



UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

POLICY TITLE: <i>Advancement and Retention Policy</i>	APPROVAL DATE: <i>June 7, 2018</i> <i>Revised August 5, 2021</i> <i>Revised June 2, 2022</i> <i>Revised September 1, 2022</i> <i>Revised November 3, 2022</i>
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: <i>Office of Medical Education</i>	APPLIES TO: <i>All Students</i>

POLICY STATEMENT

**MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ADVANCEMENT AND RETENTION**

**A. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR M1**

1. To maintain enrollment and progress to M2, students must pass all M1 courses. In M1, all courses will be weighted equally when considering repetition of a year or for dismissal. A Failure designates a grade below the standards established for passing. See Appendix for course names and credits awarded.
2. The Education Program Committee (EPC), in consultation with the course director, establishes the Minimum Pass Level (MPL) for each course.
3. One Grade of Failure: A student who receives a single grade of Failure in an M1 course may, at the discretion of the Performance and Advancement Committee (PAC), continue in the curriculum for the remainder of the academic year and remediate the failed course during the summer following the conclusion of Spring Semester examinations.

The process and procedures for remediation are to be designed by the course director and approved by the EPC. Any remediation must be completed prior to the beginning of the next academic year. A Failure grade will remain on the student's official transcript along with the grade achieved when completing the remediation for the course. The remediation grade will be either a Pass or Failure. Receipt of a passing grade results in promotion to M2 coursework. An initial Failure followed by a second Failure in a course is grounds for dismissal.

Alternatively, if the PAC does not allow the student to continue in the curriculum, the PAC may mandate that the student repeat M1 or may recommend the student for dismissal. If the student is allowed to repeat M1, the student will repeat all courses in the first year. If the student fails the course previously failed during this year, it is grounds for dismissal. Failure of any one of the other courses in that repeat year may lead to a recommendation of dismissal, or allowing the student to remediate the failure during the summer remediation period. Failure of two courses during the repeat year is an automatic recommendation for dismissal.

Even if the PAC approves the student to continue in the curriculum, a student with one Failure retains the option, with approval of the PAC, to discontinue with the M1 curriculum and repeat the course the following year along with all other M1 courses, as long as doing so will not exceed the requirement to complete all M1 and M2 courses in six academic semesters. If this option is chosen, then the requirements of the PAC-mandated repeat of M1 apply if the student has a Failure (or two) during the repeat of the first year.

4. Two Grades of Failure: A student who receives two or more grades of Failure in M1 courses has met the grounds for dismissal from the program. The student may be recommended for dismissal, may be required to repeat the M1 year, or may be allowed to remediate both failures during the summer only if

one of the failed courses has a remediation schedule that is 2 weeks or less in duration. The student will work with the Office of Student Affairs to arrange for repeating the M1 year if that option is chosen. Should the PAC determine that the student should repeat the year, the academic year in which the student returns is at the discretion of the PAC. Failure to pass any course (including any courses that had been previously completed and passed) in the repeated year by the end of Spring Semester will result in an automatic recommendation of dismissal from the program. The repetition grade will be either a Pass or Failure. Receipt of a passing grade in the repeated courses results in promotion to M2 coursework.

When repeating M1, the student must participate in orientation (except the White Coat ceremony) and all courses following orientation.

5. Three or more grades of Failure in M1 will constitute an automatic recommendation for dismissal.
6. The College of Medicine (COM) recognizes that although academic performance is significant, passing courses is not the only measure of success. Students must demonstrate professionalism at all times and must complete administrative and other responsibilities in a timely manner. Students who are found deficient in either of these areas will be reviewed by the PAC and this review may result in a recommendation of dismissal from the COM.

## **B. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR M2**

1. To maintain enrollment and progress to M3, students must pass all M2 courses. In M2, all courses will be weighted equally when considering repetition of a year or for dismissal. A Failure designates a grade below the standards established for passing. Course names and credits awarded for each course appear in MedOneStop.
2. The Education Program Committee (EPC) in consultation with the course director establishes the Minimum Pass Level (MPL) for each course.
3. One Grade of Failure: A student who receives a single grade of Failure in an M2 course, and has not previously had two other failures may, at the discretion of the PAC, continue in the curriculum for the remainder of the academic year and remediate the failed course during the summer following the conclusion of Spring Semester examinations. This also applies if the student has had either zero or one failure in the first year, which had been successfully remediated. The process and procedures for remediation are to be designed by the course director and approved by the EPC. Any remediation must be completed prior to the beginning of the next academic year. A Failure grade will remain on the student's official transcript along with the grade achieved when completing the remediation for the course. The remediation grade will be either a Pass or Failure. An initial Failure followed by a second Failure in a course is grounds for dismissal.

A student who remediates a course in the summer after the second year will be delayed in entering M3 coursework. This may result in a delayed graduation as the student may not be able to complete all requirements by the original graduation date.

Alternatively, if the PAC does not allow the student to continue in the curriculum, the PAC may mandate that the student repeat M2 or may recommend the student for dismissal. The decision to repeat M2 may be allowed as long as doing so will not exceed the requirement to complete all M1 and M2 courses in six academic semesters. If this option is chosen, the student will repeat all courses in the second year. If the student fails the course previously failed during this year, it is grounds for dismissal. Failure of any other course during the repeat year (other than the course previously failed) may lead to a recommendation of dismissal, or allowing the student to remediate the failure during the summer remediation period. Failure of two courses during the repeat year is an automatic recommendation for dismissal.

Even if the PAC approves the student to continue in the curriculum, a student with one Failure has the option, with approval of PAC, to discontinue with the M2 curriculum and repeat the course the following year along with all other M2 courses, as long as doing so will not exceed the requirement to complete all M1

and M2 courses in six academic semesters. If this option is chosen, the student will repeat all M2 courses. If the student fails the course previously failed during this year, it is grounds for dismissal. Failure of a different course during the repeat of the second year (outside of the course previously failed) is also grounds for dismissal, or the PAC may allow the student to remediate the course during the summer remediation period. Failure of the summer remediation is grounds for dismissal.

4. Two Grades of Failure: A student who receives two or more grades of Failure in M2 courses (and has had no failures in M1 courses) may be recommended for dismissal from the program, may be asked to repeat the M2 year from the beginning, or may be allowed to remediate both failed courses the summer after the second year, provide that one of the two remediation plans is less than 2 weeks in duration. The PAC will review the performance of the student and determine which of the above options will apply to the student. Should the PAC determine that the student can repeat the year, the academic year in which the student returns is at the discretion of the PAC. Failure to pass any course (including any courses that had been previously completed and passed) in the repeated year by the end of Spring Semester is grounds for dismissal. The repetition grade will be either a Pass or Failure. If the student is repeating the year the student will work with the office of student affairs to arrange for the repeat of M2.
5. Three or More Grades of Failure (in total between M1/2): Three failing grades distributed across M1/2 will constitute grounds for dismissal. This applies even if there was successful remediation or repetition of the failed courses. Withdrawal Failing does not count as a Failure towards dismissal. However, a Withdrawal Failing followed by a Failure is grounds for dismissal.
6. To begin M3 coursework, a student must have passed all M2 courses and have taken the USMLE Step 1 examination. To continue in M3 coursework, a passing score on USMLE Step 1 must be recorded in the Registrar's Office. Since the date a student takes the USMLE Step 1 varies, some test scores may arrive after a student starts M3. Should a student who has already started M3 receive a failing score on USMLE Step 1, the student may be immediately removed from clinical rotations as described in Section E of this policy.
  - a. A student who has passed all M2 courses by the end of Spring Semester must register for a Step 1 administration date and sit for the examination prior to the first day of M3 coursework. Students who are taking a LOA after the M2 year for further academic enrichment (i.e. a research opportunity) must sit for USMLE Step 1 before the LOA starts. Any exception to this policy must be approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee. Exceptions will only be granted for truly extenuating circumstances. If such an exception is granted, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee will determine a timeline by which the student must take the USMLE Step 1 examination. Failure of the student to take the examination as directed will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the COM.
  - b. A student who completes M2 coursework in the Summer Semester must register for a Step 1 administration date after they have successfully completed their remediation. The COM will only sponsor a student to take USMLE Step 1 after a date upon which all M2 coursework, and if necessary, any remediation is completed. In this case, the student will be authorized to enter M3 only after sitting for the USMLE Step 1 exam.
  - c. The scores from all repetitions of Step 1, including the passing score, must be received by the COM within one year of the first failing score. This time limit applies even if the student is on a Leave of Absence. Delay beyond one year requires PAC approval and would be granted only under exceptional and extenuating circumstances. Delay beyond one year without PAC approval is grounds for dismissal of the student from the COM.
7. The COM recognizes that although academic performance is significant, passing courses is not the only measure of success. Students must demonstrate professionalism at all times and must complete administrative and other responsibilities in a timely manner. Students who are found deficient in either of these areas will be reviewed by the PAC and this review may result in a recommendation of dismissal from the COM.

### **C. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR M3**

1. Third year courses consist of those clerkships designated as required core clerkships by the Education Program Committee and two specialty clerkships of the student's choosing.
2. If a student, during the M3 year, obtains a failing grade in a clerkship such that the student's total number of failures during M1, M2 and M3 is three, then the accumulation of three failing grades is grounds for dismissal.
3. If a student, during the M3 year, obtains three conditional grades (C) the student has reached the threshold for grounds for dismissal. This is regardless of whether some conditional grades have been successfully remediated.
4. If the PAC determines that there is a concern for student or patient safety, the PAC can immediately remove the student from the curriculum. If the student is allowed to remain in the curriculum, the student should work with Student Affairs to evaluate why they are having difficulty with third-year material, develop a plan to address these difficulties and plan a timeline for remediation or repetition of the failed clerkship or clerkship component. The PAC will review the student's adherence to the plan as they progress through the third year. Receipt of another non-passing grade during the repeat or completion of the year is grounds for dismissal. If a student in this situation appeals a final grade in a third-year clerkship they will be removed from the curriculum until the appeal is adjudicated. If the original grade of failure is upheld, the student will be automatically recommended for dismissal.
5. All M3 required core clerkships as defined by the EPC should be passed no later than January 1 of M4 unless otherwise agreed upon by the PAC chair and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
6. All M3 required core clerkships as defined by the EPC should be passed before the student can start an M4 Acting Internship unless otherwise agreed upon by the PAC chair and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
7. Two M3 specialty clerkships/selectives are required for all students. Deferment of this requirement will be rare and granted only under exceptional circumstances such as the following: (1) to allow military (Health Professions Scholarship Program) students to do their required active duty or (2) extenuating personal/academic circumstances. The office of Student Affairs will review all requests and, if a deferment is granted, the student will be responsible for requesting the change online. Any credits from deferred M3 required specialty electives must be completed before graduation, unless otherwise approved by the appropriate PAC chair and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
8. Prior to enrollment in any clinical rotation for remediation purposes, the student must obtain approval of the course director(s) and PAC if the student wishes to have the course recorded for credit. The clinical site(s) to which the student is assigned for remediation is at the discretion of the clerkship director.
9. A student may only receive a grade of Pass or Fail for any clerkship that is remediated. Honors or High Pass grades are not allowed. The original grade of F as well as the remediated grade will be on the student's transcript. An initial Failure followed by a second Failure in any clerkship is grounds for dismissal.
10. A student must observe/perform the required clinical procedures and patient encounters by the completion of each clerkship (see clinical procedures and patient encounters policy).
11. The COM recognizes that although academic performance is of significant importance, passing courses is not the only measure of success. Students must demonstrate professionalism at all times and must complete administrative and other responsibilities in a timely manner. Students who are found deficient in either of

these areas will be reviewed by the PAC and this review may result in a recommendation of dismissal from the COM.

#### **D. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR M4**

The following requirements apply in M4

1. If a student enters M4 with two Failures from M1, M2 and/or M3, receipt of a third Failure or two Conditional grades is grounds for dismissal. Withdrawal Failing does not count as one of the three course failures in four years that represents grounds for dismissal. However, a Withdrawal Failing followed by a Failure in a given course is grounds for dismissal.
2. If an M4 student who previously has had one Failure in M1, M2 and/or M3, receives three Conditionals, two Conditionals and one Failure or two Failures in any separate M4 courses, it is grounds for dismissal. If an M4 student, who has not previously had any other Failures in M1, M2 and/or M3, receives two failing grades (F) or three Conditional grades, the student will be placed on a mandatory leave of absence by the PAC, while the PAC decides if the student should remain in the curriculum. If allowed to continue in the curriculum the student should use the leave to evaluate, with the help of the Office of Student Affairs, why they are having difficulty with fourth-year material, and to develop a plan to overcome these difficulties. Once such a plan is in order the student may petition the PAC for approval of the plan and for re-entry into the fourth year of the curriculum. Upon re-entering the fourth year the student will either repeat the entire fourth year, or just the courses that were not passed. The decision will be made by the PAC in consultation with the Office of Student Affairs, and is not subject to appeal. The PAC will review the student's adherence to the plan as they progress through the year. Failure to pass any further clinical rotations (with either a C or F grade) in the fourth year is an automatic recommendation for dismissal. If a student in this situation appeals a final grade in a fourth-year clerkship they may be placed on a mandatory leave of absence. If the original grade of failure is upheld, the student will be automatically recommended for dismissal.
3. Students must take and pass the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge examination and record passing scores with the COM Registrar's Office as a requirement for graduation. All students must sit for the USMLE Step 2 examination by the date set by the COM. Any delay in sitting for the Step 2 examination beyond the required date must be approved by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Admissions, with notification of the appropriate PAC chair if such a delay is granted.

Passing scores on the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge examination must be recorded in the Registrar's Office no later than three days prior to the anticipated graduation date from the COM. A student with an unexcused failure to sit for this exam by the set date will receive a professionalism warning from the PAC and could be delayed in their graduation date.

4. A student must pass the Clinical Competency Examination (CCX) administered by the COM as a requirement for graduation. A student should have passed all M3 core clerkships prior to sitting for the CCX. Exceptions to this policy will be determined by the Office of Student Affairs in consultation with the Director of the Simulation Center. The Office of Student Affairs will notify the appropriate PAC chair. The first administration of the exam occurs in late July-early August of the M4 year. The COM will offer an alternate first testing date for students who are unable, due to extenuating circumstances as approved by the Medical Director of the Simulation Center, to take the examination during the July-August administration. All M3 required core clerkships as defined by the EPC should be passed no later than January 1 of M4 and before starting an M4 Acting Internship, unless otherwise agreed upon by the appropriate PAC and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
5. Any credits from deferred M3 required specialty elective should be completed before graduation, unless otherwise approved by the appropriate PAC and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Failure to do so may result in delayed graduation.
6. Non-UC electives. All students who wish to obtain UC credit for a non-UC (away) elective must obtain approval in writing from the COM prior to the elective experience. Retroactive credit will typically not be

given to students that do not follow this policy unless there are extraordinary circumstances. In such cases, the student's PAC, in consultation with the Office of Student Affairs, will decide if the credit is allowed.

The approval process requires that the outside institution accepts the student into their elective, that the corresponding UCCOM department approves the elective offering as meeting education standards acceptable to the COM, and that the Office of Student Affairs determines that the away elective meets the needs of the individual student's education. Permission for a student to do an away elective is at the sole discretion of the COM. Either the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or the PAC may prevent a student from participating in away rotations. A student may be denied permission for an away elective for reasons including but not limited to: the academic performance of the student; concerns about the professionalism of the student; the perceived educational value or quality of the away elective; concerns about student safety.

7. A student must observe/perform the required clinical procedures and patient encounters by the completion of each clerkship/acting internship (see clinical procedures and patient encounters policy).
8. The COM recognizes that although academic performance is of significant importance, passing courses is not the only measure of success. Students must demonstrate professionalism at all times and must complete administrative and other responsibilities in a timely manner. Students who are found deficient in either of these areas will be reviewed by the PAC and this review may result in a recommendation of dismissal from the COM.

**E. FAILURE TO PASS UNITED STATES MEDICAL LICENSING EXAMINATION (USMLE) STEP 1 AND STEP 2 CLINICAL KNOWLEDGE (CK) EXAMINATIONS**

1. Repetition of USMLE Step 1
  - a. A student who fails USMLE Step 1 may be given a Letter of Concern from the PAC.
  - b. A student will be permitted a maximum of two attempts to pass the USMLE Step 1 examination. Failure to pass on the second attempt will require the student to petition the PAC for another chance to take the exam. After meeting with the student the PAC will determine if the student may take the exam for a third, and final time, or if they are recommended for dismissal to the Dean. This recommendation of dismissal cannot be appealed. Should the student be allowed a third attempt to pass USMLE Step 1 and the student fails to pass the examination on the third attempt the student will be recommended for dismissal from the College of Medicine with no further right of appeal.
  - c. All repetitions of Step 1 and receipt of scores must occur within one year of the date of receipt by the COM of the first failing score. This time limit includes any and all time in which the student is on a Leave of Absence. Delay beyond one year requires PAC approval and will be granted only under exceptional and extenuating circumstances. Delay beyond one year without PAC approval is grounds for dismissal of the student from the COM.
  - d. If failing results for USMLE Step 1 (first attempt) arrive after a student has begun M3 coursework, the timing of when the student will be removed from their current clerkship will be determined by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs (or their designee) and the clerkship director.
  - e. After taking USMLE Step 1 a second time, the student may be permitted to return to coursework at the first logical juncture as determined at the sole discretion of the COM, while awaiting results. If the grade is a Failure, the student will be immediately removed from coursework irrespective of where the student is in the clerkship and placed in the Independent Study Course by the Registrar.
  - f. If allowed to take the USMLE Step 1 a third time, the student will not be permitted to return to coursework while awaiting results. Only upon submitting a passing score on USMLE Step 1 can a student who has twice failed the examination resume coursework. Timing of re-entry into the curriculum is at the sole discretion of the PAC in consultation with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Students will be placed in the Independent Study Course by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs while preparing for a retake of the

## USMLE Step 1 examination.

### 2. Repetition of USMLE Step 2 CK Examination

- a. A student who fails USMLE Step 2 CK may be given a Letter of Concern from the PAC.
- b. A student who fails USMLE Step 2 CK may retake the examination(s) and is permitted a maximum of three attempts to pass. Failure to pass on the third attempt will require the student to petition the PAC for another chance to take the exam. After meeting with the student, the PAC will determine if the student may take the exam for a fourth, and final time, or if they are dismissed. This decision of the PAC cannot be appealed. Should the student be allowed a fourth attempt to pass USMLE Step 2 and the student fails to pass the examination on the fourth attempt the student will be dismissed from the College of Medicine with no further right of appeal.
- c. Two repetitions and receipt of scores by the COM of Step 2 CK must occur within one year of the date of receipt by the COM of the first failing score. If a student is granted the ability to take the exam a fourth time (see section b) the timing of this attempt must coincide with USMLE guidelines, which currently state: "You may take the same examination no more than three times within a 12-month period. Your fourth and subsequent attempts must be at least 12 months after your first attempt at that exam and at least six months after your most recent attempt at that exam." (This is found at <http://www.usmle.org/pdfs/bulletin/2014bulletin.pdf>, page 7). The PAC will work with the student on the timing of the fourth, and final, attempt at Step 2 CK if such an attempt is granted to the student. The time limit includes any and all time in which a student is on a Leave of Absence. Delay beyond one year for taking the exam three times requires PAC approval and would be granted only under exceptional and extenuating circumstances. Delay beyond one year without PAC approval is grounds for dismissal of the student from the COM.
- d. When preparing for repetition of USMLE Step 2 CK, a student is permitted to continue clinical coursework unless otherwise determined by the PAC or the student may request to be placed in the Independent Study course. The decision as to whether the student should enter the Independent Study course must be approved by the PAC and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Should placement in the Independent Study course result in a delay in the student's original graduation date, the student will need to seek approval from the Office of Student Affairs and the PAC chair to alter their schedule. The delay in graduation would be for the next earliest graduation date, unless the student requests a later graduation date. If a student has been approved for a delayed graduation date and wants to extend the graduation date a second time, PAC approval will be required.

### **F. FAILURE TO PASS THE CLINICAL COMPETENCY EXAM (CCX)**

1. A student must pass the CCX to graduate. When a student fails all or part of the first administration of the CCX, no grade will appear on the student's transcript. The student must meet with the Medical Director of the Simulation Center to develop a remediation plan and complete it successfully, as determined by the director, before being eligible to retake any failed section of the CCX.
2. The CCX or parts thereof may be repeated up to two times. Once all parts of the examination have been passed, a grade of Pass will be recorded in the Registrar's office; this must occur no later than three days prior to the anticipated graduation date from the COM. Failure to pass on the third attempt will result in a grade of Failure on the transcript and is grounds for dismissal with no right of appeal.

### **G. ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SITE OR CURRICULUM ASSIGNMENT REQUESTS**

Students can request changes to their schedule by using MedOneStop drop/add process in years 3 and 4. The only exception being Acting Internship schedule changes must be submitted by email to the

appropriate clinical department coordinator for approval/processing.

For M3 specialty clerkships, students may change their specialty clerkships initially received in the specialty clerkship lottery. Requests must be submitted via MedOneStop greater than six (6) weeks before the start date of clerkship they are wanting to drop/add. Specific rotation site assignments within a clinical department are then determined by the clinical department coordinator based on student preferences as can be accommodated. For M3 core clerkships, student may change their pathways during the designated trading period. Rotation sites are assigned by using a lottery assignment system based on student preference or preferences will be solicited from students by means of a “bio- sketch” 4-8 weeks prior to the start of the rotation. All rotation site assignments are final unless there are extenuating circumstances that arise after the initial site assignments are made. Changes to assignments can be made at the discretion of the clerkship director. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs or a designee (i.e. advisor) may also request a review of the assignment by the clerkship director due to extenuating circumstances discussed with the student.

Schedules changes in the M4 curriculum must be requested by the final date set for completion of M4 schedules and all changes must be requested at least four (4) weeks in advance of the specific course start date. After that date, changes may be made only under extenuating circumstances and with the approval of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or a designee (i.e. advisor) to determine a substitution to meet graduation requirements. Electives are generally site specific so students should sign-up accordingly.

## **H. WITHDRAWING FROM COURSES IN M4**

Withdrawal from a course after it has begun must be approved by the director of the course and by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or a designee (i.e. advisor) to determine a substitution to meet graduation requirements. If the request to withdraw from a course is denied, the student will be required to complete the course. Should a student not complete a course in which he or she is enrolled, the student will receive a grade of Failure (F)

## **I. THIRD PARTY REQUIREMENTS**

Certain programs at the University have clinical and/or external placements that are a requirement for program completion. To the extent permitted by law, Students enrolled in such programs will be expected to comply with all rules, policies, guidelines, and requirements of any third-party placement, including but not limited to vaccination and background check requirements. Any student’s failure to comply with such third-party rules, policies, guidelines or requirements may result in the student not being able to complete and graduate from their program.