

# Policy on Academic Remediation, Observation, and Warning

## I. PURPOSE

The goal of academic remediation and observation is to make learners aware that performance has fallen below an acceptable level, and to encourage the student to avail themselves of approaches and systems to support academic success. The student is responsible for developing and demonstrating satisfactory academic performance. A student who fails a course, or nearly fails, is at higher risk for experiencing additional academic difficulties. The Committee on Student Promotions has a key role in determining the type of remediation activity that is appropriate for each student's situation, and a responsibility to monitor student performance for those students on observation or warning. The Committee on Student Promotions is charged with evaluating individual student situations, using their judgment in making academic decisions. This policy defines the usual approaches that may be selected for specific situations.

## II. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Medical students

## III. POLICY

### Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, MS1 refers to July – May of the first academic year, and MS2 refers to July through January of the second academic year.

**“Benchmark assessment”** refers to any summative exam, USMLE Step exam, NBME Subject exam, clinical exam assessment (e.g., OSCE, Clinical Competency Assessment), or other required assignments for a unit of curriculum that contributes to a student's final grade or stands independently as a graduation requirement. Formative exams are not benchmark assessments.

**"Remediation"** refers to remediation attempts of any benchmark assessment, after an initial attempt did not achieve passing threshold. A remediation attempt of a benchmark assessment also counts as a benchmark assessment.

**“Academic Observation”** refers to an internal designation for use by UPSOM to better advise and support students who have not progressed as expected (see designations below). It is not reported on a student’s transcript or Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).

**“Academic Warning”** refers to a student academic “alert” status, where students continue to receive academic supports and are closely monitored. If students fail to make academic progress while on Academic Warning, these students are at higher risk of dismissal or other adverse actions. This status is determined by the Committee on Student Promotions. Typically, this status is given when a student has additional academic difficulty while on academic observation, or due to a professionalism concern. This status is reported on a student’s MSPE.

### **Foundations Phase:**

#### **Keystone Fundamentals and Organ Systems**

Students are expected to achieve a satisfactory grade on benchmark assessments and meet attendance expectations within the Foundations curriculum. The threshold for a satisfactory grade will be set by the block directors (Keystone Fundamentals, Organ Systems) and/or course director(s) in conjunction with Assistant Dean for Foundations and the Director of Medical Student Assessment. For summative exams, this group will ensure that each assessment will either have an overall passing threshold or multiple content-specific passing thresholds (e.g., a passing threshold for all endocrinology questions and a separate passing threshold for reproductive biology questions). These assessments and passing thresholds will be vetted and approved by the Assessment Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, prior to utilization. All passing thresholds will be communicated clearly and transparently to students in writing

For courses that are immediately followed by a UPSOM recess, students must remediate any failed exam by the second Monday following the original exam unless there is a compelling reason to delay (see Procedures). For courses that are directly followed by another course rather than a UPSOM recess, students must remediate any failed exam by the second Monday following the soonest upcoming recess. UPSOM recesses are defined as: Flex Week, Spring Break, Winter Recess, and Summer Recess. For all situations, where the second Monday is a holiday, then the deadline to remediate any failed exam is the next business day. Exams must be completed by 5pm, regardless of the situation. Students who have more than one assessment to remediate or make up, in any combination, should consult with the responsible phase Dean regarding scheduling and compliance with institutional expectations.

Remediation and makeup exams taken within 7 business days of the original exam must be scheduled with the Assessment Coordinator at least two business days in advance. All other remediation and makeup exams must be scheduled with the Assessment Coordinator at least 7 business days in advance. Business days are defined as Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm, with university holidays excluded. Short-notice requests for appointments may be honored per proctor and room availability. Students are allowed one and only one remediation attempt on each failed benchmark assessment (with the exception of USMLE exams—see the Policy on USMLE Examinations for more details).

Any student with three (3) benchmark assessment failures (regardless of subsequent remediations) in any Foundations phase course will be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions for consideration of Recommended Actions, listed below.

Any student who fails a benchmark assessment and the remediation attempt for that assessment will be referred to Committee on Student Promotions for consideration of Recommended Actions, listed below.

Any student who fails two (2) benchmark assessments (initial or remediation) within the MS2 year or accumulates three or more benchmark assessment failures in the Foundations phase inclusive of MS1 and MS2 performance, will be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions for consideration of Recommended Actions, listed below.

Students may remediate a maximum of two benchmark assessments in any semester of the Foundations phase. Students who subsequently receive a failing grade will be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions for consideration of Recommended Actions, listed below

### **Other Courses**

Other courses and content areas include and are not limited to: Evidence, Discovery and Reasoning; Physician, Patient and Society; Community Alliance Program; Longitudinal Alliance Program; and Longitudinal Research Program. As appropriate to each course or topic, assessment questions may be embedded in the summative exams for Keystone Fundamentals and Organ Systems. For the Patient Centered Care block, students must satisfactorily complete required clinical session activities and assignments by deadlines outlined below.

### **Deadlines for Satisfactory Completion of Course Requirements (all courses)**

Deadlines for completion of required Foundations benchmarks and courses are January 31<sup>st</sup> for Keystone Fundamentals, July 15<sup>th</sup> for the first semester of Organ Systems, and the start of Preclerkship Course for the second semester of Organ Systems. The same deadlines apply to courses in the Patient Centered Care block and all other courses in Foundations. These are the final deadlines; earlier remediation is encouraged. Students not meeting stated deadlines will receive a failing grade and will be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions for

consideration of repeating the course(s), repeating the semester, repeating the academic year, or dismissal.

### **Attendance (all courses)**

The academic consequences of excused and unexcused absences are described in the Policy on Absence and Attendance.

### **Clerkships/Bridges Phases**

Clerkship students who do not successfully pass an NBME subject exam will receive an Incomplete for the clerkship and will be expected to remediate by retaking the exam as soon as appropriate (as per the Policy on NBME Subject Make-Up Exams).

Students who successfully pass the NBME Subject Make-Up exam will be issued a Satisfactory grade on the clerkship, regardless of their performance on other elements of clerkship assessment.

Students who do not successfully pass the make-up of the NBME subject exam will receive an Unsatisfactory grade for the clerkship. Students who do not take their make-up within the expected timeline (see NBME Subject Exam Make-Up policy) will also receive an Unsatisfactory grade.

Any student with an Unsatisfactory grade on one clerkship, for any reason, will be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions and will need to retake the clerkship in its entirety. The original Unsatisfactory grade must appear on the transcript and the Unsatisfactory grade with narrative comments must be included on the MSPE. Students who initially earn an Unsatisfactory grade on a clerkship are eligible for any grade when they retake the clerkship.

Any student who fails two initial NBME subject exams, regardless of remediation status, will be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions. Students who fail three initial NBME subject exams will be expected to repeat the entire Clerkships phase. Students who fail an NBNME subject exam while repeating the Clerkships phase will be dismissed.

Students who do not complete all the requirements for a particular clerkship or elective by the end of the rotation will receive an Incomplete grade and must complete the requirements within a timeframe set by the clerkship or elective course director. Any student who does not complete all the requirements within the timeframe designated by the director, or within one year from the end of that rotation, whichever is earlier, will have their grade changed from an Incomplete to an Unsatisfactory.

### **Committee on Student Promotions**

Students will be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions (CSP) for the following reasons:

- Two benchmark assessment failures (regardless of subsequent remediation) in MS2 (the second Fall semester of Foundations); does not apply to MS1
- Three benchmark assessment failures (regardless of subsequent remediations) in Foundations, inclusive of MS1 and MS2
- Failed benchmark and remediation assessment in one course in any phase of Foundations (which represents a course failure)
- Incomplete in phase requirements at the deadline for advancement (see deadlines above)
- Two or more NBME subject exam failures
- Unsatisfactory grade on any curricular unit (e.g., course, clerkship, elective)
- Any USMLE Step exam failure (see Policy on USMLE Examinations)
- Clinical Competency Assessment (CCA) failure
- Any major professionalism issues regardless of curricular phase (see Code of Professionalism)

### **Recommended Actions**

Based upon their review, and in consultation with the guidelines in this policy, the CSP may choose to recommend any action, including but not limited to:

- Repeat the academic year in its entirety
- Repeat of one semester of the academic year in its entirety
- Repeat of the failed courses only
- Academic Observation or Warning (see below)
- Academic Leave of Absence (see Policy on Leave of Absence)
- Dismissal

A student who is required to repeat the entire year or phase will be required to take and pass all of the courses during that period, including courses that had previously been completed satisfactorily, unless the student receives a specific exemption in writing by the CSP. When required to repeat a segment of the curriculum, all elements must be passed on the first attempt on benchmark assessments. This applies to all curriculum years.

### **Academic Observation and Academic Warning Statuses**

Academic Observation: Any student who receives a failing transcript grade or who fails two benchmark assessments (summative exams, NBME subject exams) may be placed on Academic Observation (as determined by the Committee on Student Promotions). In Foundations, Academic Observation will last for the remainder of the academic year in which the failure occurs, as well as for the next academic year. In Clerkships or Bridges phase, it will last for the remainder of that particular phase. The Committee on Student Promotions will determine, based on academic performance, if an extension is indicated, or if a student may be removed from Observation status.

Students who take a Leave of Absence for Academic Difficulty may be placed on Academic Observation upon return to the curriculum.

In all instances, a student entering Academic Observation will be notified in writing by the Committee on Student Promotions of the observation status, its rationale, and its start and end dates.

Students on Academic Observation must pass all subsequent benchmark assessments on the first attempt. If a student on Observation fails a benchmark assessment, or fails any course, the student will be discussed by the Committee on Student Promotions. As noted above, the Committee on Student Promotions will deliberate on the appropriate action based on such a student's situation. Students who remain enrolled will be placed on Academic Warning.

Academic Warning: Students on Academic Warning must limit extracurricular activities as per the CSP decision (with input from faculty advisor(s)) and pursue academic supports through the Academic Success Team (see Procedures below). Students on Academic Warning who fail a benchmark assessment or any course will either be required to repeat portions of the curriculum (such as the prior academic year) or be dismissed.

Any student who fails a clerkship or three initial NBME subject exams will be placed on Academic Warning.

Students on Academic Observation or Academic Warning who do not take a USMLE exam by the UPSOM deadline, or who fail the USMLE exam, will be dismissed.

All students on either Academic Observation or Academic Warning shall be reviewed at the Committee on Student Promotions meeting pertaining to the advancement of their class to the next academic level.

### **Incomplete Work and Leaves of Absence**

Any student returning from a leave of absence must complete all incomplete phase-specific academic requirements prior to re-entry (including NBME subject exams, USMLE exams, coursework, or other requirements). Students who have been on leave of absence for more than a year will be expected to repeat in their entirety any clerkships in which they are incomplete. The Committee on Student Promotions could ask a student to repeat an entire year or phase after re-entry following leaves of more than one year.

## **IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)**

- Office of Medical Education

## **V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- Policy on Academic Dismissal and Appeals
- Policy on Leaves of Absence
- Policy on Requirements for Granting of the MD Degree
- Committee on Student Promotions Charter
- Policy on Academic Progress and Promotions
- Policy on Time Limitations for Completing Portions of the MD Degree Program
- Policy on USMLE Examinations
- Policy on Absence and Attendance
- Policy on NBME Subject Make-up Exams

## **VI. REFERENCES**

- LCME Standard 9.9: Student Advancement and Appeal Process
- LCME Standard 10.3: Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and Their Dissemination

## **VII. APPROVALS**

This policy represents a consolidation of two separate policies, on Academic Remediation and Academic Observation. Both were originally approved by the Dean, School of Medicine, on December 30, 2018, with latest revision approved January 6, 2025.

Curriculum Committee, revision approved July 7, 2025.

## VIII. PROCEDURES

### **Remediation in the Foundations Phase**

The Assistant Dean for Foundations, in consultation with the Academic Success Team, must approve remediation plans for students who do not successfully pass a benchmark assessment. Although the policy states that students must remediate within 7 business days of the original exam, the Assistant Dean could extend the remediation due to extenuating circumstances, particularly student health issues.

The student may avail themselves of the guidance and resources provided by the Academic Success Team. The Academic Success Team consists of the Associate and Assistant Deans for Student Affairs; the Assistant Dean for Foundations; the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and UPSOM's academic success specialists.

Students on Academic Observation and Warning are reviewed by the Committee on Student Promotions to assure that their performance remains satisfactory; students do not attend these reviews. As per Committee policy, if a student fails a course while on Academic Observation, the student would be invited to attend the meeting for a discussion before any decisions are made. Students are invited to attend CSP meetings where consideration may be given to significant outcomes such as repeating a year or dismissal.

Course leaders will provide students with an outline of requirements for remediation of required activities. A student's study plan for remediation must be based on discussions with the relevant course leader(s), the student's coach, and Assistant Dean for Foundations. Students must review the exam and relevant course materials and meet with course faculty to identify specific weaknesses. The student must also meet with a learning specialist to discuss remediation and overall academic progress. In the rare event that a student, course leader, and Assistant Dean for Foundations are unable to come to a shared agreement regarding a remediation plan, the Associate Dean of Medical Education will adjudicate.

All benchmark remediations must be taken on-site and in-person, in alignment with standard practices for National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) testing. Only one exam can be taken at a single session unless explicit permission from the Academic Success Team is obtained.

Students must schedule remediation exams with OMED's assessment coordinator. Multiple, defined times will be established for remediations to allow for flexibility. The student should plan their schedule with the recognition that all remediations must be successfully completed by the stated deadlines. A student who has taken a remediation exam is not to discuss the exam contents with other students. All academic integrity/security procedures will be maintained during remediation exams.



### **Support for Academic Success in Foundations**

We at UPSOM want all of our students to succeed. Students want to feel prepared for academic performance within and outside the curriculum. Fortunately, there are many ways that students can access support, and many kinds of support are available. Students can reach out on their own for most of these resources, get guidance from coaches or advisors about the appropriateness, or be offered services based on a discussion of their needs.

If a student hopes to improve their academic performance, the student can ask, access, or work with:

#### **Faculty:**

- Members of the Academic Success Team (Drs. Borghesi, Gonzaga, Templer, Pettigrew, Tiffany Martin, Jessica Owens)
- Faculty content leads <https://www.omed.pitt.edu/faculty-educators/faculty-educator-directory>
- LE or CSP
- OMED deans (Drs. Borghesi, Van Deusen, Rosenstock, Ufomata)
- Block directors for Keystone Fundamentals and Organ Systems (Drs. Schmidt and Powers)
- Academic success specialists (Jessica Owens: [jessica.owens@pitt.edu](mailto:jessica.owens@pitt.edu); Tiffany Martin: [tmm206@pitt.edu](mailto:tmm206@pitt.edu))
- Coach
- Advisory Dean

#### **Peers:**

- Tutor (referrals through academic success specialists)
- MedEd Elective students, residents/fellows (as available, either directly or through Dr. Rosenstock)
- Study groups (e.g., Collaborative Based Learning)

#### **University Resources:**

- Disability Resources and Services (DRS)—especially if accommodations needed  
<https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/disability-resources-services/disability-resources-services>
- Neuropsychiatric testing (thru DRS/Academic Success Team)
- Library/Other resources (e.g., learning platforms, texts, videos—as appropriate)
- Academic support programs/courses (as referred by Academic Success Team)
- Mental Health team (therapists/psychiatrist)