



VCU

Grade Appeals in the Pre-Clinical Phase and Longitudinal Curriculum Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose ---

This policy establishes the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine's (VCU SOM) formal process by which students may respond and appeal an awarded grade within the pre-clinical phase and longitudinal curriculum, in accordance with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) requirement of medical schools to follow a single set of core standards for the advancement and graduation of all medical students. This includes defining a formal process for actions that may affect the status of a medical student including: timely notice of any impending actions, disclosure of any evidence upon which actions are based, and a formal process by which students may respond and appeal any adverse decisions related to advancement, graduation, or dismissal from the program.

Stakeholders ---

The faculty, staff, and students of the VCU School of Medicine are responsible for knowing this standard operating procedure, its contents, and provisions.

Definitions ---

VCU SOM: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

LCME: Liaison Committee on Medical Education. The group with authority to accredit medical education programs leading to the MD degree in the United States and Canada.

OME: Office of Medical Education.

CD: Course Director/Co-Director/Assistant Director/Associate Director.

ADPME: Associate Dean for Pre-Clinical Medical Education.

PAC: Promotion and Advancement Committee.

Grade: A student's grade is defined as the final grade, including any individual components and associated summative, narrative comments.

Pre-Clinical Phase: All courses in the M1 and M2 year of the MD curriculum.

Longitudinal Curriculum: All longitudinal courses spanning across the MD curriculum.

Responsibilities ---



VCU School of Medicine

Students: Students have a right to appeal their grade or component of their grade they feel has been awarded unjustly, in a biased or arbitrary manner. Students are responsible for following the procedures below to submit an appeal, and are responsible for accepting grade feedback from the CD, as well as accepting the final decision of the PAC.

CD: Course Directors are tasked with using their professional judgement in determining a student's grade based on academic performance. They are responsible for ensuring grades are awarded in a uniform manner based on established expectations and criteria, and coordinates with the OME to finalize grades within the LMS.

OME: Support staff for the pre-clinical curriculum within the OME are responsible for ensuring the final gradebook is accurate, and coordinates with the CD to finalize grades within the LMS.

PAC: The PAC holds responsibility for reviewing all grade appeals, reviewing submitted information, and rendering a final decision on any grade changes executed as part of an appeal.

Procedures

Grade Feedback

- Students who have questions about their final grade must solicit feedback about the grade from the CD prior to pursuing a grade appeal. Students must:
 - Contact the CD and the OME within seven (7) calendar days of the date of electronic notification that their final grade has been posted to schedule this meeting.
 - Meet with the CD and the OME to review the final awarded grade within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the date of the electronic notification that their final grade has been posted
 - Discuss the students' progress throughout the course and how the awarded grade was achieved
 - Upon conclusion of the meeting, students who decide to continue with the grade appeal process must follow the procedures outlined below in the Grade Appeals section
 - University recognized holidays during which the university is closed will not count toward the established timelines

Grade Appeals

Basis for Appeals

- Students may appeal a grade in instances where one (1) or more of the following has occurred:
 - *Basis Not Related to Performance:* The student must demonstrate that their grade was awarded based on factors other than academic or clinical performance.
 - *Deviation from Established Criteria or Guidelines:* The student must demonstrate that the grade awarded was not calculated according to the grading criteria outlined in the course syllabus.

- *Calculation/Factual Error*: The student must demonstrate that the grade awarded was calculated using false or erroneous information, excluded pertinent information that would have otherwise impacted the grade awarded, or demonstrate narrative comments that are not representative of the student's actual performance.

Appeal Submissions

M1 Courses, M2 Courses, and all Longitudinal Courses throughout all phases of the curriculum.

- Students have the ability to appeal their grade and/or summative narrative components of their final grade. Appeals must:
 - Be submitted via email to the CD and the OME within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the date of electronic notification that their final grade has been posted
 - University recognized holidays during which the university is closed will not count toward the established timelines
 - Be submitted using the Grade Appeal Form
 - Be no more than five-hundred (500) words maximum
 - Provide evidence to support the appeal, including:
 - Reason(s) why the grade or grade component should be changed
 - Information that was previously unavailable or not considered as part of the original grade assignment
- Appeals that fail to meet the criteria as outlined above will be considered incomplete and the appeal will not be considered.
- Students are not permitted to contact individual faculty to ask for additional comments in support of their appeal.
 - Reaching out to individual evaluators is considered a violation of professional standards and students may be subject to adverse action.
- Students are not permitted to appeal individual assessment questions
 - The OME carefully reviews each exam's item analysis and makes necessary changes, which may include the acceptance of multiple answers for a question or the correction of any mis-keyed answers or typographical errors
- Students are not permitted to appeal the recording of final grades on the official transcript as outlined in the Student Promotion and Advancement Committee Policy
 - Non-passing grades will remain on a student's transcript
 - In the event of a successful remediation, the student's transcript will reflect both the original non-passing grade, as well as the remediated grade

Review of Appeals

- Appeals will be reviewed by the PAC. The PAC will:
 - Review the submitted appeal

- Appeals will be reviewed at the next scheduled PAC meeting after the appeal and all supporting documents have been submitted
- The PAC will render a decision regarding all appeals reviewed during the meeting and notify the OME
- The OME will notify the student of the outcome of the appeal within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of notification from the PAC
- University recognized holidays during which the university is closed will not count toward the established timelines

Final Decisions

- Decisions of the PAC are final, and are not appealable.

Grade Changes

- In instances where an appeal results in a change in grade for the student, the CD will complete a Change of Grade Form
 - The Change of Grade Form will be submitted via email to both the Registrar and the ADPME
 - The Registrar will change the grade in the LMS to reflect the change and certify the new grade

Discrimination

- VCU prohibits unlawful discrimination as outlined in the VCU Preventing and Responding to Discrimination Policy, located here: <https://vcu.public.doctract.com/doctract/documentportal/08DA32A740D317171538135833B28B2F>
 - Forms for reporting concerns are located on the VCU Office of Institutional Equity, Effectiveness and Success website: <https://equity.vcu.edu/>

Related Policies

Student Promotion and Advancement Committee Policy
 Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) Policy
 Confidentiality, Maintenance, and Amendment of Student Educational Records
 VCU Preventing and Responding to Discrimination Policy

Review Cycle and Revision History

The policy is reviewed and may be revised by the Curriculum Council as necessary, but at least every three years.

Current Revision Approved: 06.22.2023

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards ---

LCME Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the MD Degree:

- LCME Standard 9, Element 9
- LCME Standard 11, Element 6