

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Becky Bitter, MA, Senior Assistant Registrar  
Washington State University Registrar's Office

FROM: John Tomkowiak, MD, MOL  
Founding Dean



Dawn Cooper, PhD  
Associate Dean for Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation

DATE: January 6, 2020

RE: Expansion of the grading system to include a Near Honors option in Years 3 and 4 of the MD Program.

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The Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine (ESFCOM) is seeking the Washington State University Faculty Senate's approval to expand the current grading framework used in the Years 3 and 4 (the Clerkship Years) to include a "Near Honors" grade option. Currently, the grades available to students in Years 3 and 4 are Honors, Satisfactory, and Fail. Faculty Senate approval of this request will provide our students with four grading options in the Years 3 and 4: Honors, Near Honors, Satisfactory and Fail. We are requesting this change for the following reasons:

1. In the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 Academic Years, our faculty grading panels have clearly identified four groups of students: (1) students clearly meeting the criteria for Honors, (2) students who were clearly performing better than students achieving a Satisfactory but were short of meeting the Honors criteria (borderline group), (3) students who clearly met the criteria for satisfactory, and (4) students who did not meet the minimum requirements to pass. Faculty grading panels and the Curriculum Committee are concerned that we are disadvantaging students in this borderline group by assigning them a Satisfactory grade.
2. Four-tiered grading systems that include a "High Pass" or "Near Honors" option are common at Medical Schools in the US. The proposed change aligns the College of Medicine with the clerkship grading options at the majority of medical schools, which will likely promote comparable review of our medical students when they compete for residency program positions with students from other medical schools.
3. Fourth year medical students typically complete "away" rotations at other medical schools as part of their training. This Academic Year, we had 4<sup>th</sup> year students complete "away" rotations and receive grades of "High Pass"(a grade that sits between "Pass" (our Satisfactory) and

“Honors.” Given our current grading system, we had no choice but to assign these students a Satisfactory grade. As more of our students begin to complete away rotations, we expect to receive more High Pass/Near Honors assessments from other medical schools and would like to accurately represent these student performances on their transcripts. We disadvantage our students by down-grading to Satisfactory the grades they earned from other institutions.

In this package, we have included updated grading criteria for the courses that would be impacted by this grading change. These include:

1. Year 3: MED CLIN 521, 522, 523, 524
2. Year 4: All 4-week Electives

We greatly appreciate the University’s willingness to consider this request off cycle and thank everyone for their time.

Please accept this memorandum as approval to the changes described above by Dr. John Tomkowiak, Dean of the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine, Dr. Dawn Cooper, Associate Dean for Accreditation, Assessment, and Evaluation and the Curriculum Committee.

Thank you for your time, review, and consideration.

cc: Judith Bowen, MD, PhD, FACP  
Associate Dean for Curriculum

Jaime Bowman, MD, FAAFP  
Director, Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship

Dawn Elise DeWitt, MD, MSC, MACP, FRACP, Cert Med Ed  
Inaugural Year 4 Director

Lonika Sood, MD, MHPE, FACP, FHM  
Chair, Curriculum Committee

## **Overarching Framework for Performance Assessment**

The ESFCOM MD Program is a competency-based that uses multiple assessment methods to monitor student performance in the 6 Core Competencies: Medical and Scientific Knowledge, Patient Care and Health Promotion, Professionalism and Self-awareness, Practice-based Lifelong Learning, Systems-based Practice, and Communication and Interpersonal Skills.

### **Assessment Framework for Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (Year 3)**

Final grades in Year 3 will be reported at the end of the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) as follows:

1. Overall performance in the LIC
  - Overall: Honors/Near Honors/Satisfactory/Fail (criteria described below)
  - Performance will also be reported by competency

### **Assessment Modalities Used in Year 3**

The assessment modalities that will be used to assess student performance in the LIC include:

- Workplace-based Assessments
- Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs)
- Written Exams
- Assignments
- Portfolio Project

Each assessment modality captures information about development in specific domains of competence and together inform development in the 6 Core Competencies listed above.

### **Grading criteria**

**Satisfactory** – To achieve a grade of satisfactory in the LIC, students must:

1. Satisfactorily complete all course requirements by the end of the LIC
2. Complete logging requirements by the end of the LIC
3. Complete all required course and faculty evaluations
4. Satisfactory attendance per the ESFCOM Attendance Policy, and exhibit professional behavior throughout the LIC (see Medical Student Professionalism and Self-Awareness found in the Student Handbook)
5. Attain an “Achieve” or higher in all 6 core competency domains

**Near Honors** – To achieve a grade of Near Honors in the LIC, students must:

1. Satisfactorily complete all course requirements by the end of the LIC
2. Complete logging requirements by the end of the LIC
3. Complete all required course and faculty evaluations within the communicated due date (grace will be given for one assignment)
4. Have satisfactory attendance per the ESFCOM Attendance Policy, and exhibit professional behavior throughout the LIC (see Medical Student Professionalism and Self-Awareness found in the Student Handbook)
5. Achieve an “Honors” in 5 of 6 core competency domains

**Honors** – To achieve a grade of Honors in the LIC, students must:

1. Satisfactorily complete all course requirements by the end of the LIC
2. Complete logging requirements by the end of the LIC
3. Complete all required course and faculty evaluations within the communicated due date (grace will be given for one assignment)
4. Have satisfactory attendance per the ESFCOM Attendance Policy, and exhibit professional behavior throughout the LIC (see Medical Student Professionalism and Self-Awareness found in the Student Handbook)
5. Achieve an “Honors” in all 6 core competency domains

## **Generic Assessment Framework for 4<sup>th</sup> Electives**

### **Assessment Modalities Used in Year 4**

The assessment modalities that will be used to assess student performance in Year 4 electives include:

- Workplace-based Assessments
- Written Exams
- Assignments
- Logbooks
- Self-assessments and learning plans

### **A. Grading Criteria For 4-week Patient Care Electives**

The following components will inform the grades for all 4-week patient-care electives. The relative weighting for each component has been included.

1. Clinical Performance (Clinical Performance Assessment and Workplace-Assessments) (50-65%)
2. Assignments (5-20%)
3. Professional Attributes (10%)
4. Logbook (5%)
5. Self-assessment and learning plan – 5%

All 4-week patient care electives will be graded using Honors, Near Honors, Satisfactory, or Fail. To achieve an Honors, students must meet the Honors criteria outlined for each assessment component. To achieve a Near Honors, students must meet Honors criteria for 4 of the 5 assessment components listed above (Note: to achieve a Near Honors, students must achieve an Honors in the Professional Attributes component). To achieve a satisfactory in this rotation students must meet the criteria for satisfactory outlined for each assessment component listed above. Any student failing to achieve a satisfactory in the Professional Attributes component in any elective will fail the elective.

### **Grading Criteria for Non-Patient Care Electives**

Non-patient care electives are important learning opportunities that do not require direct care of patients. Examples include: Medical Education, Evidence-based Medicine, Quality Improvement & Patient Safety, Research Experience.

The following components will inform the grades for all non-patient care electives. The relative weighting for each component has been included.

1. Learning plan (10%)
2. Assignments (70%)
3. Professional Attributes (10%)
4. Self-assessment (10%)

All 4-week non-patient care electives will be graded using Honors, Near Honors, Satisfactory, or Fail. To achieve an Honors, students must meet the Honors criteria outlined for each assessment component. To achieve a Near Honors, students must meet Honors criteria for 4 of the 5 assessment components listed above (Note: to achieve a Near Honors, students must achieve an Honors in the Professional Attributes component). To achieve a satisfactory in this rotation students must meet the criteria for satisfactory outlined for each assessment component listed above. Any student failing to achieve a satisfactory in the Professional Attributes component in any elective will fail the elective.