's progress and standing in the curriculum (including dismissal) after reviewing the record and testimony concerning the student. A decision by the SSPC must receive a simple majority vote of a quorum of members present. The Chair shall not vote except in case of a tie.

- a. Continuation Active Status. This determination will be made by SSPC when no formal change of status is recommended, and may include adjustments in the curriculum, and/or stipulations for continuation in the curriculum.
- b. Academic Probation. The SSPC will impose Academic Probation, as an internal designation, for deficiencies in academic or professional performance which threaten the student's ability to graduate. The imposition of Academic Probation is accompanied by conditions outlined by the SSPC for a specified time period. The Director of the OSA will assure that the student receives the notification, in writing and verbally, of the imposition of probation. The student on Academic Probation is not considered to be in good academic standing, and will not be allowed to complete any out-of-state curricular experience including non-credit electives and research. The student must appear before the SSPC at the end of the probationary period to determine the student's status in the curriculum.

Should a student be placed on Administrative Leave of Absence prior to the end of the probation period, probation will be suspended, and the student will reappear before the SSPC to determine academic status at the end of the leave period.

c. Dismissal.

SSPC may dismiss a student for one or more of the following:

- failure to meet the standards of academic progress and/or professionalism
- failure of remediation
- failure to meet conditions of probation
- three failures of any one or a combination of USMLE exams (Step 1, Step 2), or any failure of a USMLE exam in combination with academic malperformance
- failure to complete the curriculum in seven (7) years, excluding participation in a dual-degree program
- more than five (5) appearances before the SSPC for any reason, except to clear probation
- a pattern of academic malperformance or unprofessional behavior
- failure to sign up for and/or withdraw from appropriate courses in a timely manner
- absence from any academic period for more than two (2) days of required academic activities without makeup or approval from course directors and OSA.

A status of 'Academic Probation' is not necessary prior to the decision to dismiss.

Dismissal will become effective immediately upon receipt of written notification to the student of a dismissal decision. Should a student appeal a dismissal decision, the student will remain in dismissal status until the appeals process has been completed (see 4. Below).

- d. Academic Leave of Absence. Academic Leave of Absence for up to one year may be recommended by the SSPC if the circumstances lead to the conclusion that temporary or personal problems are the reason for deficiencies, and that an Academic Leave of Absence is in the best interest of the student. This category will apply to any student who fails to pass USMLE Step 1 or Step 2. During the Academic Leave of Absence, the student may not participate in any educational activities of JABSOM for credit, and the SSPC may impose specific conditions and time limit for the student to return to active status.
- e. Administrative Leave of Absence. The Director of the Office of Student Affairs will issue an Administrative Leave of Absence for reasons of health or personal hardship. If a period of absence is in excess of one academic year, including previous leaves for any reason, approval of additional leave will be determined by the SSPC.

3. Promotion

Unless specifically proscribed by the decision of the SSPC, students will be automatically advanced and promoted to the next level following successful completion of the current year's curriculum. Formal approval for advancement will be conducted in the fall of the new academic year.

4. Appeal of a decision of the SSPC

If a student wishes to appeal the decision of the SSPC, s/he must submit the grounds for the appeal, in writing, to the Chair of the Academic Appeals Committee (MC), within seven (7) calendar days of being informed of the decision of the SSPC.

The MC is appointed by the Dean in accordance with JABSOM Faculty Bylaws. The MC will follow the policy set forth in the Academic Appeals Policy.

In all cases, an appeal of any academic decision will be heard only on the grounds that the decision of the SSPC was made in an arbitrary and capricious manner.

If the student or the SSPC wishes to appeal the MC decision, either party shall have five (5) calendar days in which to present the appeal to the Dean, and will follow the Academic Appeals Policy.

**G. FINAL AUTHORITY OF THE DEAN OF THE JOHN A. BURNS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

The decision of the Dean concerning appeals is final in all cases. This responsibility may be delegated by the Dean to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

**H. IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS REVISION**

On the effective date, this policy will take effect for all medical students of the John A. Burns School of Medicine.

Accepted by:



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Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, FAAFP  
Interim Dean

December 15, 2023

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Date

Revision approved by the JABSOM Curriculum Committee on 5/12/2023.

Revision approved by the JABSOM Executive Committee on 5/19/2023.

Revision approved by the JABSOM Curriculum Committee on 12/1/2023.

Revision approved by the JABSOM Executive Committee on 12/15/2023.



## APPENDIX

### Procedures

#### General:

1. Students who are referred to the SSPC will be notified of such by the Director of the OSA at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting.
2. The student will be provided written notification which outlines the reason(s) for attendance and will counseled regarding the potential outcomes of the meeting as outlined in this policy.
3. The student will be informed of their right to have someone of their choosing attend the meeting with them given appropriate advanced notice.
4. The student will be advised that student representatives to the SSPC may attend unless the student declines to have them present.
5. The student will be advised as to the meeting process and conduct of the meeting.
6. The student will be advised of the outcome of the meeting by the Director of the OSA and provided a copy of the written decision memo.
7. The student will be advised of the right of appeal and the appeal process should the student desire to take such action.
8. The student will be advised that the only basis for appeal would be based upon the student's belief that the SSPC decision was arrived at in an arbitrary or capricious manner.
9. The student will be advised that any appeal would be made to the AAC and must be submitted to the Chairperson of the AAC in writing within 7 calendar days of receiving the SSPC decision.

#### Procedure For a Case of Academic Misconduct:

Each course director/instructor is responsible for ensuring that all exams are conducted under standardized conditions and that any student conduct, performance, or submitted work that appears to constitute academic misconduct be accurately observed and documented.

#### Informal Process:

The instructor will attempt to discuss the incident with the student(s) involved:

1. If the student admits that an act of academic misconduct was committed, within the context of the course, the instructor may:
  - a. require the student to redo the assignment;
  - b. give the student a failing or reduced grade for the assignment; or
  - c. give a failing or reduced grade for the course.
2. The department chair or Director of the OME shall be notified of the incident and action.

### Formal Process:

If the student contests his/her liability, the instructor may not take action against the student but shall prepare a signed written report. The report should be submitted to the course director who shall forward it to the Department Chair/Director as appropriate and the Director of the OSA and should include the following information when appropriate:

1. the name of the student, course involved, date, name(s) of the proctor(s) and instructor(s), and the nature of the misconduct;
2. exam location, room number, and description of seating arrangement;
3. the location of the student with respect to other student(s), including names;
4. a description of the situation, or behavior observed, including a statement of the facts which support the belief that academic misconduct has been observed; and
5. names of witnesses.

Following the receipt of the report, the Director of the OSA shall, within seven (7) calendar days, notify the student of the allegation(s), by providing him/her with a copy of the report, and shall meet with the student and conduct an informal inquiry, including an investigation of the circumstances pertinent to the allegation and determine whether there are reasonable grounds for the allegation.

A finding by the Director of the OSA that reasonable grounds for the allegation(s) do not exist shall conclude the matter. The Department Chair/Director will be so notified and no further action shall be taken; the written report shall be destroyed and no record of the matter shall be placed in the student's file.

A finding by the Director of the OSA that there are reasonable grounds for the allegation(s) shall require the Director of the OSA to notify the Department Chair/Director and the case will be referred to the SSPC.