

## Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM)

**Statement:** Assessment, Advancement, and Graduation

**Subject:** Academic Affairs, Student Affairs

**Administrator:** R. Vari & E. Holt

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### 1 Purpose

VTCSOM is a professional community of students and faculty who share the responsibility for the achievement of a common goal: the education of competent physicians who shall exhibit and maintain high standards of professional and personal conduct. Achievement of this goal is a complex process with many incremental steps through which a student must progress. The progress of students shall be monitored by the faculty to ensure and facilitate each student's adherence to proper standards of performance including academic, professional skills, behavior, academic honesty, and satisfactory performance within all components of the curriculum.

### 2 Policy

Each student has the responsibility of abiding by the rules and regulations of VTCSOM and meeting the standards of academic performance and personal conduct. At the same time, each student has the right to be afforded the benefit of policies and procedures in matters related to his/her progress through the medical curriculum and with respect to grievances of an academic nature. The Medical Student Promotion and Performance Committee (MSPPC) is delegated the oversight responsibility for student advancement and graduation.

### 3 Procedures

#### Assessments

The Patient-Centered Curriculum is incorporated into integrated Blocks which structurally serve as courses. The curriculum is designed to maximize learning by minimizing formal didactic sessions and emphasizing self-directed learning in a team setting. Students in VTCSOM are assessed as they progress through and complete each Phase of the curriculum. The assessment process includes internal and external measures as described below.

VTCSOM's Goals and Objectives document contains benchmarks and outcomes focused on knowledge, skills, and attitudes for all of the goals listed. This provides a framework for development of assessment methodology targeted to definite outcomes.

#### Internal Assessments:

The knowledge base of students is assessed with multiple choice questions, lab practical exam questions, short essay basic science questions (tasks on the Integrated Case Exam), and individual facilitator comments and ratings on the "Acquisition and Integration of Knowledge" section of the on Patient-Centered Learning Assessment form (SPIRAL). Clinical skills are assessed with end-of-Block clinical skills exams. Students are assessed in data gathering and interpersonal communication skills as well as clinical reasoning. "Peer Teaching and Communication Skills" are assessed on the SPIRAL form. Clinical reasoning

skills are assessed with tasks on the Integrated Case Exam. Attitudes are assessed by narratives and ratings on the "Professionalism" section of the Patient-Centered Learning Case form. Success in the Interprofessionalism and Research domains are assessed by a combination of multiple choice questions, written assignments during the Block, and formal assessments by faculty. In the teamwork aspects of the interprofessionalism curriculum, preceptor assessments are obtained. Specific timelines for research goals are set by research mentors and committees, and reports on student progress are to be submitted. In addition, students provide self-assessments to their facilitators during the formative assessment sessions of each Block which are compared to the facilitator impressions of the individual student's performance.

Exams are given at the end of each Block. The exams are coordinated by the Director of Assessment. Some assignments may be given in the Research and Interprofessionalism Domains that will be needed to be completed during the Block in order to satisfactorily complete the block. These assignments will be made known to the students prior to beginning each block and formative assessment should be included. Students will be given the results of assessment week on the Friday of that week and these will be posted on Blackboard. Grades will be reported to the Registrar at the end of Special Studies Week.

During Phase 2, students are assessed utilizing a standardized assessment form in all clerkships and electives. In addition, various clerkships utilize other means of assessing students. The details are described below.

Students must demonstrate satisfactory progress on their research project to their Research Committee by the end of Phase 1 in order to continue to Phase 2.

**External Assessments:**

All students must take and pass Step 1 of the USMLE before they begin the second clerkship rotation of Phase 2.

All students must pass the Clinical Knowledge (CK) and Clinical Skills (CS) portions of Step 2 of the USMLE in order to graduate.

**Grading Assessment Policy**

The following grading policy is designed to match the Patient-Centered Curriculum at VTC SOM. The policy is based on the premise that the curriculum is criterion-referenced and evaluations are based on stated learning objectives. The grading system is intended to reflect the needs of the students, the faculty, and external agencies (e.g., residency programs). The Senior Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee) provides each student with their performance results and a record of this is kept in the student's educational file. Grades for transcripts are reported to the Registrar for inclusion in the student's formal record. Any notices of deficiencies are also forwarded to the Chair of MSPPC whenever appropriate.

**Student Assessment Plan**

Student success in the program of study will be measured and assessed using a variety of both internally and externally developed assessment methods. Student progress and

achievement will be assessed at defined intervals. Appropriate and frequent formative feedback will be provided throughout the curriculum.

Success in achieving the stated objectives of the curriculum will be graded and documented using a Satisfactory (S) / Unsatisfactory (U) grading system.

### **Phase 1**

#### **A. Assessment Components**

Success in achieving the stated learning objectives of the Phase 1 curriculum will be measured at regular intervals using both objective and subjective measures. Each interval assessment (Block) exam will be comprised of six (6) individual component assessments: four Domain Assessment Tools, an Integrated Case Exam and the Patient-Centered Learning Case Facilitator Assessment. Individual elements of each component are indicated below.

#### **Components of the Learning Assessment Plan**

<b><u>Component</u></b>	<b><u>Passing Score</u></b>	<b><u>Grade</u></b>
<b>Basic Science Domain</b> MCQ Exam (NBME Questions) Laboratory Exam	TBD*	S/U
<b>Clinical Science Domain</b> MCQ Exam Clinical Skills Exam	75%	S/U
<b>Research Domain</b> Assignments Written/MCQ Exam	75%	S/U
<b>Interprofessionalism Domain</b> Preceptor Evaluations Team Action Group Written/MCQ Exam	75%**	S/U
<b>Integrated Case Exam</b> Case-Based Short Answer Exam	75%	S/U
<b>Patient-Centered Learning Case Facilitator Assessment (SPIRAL)</b>		S/U

**\*NOTE: (TBD): the passing score for the Basic Science Domain is determined based on individual block exam format and the use of NBME cut-score standards.**

**\*\* NOTE (75%): the passing score in some blocks for Interprofessionalism may be different than 75% to be congruent with other Interprofessional School grading standards.**

#### **B. Assessment Policies (Implemented by the Director of Assessment)**

1. Grades assigned for academic achievement/accomplishment include:  
Satisfactory (S)  
Unsatisfactory (U)

Other grades which can be recorded:

Incomplete (I) - An Incomplete grade is assigned only to a student who has been doing Satisfactory (S) work in a course, but who has not completed all the requirements due to extenuating medical and/or personal circumstances. The Incomplete grade may only be removed by Satisfactory (S) completion of the course. Incomplete grades must be converted in order to be considered for promotion. A student cannot graduate with an Incomplete grade on his or her academic record.

Withdrawn (W) – This grade notation is assigned to a student who, with approval from the MSPPC (Medical Student Performance and Promotion Committee), withdraws from a course and/or has been granted a leave of absence.

If a student receives a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for a course, the original grade assigned for that course will remain on their transcript. If they receive a grade of Satisfactory (S) after remediating the course the grade on the transcript will be changed to an (S). If the student repeats the course, the transcript will show both registrations and both grades.

2. Students must earn a grade of Satisfactory (S) in each of the six (6) Components of a Block in order to remain in good academic standing.
3. Students in good academic standing who receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for any one (1) component of a Block will be provided with a remediation plan, detailed in a written and signed contract, which must be successfully completed during the Special Studies week. The remediation plan is tailored to the individual student following identification of deficiencies and the degree of unsatisfactory performance in a particular Domain. The remediation exam could consist of targeted questions on identified topics or, in the case of more severe deficiencies, a new comprehensive exam. In addition, students will be required to meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services before or during Special Studies week to discuss the availability of additional academic support services and to facilitate other counseling services if necessary. Successful remediation results in the student returning to the status of good academic standing. Students who fail to successfully remediate a deficiency during Special Studies week will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory for the Block and will be placed on academic probation. They will be allowed to participate in the next Block and will be required to remediate the deficiency in the month following Blocks IV (Year 1) or VIII (Year 2). Students on academic probation who are required to complete an end-of-the-year remediation will be reported to the MSPPC. This remediation consists of a minimum of four weeks of independent study focused on the Domain(s) that was (were) not successfully completed during the block. Similar assessment tools are applied to test for competency in the Domain(s) at the end of this remediation period. Students who successfully remediate the Block will be returned to good academic status. Students who fail to successfully remediate a block during the summer will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.

### **Block Remediation during Special Studies Week**

The following Remediation Plan allows students who do not successfully complete a given Block assessment to identify their deficiencies and demonstrate they have addressed them prior to proceeding on to the next Block. These activities occur during the week immediately following assessment week or in some cases in the month following Block IV and Block VIII.

If a student receives an “Unsatisfactory” grade on a knowledge or skills-based component of Block assessment, the student is required to meet with the Domain Leader to discuss a plan for remediation. The initial step of the plan is always a review of the failed examination by the student and the faculty member with attention given to the identification of areas of academic strength and weakness.

**Basic Science Domain**

Year 01 (Anatomy Practical Exam)

If anatomy practical exam deficiency noted, focused study on anatomy and remediation activities based on the identified areas of weakness.

Years 01/02 (NBME Exam failure)

Comprehensive study of *all* material presented during Block  
Comprehensive NBME exam

**Research Domain**

Focused study and remediation activities based on identified areas of weakness  
Focused exam based on specific identified weaknesses.

**Integrated Case Exam (ICE)**

Focused study and remediation activities based on identified areas of weakness

**Clinical Sciences Domain**

OSCE

Focused study and remediation activities based on identified areas of weakness (written, interview, skills)

Written Exam

Focused exam based on specific identified weaknesses (written and/or interview, skills)

**Interprofessionalism Domain**

Focused study and remediation activities based on identified areas of weakness

**PCL Facilitator Assessment (SPIRAL)**

Focused review of PCL Facilitator Assessment and remediation activities based on identified areas of weakness (Acquisition and Integration of Knowledge, Peers Teaching and Communication, Professionalism)

In all cases, participating faculty will provide written documentation of the completion of required components of the remedial experience and will make a recommendation to the Director of Assessment, via the written signed contract, regarding the award of a “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” grade.

4. Students who remediate 2 (two) individual components during a 12-month period will be referred to the Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services to discuss the need for additional academic support services and to facilitate other counseling services as deemed necessary. Students who remediate 3 (three) individual components during a 12-month period will be referred to the MSPPC for an academic review.
5. Students in good academic standing who receive grades of Unsatisfactory (U) for any two (2) or more of the six Assessment Components of a Block will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory for the Block and be placed on academic probation. The students will be required to meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services to discuss the need for additional academic support services and to facilitate other counseling services as deemed necessary. They will be allowed to participate in the next Block and will be required to remediate the deficiency in the month following Blocks IV (Year 1) or VIII (Year 2). Students on academic probation who are required to complete an end-of-the-year remediation will be reported to the MSPPC. This remediation consists of a minimum of two weeks of independent study focused on the Domain(s) that was (were) not successfully completed during the block. Similar assessment tools will be applied to test for competency in the Domain(s) at the end of this remediation period. Students who successfully remediate the Block will be returned to good academic status. Students who fail to successfully remediate a block during the summer will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing. Successful remediation results in the student returning to the status of good academic standing.
6. Students on academic probation who receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for any one (1) Assessment Component of a second Block will be provided with a remediation plan as detailed in Item # 3 above. Students who successfully remediate the deficiency will be permitted to participate in the following block, but will remain on academic probation and will be referred to the MSPPC for academic review. Successful remediation results in the student returning to the status of good academic standing. Students who fail to successfully remediate the deficiency will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory for the Block and since this represents two block failures in the same year, will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing and will not be permitted to participate in a subsequent block.
7. Students on academic probation who receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for any two (2) or more Assessment Components of a Block will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory for the Block and since this represents two block failures in the same year, will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing. Such students will not be permitted to participate in a subsequent block.
8. Students repeating an academic year who receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for any one (1) Assessment Component of a Block will be provided with a remediation plan detailed in item #3 above. Students who fail to successfully remediate the deficiency during Special Studies week will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory for the Block. Since this represents a failure in a repeated block, these students will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing. Such students will not be permitted to participate in a subsequent block.
9. Students repeating an academic year who receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for any two (2) or more Assessment Components of a Block will be assigned a grade of Unsatisfactory for the Block. Since this represents a failure in a repeated block these students referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing. Such students will not be permitted to participate in a subsequent block.

10. We strongly recommend that students with academic struggles seek and/or accept the help and guidance necessary for optimal performance and successful progression through the curriculum. However, students have the “right to fail” and as such they may choose not to seek help or accept the advice and/or referral suggestions of academic and/or student affairs professionals. For students whose academic deficiencies precipitate probationary or dismissal proceedings with the Medical School Performance and Promotion Committee (MSPPC), the committee will be made aware of the student’s academic and/or student affairs support history including choices not to accept suggested support services.
11. Only students who are in good academic status at the end of Year 01 will be permitted to begin Year 02 of Phase-1 of the curriculum.
12. Only students who are in good academic status at the end of the Year 02 will be permitted to begin Phase-2 of the curriculum

## **Phase 2**

### **A. Assessment Components**

Success in achieving the stated learning objectives of the Phase 2 curriculum will be measured at regular intervals using both objective and subjective measures. Each clerkship or elective will determine the components that comprise the final assessment, although all rotations (clerkships or electives) will, at a minimum, utilize a composite of faculty assessments. The six (6) core clerkships (Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Surgery) will administer a written examination with questions similar to those on the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge examination and a Clinical Skills Examination.

Please refer to the Clerkship Handbooks or the Elective Descriptions for details of which of the Assessment Components will be utilized.

Components of the Assessment Plan might include:

- Written Examination
- Clinical Skills Examination
- Clerkship Passport
- Specific Clinical Responsibilities
- Composite of Assessments
- Oral Examination

### **B. Assessment Policies**

1. Grades assigned for academic achievement/accomplishment include:  
Satisfactory (S)  
Unsatisfactory (U)
2. Students must earn a grade of Satisfactory (S) in each Clerkship or Elective in order to remain in good academic standing.
3. In order to achieve a grade of Satisfactory (S), students must achieve a satisfactory on each Assessment Component for the Clerkship or Elective as described in the Clerkship Handbook or Elective Description.

4. Students in good academic standing who receive grades of Unsatisfactory (U) for any of the Assessment Components other than the composite of assessments must successfully retake the examination or complete the incomplete component. Prior to repeating the examination or completing the incomplete component, the student must meet with the clerkship director to determine the time for the examination or deadline for completing the incomplete component. In addition, at that meeting the clerkship director will advise the student on study strategies and/or offer academic assistance.
5. Students who are unsuccessful on retake of the examination or who fail to meet the deadline for completion of the incomplete component will be required to use the first available two-week elective period to complete a remediation. These students will be placed on academic probation. The terms of the remediation are determined by the Clerkship Director and Associate Dean for Clinical Science- Years 3 and 4. A remediation contract is created and is signed by the Clerkship Director, the student, and the Associate Dean for Clinical Science Years 3 and 4. The student must take the examination at the conclusion of the remediation period. These students will be reported to the MSPPC and referred to the Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services. Successful remediation results in the student returning to the status of good academic standing.
6. Students who are unsuccessful on the second retake of the examination will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.
7. Students on academic probation who receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for any of the Assessment Components other than the composite of assessments must successfully retake the examination or complete the incomplete component. Prior to repeating the examination or completing the incomplete component, the student must meet with the clerkship director to determine the time for the examination or deadline for completing the incomplete component. In addition, at that meeting the clerkship director will advise the student on study strategies and/or offer academic assistance. Students on academic probation who are unsuccessful on retake of the examination or who fail to meet the deadline for completion of the incomplete component will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.
8. Students who remediate three or more individual assessment components over the course of Year 3 will be referred to the MSPPC for an academic review as well as to the Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services for consultation.
9. Students in good academic standing who receive grades of Unsatisfactory (U) for the composite of assessments will need to remediate the clerkship or elective and will be placed on academic probation. The terms of the remediation are determined by the Clerkship Director and Assistant Dean for Clinical Science- Years 3 and 4. A remediation contract is created and is signed by the Clerkship Director, the student, and the Associate Dean for Clinical Science Years 3 and 4. These students will be reported to the MSPPC. Successful remediation results in the student returning to the status of good academic standing.
10. Students who fail to receive a grade of Satisfactory (S) on remediation or repeat of the clerkship or elective will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.



11. Students who receive a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) for any two clerkships and/or electives in a single year will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.
12. We strongly recommend that students with academic struggles seek and/or accept the help and guidance necessary for optimal performance and successful progression through the curriculum. However, students have the “right to fail” and as such they may choose not to seek help or accept the advice and/or referral suggestions of academic and/or student affairs professionals. For students whose academic deficiencies precipitate probationary or dismissal proceedings with the Medical School Performance and Promotion Committee (MSPPC), the committee will be made aware of the student’s academic and/or student affairs support history including choices not to accept suggested support services.

### **Advancement**

Promotion from one phase of the curriculum to the next and graduation with the granting of an M.D. degree are based on a student satisfactorily meeting the performance standards established by the faculty of VTCSOM.

#### **A. Performance Standards**

1. Students must be registered for each Block, rotation, required clinical experience, research, or elective at the prescribed time as outlined in the VTCSOM Calendar unless otherwise authorized by MSPPC.
2. Student performance is determined on the basis of achievement of prescribed Block, rotation, required clinical experience, research, or elective objectives. Students must achieve the satisfactory criterion level established by the faculty and presented to all students at the beginning of each Block, required clinical experience, or elective.
3. Student performance will be recorded according to the grading policy for medical students (described above).
4. Satisfactory completion of Steps 1 and 2 (CK and CS) of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), according to established National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) criteria, is a requirement for graduation and granting of the M.D. degree by VTCSOM. If a student fails any of the USMLE Step Examinations two times, he/she will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.
5. A student must take USMLE Step 1 Examination no later than June of year two of Phase 1 unless he/she has received permission from the Senior Dean for Student Affairs to schedule the exam for a later time. A student will not be permitted to take USMLE Step 1 before Blocks I-VIII have been satisfactorily completed, and must receive approval from the Senior Dean for Student Affairs prior to taking the exam during or after M2 Research and Independent Study. This approval is based on the student achieving a minimal target score on the NBME Comprehensive Basic Sciences Self-Assessment exam.
6. Should a student fail to pass Step 1, he/she will be placed on academic probation and be required to take the USMLE Independent Study elective as their next course. All students on academic probation are reported to the MSPPC. Under such circumstances, they may complete

the current clerkship but are not permitted to advance to the next clerkship until they have retaken the exam. Should he/she fail the exam a 2nd time, he/she will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.

7. If a student fails the USMLE Step 1 Examination for the first time and has already used their USMLE Independent Study elective in preparation for this first attempt, he/she may not take another USMLE Independent Study elective. Under such circumstances, he/she will complete the clerkship currently enrolled in and meet with the Senior Dean for Student Affairs and Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services to determine the best course of action. Should he/she fail the exam a 2nd time, he/she will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.
8. Students are required to complete all 3rd year clerkships and successfully complete the VTCSOM Clinical Skills Examination during the Year 03 Assessment Week prior to taking the USMLE Step 2 CS exams. Students are required to complete all 3rd year clerkships and achieve a satisfactory score on the Comprehensive Clinical Sciences examination administered during Year 03 Assessment Week in order to take the USMLE Step 2 CK exam. Students may take for credit up to six weeks of a study elective prior to taking the USMLE Step 2 examinations.
9. Students must take both the Step 2 CS and Step 2 CK examinations prior to December 1 of Year 04. Exceptions are only with approval of the Senior Dean for Student Affairs
10. Students who fail either of the USMLE Step 2 Examinations for the first time will meet with the Senior Dean for Student Affairs and Director of Academic Counseling and Enrichment Services to determine the best course of action. If the student who fails either of the USMLE Step 2 Examinations and has any of the available six weeks of study elective available, he/she may modify their schedule and use the remaining study elective time. Should he/she fail the exam a 2nd time, he/she will be referred to the MSPPC for a dismissal hearing.
11. Students must demonstrate satisfactory progress on their research project by the end of M2 Research and Independent Study in order to continue to Phase 2.
12. Satisfactory grades in individual components of the curriculum do not guarantee that the student's performance, viewed as a whole, will meet requirements for awarding the M.D. degree. This determination is made by the MSPPC.

### **Curriculum Completion and Promotions**

Students admitted to VTCSOM must complete their requirements for the M.D. degree within six years from the date of matriculation. Phase 1 must be completed satisfactorily in no more than three years from the date of matriculation, and required clinical experiences and electives of Phase 2 must be completed satisfactorily in no more than three years from the date the student begins the Phase 2 required experiences. Failure by any student to complete requirements as stated is grounds for dismissal. The MSPPC may make limited exceptions to this policy for medical or other compelling reasons.

Each student's record is reviewed by the MSPPC at the end of each academic year of Phase 1 and Phase 2 to confirm completion of academic and professionalism requirements necessary for advancement in

the curriculum. Formal notification of this will be provided to the student, the Dean, and the Academic Council by the Chair of the MSPPC.

### **Graduation**

Upon recommendation by the School of Medicine Faculty, the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine will confer the degree of Doctor of Medicine upon candidates who have:

1. Successfully completed the Phase 1 and Phase 2 requirements;
2. Completed the research project criteria (manuscript, Year 04 presentation, and submission of an abstract for presentation);
3. Passage of the USMLE Step 1, Step 2 CS, and Step 2 CK examinations;
4. Discharged all financial obligations to the School of Medicine.

Each student's record is reviewed by the Medical Student Performance and Promotion Committee (MSPPC) in the latter half of their fourth year to confirm the successful completion of all academic requirements and the demonstration of a degree of professionalism deemed to be essential for all physicians. Upon completion of this review, the findings and recommendations of the MSPPC are forwarded to the Dean for approval.