

| Clinical and Academic Policy Document | | |
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|  | Policy Title | Grading and Assessment |
| | Policy Number | OME-900.03 |
| | Department/Office | Office of Medical Education |
| | Effective Date | November 17, 2016 |
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| | Approved By | Executive Medical Education Committee |
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Purpose

To ensure a standardized grading and assessment approach across the Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) curriculum for the MD Degree in compliance with LCME standards 9.5 and 9.6.

Scope

This policy applies to all Course and Clerkship Directors in the MD program.

Policy

All course directors are required to submit a final course grade which will appear on the student transcript. For all courses, the grade should include a “letter grade.”

In the first year and a half of the curriculum, students may receive the following final grades:

- “Pass” - satisfactory performance; or
- “Fail” - below satisfactory performance in all or a preponderance of the components and/or activities comprising the final grade.

In the evaluation of clinical clerkships, an additional grade of “Honors” and “High Pass” can be assigned.

Electives and all Phase 3 courses are graded only on a “Pass/Fail” basis.

In addition, the temporary/placeholder grades “Incomplete” or “Marginal” may be assigned.

- “Marginal” - a non-passing, interim grade based on less than satisfactory performance in one or more components and/or activities comprising the final grade.
- “Incomplete” - given in any course in which the student has been unable, due to an emergent event or a planned and excused activity, to attend and/or complete a required component or activity that the course director has agreed may be completed at a subsequent agreed-upon date. The grade “Incomplete” is not available in the event that the failure to attend and/or complete a required component or activity results from unexcused absences or activities.

In rare circumstances in which a student begins a course but does not complete at least half of it, a final grade of “Withdrawal” is assigned.

If a student receives a non-passing interim grade of “Marginal” or “Incomplete,” the learning unit or course director will discuss the performance with the student and will notify the Office of Academic Affairs. The opportunity to do remedial work, or complete necessary work, generally will be presented to the student, in accordance with the procedures described in these regulations. The work that is necessary to address an “Incomplete”, “Marginal,” or “Fail” grade should take place at the first available opportunity (as determined by the course director in consultation with the student and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs), but may not conflict with any other scheduled academic activity. In the case of a “Marginal” grade, if a student completes the remedial or missing work satisfactorily, a “Marginal” interim grade will revert to a grade of “Pass”; if not, the grade will convert to “Fail.”

In the case of an “Incomplete” grade, if a student completes the missing work satisfactorily within the time extension period specified a priori, the “Incomplete” interim grade can convert to either a “Pass,” “High Pass” (if available), or “Honors” (if available) grade; if not, the grade may convert to either a “Marginal” or a “Fail” grade. If a student receives a grade of “Fail,” the learning unit or course director will notify the Office of Academic Affairs and will discuss with the student the need to repeat the course or other remediation if appropriate. In the event a student’s performance is deemed unsatisfactory, the Medical College may follow other procedures, also described in the student handbook to assess continued participation in the MD program.

In addition to a letter grade, narrative comments must be provided to all students for each course more than two weeks in length if the course contains small group teaching for at least 3 sessions with the same faculty preceptor. Additional narrative comments as formative, constructive feedback should be provided to students for core clinical clerkships of more than two weeks in length. Narrative comments for all relevant courses are available to students in the performance evaluation comments box of the OASIS platform. Additionally, in Phase 2, the narrative comments are synthesized into a single narrative at the end of the clerkship.

All clinical courses should adopt a consistent narrative format. This is to ensure consistency in grading information and feedback to students across all clinical courses. In addition, official, summative comments from core clerkships are used for the Medical School Performance Evaluation (MSPE), also known as “the Dean’s Letter.” Consistency in the narrative summative comments portion of the final grade gives the MSPE a more professional and uniform look, making it a more effective document in the residency application process.

Narrative Assessment Guidelines:

1. For the official, summative comments section, write 1-2 paragraphs, synthesizing the feedback.
2. Use whole sentences in proper English in the same tense (past) with correct spelling.
3. Write in the third, not first, person.
4. Do not number sections.
5. Use the student’s formal first name; do not use nicknames.
6. Do not enter grading rubrics in the summative assessment section. These should be delineated on the course site.
7. For courses with exams, do not routinely report the exam score
8. If discussing a student’s outstanding written exam score, use the correct phrase “NBME clinical subject exam” instead of “shelf exam.” If referencing that a score is above a mean, make sure to state what the reference mean is.
9. Constructive/formative comments section
 - Enter helpful and constructive suggestions for areas of improvement
10. For students who fail the NBME clinical subject exam, report to the Associate Dean (Academic Affairs) and the student: the failed grade, the minimum passing grade, and the remediation recommendation.
11. Grades (Final Grade including narrative comments) are due no later than four weeks after the course ends.

“Incomplete” Grade Reporting Guidelines

1. The course director must submit in the narrative comments, a description of what portion of the course:
 - a. has already been completed; and
 - b. is left to complete upon return, including the number of weeks needed.

2. In order for coursework credit to be given up to the time prior to the student's leaving the course and to assess the final course grade when completed, there must be documentation of the quality of the work the student has already completed.
 - a. Foundational courses: course directors should keep on file any completed unit grades and quiz scores.
 - b. Clerkship and other courses: clerkship/course directors should obtain and keep on file Student Performance Evaluations (SPEs) and any other grading forms for that portion of the clerkship/course the student has completed.
3. The plan for completion, including timing and scheduling should be discussed with:
 - a. the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, for "Incomplete" grades due to personal/medical issues
 - b. the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, for "Incomplete" grades due to academic issues
4. Once a student has completed the course, in addition to submitting the final grade, the clerkship/course director should update all narrative comments, eliminating any mention of the initial "Incomplete" grade in the summative comments section.

Definitions

Assessment: The systematic use of a variety of methods to collect, analyze, and use information to determine whether a medical student has acquired the competencies (e.g., knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes) that the profession and the public expect of a physician.

Narrative Assessment: Written comments from faculty that assess student performance and achievement in meeting specific objectives of a course or clerkship, such as professionalism, clinical reasoning.

Compliance with this Policy

NA

Contact Information

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References

Policy Approval

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Executive Medical Education Committee.

Version History

| Date | Author | Revisions |
|------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 11/17/2016 | Office of Medical Education | Original date of issue. Titled, "Clinical Grade Reporting Guidelines." |
| 8/2020 | Office of Medical Education | Minor Updates. |
| 1/23/2025 | Office of Medical Education | Transfer to new policy template. Retitled to, "Grading and Assessment," and assigned policy number, "OME-900.03." Updated to align with LCME standards. |

Appendix

N/A