

Policy on Academic Progress and Promotion

I. PURPOSE

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine hopes for the success of every student enrolled in the MD program and provides an array of resources to assist students in mastery of the school's curriculum. This policy establishes the framework through which UPSOM monitors academic progress, offers support when students encounter difficulties, and makes decisions about promotion, remediation, and advancement from matriculation through the conferral of the Doctor of Medicine degree.

Students are expected to meet the academic and professional standards required of the MD degree and to engage actively with available support when difficulties arise. UPSOM's approach to academic progress is grounded in early identification and availability of support. Decisions about academic standing are made with the goals of promoting student success and on-time graduation, ensuring the competence and professionalism that patients deserve, and maintaining the integrity of the MD degree.

The Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC), a standing committee of the faculty charged by the Dean or designee, is responsible for reviewing academic progress, overseeing remediation, and making decisions about promotion and advancement. The SPPC is also the body that may impose adverse academic actions, up to and including dismissal. The procedures of the SPPC and the rights and responsibilities of students who appear before it are described in detail in this policy.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All medical students enrolled in courses, clerkships, electives, or other components of the curriculum
- Students enrolled in dual-degree and special programs
- Students on approved leaves of absence
- Faculty and administrators of the School of Medicine who are members of, or otherwise involved in, the Student Progress and Promotions Committee.

III. POLICY

A. Committee Structure and Authority

Committees

Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC):

The SPPC, as specified by the Plan of Organization, is composed of both elected and appointed faculty members and is charged to review academic performance at appropriate times, including after each grading period and upon receipt of scores on all required assessments, and to determine each student's academic standing. The SPPC is responsible for monitoring the academic progress of all medical students. Each year, the SPPC is responsible for endorsing the graduation of all students who have successfully completed all graduation requirements.

The Executive Vice Dean, who serves as the dean's designee and the Chief Academic Officer, may request that the SPPC perform a special review for any reason, including but not limited to, any student's assessments, professional behaviors, or outstanding requirements, including but not limited to matters arising under the Code of Professionalism.

Professionalism Subcommittee (PS):

The Professionalism Subcommittee (PS) serves as the SPPC's initial decision-making body for alleged violations of the Code of Professionalism, while the SPPC maintains overall responsibility.

SPPC Appeals Committee (SPPCAC):

The SPPC Appeals Committee (SPPCAC) serves as the upper-level appellate body for SPPC decisions.

Detailed compositions, responsibilities, and meeting requirements of the SPPC, PS, and SPPCAC are outlined in the Committee Charter (Appendix A).

B. Requirements for Granting of the MD Degree

To be awarded the MD degree, a student must satisfy academic, professional, and technical standards on an ongoing basis throughout enrollment and fulfill all of the following requirements:

- Successfully complete all curricular requirements and achieve all school-designated competencies within the time set forth for completion.
- Pass United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Steps 1 and 2 CK within the time requirements of the school and limited to the number of attempts set by the school.
- Pass the Clinical Competency Assessment (CCA).
- Meet accepted standards of professional behavior
- Demonstrate continued satisfactory fulfillment of the technical standards.
- Satisfy the terms of any corrective action plans, conditions for continued enrollment, or approved USMLE study plan agreements, as well as any other requirements stipulated by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) or through appeal.

Completion Deadlines

Unless granted an extension as described below, students must complete the MD curriculum within a standard four-year period, beginning with first class matriculation and concluding by the end of May approximately 46 months later. On-time completion supports cohesive and sequential learning, maintains the relevance of foundational science knowledge relative to the current state of medical science, and optimizes preparation for residency training and clinical practice.

In special circumstances, and with the approval of SPPC, the time requirement for graduation may be extended to not more than approximately 6 years, by the end of May, approximately 70 months after first matriculation. This time extension is inclusive of all leaves of absence for all causes. Inability to complete requirements within the time designated may result in dismissal from UPSOM.

The Foundations phase of the curriculum, including passing USMLE Step 1, must be completed by January 15, approximately 32 months after matriculation.

The Clerkships and Bridges phases, including passing USMLE Step 2 CK as outlined in the Policy on USMLE Examinations and completing all requirements for graduation, must be completed within 38 months after completing the Foundations phase.

Students participating in dual degree master's degree programs, Physician Scientist Training Program (PSTP), and Clinical Scientist Training Program (CSTP) while in medical school must complete these programs along with MD program requirements within the 70-month limit stated above.

Students participating in the Primary Care Accelerated Track must complete the program within 34 months from the date of matriculation. Students participating in the Oral Maxillofacial Surgery program must complete the program within 30 months, given the advanced standing that is provided for credit earned during the Doctor of Dental Medicine program.

Students enrolled in the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) are granted additional time beyond the 70-month limit stated above to complete both the MD degree and PhD degree components. The typical time for the PhD program is 4 years.

C. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, Foundations MS1 refers to July – May of the first academic year, and Foundations 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 assessments are not benchmark assessments.

"Remediation" refers to a subsequent attempt of any benchmark assessment, after an initial attempt did not achieve the passing threshold. A remediation attempt counts as a benchmark assessment for all purposes under this policy.

"Good Academic Standing" refers to a student who is progressing on pace through the academic program, meeting professionalism expectations, fulfilling required administrative obligations, and has no active academic- or professionalism-related sanctions.

"Academic Observation" refers to an internal designation used by UPSOM to advise and support students who have not progressed as expected. This status is assigned by the SPPC and is not reported on a student's transcript or Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).

"Academic Warning" refers to an adverse action assigned by the SPPC indicating that a student's academic or professional standing requires close monitoring and intervention. This status is reported on a student's MSPE.

"Adverse action" refers to any SPPC decision that negatively impacts a student's academic standing or progression in the MD program. Adverse actions include, but are not limited to, Academic Warning, required repetition of coursework or an academic year or phase, and dismissal. Academic Observation is not an adverse action.

"Phase Dean" refers to the dean from the Office of Medical Education who has primary responsibility for and oversight of curriculum in a particular phase of the curriculum – Foundations, Clerkships, or Bridges.

"Academic Success Team" refers to staff and faculty leaders who provide students with guidance and resources to support academic progress, and who review and track students' medical knowledge assessments throughout the MD program. The AST consists of the Associate and Assistant Deans for Student Affairs, the Associate Dean for Student Engagement and Enrichment, the Assistant Dean for Foundations, the Associate Dean for Clinical Education, the Director of Coaching Services, and the School's Learning Specialists. For students in the Clerkships/Bridges Phases, academic success is monitored by a subgroup that includes the phase deans (Associate Dean for Clinical Education, Assistant Dean for Medical Education), the Associate Dean for Medical Education, and the Director of Coaching Services, with others from AST involved as appropriate.

D. Academic Standards by Phase

Foundations Phase:

Students are expected to achieve a satisfactory grade on all benchmark assessments and meet all attendance expectations within the Foundations curriculum. Each benchmark assessment will have either 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).

Students are allowed one and only one remediation attempt on each failed benchmark assessment in the Foundations phase. Students may remediate a maximum of two benchmark assessments in any semester of the Foundations phase. See the Procedures section for remediation schedule requirements and deadlines.

Other courses and content areas include and are not limited to: Patient Centered Care; Evidence, Discovery and Reasoning; Physician, Patient and Society; Community Alliance Program; Longitudinal Alliance Program; Threads; and Longitudinal Research Project. As appropriate to each course or topic, assessment questions may be embedded in the benchmark assessments for Keystone Fundamentals and Organ Systems.

Course Completion Deadlines:

The following deadlines apply to satisfactory completion of all required Foundations phase courses and benchmark assessments, including remediation attempts:

- Keystone Fundamentals: January 15 of MS1
- Organ Systems, first semester: July 15 of MS1
- Organ Systems, second semester: January 15 of MS2.

The same deadlines apply to courses in the Patient Centered Care block and all other courses in the Foundations phase. These are final deadlines; earlier remediation is encouraged. Students not meeting stated deadlines will receive a failing grade and will be referred to the SPPC.

Clerkships Phase:

Students are expected to pass all required clerkship benchmark assessments and satisfy all clerkship requirements within each rotation period.

Clerkship students who do not successfully pass an NBME subject exam will receive a grade of Incomplete for the clerkship and will be expected to remediate by retaking the exam as soon as practical, as outlined in the Policy on NBME Subject Make-Up Exams for scheduling requirements and deadlines.

Students who successfully pass the NBME Subject remediation exam will receive no higher than a Satisfactory grade on the clerkship, irrespective of performance on other clerkship assessment components. Successful completion of the remediation examination does not guarantee a Satisfactory clerkship grade; final clerkship grades reflect performance across all required

assessment elements, and students who demonstrate unsatisfactory performance in other clerkship components may receive a grade below Satisfactory.

Students who do not successfully pass the NBME subject exam remediation, or do not complete their remediation within the expected timeline, will receive an Unsatisfactory grade for the clerkship.

Any student with an Unsatisfactory grade on a clerkship, for any reason, will be referred to the SPPC and will need to retake the clerkship in its entirety by the Match verification date (Credentials Verification Deadline as per the National Resident Matching Program). The original Unsatisfactory grade must appear on the transcript, and the Unsatisfactory grade with narrative comments must be included on the MSPE. Students who fully retake a clerkship are eligible for any grade upon retaking it.

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. The student must complete all outstanding requirements as soon as practical, with a maximum deadline of within six months of the start of the rotation. Any student who does not complete all the requirements within six months of the start of the rotation will have their grade changed from an Incomplete to an Unsatisfactory. The academic standards and grading provisions of the Clerkships phase guidance apply to all required clerkships, including those scheduled during the Bridges phase.

Bridges Phase

Students are expected to satisfactorily complete all required Bridges phase courses, electives, and rotations and to fulfill all remaining graduation requirements, including USMLE Step 2 CK and the Clinical Competency Assessment (CCA), within the timeline established by the School.

Students who do not complete all requirements for a Bridges phase course or elective by the end of the course/rotation will receive an Incomplete grade, subject to the same timeline and grading provisions described above for the Clerkships phase.

See Section B for graduation requirements and time limitations applicable to the Bridges phase.

Attendance in Foundations, Clerkships, and Bridges Phases:

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

E. Circumstances Requiring SPPC Review

The following provisions are intended to give students the opportunity to identify and address academic challenges early, while preserving the SPPC's full authority to act when circumstances require.

The SPPC may review any student whose academic or professional trajectory raises concern, at the discretion of the phase dean or SPPC chair. Upon referral, the SPPC will determine the appropriate action for each student's individual situation, guided by the Guide to Expected Outcomes (Appendix B). The SPPC retains full authority to determine outcomes that vary from the Guide to Expected Outcomes based on case-specific circumstances.

Students who are referred to the SPPC will be notified in writing at least seven (7) calendar days before the meeting at which their case will be discussed. When the referral may result in an adverse action, the student is required to attend. When no adverse action is being considered, the student will be invited to attend.

The following circumstances will result in referral of a student to the SPPC for review. This list is not exhaustive.

Foundations Phase

Foundations MS1 (Semesters 1 and 2):

- Any course failure
- Three or more benchmark assessment failures, even if subsequently remediated
- Two or more benchmark assessment failures per semester, even if subsequently remediated
- Incomplete phase requirements at the end of year 1, as of July 15.

The student will meet with the SPPC as the circumstances above arise so that the committee can perform its oversight function, evaluate opportunities to promote student success, and give the student an opportunity to self-assess. Typically, the SPPC will require that the student remain fully enrolled in the academic program and defer decision on action until the end of the first year of medical school. The student will be able to work with the learning specialist and continue to develop study and learning skills. With the entire first year record in place, the SPPC will then decide actions required for continued enrollment, which may include but are not limited to:

- Repeat of a single course or two courses by July 15
- Repeat of the academic year
- Dismissal.

Foundations MS2 (Semester 3):

- Any course failure
- Two or more benchmark assessment failures in the Foundations MS2 year, even if subsequently remediated
- Three or more benchmark assessment failures in the Foundations phase inclusive of Foundations MS1 and Foundations MS2 performance
- Exceeding the maximum of two benchmark assessment remediations in any semester of the Foundations phase, with subsequent failure
- Incomplete phase requirements at the end of the phase, as of January 15.

The student will meet with the SPPC as the circumstances above arise so that the committee can perform its oversight function, evaluate opportunities to promote student success, and give the student an opportunity to self-assess. Typically, the SPPC will require that the student remain fully enrolled in the academic program and defer decision on action until the end of the Foundations phase. The student will be able to work with the learning specialist and continue to develop study and learning skills. With the entire Foundations phase record in place, the SPPC will then decide actions required for continued enrollment, which may include but are not limited to:

- Repeat of a single course or two courses by January 15
- Repeat of the academic year
- Dismissal.

Clerkships and Bridges Phases

- Two or more initial NBME subject exam failures, regardless of remediation status
- Unsatisfactory grade on any curricular unit (e.g., course, clerkship, elective, acting internship, rotation, etc.)
- Incomplete phase requirements at the deadline for advancement or graduation.

All Phases

- Any USMLE Step exam failure (see Policy on USMLE Examinations)
- Clinical Competency Assessment (CCA) failure
- Any major professionalism lapse, regardless of curricular phase (see Code of Professionalism)
- Failure to satisfy time limitations for degree completion as outlined in Section B
- Failure to comply with SPPC directives, conditions for continued enrollment, or remediation deadlines
- Referral by the Executive Vice Dean.

F. Academic Observation and Academic Warning Statuses

Academic Observation

Academic Observation is an internal designation used by UPSOM to advise and closely support students who have not progressed as expected. It is not reported on a student's transcript or MSPE.

The SPPC has the authority to place a student on Academic Observation. The SPPC retains discretion to assign this status in any circumstance warranting closer academic support including, but not limited to, a failing transcript grade in any course or the failure of two benchmark assessments.

Students returning from a Leave of Absence for Academic Difficulty will be placed on Academic Observation upon re-entry.

Academic Observation will last for the remainder of the phase in which it was started. The SPPC will notify the student in writing of the Academic Observation designation, including its basis and start and anticipated end dates.

Academic Warning

Academic Warning is an adverse action that places a student under close monitoring and is reported on the student's MSPE. This status is assigned by the SPPC.

The SPPC has the authority to place a student on Academic Warning. This status may follow Academic Observation, arise from a professionalism concern, or be assigned in any circumstances warranting closer monitoring and intervention. A student may be placed on Academic Warning without first having been on Academic Observation.

The SPPC will notify the student in writing of the Academic Warning designation, including its basis and start and anticipated end dates.

A student who is required to repeat an academic year or phase will be placed on Academic Warning and required to take and pass all of the courses during that period, including those previously completed satisfactorily, unless the SPPC grants a specific written exemption. When repeating a year or phase of the curriculum, all benchmark assessments within that year or phase must be passed on the first attempt. This requirement applies across all curriculum years.

G. 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-enrollment in any academic courses or clerkships. The SPPC will determine the appropriate re-entry plan based on the nature and duration of the leave and the student's incomplete requirements. Required completion may include, but is not limited to, NBME subject exams, USMLE exams, coursework, or other outstanding requirements. Any student who has an NBME subject exam to make up for any reason must complete the exam within 4 weeks of their return to the curriculum at the end of their Leave of Absence. Students will be enrolled in courses once the make-up NBME subject exam is successfully passed.

Students who have been on leave of absence for more than one year from the start date of a clerkship rotation will be required to repeat any clerkships in its entirety upon return if an Incomplete grade remains outstanding. The SPPC retains authority to require a student to repeat an entire academic year or phase following a leave of absence of more than one year.

Any leave of absence longer than three (3) months, other than those approved through other established School of Medicine processes must be approved by the SPPC. Students who take a leave of absence must meet all agreed-upon terms of the approved leave. Please refer to the

UPSOM Policy on Leaves of Absence for additional detail regarding leave approval, duration limits, and terms of return.

H. Withdrawal (Voluntary or Administrative) from the UPSOM MD program

A student seeking to voluntarily withdraw from the MD program must submit a written request to the Executive Vice Dean. The Executive Vice Dean will review the request and notify the student of the decision in writing.

Alternatively, the School may initiate an administrative withdrawal when a student fails to respond to School communications for longer than one month while on a leave of absence, fails to return from an approved leave of absence, or inability to fulfill the technical standards. A student notified of a pending administrative withdrawal may appeal that decision following the same pathway used for dismissal decisions.

Whether voluntary or administrative, any withdrawal is a permanent and irreversible decision. Students who are withdrawn (voluntarily or administratively) may not re-apply for admission to the MD program at UPSOM. Students who have successfully completed the Foundations phase prior to withdrawal may be eligible for the Master of Science in Medical Science degree.

I. Dismissal

The SPPC has the authority to dismiss a student from the MD program as per Section E. A dismissal action may occur regardless of whether the student has previously been placed on Academic Observation or Academic Warning.

A student who has been dismissed by the SPPC may remain enrolled and continue in the curriculum while pursuing an appeal under Section K. Dismissal takes full effect only upon exhaustion of all available appeals or upon the student's failure to appeal within the designated timeframe, at which point the student may not continue in any new course, clerkship, or rotation and may not re-apply for admission to the MD program at UPSOM. The SPPC or Executive Vice Dean may impose interim suspension where a student's continued presence poses a risk to patient safety, the safety of themselves or others, or the integrity of the academic environment. Interim suspension does not constitute a final determination, and the student's right to appeal is fully preserved.

J. Expected Outcomes

Each year, the SPPC reviews and updates the Guide to Expected Outcomes (Appendix B), which provides recommendations for committee decisions based on specific academic or professional situations. The Guide reflects typical outcomes to guide committee action and is a reference document only. The SPPC, as well as the SPPCAC and Executive Vice Dean, retain full authority to determine outcomes that vary from the Guide based on case-specific circumstances.

K. Appeals of the Decisions of the Student Progress and Promotions Committee

A student may appeal any decision of the SPPC within seven (7) calendar days of written notification of the decision. The appeal must be submitted in writing and must be based on the student's belief that the decision did not follow the appropriate procedures, that the decision occurred as a result of arbitrary, capricious, or biased/discriminatory approaches as set forth by UPSOM academic policies, or that new information has become available. Failure to appeal within seven (7) calendar days of written notification of the decision renders the SPPC decision final. The procedures for filing and resolving appeals are outlined in the Procedures section of this policy. A student who has been dismissed may remain enrolled while pursuing an appeal under this section, subject to the interim suspension provision in Section I.

IV. POLICY AUTHORS

- Office of Medical Education

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Policy on USMLE Examinations
- Policy on Leaves of Absence
- Policy on NBME Subject Make-Up Exams
- Code of Professionalism
- Policy on Technical Standards for Admission, Retention, & Graduation of Applicants & Students
- Policy on Absence and Attendance

VI. REFERENCES

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

VII. APPROVALS

Approved by the Curriculum Committee, July 7, 2025.

Revisions approved by the Curriculum Committee, July 6, 2026.

Disclaimer: UPSOM acknowledges that the USMLE program's proposed transition to a Designated Testing Dates model, effective January 1, 2028, may impact the timelines, deadlines, and procedures described in this policy. UPSOM will review and, as necessary, revise this policy prior to the implementation of that change to ensure continued alignment with USMLE testing availability.

VIII. PROCEDURES

1. Provisions for Continued Enrollment

The SPPC, PS, SPPCAC, and Executive Vice Dean may require students to satisfy specific conditions for continued enrollment in the program. Failure to comply with any additional requirements stipulated by these bodies may lead to dismissal or other actions.

2. Review and Potential Removal of Academic Observation and Warning Status

Academic Observation

All students on Academic Observation will be reviewed at the SPPC meeting pertaining to the advancement of their class to the next academic level.

A student on Academic Observation who fails a benchmark assessment or any course will be referred to the SPPC for review and determination of appropriate action. Students are required to attend SPPC meetings where adverse actions are being considered. Students who remain enrolled following SPPC review may be placed on Academic Warning.

A student placed on Academic Observation will have this status automatically removed at the end of the phase in which it was assigned, provided the student completes that phase with no new benchmark assessment failures, course failures, new SPPC referrals, or new professionalism lapses. No petition is required. The SPPC will notify the student in writing upon automatic removal. The SPPC retains authority at their discretion to extend Academic Observation beyond the end of the phase, which will be communicated to the student in writing prior to the automatic removal date.

A student with both a professionalism-based and an academic-based Academic Observation must satisfy the criteria for each pathway separately

Academic Warning

All students on Academic Warning will be reviewed at the SPPC meeting pertaining to the advancement of their class to the next academic level.

Students on Academic Warning are advised to limit extracurricular activities, and, if given the designation due to academic performance, must actively engage with academic support through the Academic Success Team.

A student placed on Academic Warning will have this status automatically removed no earlier than 12 months after the date of designation, provided there have been no benchmark assessment failures, course failures, clerkship failures, USMLE exam failures, new SPPC referrals, or new professionalism lapses during that period. The SPPC will notify the student in writing upon automatic removal. The SPPC retains authority at their discretion to extend Academic Warning beyond the 12 month period or move the student to the status of Academic Observation after the

12 month period, which will be communicated to the student in writing prior to the automatic removal date.

A student with both a professionalism-based and an academic-based Academic Warning must satisfy the criteria for each pathway separately.

While a student may be removed from Academic Warning status, this is an adverse action and the reason for, and duration of, the status will be reflected on the student's MSPE consistent with AAMC guidelines.

3. Remediation by Phase

Foundations Phase

The Assistant Dean for Foundations, in consultation with the Academic Success Team, must approve all remediation plans for students who do not successfully pass a benchmark assessment. A student's remediation study plan must be developed through discussions with the Assistant Dean for Foundations and the Learning Specialist. Students must meet with their coach and, once a study plan is developed, seek input on their study plan from the Course Director(s). Students are expected to review the benchmark assessment and relevant course materials. Students are encouraged to meet with course faculty to identify specific weaknesses. The student is strongly encouraged to meet with a Learning Specialist to discuss remediation. In the rare event that a student and Assistant Dean for Foundations cannot reach a shared agreement on a remediation plan, the Associate Dean for Medical Education will adjudicate.

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 details. Students may remediate a maximum of two benchmark assessments in any semester of the Foundations phase.

Students in the following circumstances must obtain written permission from the SPPC before scheduling any remediation assessment:

- Accrual of three or more benchmark assessment failures in the Foundations phase inclusive of Foundations MS1 (Semesters 1 and 2) and Foundations MS2 (Semester 3) performance.
- Accrual of two benchmark assessment failures in Foundations MS2 (Semester 3), regardless of subsequent remediation.

For courses that are immediately followed by an UPSOM recess or a Professional Development Course (Flex Weeks), students must remediate any failed benchmark assessment by the second Monday following the original assessment, unless there is a compelling reason to delay as determined by the Assistant Dean for Foundations. For courses directly followed by another course rather than an UPSOM recess or Professional Development Course (Flex Weeks),

students must remediate by the second Monday following the first day of the soonest upcoming recess. Where the applicable deadline falls on a university holiday, the deadline is extended to the next business day. All assessments must be completed by 5pm regardless of circumstance. Makeup assessments follow the same deadlines as remediation.

Scheduling Requirements: Remediation and make-up benchmark assessments must be scheduled with the Assessment Coordinator in advance according to the below timelines. Business days are defined as Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm, with university holidays excluded. Short-notice requests for appointments may be honored based on proctor and room availability.

Circumstance	Advance notice required for scheduling assessment
Courses immediately followed by an UPSOM recess or Professional Development Course (Flex Weeks)	2 business days
Courses directly followed by another course	7 business days
All other situations	7 business days

All benchmark remediations and make-up assessments must be taken on-site and in-person, in alignment with standard practices for NBME testing. The number of remediation and make-up benchmark assessments permitted in a single session may not exceed the number of assessments scheduled on the original test date. Students seeking exemption must obtain advance permission in writing from the Assistant Dean for Foundations. A student who completed a remediation/make-up assessment may not discuss its contents with other students. All academic integrity and security procedures will be maintained during remediation and make-up assessments, and assessment review.

Students with more than one benchmark assessment to remediate or make up in any combination must coordinate their schedule with, and obtain written approval from, the Assistant Dean for Foundations. Students with an approved schedule who subsequently miss or fail an additional benchmark assessment must obtain written approval from the Assistant Dean for Foundations before rescheduling or reprioritizing remaining assessments. All make-up and remediation assessments must be completed by the course completion deadline stated in Section D. Any extension beyond those deadlines must be approved by the SPPC.

Clerkships and Bridges Phases

Clerkship and course directors, in consultation with the phase dean and the Academic Success Team, must approve all remediation plans for students who do not successfully pass an NBME subject exam. All make-up and remediation assessments must be completed as soon as practical, as per the NBME Subject Make-Up Exams. The Associate Dean for Medical Education may

extend this deadline up to 6 months due to extenuating circumstances, particularly student health issues.

Students with two or more benchmark failures in the Clerkships phase must obtain written permission from the SPPC before scheduling any remediation assessment.

4. Assessments During Pending Professionalism Proceedings

A student is permitted, but is not required, to take any assessments between the time the student receives written notice of an allegation of major lapse in professionalism and five (5) business days after the final decision is delivered to the student by the SPPC. Any benchmark assessment score(s) received during this period will be withheld until the SPPC authorizes score(s) transmittal to the Registrar. The grade will be issued as an Incomplete until the situation is resolved.

5. Support for Academic Success

UPSOM provides a wide range of resources to all students throughout the MD program. Students may reach directly for most resources, seek guidance from coaches or advisory deans, or be connected to services based on a discussion of their needs. Students are encouraged to utilize these resources proactively, particularly when placed on Academic Observation or Academic Warning.

Faculty and staff:

- Members of the Academic Success Team (Associate and Assistant Deans for Student Affairs, Assistant Dean for Foundations, Associate Dean for Student Engagement and Enrichment, Associate Dean for Clinical Education, and Learning Specialists)
- Faculty content leads
- Block directors for Keystone Fundamentals, Organ Systems, and Patient Centered Care
- Longitudinal Educator or Clinical Skills Preceptor
- Clerkship, Elective, Selective, and other Course Directors
- OMED deans
- Coach
- Advisory Dean

Peers:

- Tutor (referrals through Learning Specialists)
- MedEd Elective students, residents/fellows (as available)
- Study groups (e.g., Collaborative Based Learning)

University Resources:

- Disability Resources and Services (DRS)—especially if accommodations needed (<https://www.wellbeing.pitt.edu/disability-access-accommodations>)
- Library resources (e.g., learning platforms, texts, videos)

- SOM Mental Health Team (therapists/psychiatrist), and University Counseling Center

6. Dismissal

When a student's case is referred to the SPPC under circumstances that may result in dismissal, the student will be notified in writing and required to attend the SPPC meeting for discussion before any decision is made. The range of possible outcomes, including dismissal, will be communicated to the student in advance of the meeting. Following the meeting, the student will be notified in writing of the SPPC's decision, including the basis for that decision.

A student who wishes to appeal must follow the appeals process outlined in Section K. See Section I for enrollment status during the pendency of an appeal. A student facing dismissal may request to voluntarily withdraw from the program. See Procedures item 11 below.

7. Appealing Decisions of the Student Progress and Promotions Committee

Level 1 Appeal

A student seeking to appeal an adverse SPPC decision must formally submit a written appeal via the form located on the Learning Management System (Elentra), to the Vice Dean of Education, who chairs the SPPC Appeals Committee (SPPCAC), within seven (7) calendar days of written notification of the SPPC's decision. Failure to appeal within this window renders the SPPC decision final.

The written appeal may not exceed two (2) pages and must state the basis for appeal and must be grounded on a student's belief that the decision did not follow the appropriate procedures, that the decision resulted from arbitrary, capricious, or biased or discriminatory approaches as set forth by UPSOM academic policies, or that new information has become available.

Within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving the written appeal request, the SPPCAC must meet synchronously with the student to discuss the appeal. The SPPCAC has seven (7) calendar days to determine whether to grant the appeal or not. The SPPCAC must notify the student in writing within seven (7) calendar days of their meeting. Note these timelines do not include University closures or holidays.

Level 2 Appeal

If a student wishes to dispute the Level 1 Appeal decision, the student must submit a written appeal to the Executive Vice Dean, via the form located on Elentra, within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the Level 1 decision. The written appeal may not exceed two (2) pages and must state the basis for disputing the Level 1 decision.

The Executive Vice Dean has fourteen (14) calendar days from receipt of all required information to review the appeal, render a decision, and respond in writing to the student. The decision of the Executive Vice Dean is the final decision within the School of Medicine. Note these timelines do not include University closures or holidays.

See Section I for enrollment status during the pendency of a Level 1 or Level 2 appeal.

8. Support of Students going before SPPC or SPPCAC

The School recommends, but does not require, that students meet with their Advisory Dean or other trusted UPSOM faculty member when preparing for an appearance before the SPPC or SPPCAC. This individual serves as a faculty support person and may attend the meeting with the student. The faculty support person may not respond to questions or assist the student during their presentation, leaves the meeting when the student does, and is not present during the committee's deliberation. A faculty support person may not attend Level 2 appeal meetings with the Executive Vice Dean.

9. Additional Representation

Students may seek the assistance of an advisor, including legal counsel, at any point in the process. The role of the advisor or legal counsel is limited to advising the student outside of formal proceedings. Advisors and legal counsel may not attend meetings held by the SPPC, the SPPCAC, or with the Executive Vice Dean.

10. Withdrawal

A student who has been dismissed by SPPC, or who has been notified of a pending administrative withdrawal, may request to voluntarily withdraw from the program at any point prior to the Executive Vice Dean's final decision. The request to voluntarily withdraw must be approved by the Executive Vice Dean.

In any case involving violations of the School's academic or personal conduct policies, violations of the School's Code of Professionalism, or other cited professional behaviors, the Executive Vice Dean's approval of the withdrawal is required and is not guaranteed.

An approved withdrawal, whether voluntary or administrative, is permanent and irreversible. Students who are withdrawn may not re-apply for admission to the MD program at UPSOM. Students who have successfully completed the Foundations phase may be eligible for the Master of Science in Medical Science degree.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine reserves the right to change these policies and procedures as needed.

Appendix A: Committee Charter

Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC), Professionalism Subcommittee (PS), and SPPC Appeals Committee (SPPCAC)

The Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) is a standing committee as listed in the Plan of Organization and is charged by the Dean or designee to review medical student academic progress and to rule on questions about student progress, remediation, and ultimately, the awarding of the Doctor of Medicine degree. The SPPC is responsible for overseeing, executing, and enforcing the Policy on Academic Progress and Promotion, the Code of Professionalism, and portions of the Policy on Leaves of Absence as outlined in those documents.

The Professionalism Subcommittee (PS) serves as the SPPC's initial decision-making body on alleged violations of the Code of Professionalism, while the SPPC maintains overall responsibility.

The SPPC Appeals Committee (SPPCAC) serves as the upper-level appellate body for SPPC decisions.

Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC)

Composition

Faculty members are either appointed or elected to the SPPC, for a total of sixteen (16) voting committee members. Thirteen (13) voting members are appointed by the Dean or Dean's designee, with input from SPPC leadership. Faculty appointees should represent a broad range of specialties and departments as well as experience at the institution. Three (3) faculty members on the SPPC are elected by a vote of the UPSOM general faculty.

All voting members serve three-year terms for up to two consecutive terms, upon completion of which they must take a one-year hiatus before being eligible to rejoin the committee. Members may be asked to step down if they fail to participate in committee activities. When possible, terms should be staggered such that no more than one-third of the voting members rotate off the SPPC with every transition.

Eleven (11) voting members constitute a quorum.

Advisory Deans and coaches are not permitted to serve on SPPC.

The chair of the SPPC is appointed by the Vice Dean for Education from among the SPPC voting members and may be reappointed annually to consecutive one-year terms at the discretion of the Vice Dean for Education, as long as the individual remains a voting member of the SPPC. The chair does not vote except in the case of a tie.

Ex officio, non-voting members of the SPPC include: the Associate Deans for Admissions and Financial Aid; Medical Education; Student Affairs; and Student Engagement and Enrichment.

Voting Requirements

Any SPPC decision resulting in the dismissal of a student requires an affirmative vote of 60% or more of the members present and eligible to vote. SPPC decisions regarding remediation, repeating coursework, repeating the academic year, promotion, or other disciplinary actions excluding dismissal require an affirmative vote of a simple majority of the members present and eligible to vote.

Conflict of Interest and Recusal

Recusal is required of any SPPC member who is the faculty member of record for the academic circumstance being discussed, or who was otherwise directly involved in the action under review. Additional mandatory reasons for recusal include, but are not limited to, circumstances in which a faculty member is:

- A current or past healthcare provider of the student
- A provider of assessment data for the curricular unit under review
- A current or past advisor, mentor, or coach of the student
- A current or past Longitudinal Educator (LE) or Clinical Skills Preceptor (CSP)
- A family member or friend of the student
- A director of a course the student has previously failed.

Recusal requires that the committee member be absent from the entire proceeding addressing the student and return only after an approved motion is completed. All SPPC voting members must annually sign a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement.

Students brought before the SPPC may object in advance to the participation of any voting member due to an alleged conflict of interest. The SPPC chair, with input from the voting member in question, will rule on the validity of the objection. If a student objects to the participation of the chair, the Vice Dean for Education will rule on the validity of the objection.

Responsibilities

Meetings should be scheduled monthly, and dates should be announced as early as possible during the academic year. Meetings are confidential and closed to the public. Guests, including students who are brought before the committee, may attend only by invitation of the chair. Attendance will be recorded.

The SPPC has responsibility to monitor and rule on the following:

- **Satisfactory Progress of the Student Body:** The minutes of at least one SPPC meeting between April and August each year must indicate that all students who have not been otherwise discussed have been reviewed and found to be making satisfactory progress. In any meeting, the chair should, as time permits, present data concerning the general standing of the class and its accomplishments, to provide members with comparative context to assist in decision-making.
- **Academic Observation, Academic Warning, and Provisions for Continued Enrollment:** The SPPC has the authority to place a student on Academic Observation or

Academic Warning status or remove a student from that status, as outlined in the Policy on Academic Progress and Promotion. The SPPC has the authority to set conditions and require any student adhere to requirements determined by the SPPC for continued enrollment in the program.

- **Dismissal:** The SPPC has the authority to determine whether a student has met the criteria for dismissal as outlined in the Policy on Academic Progress and Promotion and to dismiss the student from the School of Medicine. The SPPC retains authority to impose interim suspension pending the outcome of an appeal where the student's continued presence poses a risk to patient safety, the safety of themselves or others, or the integrity of the academic environment.
- **Major Professionalism Violations and Appeals of PS Decisions:** The SPPC has the responsibility to adjudicate and impose sanctions for potential major violations of the Code of Professionalism referred to it by the PS. The SPPC also serves as the upper-level appellate body for PS decisions regarding minor violations of the Code of Professionalism.
- **Leaves of Absence:** The SPPC has responsibility to review and approve all leaves of absence longer than three (3) months, other than those approved through other established School of Medicine processes. Please refer to the Policy on Leaves of Absence for additional details.

Professionalism Subcommittee (PS)

Composition

The PS reports to the SPPC and is not composed of members serving on SPPC. No voting members or alternates may simultaneously serve on both the SPPC and the PS. Advisory Deans and coaches are not permitted to serve on the PS.

Faculty members are appointed to the PS, for a total of 6 voting members and 3 alternates. All voting members and alternates will be appointed by the Dean or Dean's designee, with input from SPPC and PS leadership.

All voting members serve three-year terms for up to two consecutive terms, after which they must take a one-year hiatus before being eligible to rejoin the subcommittee. Where possible, terms should be staggered such that no more than two voting members rotate off at one time. Alternate members may be appointed to unlimited consecutive terms. Prior service as an alternate does not preclude subsequent service as a voting member for up to two consecutive terms.

The chair of the PS is appointed by the Vice Dean for Education from among the voting members and may be reappointed annually to consecutive one-year terms at the discretion of the Vice Dean for Education as long as the individual remains a voting member of the PS. The chair does not vote except in the case of a tie.

Three (3) voting members constitute a quorum. The subcommittee chair may ask alternates to serve on an ad hoc basis in the event of a voting member's recusal, a student objection to one or more of the voting members, or the inability of one or more voting members to attend.

Meetings are confidential and are not open to the public. Guests, including students brought before the subcommittee, may attend only by invitation of the chair. Attendance will be recorded.

Conflict of Interest and Recusal

Recusal is required of any PS member who was directly involved with or who reported the professionalism issue being discussed. Additional mandatory reasons for recusal include, but are not limited to, circumstances in which a faculty member is:

- A current or past healthcare provider of the student
- A provider of assessment data for the curricular unit under review
- A current or past advisor, mentor, or coach of the student
- A current or past Longitudinal Educator (LE) or Clinical Skills Preceptor (CSP)
- A family member or friend of the student
- A director of a course the student has previously failed.

Recusal requires that the subcommittee member be absent from the entire proceeding addressing the student and return only after an approved motion is completed. All PS voting members and alternates must annually sign a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement.

Students brought before the PS may object in advance to the participation of any voting member due to an alleged conflict of interest. The subcommittee chair, with input from the voting member in question, will rule on the validity of any student objection to a voting member's participation. If a student objects to the participation of the chair, the Vice Dean for Education will rule on the validity of the objection.

Responsibilities

The PS meets monthly to review reported violations of the Code of Professionalism. It has the authority to determine that a reported violation qualifies as a minor lapse in professionalism and to adjudicate minor violations as outlined in the Code of Professionalism. The PS has the authority to identify, but not adjudicate or impose, sanctions for potential major lapses in professionalism. If the PS determines it is reasonably possible that the student may have committed a major violation, or if the PS is unable to classify the violation as minor or major, the PS will refer the matter to SPPC for full adjudication as outlined in the Code of Professionalism.

SPPC Appeals Committee (SPPCAC)

Composition

Faculty members are appointed to the SPPCAC by the Dean or Dean's designee, for a total of five (5) voting members and two (2) alternates. Voting members serve three-year terms for up to two consecutive terms, after which they must take a one-year hiatus before becoming eligible to serve again. Alternate members may be appointed to unlimited consecutive terms. Prior service as an alternate does not preclude subsequent service as a voting member for up to two consecutive terms.

The chair of the SPPCAC is the Vice Dean for Education. The chair does not vote except in the case of a tie.

Members of the SPPCAC may not simultaneously serve on the Grade Appeals Committee, SPPC, or PS. Course/clerkship/elective directors, thread leads, coaches, and Advisory Deans may not serve on the SPPCAC.

Three (3) voting members constitute a quorum. The chair may ask alternates to serve on an ad hoc basis in the event of a voting member's recusal, a student objection to one or more of the voting members, or the inability of one or more voting members to attend.

Meetings are confidential and are not open to the public. Guests may attend only by invitation of the chair. Attendance will be recorded.

Conflict of Interest and Recusal

Recusal is required of any SPPCAC member who is the faculty member of record for the circumstance being discussed, or who was otherwise directly involved in the action under review. Additional mandatory reasons for recusal include, but are not limited to, circumstances in which a faculty member is:

- A current or past healthcare provider of the student
- A provider of assessment data for the curricular unit under review
- A current or past advisor, mentor, or coach of the student
- A current or past Longitudinal Educator (LE) or Clinical Skills Preceptor (CSP)
- A family member or friend of the student
- A director of a course the student has previously failed.

If a student identifies a potential conflict with a faculty member, the student may request that faculty member recuse themselves. However, the decision to recuse rests with the faculty member. Recusal requires that the committee member be absent from the entire committee proceeding and return only after an approved motion is completed. All SPPCAC voting members and alternates must annually sign a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement. The chair, with input from the voting member in question, will rule on the validity of any student objection to a voting member's participation.

Responsibilities

The SPPCAC serves as the upper-level appellate body for SPPC decisions. A student who wishes to appeal a SPPC decision must follow the appeals process outlined in the Policy on Academic Progress and Promotion.

Approvals

Educational Policy Council approved July 22, 2025.

Educational Policy Council approved revisions July 10, 2026.

Executive Committee approved on August 18, 2025.

Dean, School of Medicine, approved August 20, 2025.

Appendix B: Guide to Expected Outcomes

The Guide to Expected Outcomes outlines the typical outcomes the SPPC applies when academic or professional challenges arise. The SPPC may choose one or more of the expected outcomes listed for each finding. All decisions are made in consideration of the student's full educational record to date. This guide is reviewed and updated annually by the SPPC. It is a reference document only. The SPPC, SPPCAC, and Executive Vice Dean retain full authority to determine outcomes that vary from those described here based on case-specific circumstances.

Table of Contents

- Foundations Phase – Foundations MS1 (Semesters 1 and 2)
- Foundations Phase – Foundations MS2 (Semester 3)
- Clerkships Phase
- Bridges Phase

Foundations Phase

Semesters 1 and 2

Finding	Typical Expected Outcomes
Course Failure	• Place on Academic Observation • Repeat course if deemed feasible by the SPPC • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year
2 Benchmark Assessment Failures in separate courses	• Place on Academic Observation
3 or more Benchmark Assessment Failures (even if previously remediated), in at least 2 separate courses	• Place on Academic Observation • The student remains fully enrolled and no further action is taken until the end of Foundations MS1 (Semesters 1 and 2), at which point the SPPC will review the student's entire first year record and determine next steps, which may include but are not limited to: • Repeat of one or two courses by July 15 • Repetition of the academic year • Dismissal
Benchmark Assessment Failure while on Academic Observation	• Place on Academic Warning • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Remediate benchmark assessment • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year • Dismissal
Failure of the Same Course 2 Times; this	• Place on Academic Warning

includes first failure on benchmark assessment when repeating the course after a failure	• Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Repeat academic year • Dismissal
While repeating a year or phase, any Benchmark Assessment Failure or Course Failure in the phase	• Dismissal
Major Lapse in Professionalism	• Place on Academic Warning • Remediate benchmark assessment • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year • Remediation plan/sanctions • Dismissal

Semester 3:

Finding	Typical Expected Outcomes
Course Failure, no prior benchmark assessment or course failure	• Place on Academic Observation • Repeat course if deemed feasible by the SPPC • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year
2 Benchmark Assessment Failures in separate Foundations MS2 courses, no prior benchmark assessment or course failure	• Place on Academic Observation • The student remains fully enrolled and no further action is taken until the end of Foundations MS2 (Semester 3), at which point the SPPC will review the student's complete Foundations Phase record and determine next steps, which may include but are not limited to: • Repeat of one or two courses by January 15 • Repetition of the academic year • Dismissal
Benchmark Assessment Failure while on Academic Observation	• Place on Academic Warning • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Remediate benchmark assessment • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year • Dismissal
While repeating a year or phase, any Benchmark Assessment Failure or Course Failure in the phase	• Dismissal

Incomplete Phase Requirements by Deadline	• Place on Academic Observation • Grade changed from Incomplete to Unsatisfactory, where appropriate • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year
Failure to take Step 1 by UPSOM Deadline	• Place on Academic Observation • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Dismissal if no passing score by 10/1 of same calendar year
Step 1 Failure on first attempt	• Place on Academic Observation • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Dismissal if no passing score by 10/1 of same calendar year
Step 1 Failure 2 Times	• Place on Academic Warning • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Dismissal if no passing score by 10/1 of same calendar year
Step 1 Failure 3 Times	• Dismissal
Major Lapse in Professionalism	• Place on Academic Warning • Remediate benchmark assessment • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year • Remediation plan/sanctions • Dismissal

Clerkships Phase

Finding	Typical Expected Outcomes
Clerkship Failure	• Place on Academic Observation or Academic Warning • Repeat clerkship
Second Clerkship Failure	• Place on Academic Warning • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Repeat clerkships phase • Dismissal
Elective/Course Failure	• Place on Academic Observation or Academic Warning • Repeat elective/course or remediate to elective/course director's satisfaction
Second Elective/Course Failure	• Place on Academic Warning • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Repeat rotation or remediate to course director's satisfaction • Repeat clerkships phase

	Dismissal
NBME Subject Exam Failure in 2 Separate Clerkships	- Place on Academic Observation - Academic LOA for 2-4wks (for study before re-entry)
NBME Subject Exam failure in 3 separate clerkships, even if some or all NBME Subject Exams previously remediated	- Place on Academic Warning - Repeat clerkships phase
Clerkship failure and 1 NBME Subject Exam Failure in another Clerkship	- Place on Academic Warning - Repeat clerkships phase
If required to repeat Clerkships phase, any NBME Subject Exam Failure in either Clerkships or Bridges Phase	Dismissal
Major Lapse in Professionalism	- Place on Academic Warning - Remediate benchmark assessment - Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year - Remediation plan/sanctions - Dismissal

Bridges Phase

Finding	Typical Expected Outcomes
Elective/Course Failure	- Place on Academic Observation or Academic Warning - Repeat Elective/Course
CCA Failure	- Place on Academic Observation - Remediate exam and clinical skill-building as per Assistant Dean for Human Simulation Education
Failure to take Step 2CK by UPSOM Deadline	- Place on Academic Observation - Advise to limit extracurricular activities - Test by SPPC deadline

Failure to take Step 2CK by SPPC Deadline	• Place on Academic Warning • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Delay graduation • Dismissal
Step 2CK Failure 1 Time	• Place on Academic Observation • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Test by SPPC deadline • Delay graduation
Step 2CK Failure 2 Times	• Place on Academic Warning • Advise to limit extracurricular activities • Test by SPPC deadline • Delay graduation
Step 2CK Failure 3 Times	• Dismissal
Major Lapse in Professionalism	• Place on Academic Warning • Remediate benchmark assessment • Repeat portions of the curriculum, including academic year • Remediation plan/sanctions • Dismissal