



# Grading & Grade Appeals

**Senior Leader:** Medical School Dean

**Responsible University Officer:** Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education

**Policy Owner:** Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education

**Policy Contact:** Medical School Registrar

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## POLICY STATEMENT

The medical school has defined grading criteria and informs students about how they will be assessed in each course.

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## REASON FOR POLICY

The assignment of grades reflects students' mastery of content and level of performance in the medical school curriculum.

The policy also ensures the medical school meets LCME Accreditation requirements as follows:

**Element 9.6: SETTING STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT.** "A medical school ensures that faculty members with appropriate knowledge and expertise set standards of achievement in each required learning experience in the medical education program."

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## PROCEDURES

### I. Course and Clerkship Grading Structure

#### A. Grade Bases and Grade Definitions

Foundations phase courses have a grade basis of P-N. Clerkship courses have either a H-E-S-N or P-N grade basis. The grade basis is determined when the course is created and cannot be changed mid-year. Any changes to the grade basis are approved by the Medical School Education Committee (MSEC).

**P** – Pass. Achievement meets the course requirements.

**N** – No Pass. Signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed. Students earning an N (No Pass) grade in one or more courses are subject to the *Academic Progress and Graduation Policy* including requirements for remediating courses and making satisfactory academic progress (see "*Related Information*" below).

**H** – Honors. Achievement is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet the course requirements.

**E** – Excellent. Achievement is significantly above the level necessary to meet the course requirements.

**S** – Satisfactory. Achievement meets the course requirements.

#### B. Other Grade Symbols and Definitions

**I** – Incomplete. An Incomplete (I) grade may be granted at the discretion of the Course Director when a student has completed a substantial portion of the course and is passing, but extenuating circumstances prevent timely completion of the course, or when a clerkship is successfully completed with the exception of a non-substantive component such as the final exam or completion of all required patient encounter logs.

An *Incomplete Contract* signed by the Course Director, and either the student's Academic Advisor (for Twin Cities students) or the Dean of Students (for Duluth students) and must outline the work left to be completed and the deadline by which it must be completed. Deadlines for completion of work can be no later than one calendar year from the last date of the course. The *Incomplete Contract* must be submitted to the UMMS Registrar no later than one week after grades are due for the course. Failure to submit the *Incomplete Contract* to the UMMS Registrar, or failure to complete the terms of the *Incomplete Contract* will result in an N (No Pass) grade.

**K** – Course is in progress. Used for Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships or other courses spanning multiple terms before a grade is assigned.

**NG** – No grade required.

**NR** – Not reported. Assigned when an instructor has not posted grades by the grading deadline.

**T** – Test credit. Assigned when a student successfully remediates a course by re-examination. Will appear in a separate section on the Transcript.

**W** – Withdraw. Course withdrawals (W) must be approved by the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (Twin Cities) or the Associate Dean for Student Life and Academic Affairs (Duluth) in consultation with the Course Director. Assigned when a student withdraws from a course after completing 50% or more of the course. The 50% completion point is defined as the midpoint between the first and last session of the course. In the event this date falls on a weekend or holiday, the 50% completion point will be the next available business day. (See the [Medical School Registration Policy](#) for information on withdrawals from courses).

**X** – Course is part of a sequence of courses and is in progress. Used for clinical continuity courses in the MSTP program.

### **C. Foundations Phase**

Grades in the Foundations phase are criterion-referenced, that is, based on a student's mastery of the material and not comparative to other students in the class. A student must accumulate 70% or more of the total points in the course in order to earn a course grade of P (Pass).

### **D. Clinical Immersion and Specialty-Specific Transitions Phases**

Students must pass all required components of the clerkship as listed in the online learning management system (LMS). The LMS will also include criteria for each possible grade. If a student meets all the criteria to pass the clerkship but fails the clerkship exam, an I (Incomplete) grade will be entered and the student will be allowed a second attempt at the exam. A second failure of the final exam results in a N (No Pass) grade in the clerkship.

### **E. Changing Course or Clerkship Grades**

There are limited circumstances in which a grade may change after it has been posted on a student's official Transcript. In each circumstance, the request for the grade change must be submitted in writing to the UMMS Registrar by the Course Director/Coordinator or the Medical Student Scholastic Standing Committee. The UMMS Registrar will change the grade and file the documentation in the student's file. Course or clerkship grade changes occur when:

1. The work has been completed in a course with an I (Incomplete) grade.

2. A course or clerkship has been successfully remediated.
3. Concluding a course/clerkship or a sequence of courses/clerkships in which K or X grades have been assigned.
4. An error has been made on the initial grade entry.
5. The Scholastic Standing Committee (MSSSC) authorizes a grade change; this may result in a non-passing grade.
6. A student's appeal of a grade is successful ("IV" below).
7. The course grade is adjusted due to a grade change on a course component reviewed by an ad hoc committee ("II.C" below).

## **II. Graded Assessments & Components in Courses and Clerkships**

### **A. Foundations Phase**

Students must meet all requirements and pass all components of the course as listed in the online learning management system (LMS).

Graded assessments (quizzes, exams) in Foundations phase courses are criterion-referenced, that is, based on a student's mastery of the material and not comparative to other students in the class. The pass cutoff score is set at  $\geq 70\%$ .

Each student whose total score for the course is below 70%, but within one standard error of measurement, triggers an automatic review by an ad hoc committee (see below). This ad hoc committee will make a recommendation to the Course Director who will have the final decision about Pass/No Pass.

### **B. Clinical Immersion and Specialty-Specific Transitions Phases**

Students must meet all requirements and pass all components of the clerkship as listed in the online learning management system (LMS).

### **C. Foundations Phase Ad Hoc Committee**

Upon obtaining the final results of the total score for the Foundations phase course, scores below 70%, but within one standard error of measurement, will be reviewed.

These scores will be reviewed, with the student's name removed, by an ad hoc committee consisting of the Course Director(s) for the course in question, one additional Course Director, and a representative from the Campus' Assessment and Evaluation Office. Upon completion of the review, the Course Director(s) will make a final decision and document the rationale.

The final decision of the review should be completed in a timely manner based on committee member availability (generally within five business days from receipt of the scores). Students will be notified, in writing, of the outcome of the review, including the rationale. If the outcome changes the score (i.e. to a passing grade) it will be updated in the student's record.

## **III. Appealing<sup>1</sup> Graded In-Class Components**

A student who believes the score they received on a graded in-class component (assessments, written assignments, class participation, etc) within a course/clerkship is not justified must contact the Course Director(s), in writing, within ten days of receipt of the grade to discuss the issue, including providing a rationale for the appeal.

The Course Director(s) will decide the most appropriate action to take in considering the student's appeal, which may include, but is not limited to:

1. acting on the appeal directly
2. requesting input from faculty members involved in the item under appeal, including the instructor(s) of record
3. requesting the student meet with the Instructor of Record

The Course Director(s) will render a decision regarding the student's appeal within ten business days from receipt of the student's written appeal and notify the student of the decision, in writing, adjusting in-class grades on the components in question, as needed. The decision of the Course Director(s) is final.

In the event that a changed score on a component changes the final grade for the course *after* the course grade has been posted, the UMMS Registrar will be notified of the change in order to make the needed adjustment to the student's official academic record, as per the process outlined above.

#### IV. **Appealing<sup>1</sup> Course or Clerkship Grades**

The University gives broad authority to Course Directors, as content experts, to determine student grades. As such, students cannot appeal a grade directly.

Students are entitled to an explanation by the Course Director(s) of the grade they received and can file a complaint if they believe they have been unfairly evaluated. Complaints must be based on a claimed violation of a University rule, policy, or established practice and provide evidence that:

- The Course Director(s) failed to follow the grading policy in the syllabus;
- The assigned grade was unreasonable based on the available information the Course Director(s) had; and/or
- The method of evaluation applied in determining the grade is inconsistent when compared to other comparable situations.

**Informal Resolution:** Students appealing their course or clerkship grade must first attempt to resolve the appeal informally directly with the Course or Clerkship Director(s).

1. Submit a written request to the Course or Clerkship Director(s) detailing what your concern is and any allegations that meet the conditions noted above; include what action you are requesting be taken to address the concern. Students may seek assistance with this step from their assigned Academic Advisor (Twin Cities) or the Associate Dean for Student Services and Academic Affairs (Duluth).
2. The appeal must be submitted to the Course or Clerkship Director(s) within ten business days from the date grades are posted. A student who does not initiate an appeal within the stated time limit waives any right to appeal the grade in question.
3. Meet with the Course or Clerkship Director(s) to discuss the rationale for the appeal.
4. The Course or Clerkship Director(s) is(are) to provide the student with their decision and rationale, in writing, in a timely fashion (generally within ten business days from receipt of the student's written appeal).
5. If the issue is resolved to the satisfaction of the student, both the student's written appeal and the Course/Clerkship Directors written decision must be forwarded to the UMMS Registrar who will change the grade and file the documentation in the student's file.

**Formal Resolution:** If the issue is not resolved to the student's satisfaction through informal resolution as described above, the student may appeal under the formal resolution process.

1. Students must submit their complaint (this [template](#) may be used) to the UMMS' Vice Dean for Education and Academic Affairs. Complaints should include a description of the outcome of informal resolution and a justification for challenging the decision of the Course or Clerkship Director(s).
2. The Vice Dean for Education and Academic Affairs will follow the process outlined in the [Conflict Resolution Process for Student Academic Complaints](#).
3. Assistance with the formal resolution process can be found with the Dean of Students on the student's respective campus, or through the University's Office for Conflict Resolution ([ocr@umn.edu](mailto:ocr@umn.edu), 612-624-1030).

<sup>1</sup> It is recognized that subjectivity is inherent in many evaluations of students that affect their grades. As a general rule, appeals that cite subjectivity or a difference of opinion between the student and evaluator(s) regarding a student's performance will not be successful.

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## FORMS/INSTRUCTIONS

[Agreement for the Completion of Incomplete Work](#) (Incomplete Contract)

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## ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

Subject	Contact	Phone	Fax/Email
<b>Primary Contact</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Fax/Email</b>
Medical School Registrar (Twin Cities)	Jennifer Neufeld	612-625-4489	<a href="mailto:neuf0006@umn.edu">neuf0006@umn.edu</a>
Director of Student Affairs (Duluth)	Shawn Evenson	218-726-8873	<a href="mailto:sevenson@d.umn.edu">sevenson@d.umn.edu</a>

## RELATED INFORMATION

This policy replaces previous policies or portions of previous policies Mid Course and Clerkship Feedback, Years 1-4; Required Clerkship Grade Standardization, Years 3 and 4; Clinical Course Grades, Years 1-4; Exam Grades, Years 1 and 2; Course Grades, Years 1 and 2; and Medical School Grading and Transcripts: Twin Cities, Duluth

**Academic Progress and Graduation Policy:**

<https://med.umn.edu/md-students/medical-student-policies>

**Scholastic Standing Committees:**

<https://med.umn.edu/md-students/medical-student-policies>

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## HISTORY

**Amended:** September 2018 - Office of the Registrar

**Amended:** August 2019

**Approved by:** Education Council

**Amended for content by:** UMMS Registrar, August 2021

**Reviewed and Approved:** Medical Student Education Committee (MSEC), August 2022

**Reviewed with minor updates:** August 2023