

# Student Assessment, Grading, and Grade Appeals

Assessments are measurements of student performance conducted using instruments such as written exams or observational checklists. Evaluations are comprehensive summaries of student performance measured against a performance standard.

A wide variety of assessment types are used to measure students' academic and professional performance in relation to the Emory University School of Medicine Student Physician Activities (SPAs) and are incorporated into grades for courses and clerkships. In addition to written exams and academic papers, instructor observational assessments are often used during small group work, during patient care on clerkships, for elective courses, and in research labs. Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs) are a regular and vital element of student assessment.

## Grading Scales

### S/U

- "S" indicates satisfactory work; Pass
- "U" indicates unsatisfactory work
- A grade of "U" carries no academic credit. A student cannot be promoted to the next phase of the curriculum with a grade of "U" on their transcript. Any student who receives a "U" will, at a minimum, have to successfully remediate the course, and may be susceptible to additional actions such as probation or dismissal, as determined by the Progress and Promotions Committee.

### A -- F

The letter grades "A" through "F" indicate the quality of a student's performance as measured by various assessment instruments and processes: modifiers of 'plus' or 'minus' with letter grades are also used. Letter grades are derived from a comprehensive, summative evaluation of a student's achievement, both academically and professionally. Grades are assigned based on published criteria.

- "A" indicates exceptional performance
- "B" indicates good performance with no identified weaknesses
- "C" indicates acceptable performance with improvement needed
- "D" indicates unacceptable performance on at least one criterion and no academic credit is awarded
- "F" indicates unacceptable performance on multiple criteria and no academic credit is awarded
- A student cannot be promoted to the next phase of the curriculum with a grade of "D" or "F" on their transcript. Any student who receives a "D" or "F" will, at a minimum, have to repeat the clerkship, and the student will be susceptible to additional actions such as probation or dismissal, as determined by the Progress and Promotions Committee. Any repetition of

coursework must be completed as soon as possible after the grade of “D” or “F” has been submitted.

## **IP and I**

- “IP” indicates ‘in-progress’ course work. Final transcripts cannot carry grades of “IP.”
- “I” indicates incomplete course work.
- The grade of “I” will be assigned to students who have been unable to complete the requirements of the course/clerkship due to absences approved by the dean’s office. The grade of “I” is appropriate only when enough work has been completed at an acceptable level of performance such that the student can complete the remaining work without repeating the entire course/ clerkship.
- If a student receives a grade of “I,” the remaining work must be completed within a reasonable time, as determined by Associate Dean for Clinical Education, or the grade of “I” will automatically convert to an “F.” The grade of “I” cannot be assigned for unsatisfactory work. The grade of “I” is to be viewed as a non-prejudicial entry on the student’s record.

## **W**

- “W” indicates withdrawal from course or clerkship without penalty “WF” indicates withdrawal failing
- “WU” indicates unsatisfactory withdrawal

## **Grading in the Foundations Phase**

In the Foundations Phase of the curriculum, grades “S” or “U” are assigned to students for each course. Students will receive a grade of Satisfactory in any course during the Foundations phase if they meet either of the following criteria: A student’s total score for the course is greater than 2 standard deviation units below the mean (i.e.  $z > -2.0$ ) OR the student’s total percentage score is greater than 68.2%. When appropriate, students may also be assigned the grades of “I,” “IP,” “W,” “WF,” or “WU.”

Students may not progress to the Application Phase of the curriculum without receiving a final grade of “S” in all Foundations courses. Although Anatomy is not a separately graded course, students must reach a satisfactory standard of performance in the portion of each end-of-course-exam devoted to Anatomy.

## **Grading in the Application, Discovery, and Translation Phases**

In the Application, Discovery, and required clerkship portion of the Translation Phases of the curriculum, grades “A+” through “F” are assigned to students. For electives taken during in the Translation Phase, grades of “S” or “U” are assigned. When appropriate, students may also be assigned the grades of “I,” “IP,” “W,” “WF,” or “WU.”

If a student fails any aspect of a clerkship that is required to pass the clerkship, the student will receive a failing grade (“D” or “F”) for the clerkship and be required to

repeat the clerkship in its entirety. The student will be re-enrolled in the clerkship and a second grade will be issued after repetition of the clerkship; however, the “D” or “F” grade earned after completing the clerkship for the first time will remain on the student’s official transcript.

Students must successfully complete all Application clerkships before proceeding to the next phases of the curriculum.

## **Completion of Clerkship Requirements**

All clerkship requirements, as defined by the individual clerkship directors, must be completed by 5pm on the final day of the rotation, including but not limited to patient logs in OASIS and direct observation forms. Students who fail to complete clerkship requirements on time will be subjected to penalties outlined by the clerkship directors and may result in a grade deduction or a failing grade for the clerkship.

## **Conflicts of Interest in Grading**

Residents and faculty members with a conflict of interest (e.g., professional, personal, or familial relationship to a student, including providing health services or psychiatric/psychological counseling) should not participate in assessing a student in which a conflict exists. The EUSOM Separation of Roles outlines this in further detail.

On the occasion when a student’s Small Group Advisor is also a clerkship director, the department Vice Chair for Education (or designee) will be responsible for assigning grades for those students in which a conflict exists.

## **Grade Appeals**

Students are encouraged to discuss their final grades with the course, course, clerkship, or elective director. Although grades are assigned as an accurate and fair representation of a student’s work, students have the right to appeal a grade and to receive an independent review of the grading criteria and their performance.

If a student wishes to appeal a final grade, this should be presented in writing to the Executive Associate Dean of Medical Education and Student Affairs **within 30 days** of receiving the grade. The appeal may be based on the process that led to the grade and/or questions of factual content used in the evaluation process. The Executive Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs or his/her designee will then review the basis for the appeal of the grade.

Upon review, the Executive Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs may find that based on process or factual content, there is no basis for a change of an evaluation or grade.

Alternatively, the Executive Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs may recommend that the grade be changed.

After review by the Executive Associate Dean for Medical Education and Student Affairs and submission of the reconsidered grade, the student may appeal any decision to the Dean of the medical school. The decision by the Dean shall be final.

It should be noted that any and all grade appeals should be conducted in a professional manner by the student involved; that is, demonstrating respectful disagreement with the perspective and judgment used by faculty members. Failure to exhibit appropriate

professional attitudes may immediately terminate the appeal process and lead to an unprofessional conduct report.

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