

Grading Rubric for the Clinical Years
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

1. **GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES.**

- 1.1 This policy describes the procedure for assigning final clerkship grades for DGSOM medical students implemented in May 2016. The DGSOM Faculty Executive Committee adopted a 4-tier grading system (Honors/High Pass/Pass/Fail) to replace the existing Pass/Fail system. This initiative was student driven, with the intent to better represent individual student clinical performance. The new system evaluates students objectively, using criterion-based standards. An evaluation method to ensure fairness and transparency was developed and is applied in a uniform manner across all clinical clerkships. It is the intention that these graded assessments of clinical performance more accurately reflect a student's clinical abilities, and aid in the overall assessment of DGSOM students when compared with medical students nationwide. Clinical grades are reported on each student's transcript and the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE), also known as the Dean's Letter, and include narratives from the evaluations, providing a holistic assessment.
- 1.2 The following policy was applied to all students matriculating on or after August 2014. Students matriculating before August 2014 have the option to "opt-in" for grades in the clinical years.

2. **OVERALL GRADES FOR CORE CLINICAL CLERKSHIPS.**

- 2.1 The third year Core Clinical Clerkships include Ambulatory Internal Medicine, Family Medicine Inpatient Internal Medicine, Neurology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Surgery. For each Core Clinical Clerkship, the four possible grades are: Honors, High Pass, Pass, and Fail. Grades are submitted to the Student Affairs Office and available for student review within six weeks of clerkship completion. If a grade is not assigned due to unresolved activities or requirements at the six-week mark, "Incomplete" will be the assigned grade. A final clerkship grade will be recorded once clerkship requirements are met.
- 2.2 For the Core Clinical Clerkships, an Overall Clerkship Grade is assigned. This is composed of a Clinical Performance Grade comprising 70% of the overall grade, and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) Shelf Exam Grade comprising 30% of the overall grade. Table 1 describes the Overall Grade determination, accounting for the ratio of weighted clinical performance/NBME shelf exam grades.

Table 1:

CLINICAL PERFORMANCE GRADE	SHELF EXAM GRADE	OVERALL CLERKSHIP GRADE
Honors	Honors	Honors
Honors	High Pass	Honors
Honors	Pass	High Pass
Honors	Fail	Fail
High Pass	Honors	High Pass
High Pass	High Pass	High Pass
High Pass	Pass	High Pass
High Pass	Fail	Fail
Pass	Honors	High Pass
Pass	High Pass	Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	Fail	Fail
Fail	Honors	Fail
Fail	High Pass	Fail
Fail	Pass	Fail
Fail	Fail	Fail

3. CLINICAL GRADE CONTRIBUTION.

- 3.1 The Clinical Grade counts for 70% of the Overall Clerkship Grade, and is calculated and reviewed by each Core Clerkship Chair in collaboration with the Clerkship Grading Committee. The Clerkship Chair and Grading Committee uses a rubric tallying 13 possible sub-competency evaluations (representing 6 core graduation competencies) for the third-year core clerkships.
- 3.2 The sub-competencies on the DGSOM-UCLA Clerkship Evaluation Form include:
- (1) History taking (Patient Care)
 - (2) Physical Examination (Patient Care)
 - (3) Fund of Knowledge (Medical Knowledge)
 - (4) Differential Diagnosis Development (Medical Knowledge)
 - (5) Treatment Plan Generation (Medical Knowledge)
 - (6) Medical Record Documentation (Interpersonal and Communication Skills)
 - (7) Oral Presentations (Interpersonal and Communication Skills)
 - (8) Communication with Patients and Families (Interpersonal and Communication Skills)
 - (9) Communication with the Interprofessional Team (Interpersonal and Communication Skills)
 - (10) Humanism (Professionalism)
 - (11) Integrity and Work Ethic (Professionalism)
 - (12) Commitment to Learning (Practice-Based Learning and Improvement)
 - (13) System-based practice (System-Based Practice)
- 3.3 Each sub-competency is rated using criterion-based anchors along four levels of performance. For each sub-competency, the evaluator chooses the descriptor amongst the four possible options that best describes the student's performance. If an evaluation of a sub-competency is not possible due to lack of observation, the evaluator selects "Unable to Evaluate/Insufficient Contact." Each clerkship site director produces a summative evaluation as well as a composite narrative.

- 3.4 The Clerkship Chairs, in collaboration with their respective Clerkship Grading Committee, assign a Clinical Performance Grade by reviewing the Total Evaluation Score from a compilation of the individual evaluations received, which is a percentage value of the total score possible. Because the number of sub-competencies assessed may vary by clerkship, each Total Evaluation Score is calculated as a percentage. If a student receives evaluations for all 13 sub-competencies, the denominator for the percentage calculation is 13; if only 9 sub-competencies are assessed, the denominator is 9. Each Evaluation Score is then calculated as a ratio against the highest score possible – the highest score possible being that which would be arrived at if all sub-competencies were scored at the highest level. For example, if 9 items are submitted, the maximum score is 36 (4 X 9); for all 13 competencies, 52 (4 X 13). Each student is evaluated by descriptive anchors and these are assigned a value on a scale of 0-4, where “0” is assigned for N/A or “not observed.” Based on review of the total evaluation scores and the evaluator comments, the Clerkship Chairs have ultimate oversight of the final grades assigned for each clerkship.
- 3.5 The Total Evaluation Score is then used to arrive at the Clinical Performance Grade. (Table 2)

Table 2:

TOTAL EVALUATION SCORE	CLINICAL PERFORMANCE GRADE
88-100%	Honors
75-87%	High Pass
48-74%	Pass
<48%	Fail

In addition to having a Total Evaluation Score of 48% or above, to pass the clinical course, the student must meet minimum competency scores for the 6 core graduation competencies as listed below. The minimum passing scores (expressed as a percentage of the total possible) for the core clerkships are as follows:

- Patient Care – 50%

- Medical Knowledge – 33%
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills – 50%
- Professionalism – 50%
- Practice-Based Learning and Improvement – 50%
- System-Based Practice – 25%

4. FINAL EXAMINATION (NBME) GRADE.

- 4.1 The NBME Shelf Exam Grade accounts for 30% of the Overall Clerkship Grade. Annual national percentiles are used to arrive at the Shelf Exam Grade of Honors, High Pass, Pass or Fail. The percentile cutoffs are: Honors: ≥ 80 th percentile; High Pass: 60th-79th percentile, and Pass: ≥ 10 th -59th percentile. Students scoring below the 10th percentile on the NBME shelf exam receive a fail for the Shelf Exam Grade.
- 4.2 Percentile data is obtained from annual reports of the NBME for each of the eight

Percentile Rank	SHELF EXAM GRADE
$\geq 80\%$	Honors
60-79%	High Pass
10-59%	Pass
$< 10\%$	Fail

clerkship subject exams. The scores corresponding to the percentile nearest (but above) the 80th, 60th and 10th percentile will be identified at the beginning of each academic year.

5. THIRD YEAR COURSEWORK THAT REMAINS PASS/FAIL.

- 5.1 Third year clinical experiences that are not graded on the 4-tier system include the following: Radiology, System Based Healthcare (SBHC), Research electives, and Longitudinal Preceptorship.

- (1) Radiology: Radiology is graded Pass/Fail. Students take a written radiology examination during each core clerkship. These scores are compiled upon completion of the third year to arrive at a final radiology examination grade.
- (2) System Based Healthcare (SBHC): SBHC provides each student with a narrative evaluation. This narrative is included in the student's MSPE, and the grade reported on the transcript is Pass or Fail.
- (3) Longitudinal Preceptorship: A narrative evaluation is submitted at the completion of the preceptorship, and is included in the student's MSPE. A grade of Pass or Fail will appear on the student's transcript.
 - Research: For students who participate in research during the longitudinal preceptorship, a grade of Pass or Fail will appear on the student's transcript.

6. 4-TIER GRADED FOURTH YEAR CLINICAL ELECTIVES AT DGSOM-UCLA

- 6.1 Fourth year clinical rotations (400 level, 300 level and 200 level with the exception of global health) are graded using the same 4-tier Clinical Grade system described above. The same grading rubric used in the core clerkships is used to arrive at the Clinical Performance Grade of Honors/ High Pass/ Pass and Fail. As no written examinations are administered, the Clinical Performance Grade is the Overall Grade for designated fourth year elective rotations. Students must also meet the same competency minimums as described above for third year clerkships to pass fourth year electives.

7. CLINICAL EXPERIENCES IN FOURTH YEAR THAT ARE PASS/FAIL

- 7.1 The following courses are graded Pass/Fail: Global Health, Research and 100 level non-clinical electives.
- 7.2 Students on away electives may be evaluated with the host institution's evaluation system or with the **DGSOM Elective Evaluation Form**. The DGSOM transcript reports the grade as Pass or Fail.

8. GRADING CONTINUUM

- 8.1 All students are graded in a consistent grading system. The system in which a student is graded includes ALL clinical years, regardless of any interruption or interval training that may occur. Fourth year grading is carried forth as a

continuum; whatever system was in place for that student during his or her third year is the system that will be in place for his or her fourth year.

9. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

9.1

(A) Special Circumstance for DGSOM-UCLA Class Entering August 2014

Students matriculating in August 2014 had a one-time option to opt out of the new grading system. In order to opt out, the DGSOM-UCLA Student Affairs Office (SAO) must have received the completed opt out academic agreement by December 18, 2015. By choosing to OPT OUT the student chose a Pass/Fail grading system for all clinical coursework. These students are eligible for Letters of Distinction in the core clerkships for exceptional performance, and these are awarded based on the same criteria used to achieve an overall Honors grade in the new 4- tier system as outlined above. For such students starting core clerkships in May 2016 the new DGSOM Clerkship Evaluation Form was used for both the 4-tier and Pass/Fail grading systems.

(B) Off Cycle Students Entering prior to August 2014

Students who entered DGSOM prior to August 2014 and are beginning their clinical clerkships in or after May 2016 may have chosen to OPT IN to the 4-tier grading system. For such students starting clinical clerkships in May 2016 who elected to OPT IN to the 4-tier grading system, they had to notify the SAO of their intention by a signed agreement submitted by December 18th, 2015. All other off cycle students beginning their clinical clerkships after May 2016 will need to notify the SAO of their intention to OPT IN to the 4-tier system by October 1st of the year preceding their re-entry into the clinical years.

9.2 Once a student has begun third year coursework under either grading system, that system will be used for all clinical rotations (third and fourth year coursework). For students who have a break in clinical coursework between the third and fourth years, the grading system in place prior to leaving the clinical curriculum is the grading system that resumes upon their return. Students **will not have an option to change** their grading system once they have entered the clinical years.

9.3 **ONCE A GRADING PREFERENCE HAS BEEN DECIDED, NO CHANGES WILL BE ALLOWED**

Appendix 1
NBME Tables for grading Academic Year 2017-2018:
 Based on National Percentile Rank 2015-2016

Table 1: Family Medicine

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 82	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
78-81	60-79%	High Pass
64-77	10-59%	Pass
≤ 63	$<10\%$	Fail

Table 2: Internal Medicine

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 82	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
77-81	60-79%	High Pass
62-76	10-59%	Pass
< 62	$<10\%$	Fail

Table 3: Obstetrics & Gynecology

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 84	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
80-83	60-79%	High Pass
67-79	10-59%	Pass
<67	$<10\%$	Fail

Table 4: Pediatrics

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 84	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
79-83	60-79%	High Pass
65-78	10-59%	Pass
<65	<10%	Fail

Table 5: Psychiatry

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 86	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
82-85	60-79%	High Pass
69-81	10-59%	Pass
<69	<10%	Fail

Table 6: Surgery

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 81	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
76-80	60-79%	High Pass
62-75	10-59%	Pass
<62	<10%	Fail

Table 7: Ambulatory Internal Medicine

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 81	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
77-80	60-79%	High Pass
66-76	10-59%	Pass
<66	<10%	Fail

Table 8: Neurology

Score	Percentile Rank	GRADE
≥ 86	$\geq 80\%$	Honors
81-85	60-79%	High Pass
67-80	10-59%	Pass
< 67	$< 10\%$	Fail

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