UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA
SANFORD SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Requirements for Advancement, Graduation, Dismissal Policy

LCME Standard: 9.6 Setting Standards of Achievement; 9.9 Student Advancement and Appeal Process; 10.3 Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and Their Dissemination
Originating Office: Medical Education
Responsible Executive: Assoc. Dean, Medical Education; Assoc. Dean, Medical Student Affairs
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I. REASON FOR THIS POLICY

The LCME, in Element 9.6, indicates a medical school ensures that faculty members with appropriate knowledge and expertise set standards of achievement in each required learning experience in the medical education program.

Element 9.9 indicates a medical school ensures that the medical education program has a single set of core standards for the advancement and graduation of all medical students across

all locations. A subset of medical students may have academic requirements in addition to the core standards if they are enrolled in a parallel curriculum. A medical school ensures that there is a fair and formal process for taking any action that may affect the status of a medical student, including timely notice of the impending action, disclosure of the evidence on which the action would be based, an opportunity for the medical student to respond, and an opportunity to appeal any adverse decision related to advancement, graduation, or dismissal.

Finally, Element 10.3 indicates the faculty of a medical school establish criteria for student selection and develop and implement effective policies and procedures regarding, and make decisions about, medical student application, selection, admission, assessment, promotion, graduation, and any disciplinary action. The medical school makes available to all interested parties its criteria, standards, policies, and procedures regarding these matters.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Students must complete all requirements for graduation within 6 years of matriculation. Students who do not complete all requirements or reach a point where they will not be able to complete the requirements in the allotted time will be dismissed from the Medical School. Exceptions may be granted based on appeal by a student in good academic standing. Students in good standing in the Physician Scientist Program (MD/PhD) are granted a total of 10 years.

The decisions on advancement of a medical student to the next academic period are made by student affairs leadership based on four guidelines established by the Medical Education Committee:

1 Satisfactory completion of the course work required for the previous academic period as verified by faculty clerkship or course directors.
2. Satisfactory completion of the required exams that include USMLE Step 1, USMLE Step 2, and the Sanford School of Medicine OSCE(s) as verified by the Associate Dean of Medical Student Affairs or their assigned delegate.
3. No pending or active review by the Student Progress and Conduct Committee (SPCC) that may impact the student's advancement as verified by the Chair of the Student Progress and Conduct Committee.
4. The ability to register in a timely manner or be eligible for financial aid, as verified by the medical school financial aid program assistant, and the registration officer for the medical school.

The Doctor of Medicine degree is granted to students who have been recommended by the Student Progress and Conduct Committee as having achieved a satisfactory level of the Medical Student Education Competencies. To graduate, a student must have successfully completed the required four-year curriculum of the SSOM with:

1. A grade of Satisfactory, C or better in all required courses and completed a total of 166 credits.
2. A minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.00 on a 4.00 scale (all deficient and failing grades are included in the calculation of the GPA, but Pass/Fail courses are not.)
3. A passing performance on USMLE Step 1 (must attain a passing score in three or fewer attempts.)
4. A passing performance on USMLE Step 2 (must attain a passing score in three or fewer attempts.)
5. A passing score, as determined by the school-wide OSCE committee, on the school administered OSCE (or appropriate remediation as determined by the Medical Education Committee)

A diploma will not be released until grades are submitted to the registrar for all registered courses and all other requirements are met.
If a student fails to advance or graduate per this policy, the student will be recommended to the Student and Progress Committee for consideration of dismissal.

The fitness of a medical student to be promoted, to continue as a student, and to graduate from the Sanford School of Medicine (SSOM) are faculty responsibilities. The faculty has established the Student Progress and Conduct Committee (SPCC) to review the student's academic performance in the areas of grades, professionalism, ethics or other aspects of performance and to direct and enforce stipulations for student remediation. The SPCC recommends students for graduation, suspension, or dismissal. The faculty has established the following guidelines and rules as the basis of promotion, suspension, dismissal, and graduation.

Scholastic Performance

1. A course is defined as an approved subject under a specific name and number with a specific number of credit hours and for which registration will be allowed.

2. A grade of D, assigned after completion of the regular course, will be considered to be a scholastically deficient grade.

3. A grade of F or U, assigned after completion of the regular course, will be considered a failing grade.

4. All students receiving a failing grade are automatically referred to the SPCC for evaluation.

Students receiving an unsatisfactory or deficient grade are not eligible for promotion to the next Pillar or graduation until the grade is remediated.

No student may receive a grade of "U" in two courses during the first portion of Pillar 1 (Medical Foundations 1 through Blood/Hematopoietic/Lymphoreticular Systems) or in two courses during the second portion of Pillar 1 (Cardiovascular through Endocrine), because time constraints then preclude the possibility of successful remediation. Any student meeting this criterion will automatically be referred to the SSOM SPCC.

A deficient grade obtained during a clinical rotation (Pillar 2 or 3) may require repeating the rotation, preferably at a different clinical site. A student receiving two grades of D or one grade of F in the same Pillar will be referred to the SPCC for evaluation and may be subject to dismissal.

III. DEFINITIONS

IV. PROCEDURES

Appeal of an Assigned Grade in a Course or Clerkship:
*Revised 04/2023, 03/2024, by Office of Medical Education

This appeals process outlines how the Office of Medical Education handles appeals. This process follows the South Dakota Board of Regents Policy (see Policy 2.9.1) and the Medical Student Affairs Handbook but centralizes the process so that appeals are submitted within the designated timeframe and forwarded to the proper individual to assist students with this process and avoid conflicting information from multiple parties. Within this policy, the term "grade" refers to both the letter grade and narrative assessment. Students must submit a written appeal using the standard Appeal Form available in One45/Acuity.
Appeals made via email, or any other form of communication will not be accepted.

The appeal form will be made available in One45/Acuity following the grade release and must be submitted within fourteen calendar days. Specific appeal window dates will be communicated to the students as needed.

The Office of Medical Education will ensure all information required on the appeal form has been completed, and they will forward the appeal to the appropriate individual for a decision. If there is a potential conflict of interest arising from the student working with a clerkship director or campus dean as their preceptor, the appeal will be forwarded to another advisor in the respective discipline or another campus dean. Clerkship directors and campus deans or other designees will review and discuss all grade appeals and make a decision regarding the requested change. After a grade appeal decision has been made, the student will be notified in writing of a decision regarding their appeal and appropriate grade change documentation will be completed by the Office of Medical Education.

Appeal Process

Pillar 1

Pillar 1 follows SDBOR Policy 2.9.1 regarding academic grievances and appeals. The official form for academic appeals can be provided by the Pillar 1 Director or the Biomedical and Translational Sciences Dean's office.

Pillars 2 and 3

Step 1

- Clerkship director if the student is appealing a clerkship/discipline-specific grade.
- Campus dean if the student is appealing a Pillar 2 clinical competency grade.
- The appropriate course director for Clinical Ethics, Radiology, Friday Academy, or Cultural Immersion.
- If a student's appeal for a competency grade is deemed by the campus dean to involve the component of the grade derived from the OSCE, Palliative Care, or HQIP, the following procedures should be followed:
    - The campus dean should contact the individual charged with that graded component via email with the specific concern. These individuals may include the OSCE director, Palliative Care instructor, or Pillar 2 director.
    - The appropriate individual would then investigate the concern by reviewing the applicable materials from which the grade or comment was derived. This step may include others involved in the grade assignment or comments.
    - This individual would report back to the campus dean with the findings regarding the merits of the appeal.
    - The campus dean would then be invited to also review the materials.
- It is recommended the appeal decisions be made within 4 weeks of when the appeal was received, however, due to extenuating circumstances, an extended time may be needed.

Step 2: (appeal must be completed within 14 days of 1st appeal decision)

- If there is an appeal of the original appeal, the appropriate Pillar Director will form an ad-hoc committee of 3 clerkship directors not involved in the original appeal to review the appeal. This committee should convene within two weeks of the notification from OME.
- Campus dean from another campus for clinical competency grades.
- It is recommended the appeal decisions be made within 4 weeks of when the appeal was received/reviewed, however, due to extenuating circumstances, an extended time may be needed.

Step 3: (appeal must be completed within 14 days of 2nd appeal decision)

- Appeal to Senior Academic Dean
- It is recommended the appeal decisions be made within 4 weeks of when the appeal was received, however, due to extenuating circumstances, an extended time may be needed.

Pillar 3 Graduating Class
Any appeals requested after April for the May graduating class may cause a delay in transcript availability that could impact a student's residency start date.

Appeal of the SPCC Stipulations for Remediation:
Appeal to the VP/Dean of the SSOM

In the event that the student feels they have a legitimate grievance concerning the stipulations for remediation of the Student Progress and Conduct Committee, they may submit in writing a full statement, with documentation (including statement of grievance, prior actions and recommendations, action the student is seeking and other pertinent information) of the nature of the grievance to the Dean/VP of the School of Medicine within fourteen calendar days of receipt of such a recommendation from the SPCC. Examples of legitimate grievances include, but are not limited to, alleged failure of the SPCC to follow the procedures set forth in the Faculty Handbook, recommendation(s) not based on evidence, or the severity of the sanctions recommended. The Dean/VP may seek the advice and assistance of any faculty and/or administration in attempting to evaluate and resolve the grievance. The Dean/VP shall use their best effort to communicate to the student, in writing, a decision pertaining to the grievance within fourteen calendar days of receipt of the grievance.

Appeal of a Recommendation by the SPCC Suspension or Dismissal:
Appeal to the VP/Dean of the SSOM

In the event that the student feels they have a legitimate grievance concerning the recommendation of the Student Progress and Conduct Committee that the student be suspended or dismissed from the Sanford School of Medicine, they may submit in writing a full statement, with documentation (including statement of grievance, prior actions and recommendations, actions the student is seeking and other pertinent information) of the nature of the grievance to the Dean/VP of the Sanford School of Medicine within fourteen (14) calendar days of the receipt of such a recommendation from the SPCC. The Dean/VP may accept or reject the appeal.

V. RELATED DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND TOOLS

This policy is also posted in the Medical Student Affairs Handbook.