



Faculty of  
Medicine

## UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

### **GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL TRAINEES IN ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY - CLERKSHIP**

**Approved December 7, 2010**

#### **PERFORMANCE BELOW EXPECTATIONS**

##### **Categories of weak performance that may be grounds for failing to achieve credit in a course, rotation or integrated OSCE, and/or a need for extra work and remediation**

In order to achieve credit in a course, a rotation or an integrated OSCE, a student must demonstrate satisfactory performance in two separate, though related, domains: they must achieve a satisfactory minimum grade in the course, rotation or integrated OSCE as a whole, and must also demonstrate appropriate professional behaviors and ethical values in relation to patient care and institutions within which they are receiving instruction. Students must meet all required criteria in order to receive credit. Criteria consist of a grade >60%, no major lapses and less than three minor lapses in professionalism and any other course specific criteria.

If a student falls significantly short of the expected standards in one or both of these domains, they will be reported to the Board of Examiners by the Clerkship Director.

#### **Remediation**

The criterion grade for automatically reporting to the Board is a grade below 60%. The Board may then determine that the student should receive a grade of "No credit" (failure) in the course, and the student would normally be required to complete remediation and reexamination.

If a student demonstrates a major lapse in professionalism, then this may also be considered grounds for a grade of "No credit" and this too may be reported to the Board of Examiners.

Specific activities deemed likely to be helpful to the student e.g. educational testing, exam taking skills classes, and further work in areas of weakness may be required at the discretion of the Board of Examiners.

#### **Extra work**

Even if a student achieves a grade of 60% or higher in a course, rotation or integrated OSCE as a whole, they may still be required to carry out extra work in that course, rotation or skills relevant to the OSCE. This decision would be based on criteria

specified for the particular course, rotation or OSCE. These students would be considered “borderline”, and they are dealt with according to the terms defined in section (ii) below.

Furthermore, weaknesses in several different courses, rotations or OSCE, which by themselves might not be deemed to merit a grade of “No credit” in any one of them, may still lead a student to either be required to carry out extra work, and/or to be reported to the Board of Examiners under the procedures specified in section (iii) below.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **i. Failure of a course, rotation or integrated OSCE due to overall standing of less than 60%: remediation**

- a) The course director and course committee subject to the approval of the Board of Examiners, will be responsible for the design and content of remedial work and determine the level of performance expected in supplemental evaluation(s) such that students may meet the standard for successful completion of the course or rotation.,
- b) The student will be required to meet with the Clerkship Director.
- c) The student will be informed both orally and in writing that their performance is below expectations and that the Board of Examiners will be informed of this fact and their performance will be discussed at a meeting of the Board of Examiners. Students will also need to be informed of the consequences of not successfully completing the required remediation.
- d) The student may be required to meet with the Associate Dean Health Professions Student Affairs for the purpose of exploring reasons for performance below expectations.
- e) The Clerkship Committee will be informed of the proposed educational experience and assessment for each student.
- f) In the Clerkship, the timing of the remediation will be determined in consultation with the course director, course committee, Clerkship Director and student, taking into consideration the student need for elective experiences. The duration of the remediation will be dependent on the specific course/rotation or integrated OSCE in which the failure occurred. Usually elective time is required for remediation. If so, the remediation must occur within the first 6 weeks of the elective period and the student must make-up any outstanding elective time prior to graduation.
- g) Specific performance criteria, which may differ from those normally used in a course or rotation, may be imposed.
- h) Upon successful completion of this remedial program, the course director can recommend to the Board of Examiners that the student be granted Credit for the course.
- i) The Board of Examiners will make the final determination regarding successful completion of the remediation.

**ii. Borderline performance e.g. a mark less than 70% or a mark 2 standard deviations or more below the class mean in one or more of the components of a course, rotation or integrated OSCE or as determined for the specific course, rotation or OSCE: extra work**

- a) At the discretion of the course director, a student with borderline performance may be required to complete extra work. The course director and colleagues will be responsible for the design and content of extra work and the level of performance which will be expected of the student so that they can meet the standard for successful completion of the course.
- b) The student may be informed orally and/or in writing that their performance is below expectations and that the Board of Examiners may be informed of this fact and their performance may be discussed at a meeting of the Board of Examiners.
- c) The student will be required to meet with the Clerkship Director at the discretion of the Director or at the request of the course director.
- d) The Clerkship Director and Clerkship Committee will be informed of any proposed additional educational experience and assessment.
- e) The timing of the proposed extra work and assessment will be determined in consultation with the course director, course committee, student and Clerkship Director. Students may be required to complete extra work during the elective period. This should be of no more than two weeks duration. Students may choose to use the two weeks of vacation to complete this requirement. If students choose to use two weeks of elective time to complete this requirement the outstanding elective time must be completed prior to graduation. The extra work must be completed within the first 6 weeks of the elective period.
- f) This educational experience and assessment must be completed successfully prior to the student being permitted to graduate.
- g) Upon successful completion of the educational experience and assessment the original grade will be allowed to stand.
- h) The course director will not normally inform the Board of Examiners of such students unless the student has not achieved the acceptable level of performance. If that is the case, the course director will inform the Clerkship Committee and the student will be required to meet with the Clerkship Director and if necessary, with the Associate Dean Health Professions Student Affairs. The Board of Examiners will make the final determination regarding the need for formal remediation.

**iii. Borderline academic performance in two or more of courses, rotations or integrated OSCE: extra work**

- a) The Clerkship Director will identify such students and request a meeting to determine whether the student should meet with the Associate Dean Health Professions Student Affairs and if specific educational activities and evaluation are required.
- b) The Director will inform their Committee of such students.
- c) The Committee will determine what additional educational experiences, resources and assessment may be indicated and the timing of such a program.
- d) This educational experience and assessment must be completed successfully prior to the student entering Transition to Residency or being permitted to graduate in the case of a fourth year student. Upon successful completion of the educational experience and assessment the original grades will be allowed to stand.
- e) The course director will inform the Board of Examiners of such students. If the student has not achieved the acceptable level of performance the Board of Examiners will make the final determination regarding a remediation program.

#### **iv. A major lapse in professionalism**

**For details, see the flowchart “Steps in Professionalism Review” (Appendix 1).**

- a) The course director will meet with any student who exhibits a major lapse and confirm that such a lapse has occurred. If this is confirmed, the course director will inform the Clerkship Director.
- b) The student will be required to meet with the Clerkship Director to discuss issues identified and the student viewpoint, with input from faculty members and course director(s) as appropriate. The Clerkship Director will make a final determination as to whether the Major Lapse should stand.
- c) If so, the student will also be required to meet with the Associate Dean, Health Professions Student Affairs. The student will be discussed at the Clerkship Committee in camera discussion of Students in Academic Difficulty. A plan for extra work in professionalism will be determined.
- d) The Clerkship Director, in consultation with the course director, will determine whether to inform the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education. If the lapse is deemed to be particularly significant, and/or if there are further lapses, then a meeting between the student and the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education, will be required.
- e) In cases where the Clerkship Director has determined that the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education, should be informed of the situation, the Vice-Dean will then determine whether to inform the Board of Examiners, which will make the final determination regarding the need for formal remediation. The student will have the opportunity to respond to allegations of academic difficulty, especially if related to professionalism. The student must be fully informed of their rights, including their right to provide a written submission to the Board of Examiners in the event that their performance is being reviewed by the Board.
- f) Specific performance criteria that may differ from those normally used in a course or rotation may be imposed for successful completion of remedial work.
- g) Upon successful completion of this remedial program, the course director will recommend to the Board of Examiners that the student be granted Credit for the course.
- h) The Board of Examiners will make the final determination regarding successful completion of the remediation. In the event that remediation in professionalism is not successful, the Board of Examiners may determine that the student cannot proceed to the next year of the program, and/or may take other action according to its term of reference.

## **v. Multiple minor lapses in professionalism**

**For details, see the flowchart “Steps in Professionalism Review” (Appendix 1).**

- a) The course director will meet with any student who exhibits three or more minor lapses in professionalism and confirm that such lapses have occurred. If this is confirmed, the course director will inform the Clerkship Director.
- b) The student will be invited to meet with the Clerkship Director to discuss issues identified and the student viewpoint. The purpose of the meeting is educational. Referral to the Associate Dean for Health Professions Student Affairs will be offered. The Clerkship Director may determine that in fact the minor lapses did not occur, and if so will adjust the student’s record accordingly.
- c) If there are further minor lapses of professionalism beyond the initial three lapses, then the student will be required to meet with the Clerkship Director. Referral to the Associate Dean for Health Professions Student Affairs will be offered. The Clerkship Director may determine that in fact the minor lapses did not occur, and if so will adjust the student’s record accordingly. Otherwise, the student will be discussed at the Clerkship Committee in camera discussion of Students in Academic Difficulty. A plan for extra work in professionalism will be determined.
- d) If minor lapses continue to be identified, and are confirmed by the course director, then the student will be considered to have the equivalent of a Major Lapse in professionalism, and the procedures described above in section (**iv. A major lapse in professionalism**) will be followed.

## **COMMUNICATION REGARDING STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

- a) Communication to the Clerkship Director from the course director regarding student performance should be provided in a timely fashion, within 2 weeks of the end of the course or rotation.
- b) Communication between course directors, course officials, and academy directors regarding a student’s performance, including professionalism, may take place at faculty meetings at the discretion of the Clerkship Director or upon instruction from the Board of Examiners.
- c) The student should be informed at the appropriate time that such communications will take place or have taken place.
- d) The student should have the opportunity to respond to allegations of academic difficulty especially if related to professionalism. The student should be informed that they have the right to provide a written submission to the Board.
- e) In the event that program modifications or enhanced supervision are proposed:
  - i. Every effort must be made by course directors, Academy directors and faculty to ensure an environment of positive expectation among those responsible for supervision, teaching and evaluation.
  - ii. If appropriate the student should be involved in planning program modifications.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR DOCUMENTATION BY COURSE DIRECTORS AFTER MEETING WITH STUDENT, DISCUSSIONS WITH COURSE COMMITTEE, CLERKSHIP DIRECTOR AND CLERKSHIP COMMITTEE**

**Communication to Clerkship Director**

**No credit (failure): remediation**

1. Remediation proposed

- a) Include information documenting that student is in academic difficulty and on what basis (marks on evaluations and what the criteria are for passing the specific course)
- b) Provide description of the proposal for the remediation and where and when it is to take place
- c) Provide description of what the evaluations will be and performance level to be achieved
- d) Copy Vice Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education, Associate Dean Health Professions Student Affairs, respective Academy Director, Site Coordinator for the remediation as appropriate, Faculty Registrar, Clerkship Administrative Coordinator and student

Send a copy of the letter to the student by email or registered mail and require that the student acknowledge receipt of the letter. Advise the student that the final decision on remediation is subject to the decision of the Board of Examiners, Undergraduate Medical Education.

2. Following completion of remediation

- a) Include a description of the remediation program that was carried out
- b) Include the results of the evaluation
- c) Provide a recommendation that if successful the grade be recorded as Credit.
- d) If the remediation is not successful indicate the reason and any further recommendations, and Credit has not yet been obtained for the course.
- e) Copy the Faculty Registrar and the Clerkship Administrative Coordinator

**Borderline performance: extra work**

1. Extra work and evaluation proposed

- a) Include information documenting that in your opinion and that of your course committee the student requires extra work and subsequent evaluation to meet the performance standard of your course
- b) Provide a description of what the extra work will be, where and when it will take place
- c) Provide a description of what the evaluation will be and the performance level to be achieved
- d) Include a statement that successful completion of the extra work and evaluation will meet the requirement for successful completion of the course
- e) Indicate that if the extra work and evaluation does not meet the standard of performance required of the course or rotation the Board of Examiners will be informed and subsequent formal remediation may be required
- f) Copy the Vice Dean Health Professions Student Affairs, the Faculty Registrar and the Clerkship Administrative Coordinator
- g) Send a copy of the letter to the student by email or registered mail and require that the student acknowledge receipt of the letter

2. Following completion of extra work

- a) Provide a description of the extra work and results of the evaluation
- b) If successful, include your recommendation that the student's grade be allowed to stand

- c) Copy the Faculty Registrar and the Clerkship Administrative Coordinator
- d) If the student does not meet the performance standard of the course that you will recommend to the Board of Examiners that the student be considered for formal remediation and then copy the Vice Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education in addition to the above

## Appendix 1

### *Step 1: Initial Response to Minor Professionalism Lapses*

Pre-clerkship/Clerkship Director is notified of professionalism learning issues when 3 or more evaluations with minor lapses are confirmed by course directors



Director sends email to student and offers **optional** appointment to discuss issues identified and student viewpoint with a collegial conversation. The purpose of the meeting is educational. Coaching and referral to the Associate Dean for Students Affairs is offered.

After collegial conversation and contacting Faculty or Course Director as necessary, Pre-clerkship/Clerkship Director feels minor lapses did not occur. Record is adjusted

Continued monitoring and documentation of process.

## Step 2: Second Response to Continuing Minor Professionalism Lapses

Pre-clerkship/Clerkship Director is notified of continued professionalism learning issues if further minor lapses follow Step 1 response.



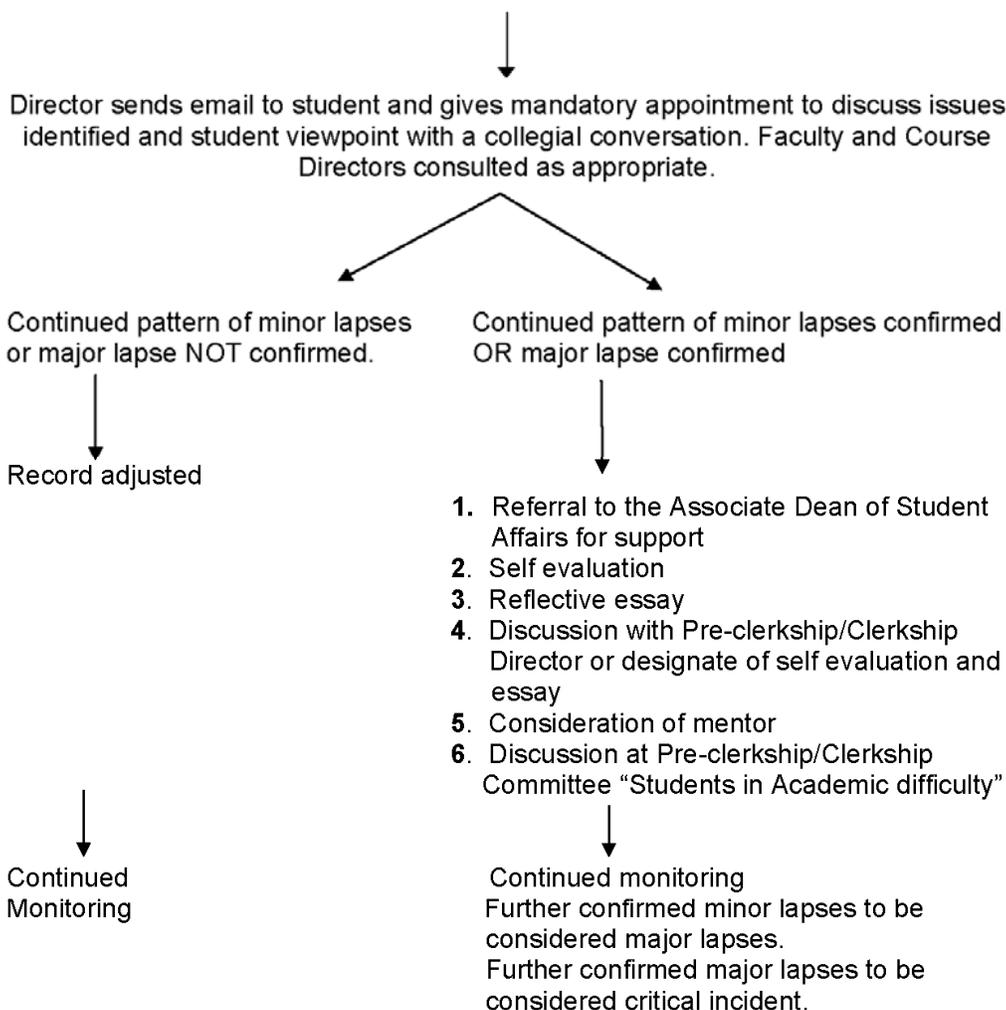
Director sends email to student and gives **mandatory** appointment to discuss issues identified and student viewpoint with a collegial conversation. Contact is made with Faculty or Course Directors identifying continued issues. Coaching and referral to the Associate Dean for Student affairs is offered.

After collegial conversation and contacting Faculty or Course Director as necessary  
Pre-clerkship/Clerkship Director feels minor lapses did not occur  
Record is adjusted

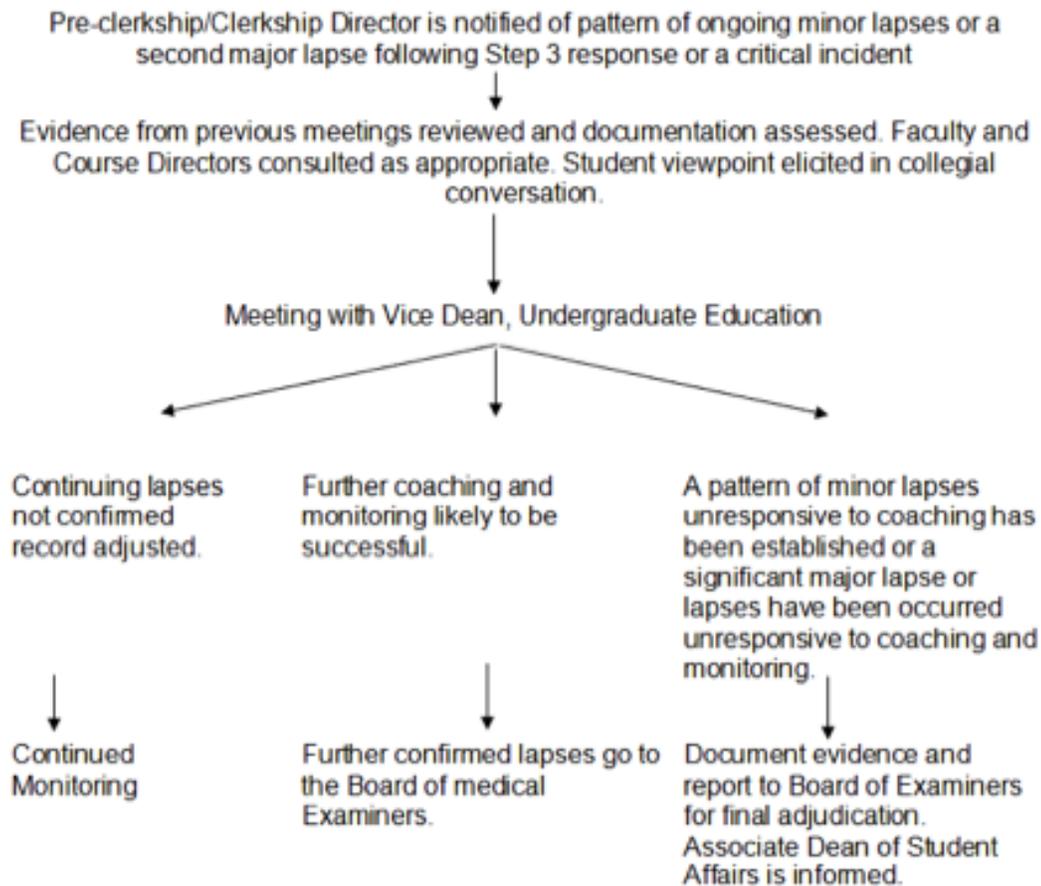
Continued monitoring and documentation of meeting.  
Student informed that further lapses will be considered major lapse.

### *Step 3: Third Response to Continuing Minor Professionalism Lapses or Initial Major Lapse*

Pre-clerkship/Clerkship Director is notified of continued professionalism learning issues if further minor lapses follow Step 2 response  
OR initial major lapse confirmed by course director



## Step 4: Second response to continued major professionalism lapses



## Step 5: Review by the Board of Examiners

Board of Examiners receives information from the Vice Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education, and others as required. Course directors may contact the Board directly if they need to appeal previous decisions

Board discusses material and reviews documentation

In view of Board of Examiners, unprofessional behaviour has occurred and has responded to monitoring and coaching.

Any further lapses to be reported to the Board of Examiners. Board of Examiners to advise on recording in academic file

In view of Board of Examiners, unprofessional behaviour has occurred and has NOT responded to monitoring and coaching.

Remedial action or dismissal from medical school is specified. Information is recorded on the student's academic file.