



Academic Appeals Procedures Policy

Category: Academic

Responsibility: Vice Dean Education

Approval: Student Academic Management Committee

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Purpose:

The purpose of the *Procedures for Academic Appeals* is to define college-level appeal processes for academic assessments, promotion decisions, and graduation decisions within the Undergraduate Medical Education program.

These procedures do not govern appeals related to contents of a Medical Student's Performance Record. These appeal mechanisms are described in the college-level *Medical Student Performance Record Policy*.

These procedures ensure that the Undergraduate Medical Education program meets or exceeds the following Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS) accreditation standards:

9.9 Single Standard for Promotion/Graduation and Appeal Process: A medical school ensures that the medical education program has a single standard for the promotion and graduation of medical students across all locations and a fair and formal process for taking any action that may affect the status of a medical student, including timely notice of the impending action, disclosure of the evidence on which the action would be based, an opportunity for the medical student to respond, and an opportunity to appeal any adverse decision related to promotion, graduation, or dismissal.

Scope:

These procedures apply to all undergraduate students registered in the Doctor of Medicine (MD) program at the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan irrespective of the geographically distributed campus or site they are currently assigned to.

Definitions:

Assessor: refers to the person(s) who was/were responsible for the assessment of medical student work or performance because (1) they prepared and graded the medical student; (2) they arranged for the grading of written work; or (3) they otherwise provided the assessment of work or performance. In the MD Program, examples include but are not limited to a preceptor, a Section Lead or Module Director, a Course Director, a Rotation Coordinator, or a Course Sub-Committee.

Course Work: includes all components of a medical student's program that are assigned a grade or outcome. Examples include assignments, examination grades, final course grades, final module grades (pre-clerkship phase only), and final rotation grades (clerkship phase only).

Promotion: students who are successful on all coursework in a term are advanced to the next term of the program.

Student Academic Management Committee (SAMC): The committee responsible making promotion decisions. Chaired by the Academic Director, UGME.

Year Subcommittee: a committee comprised of course leaders in the respective years of the program (Year 1 subcommittee, Year 2 subcommittee, and Clerkship subcommittee) responsible for making promotions recommendations.

Responsibilities

The Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education is responsible for providing oversight to the overall administration of the *Procedures for Academic Appeals* at the College of Medicine.

The Academic Director, UGME is responsible for responding to requests for reassessment submitted by medical students to the Undergraduate Medical Education Office. The Academic Director, as the Chair of the Student Academic Management Committee, is also responsible for overseeing appeals related to promotion and graduation.

The Manager, Undergraduate Medical Education with the assistance of the Undergraduate Medical Education Office, is responsible for receiving Request for and Report of Reassessment Forms, managing reassessment fees, and informing medical students of the procedures for academic appeals in the College of Medicine.

Policy

A. Academic Appeals Framework

The College of Medicine applies the university-level *Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters* to guide academic appeals of assignments, examinations, final grades, promotion standards,

and graduation decisions. As such, informal and formal mechanisms are provided to address and resolve academic assessment concerns in the Undergraduate Medical Education program.

B. Appeals of Academic Assessment

Medical students who are dissatisfied with an assessment of their work or performance in a course, module, rotation, or component thereof can request that their assessment be reviewed and/or reassessed (also referred to as a “re-read”). Such requests must be made within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving the results of their initial assessment. Wherever possible, medical students should pursue an informal consultation before pursuing formal requests for reassessment.

Students who experience a failure in the implementation of approved accommodation during an assessment should report the issue as early as possible—prior to, during, or immediately after the assessment—as soon as it is recognized, to allow for timely support and potential remediation.

Such reporting does not preclude the student’s right to submit an academic appeal based on the impact of the accommodation failure on their assessment outcome. However, timely reporting may support a more thorough and fair review of the circumstances and facilitate appropriate institutional response.

B.1 Informal Consultation

As described in the *Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters*, medical students who are dissatisfied with the results of an assessment should first consult with the assessor (typically the Module or Course Director) responsible for evaluating their work or performance.

An informal consultation affords an opportunity for an assessor and a medical student to review an assessment and ensure that all work was included, that all material was marked, that no marks were left out, and that additions and grade calculations were correctly made.

Any errors discovered during this consultation should result in an appropriate change in the grade awarded the work or performance and in the assessor’s records for the course. If the consultation relates to a final grade in a course or module, the mark or grade in the course or module may be changed following grade change procedures, subject to approval by the Academic Director, UGME.

If a medical student remains dissatisfied with the academic judgment rendered with respect to their work or performance, then they may request reconsideration of the assessment. The assessor may decide to re-evaluate the work or performance or request that the student apply for a formal reassessment.

A student wishing to pursue an informal consultation should initiate this as soon as possible after receipt of their assessment results, recognizing the deadlines for formal reassessment (see B.2).

B.2 Formal Request for Reassessment

A formal reassessment involves a re-evaluation of assessment in a course, module, rotation, or component thereof in the context of the original expectations for that assessment (also referred to as a “re-read”). Requests for reassessment shall be responded to by the Academic Director, UGME, in accordance with the *Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters*.

Medical students who wish to request a formal reassessment (“re-read”) must submit a *Request for and Report of Reassessment Form* and tender a \$20 reassessment fee to the Undergraduate Medical Education Office. Such requests should be made within **thirty (30) days** of the student receiving the initial results of their assessment. The fee shall be refunded if the student’s grade in the course, module, rotation, or component thereof is increased by at least five (5) percentage points as a result of the reassessment or where the student’s grade is changed from a Fail to a Pass.

The Undergraduate Medical Education Office is responsible for collecting *Request for and Report of Reassessment Forms*, related fee payments, and for forwarding requests to the Academic Director, UGME for further response/action. This office shall provide medical students with a written record acknowledging the receipt of a *Request for and Report of Reassessment Form* and the related fee payment. This office shall also facilitate refunds of these fees when required.

The Academic Director, UGME is responsible for receiving formal requests for reassessment, determining whether it is feasible to arrange to have some or all of the student’s work or performance reassessed, if feasible for appointing an independent re-assessor, and for notifying the medical student in writing of the results of a reassessment. If the Academic Director, UGME determines that a reassessment is not feasible, that decision is final.

The student should be aware that a grade may be reduced as a result of a reassessment.

- **Reassessment of non-written work:**

Examples of non-written work in the College of Medicine include performance of clinical skills, community-based service activities and clinical practicums. Since such forms of work involve assessment based on observation of the student's performance, it is not always possible to apply with precision the re-reading procedures for written work. In such instances, two different situations may occur:

For clinical experiences in pre-clerkship, a re-reader will be appointed by the Academic Director, UGME to review all available assessments contributing to the mark and the criteria for a pass as outlined in the syllabus. The re-reader may consult with assessors as required as to the basis of the assessment in determining whether or not to change the mark (noting limitations that the scope of the re-read will not include calling of witnesses, or addressing factors not involving academic judgment, such as discrimination or harassment, differential treatment, failure to accommodate a disability, or procedural error unrelated to mark allocation). Should opportunity exist for a review and re-assessment of the actual original performance (such as if a clinical activity was recorded) then the re-assessor may re-mark the original performance, ideally without knowledge of the mark given by the assessor and using marking or grading structure originally used. The results of the reassessment shall be recorded on the *Request for and Report of Reassessment Form* and returned to the Academic Director, UGME.

For clinical experience in clerkship (e.g. a clerkship rotation or elective), a re-reader will be appointed by the Academic Director, UGME, typically a Rotation Coordinator at a different site. The re-reader will review all available assessments contributing to the mark and the criteria for a pass as outlined in the syllabus. The re-reader may consult with assessors as required as to the basis of the assessment in determining whether or not to change the mark (noting limitations that the scope of the re-read will not include calling of witnesses, or addressing factors not involving academic judgment, such as discrimination or harassment, differential treatment, failure to accommodate a disability, or procedural error unrelated to mark allocation). Should opportunity exist for a review and re-assessment of the actual original performance (such as if a clinical activity was recorded) then the re-assessor may re-mark the original performance, ideally without knowledge of the mark given by the assessor and using the marking or grading structure originally used. The results of the reassessment

shall be recorded on the *Request for and Report of Reassessment Form* and returned to the Academic Director, UGME.

- **Re-assessment of Written Work:**

A re-assessor, appointed by the Academic Director, UGME, shall facilitate a revaluation of the medical student's work or performance. For written work, the re-assessor shall be provided copies of the student's original work, and be responsible for reassessing the work, using the marking or grading structure originally used. The results of the reassessment shall be recorded on the *Request for and Report of Reassessment Form* and returned to the Academic Director, UGME.

Where possible, the re-assessor should assess the work without knowledge of the mark given by the assessor(s). The mark assigned by the re-assessor may be higher or lower than the mark assigned by the original assessor.

The original mark shall not be changed until the original assessor(s) have been consulted, whenever practical. A third re-reader may be appointed to resolve any disagreement between the original assessor(s) and the re-reader.

Reasonable efforts will be made to complete the reassessment within 30 days.

The student shall be notified in writing by the Academic Director, UGME of the results of the re-assessment (re-read) as soon as possible, and not later than 30 days after the results of the re-assessment are determined.

The decision on a matter of substantive academic judgement will be final. A student who, having completed the reassessment process, believes that the assessment of their work or performance has been negatively affected by a factor not involving academic judgement may request a college-level investigation (see B.3).

The Dean may appoint a designate (typically the Vice Dean Education) to investigate the appeal. The Dean or designate will be provided with a copy of the medical student's appeal and supporting documentation. The investigation shall be carried out as expeditiously as possible and should, wherever practical, include consultation with the original assessor(s). The subject of the allegations shall be given an opportunity to respond to the allegations made by the student.

The Dean's designate shall inform the student and the original assessor(s) in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, the student may initiate a University-level appeal, subject to grounds specified in the University Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters.

B.3 College-Level Investigation

Medical students who allege that an assessment or re-assessment of their academic work or performance in a course, module, rotation, or component thereof has been negatively affected by a factor not involving academic judgment (such as discrimination or harassment, differential treatment, failure to accommodate a disability, procedural error, or new information not available at the time of the assessment) can appeal the assessment or re-assessment ("re-read"). The decision to request an appeal will not affect the medical student's right to make a formal complaint of discrimination, harassment, or mistreatment through the university or college complaint processes.

Medical students who wish to appeal the results of an assessment or re-assessment on the basis of non-academic judgement factors must submit a written letter of appeal and supporting documentation to the Dean, College of Medicine. Such appeals must be made within **thirty (30) days** of the student receiving the results of their assessment or re-assessment. The Dean or designate may extend the period of time to receive the supporting documentation.

The outcome of the appeal is limited to a change in the student's grade in the assessment, module, rotation or course under appeal.

C. Appeals of Promotion and Graduation Decisions

Promotion and graduation decisions in the Undergraduate Medical Education program are recommended by individual Year Committees and determined by the Student Academic Management Committee. Medical students are provided timely notice of the impending action, disclosure of the evidence upon which the action would be based, an opportunity to respond, and an opportunity to appeal promotion and graduation decisions.

C.1 Responding to Promotion and Graduation Recommendations

Individual Year Committees are responsible for recommending promotion and graduation decisions to the Student Academic Management Committee each year. In the situation of a negative recommendation, the Year Committee shall notify medical students of their impending action, provide justification for the recommendation, notify the student of the date/time of the Student Academic Management Committee meeting when the recommendation will be considered, and provide an opportunity for the medical student to respond directly to the Student Academic Management Committee before a promotion or graduation decision is made.

Medical students receiving a recommendation from the Year Committee that they not be promoted, not graduate, or discontinue the program will be informed of this recommendation at least 5 days in advance of the Student Academic Management Committee meeting at which the recommendation will be considered. Medical students who wish to challenge their promotion or graduation recommendation may do so by submitting a written statement and any relevant supporting documentation to the chair of the Student Academic Management Committee at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled Student Academic Management Committee meeting. The medical student shall be invited to either provide a written statement and/or attend the Student Academic Management Committee meeting to explain their rationale for challenging the recommendation.

After considering all medical student responses, or in the absence of a challenge, the Student Academic Management Committee shall decide upon and notify medical students of their promotion or graduation decisions. The Year Chair/Year Site Coordinator, after providing the Year committee recommendations and being present to answer questions from the Committee, shall recuse themselves from the discussion and decision related to the promotion decisions for students in their Year.

C.2 Appealing Decisions of Promotion, Graduation and Standing in Program

Medical students who are dissatisfied with a promotion or graduation decision and decisions on granting of leaves or withdrawals that would affect standing in program can appeal their decision to the Academic Appeals Committee within the College of Medicine.

The grounds for college-level appeal of decisions on promotion, graduation and standing in program are limited to the five grounds of University level appeal outlined in the university's [Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters](#):

- Alleged **significant failure to follow procedural regulations** of the relevant college or the university dealing with assessment of students' academic work or performance, or administrative decisions of alleged misapplication of regulations governing program or degree requirements;
- Alleged **differential treatment** of the student as compared to the treatment of other students in the course or program, where the alleged differential treatment affected assessment of the student's academic work or performance;
- Alleged **discrimination or harassment**, as set out in the university's Policy on Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and procedures for addressing issues of discrimination and harassment, where the alleged violation affected assessment of the student's academic work or performance;
- Alleged failure to implement the approved policy and procedures of the university dealing with **accommodation of students with disabilities**, when the alleged failure affected assessment of the student's academic work or performance;
- That **new evidence** has arisen that could not reasonably have been presented at the initial hearing and that would likely have affected the decision of the original decision-making body

Medical students who wish to appeal a decision related to promotion, graduation or standing in program must submit a written letter of appeal and supporting documentation to the Dean, College of Medicine. Such requests must be made within **thirty (30) days** of the student receiving the results of their promotion or graduation decision. The decision to request an appeal will not affect the medical student's right to make a formal complaint of discrimination, harassment, or mistreatment through the university or college complaint processes.

The Dean or Dean's designate shall provide the Chair of the Academic Appeals Committee with a copy of the medical student appeal and supporting documentation. The Chair shall then proceed with the college-level appeal in accordance with the Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters and the College of Medicine Faculty Council Bylaws.

C.3 Progress in Program during Appeals

In general, any assessment of student work and/or standing in program is considered valid until and unless it has been overturned by an appeal. However, reasonable efforts will be made to maintain a student's standing while an appeal is pending, subject to considerations of safety or well-being of others, including patients. If an assessment of student work and/or standing reflects knowledge, skills or behaviours that may impact the safety or well-being of others, including patients or students, the Program may modify participation of the student in academic or clinical settings or other work placements, pending outcome of an appeal.

Forms / Templates to be Used

Related university-level forms include: [Request for and Report of Reassessment Form](#).

Related college-level forms: College of Medicine [Academic Appeals Request Form](#) – Standing in Program

Internal and External References:

Related college-level documents include: Academic Appeals Flowchart, Promotion and Graduation Decision Flowchart.

Related university-level procedures include: [Procedures for Student Appeals in Academic Matters](#).