

Clinical and Academic Policy		
	Policy Title	Academic Advancement
	Policy Number	OME-900.12
	Department/Office	Office of Medical Education
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	Approved By	Executive Medical Education Committee
	Approval Date	June 26, 2025
	Endorsement	Endorsed by WCM-Executive Policy Review Group on July 22, 2025

Purpose

To describe the requirements for Academic Advancement throughout all phases of the medical education curriculum at Weill Cornell Medical College (WCMC).

Scope

This policy applies to WCMC MD students, MD-PhD students, and WCM Workforce Members involved in all components of the MD curriculum.

Policy

Academic Advancement (Progression through the Curriculum) and Graduation

Students must achieve a passing grade, (defined as either “Pass,” “High Pass,” or “Honors”) in all required courses prior to graduation. Any student who is unsure how this policy applies in a given situation should contact the Office of Academic Affairs for clarity. Any adjustments made in the academic advancement of students must be approved by the appropriate Associate Dean(s) and the Senior Associate Dean (Education).

1. Foundational Courses

Students must satisfactorily complete (i.e., receive a grade of “Pass”) each of the foundational year courses, Essential Principles of Medicine (EPOM) Parts A & B, Health, Illness, and Disease (HID) 1 Parts A & B and Health Illness and Disease 2 Parts A & B prior to beginning the clerkship year. Students are expected to complete the foundational courses sequentially.

Students must pass each learning unit within each of the foundational courses (described above) to achieve a “Pass” grade for the course.

If a student receives a non-passing grade of either “Marginal” (M) or “Incomplete” (I) in any foundational course, the Associate Dean of Curricular Affairs in consultation with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs may permit a student to progress to the next foundational course and remediate at a time agreed upon by the Associate Dean of Curriculum and the course director. This is to ensure that a student’s education is not unduly interrupted or extended since each foundational course is held only once a year and there is the potential opportunity for remediation between the first and second year of medical school.

Students must place their highest priority on remediating any failed learning units ahead of summer research fellowships/programs, electives or travel plans. Accordingly, students are ineligible to participate in summer research electives, fellowships or programs between Year 1 and 2 if they have not yet passed EPOM Parts A & B and HID 1 Parts A & B prior to the start date of these fellowships, programs or electives.

This is to ensure ample remediation time prior to the HID 2 start date so that a student's education is not unduly interrupted or extended.

If a student has a grade of "Fail" in a foundational course, the student may advance to the next foundational course but will have to retake that course when it is offered again. This may prolong a student's time to graduation.

2. Area of Concentration (AOC) Milestones

The AOC is a single longitudinal course with interim required milestones throughout the curriculum. A final grade is given after the end of the six-month Scholarly Project (typically completed during Year 4).

Students ordinarily are not permitted to advance to the curricular Phase 2 (Clerkships), until the AOC milestones within the first 1.5 years, curricular Phase 1 (Pre-Clerkships), have been completed. Students ordinarily are not permitted to advance to the curricular Phase 3 (Post-Clerkships), which includes the four-month AOC Scholarly Project (SP) Block 1, until the AOC milestones within the curricular Phase 2 (Clerkships), have been completed.

3. MD-PhD Students

Tri-Institutional MD-PhD students are permitted to begin a portion of Phase 2 (Clerkships) prior to entering the PhD portion of training. They must be in good academic standing in the medical school, which is defined by no outstanding "Marginal", "Fail" or "Incomplete" grades upon entering the PhD portion of training.

MD-PhD students re-enter the medical school portion of training after they have successfully defended their thesis and submitted the final, approved copy of their thesis to the relevant graduate school office, and they are held to the same standards for assessment, advancement, and promotion as the MD students.

4. Clerkships

Students ordinarily will complete all required clerkships prior to beginning the initial Area of Concentration (AOC) Scholarly Project (SP) Block 1. The Medicine and Surgery clerkships, which are pre-requisites to many advanced courses, must be taken during the clerkship year and cannot be deferred to curricular Phase 3-Post-Clerkship. Students must also successfully complete the Step 1 Study Course during their Clerkship year in order to advance to Phase 3.

There may be individual circumstances in which a student does not complete all clerkships (i.e., achieve a passing grade) prior to the initial AOC SP Block 1, but is allowed, with Associate Dean-level permission, to progress to the AOC SP Block. For compelling academic reasons, typically involving remediation of academic encumbrances, these circumstances need to be discussed and approved by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. For compelling personal/medical reasons, the circumstances need to be discussed and approved by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs in consultation with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

A student who has not yet taken, or who has taken but has not achieved a passing grade in a clerkship or clerkships (including "Marginal", "Fail" and "Incomplete" grades), except for Medicine and Surgery clerkships as noted above, may be permitted to progress to curricular Phase 3, beginning with the AOC SP Block 1/ Translational Science (TS) and Advanced Clinical Ethics (ACE) Courses, as permitted by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs with the expectation that the student will achieve a passing grade at a future opportunity to do so.

5. Area of Concentration (AOC), Translational Science (TS), and Advanced Clinical Ethics (ACE) Courses

Students may fulfill the AOC SP during a regularly scheduled block in a subsequent year of training based on the approval of the AOC course leadership. These students are permitted to complete Phase 2 courses

or take other Phase 3 courses during their original AOC SP Block in consultation with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for academic reasons or the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for personal/medical reasons. Students who have non-passing (“Marginal”, “Fail” or “Incomplete”) grades in the AOC, TS, and ACE courses may be permitted to progress in the curriculum, based on the approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs or in cases of personal/medical reasons, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. However, students need to achieve a passing grade in these course(s) prior to graduation.

6. Electives

Students who have a non-passing (“Marginal”, “Fail” or “Incomplete”) grade in an elective course may be permitted to progress in the curriculum, based on the approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, or in cases of personal/medical reasons, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs.

Students who have non-passing grades in any required course may be permitted to enroll in WCMC-sponsored electives, to enhance specific knowledge and skills to address academic deficiencies. The elective enrollment requires the approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Students must meet any elective pre-requisites to enroll in the course. Students who have non-passing grades in any required course are not permitted to enroll in international electives or non-WCMC sponsored electives until a passing grade in that course is obtained. Exceptions may be made by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

7. Required Sub-Internship and Transition to Residency Course

Students who have non-passing “Marginal” or “Fail” grades in any prior required course will not be allowed to progress to the required sub-internship. Students who have an “Incomplete” grade in any prior course may be allowed to progress to the required sub-internship, based on the approval and recommendation of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. The Transition to Residency course must be taken during the same calendar year as the student’s graduation. Exceptions may be made by the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for instances in which, for example, the MD degree is anticipated to be conferred off-cycle.

8. Registering a Score for United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) Step 1 and Step 2CK

Students who will graduate after May 2024 are required to take the USMLE Step 1 exam by December 31 of their third year and Step 2 (Clinical Knowledge) exam prior to March 15 of the year in which they are graduating. Note: passing these exams is not a graduation requirement.

9. Conferral of M.D. Degree

Satisfactory completion of all required courses and required academic milestones must be achieved prior to the conferral of the M.D. degree.

Definitions

Good Academic Standing – A term used to refer to students with no non-passing grades in their academic record (no temporary Incomplete or Marginal grades and no Fail grade in a course not yet repeated)

Workforce Member – Faculty; Staff; Students; Volunteers; Trainees; and other persons whose conduct, in the performance of work for WCM, is under the direction and control of WCM, whether or not they are paid by WCM.

Compliance with this Policy

Students must meet all criteria to graduate from the Weill Cornell Medical College.

Contact Information

Office of Academic Affairs,
1300 York Avenue, Room C-118

References

Weill Cornell Medicine Student Handbook

Policy Approval

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Executive Medical Education Committee (EMEC) on June 26, 2025.

This policy was endorsed by the WCM-Executive Policy Review Group on July 22, 2025.

Version History

Date	Author	Revisions
May 11, 2017	Medical Education	Original Date of Issue
May 13, 2021	Medical Education	Updates Approved by EMEC
October 19, 2023	Office of Academic Affairs	Updates Approved by EMEC
June 26, 2025	Office of Academic Affairs	No substantial updates. Transferred to the WCM standardized policy template and assigned new policy number, "OME-900.12."