

Academic Standards and Grading Policy A3.14a

Purpose

The Academic Standards and Grading Policy of the Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine PA Program define the standards of academic and professional performance for students who are candidates for the degree Masters of Physician Assistant Studies, to maintain enrollment and progress in the curriculum. The academic standards have been developed by the PA faculty and members of both the Curriculum Committee and the Student Progress Committee (SPC) and have been approved by the Executive Council, and the Dean of the School of Osteopathic Medicine. Actions of the Student Progress Committee are recommendations to the Dean who may approve, disapprove, modify or return the recommendations to the SPC for further consideration. The decision of the Dean of the School of Osteopathic Medicine is final in all cases concerning student academic performance.

The SPC defines the procedures by which students are considered for promotion, graduation, remedial instruction, leaves of absence and dismissal. Students with problems in personal adjustment are also considered by the Committee. The members of the SPC, in consultation with faculty advisors and faculty members, will attempt to identify how students in academic difficulty may be helped to continue and complete their professional training within the policies forthwith. The welfare of the public, whom the graduates of the Program will serve, in addition to the welfare of the student and the institution, is paramount in reaching a recommendation in all cases before the SPC.

DEFINITIONS

Complete/Incomplete – A grade that is used for individual course assignments that require accountability for completion but are not graded numerically or weighted toward the final course grade. This category of assignments is generally evaluated against specific criteria in a rubric or checklist rather than a percentage score and may include the option to revise/repeat the assignment to achieve minimum standards.

Pass/Fail: A grade assigned for overall pre-clerkship course performance (Pass=>69.45%) and for individual high-stakes assignments or assessments within a course for which students must achieve a minimum passing score or meet defined passing criteria. Failure of any P/F element will result in a failing grade (F) for the course regardless of the student's overall performance in the course.

Courses can include Pass/Fail (P/F) elements, Complete/Incomplete (C/INC) assignments, and graded elements as described below:

- Pass/Fail Elements can be used for **high-stakes assessments** designed to evaluate critical competencies and core requirements in the course. Students must achieve a **minimum passing score of 69.45%** or meet defined passing criteria to successfully complete these elements. Failure to pass any P/F element will result in a failing grade (F) for the course, regardless of the student's overall performance in the course. Students

who fail a P/F element and therefore the course may have the opportunity to remediate the course failure and earn a **Remediated Pass (RP)** or may be required to repeat the course in accordance with clerkship standards and institutional policies.

- **Complete/Incomplete Elements** are used for coursework that requires accountability for completion and are commonly evaluated using a rubric or minimum competency criteria but are not weighted toward the final course grade. To pass a course, students must submit all required assignments designated as C/INC by the end of the course. Assignments submitted that do not meet the established criteria will be marked **Incomplete (INC)** and will be required to be revised/repeated and resubmitted within a timeframe set by the course director. A C/INC assignment not turned in by the deadline will result in an **Incomplete (INC)** grade and may lead to a professionalism concern report. If a student does not submit/resubmit the assignment that meets the established standards by the end of the course, the INC will convert to a **Failure (F)** for the course. Students who fail the course due to an unresolved INC assignment will have the opportunity to remediate and earn a **Remediated Pass (RP)** as per clerkship and institutional policies.
- **Graded Elements** are used for coursework and assessments that contribute to the student's final course grade based on numerical scores or percentage weight. These assessments must align with the Rowan-Virtua SOM grading policy and reflect the relative significance of the element within the course as defined within this policy. A student is considered to have passed a course if a final numeric grade of 69.45% or higher is achieved.

Official Grades

The school will use the following grading scales in determining student grades:

P = Pass **69.45 – 100**

F = Fail **Below 69.44 or lower**

RP = Remediated Pass

INC = Incomplete

W = Withdrawal

Practical Exams

The Practical Exams are formative assessments in which students are required to demonstrate adequate progress in each skill tested to Pass. The level of progress performance required for each skill is established by the program faculty and course directors. Students who do not perform at this level for any one of the skills tested will receive an Incomplete and be required to complete a self-review and attend coaching, feedback and/or practice sessions and subsequently retake the Practical until they demonstrate the required level of performance for each skill tested. Once the student is successful, the grade will be converted to a Pass.

Recording Grades

A grade of Fail may only be changed to Remediated Pass (RP) and the notation of Incomplete (INC) to the earned grade upon receipt of a Grade Change Form from the Course or Clerkship Director to the SOM Registrar's Office once a student has satisfied their deficiencies. Students

will only be required to repeat courses they failed. If a course is repeated, both the original grade of F and the grade earned when repeated will be seen on the transcript.

Leave of Absence Grading

If a student takes a leave of absence, the following policies will apply regarding grading courses that are not complete at the time of the leave:

1. The student will receive a final grade for all courses for which they have met all requirements in the course syllabus.
2. For courses that have concluded and for which the student has not completed all requirements, the student will receive one of the following grades.
 - a. INC (Incomplete) if the student is completing the final requirements within 30 days of the last day of the term. After the remaining requirements have been completed, the INC will be replaced by the final course grade.
 - b. W (Withdrawn) if the student will not be completing the final requirements and had not completed enough work to determine performance at the time of the leave. The W grade remains permanently on the transcript.
 - c. No “credit” will be given for completion of a partial term’s work. A student who leaves in the middle of a term without completing all course requirements will receive a W. The grade will remain permanently on the transcript. The student will be required to repeat and complete the course starting at the beginning of the course when the student returns from leave. The course will be listed a second time on the transcript with the final grade the student earns in that course.
 - d. The program will adhere to the tuition refund schedule as described in the Rowan-Virtua SOM tuition refund policy.

The Rowan-Virtua SOM PA Program does not participate in grade forgiveness. Once a course grade has been filed to the registrar there is no opportunity to retake that course for a higher grade. Students who decelerate due to a leave of absence from the university, MUST complete a re-entry exam covering all materials leading up to the time a temporary separation occurred. For more information, please see the PA Program policy on deceleration in this Handbook.

The Course Director will make all final decisions regarding student grades. Failure to comply with all aspects of the course goals, learning objectives, and other attributes described in the course syllabus may adversely affect the student’s grade.

Rubric Grading

SCALE FOR FACULTY EVALUATION OF STUDENT

<u>Rubrics</u>	<u>% Possible Grade Range for Assignment</u>
5 (Expert)	100.00
4 (Advanced Proficient)	90.00
3 (Proficient)	80.00
2 (Below Average)	70.00
1 (Needs Improvement)	60.00
0 (No credit, not complete)	0.00

SCALE FOR PRECEPTOR EVALUATION OF STUDENT

<u>Rubrics</u>	<u>% Grade for Assignment</u>
5 (Expert)	100.00
4 (Advanced Proficient)	90.00
3 (Proficient)	80.00
2 (Below Average)	70.00
1 (Needs Improvement)	60.00

GRADING SCALE FOR END-OF-ROTATION & END-OF-CURRICULUM EXAMS

<u>PAEA Designation</u>	<u>% Grade for Course</u>	<u>Letter Grade for Course</u>
Advanced Medical Knowledge > 1555	95	P
Satisfactory Medical Knowledge = 1400-1554	85	P
Limited Medical Knowledge <1400	35	F

Written Exam, Practical Exam, and OSCE Reviewing Policy

Only students who fail an exam, may at the discretion of the course director, review with the student their wrong answers only. Any supervision of exam material must be done in the presence of the course director and done so without any note taking, recording of said materials, and done so in a secure manner. Reviewing exam materials can only be done in person and should not occur remotely. All requests from students who failed an exam to review their wrong answers must be made within five days from when grades are released.

Students will not be permitted to review exams, practical exams, or OSCEs with the course director or faculty advisor if they achieved a passing score. Students are encouraged to discuss test taking strategies with their faculty advisor in these instances.

Practical Exams and Objective Structured Clinical Exams (OSCEs) will similarly only be re-reviewed once by the faculty grader or course director if a student fails and makes a timely request for review. All requests for review of a practical exam or OSCE must be made within five days of when grades are released. All practical exams and OSCEs are recorded for grading and validation purposes only. Students who fail a practical exam may be asked to watch their recording of their practical exams in the presence of faculty member for learning and remediation purposes only.

Progression Requirements A3.14a & A3.14b

Requirements for Progression within the Didactic Phase

A PA Program student must complete the following requirements by the end of each semester in which they occur in order to complete the PA Program:

1. All PA courses must be passed with a minimum grade of Pass (P) or Remediated Pass (RP).
2. Satisfactory completion of all written and/or practical Summative exams with a minimum grade of 69.45% Pass (P).
3. Successful remediation of any grade below a 69.45% receiving a Fail (F), on a written summative exam, H&P practical, or individual technical skill.
4. Successful remediation of any course failure (F) with a final grade of (RP).
5. Demonstration of proficiency of required clinical and technical skills necessary for clinical practice as determined by the program.
6. Satisfactory completion of BLS/ACLS.

Deadline: Completion of all Didactic Phase requirements must be completed by the end of each semester in which they occur. Failure to meet these deadlines may result in delayed graduation, dismissal from the program, or need to take leave of absence (if applicable – see corresponding section of the PA Student Handbook).

Requirements for Progression within the Clinical Phase

In addition to the requirements for promotion within the didactic phase, a PA Program student must complete the following requirements by the end of each semester in which they occur in order to complete the PA Program:

1. All PA courses must be passed with a minimum grade of Pass (P) or Remediated Pass (RP).
2. Satisfactory completion of all PAEA End of Rotation (EOR) examinations with a scaled score at or above the value equivalent to 1.5 standard deviations below the national mean (Pass).
3. Successful completion of remediation for any PAEA End of Rotation (EOR) examination with a scaled score more than 1.5 standard deviations below the national mean, in accordance with the program's remediation policy.
4. Satisfactory remediation for a grade below 69.45% receiving a Fail (F), on any other assessment as mandated by the course director.
5. Preceptor evaluations must be passed (graded) with a minimum grade of 80% (Pass).
 - a. If any item is below an 3/5 which is an 80% (Pass), or "not observed" students must complete a [Clinical and Technical Skills Gap Analysis Plan for SCPEs](#).
6. Demonstration of proficiency of all required clinical and technical skills necessary for clinical practice as determined by the PA Program.

Deadline: for completion of all Clinical Phase requirements must be completed by the end of each semester in which they occur. Failure to meet these deadlines may result in delayed

graduation, dismissal from the program, or need to take leave of absence (if applicable – see corresponding section of the PA Student Handbook).

Requirements and Deadlines for Program Completion

To graduate from the Rowan-Virtua SOM PA Program and be eligible to take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE), students must meet the criteria listed below. The PA Program and the University will review all student records prior to graduation to ensure compliance with these requirements.

1. Academic Completion
 - Complete the Didactic Phase progression requirements
 - Complete the Clinical Phase progression requirements
 - Completion of all Performance Improvement Plans (if applicable)

2. PA Program Administrative and Financial Compliance
 - Resolution of all holds, including those placed by the registrar or student health services.
 - Submission of a completed application for graduation in compliance with the registrar's requirements.
 - Resolution of any outstanding financial balances with the University.

Deadline: All requirements for graduation must be completed by the end of each semester in which they occur. Failure to meet these deadlines may result in delayed graduation, dismissal from the program, or need to take [leave of absence](#) (if applicable – see corresponding section of the PA Student Handbook).

Performance Improvement Plan for At-Risk Students

The Rowan-Virtua SOM PA Program is committed to ensuring that all students demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to be successful on the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination (PANCE) and in clinical practice. The program will work to identify at-risk students using the criteria listed below and support students meeting the criteria with additional assistance in the form of a required Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

A PIP is a longitudinal process that is independent of an individual course. Students who are designated as at-risk based on the criteria below will be notified by the program. Students will meet with their advisor or designee to discuss, review, and collaborate on the development of the PIP.

Examples of required activities include tutoring, self-assessment, advisement from the Center for Student Success, additional assessments, and more frequent advising meetings. Please see the [Performance Improvement Plan](#) section of this handbook for more information.

All students must successfully complete their specific PIP to be eligible for graduation, if applicable. The terms of successful completion will be noted within the individual PIPs and be in accordance with the policy below.

Criteria for Entry into a Performance Improvement Plan

1. Didactic Year

- Failure of three (3) or more exams in the same semester.
- Failure of two (2) or more practical physical exam clinical skills assessments.
- Failure of the summative practical physical exam clinical skills assessment.
- Failure of two (2) or more technical clinical skills assessments.
- Failure of the Clinical Medicine 1 Summative Exam or the Clinical Medicine 2 Summative Exam.
- Being placed on Academic Probation.
- Receiving a written warning for professionalism or being placed on Professional Probation.

2. Clinical Year

- A score below 1450 on the PAEA End-of-Curriculum (EOC) Exam.
- Failure of an End-of-Rotation Exam.
- SPC-determined need for addressing a professionalism-related skill(s).
- Failure of the Capstone Course.
- Being placed on Academic Probation.
- Receiving a written warning for professionalism or being placed on Professional Probation.

PIP Requirements

Students who fail to meet one or more of the above benchmarks must complete a robust PIP, which will be individualized to address the specific deficiencies identified. PIP may include but is not limited to remediation efforts described elsewhere within this Handbook and course syllabi. In addition, other PIP components may include:

- Required participation in individualized study sessions and assessments.
- Required participation in program-sponsored tutoring services.
- Required evaluation and guidance from Center for Student Success staff.
- Required self-assessment, identifying self-realized areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
- Completion of additional board preparation activities, potentially including a second PANCE board-prep course at the student's expense.
- A delay in graduation if remediation cannot be completed within the initially scheduled timeframe.
- A grade of "Incomplete" (I) in the capstone course or SCPE clinical rotation until all requirements of the improvement plan are successfully fulfilled.
- As a required resource for all clinical year courses, all students must purchase a subscription to **UWorld** for PANCE preparation. This subscription will be integrated into the remediation and improvement plan process to ensure students have access to high-quality study materials.
- [Capstone Course Remediation](#).
- Additional requirements as recommended by program faculty, faculty advisors, course directors, the SP, or institutional support service personnel if applicable (Office of

Accessibility, Center for Student Success, Office of Student Health, etc.) tailored to the student's areas in need of improvement.

PIP Exit

Students who successfully complete all requirements and goals of their PIP by demonstrating appropriate improvement will exit the PIP process and [progress](#) in the program as outlined elsewhere in this Handbook. If the program determines that the student has met all requirements, the student will be allowed to progress to graduation and will become eligible for PANCE registration.

NCCPA Examination: PANCE (PA National Certification Examination)

Only those students who graduate in good standing from a program accredited by the ARC-PA may sit for the PANCE exam. Advanced registration is required and can be completed 3 months prior to graduation. Registration is completed online at www.nccpa.net. Once the completed application is received from a candidate, and confirmation of graduation is received from the PA Program, a scheduling permit is created by the NCCPA and emailed directly to the candidate. The available testing dates for each candidate will begin seven days after the expected program completion date and end 180 days later. Registration may be withheld from students within the PA Program if students are on a PIP.

Graduation from the Rowan-Virtua SOM PA Program does not ensure that one can practice as a PA. Graduates must successfully pass the PANCE examination and meet state registration and licensing requirements in order to become licensed to practice as a PA.

Grade Appeals A3.14h

Written Exam Item Challenges

Faculty complete an examination review process using statistical analysis to determine if any grade adjustments are required. Exam item challenges outside of this process are not accepted.

Academic Course Grade Appeals

Students and course directors occasionally disagree on final course grades. Sometimes this is the result of a mathematical error on the part of the course director; an issue that can readily be resolved by the student taking the relevant exam to the course director or otherwise pointing out the error. The course director then acts to correct the erroneous grade. Sometimes the student and the course director disagree on a substantive issue, such as the evaluation of an exam answer or the course letter grade. The student should first think through the grade and ensure that they can identify the nature of the disagreement clearly. The student should then make an appointment with the course director and discuss the issue. In this way almost all disagreements can be resolved.

The following procedure is for those more unusual cases in which further discussion cannot resolve the problem, and the student feels that their final grade was incorrectly awarded. The student should note that the formal academic appeal process is not an open review of all grades assigned within a course, nor is it the correct time or place to debate the relevance of course

material/assessments as outlined in the syllabus or other course related documents. The formal academic appeal is an examination of whether proper procedures were followed in the awarding of the grade. These steps (listed below a-f) must be initiated by seven calendar days (excluding days when the university is closed) after the end of any semester in the MSPAS program.

- a. The student should provide a written appeal statement to the course director outlining the basis of the appeal, including all objective information within seven (7) calendar days after the end of any semester in the MSPAS program. This statement should contain all the pertinent information including steps already taken by the student. A copy should be submitted to the PA Program Director. The course director will consider the statement and respond in writing within seven (7) calendar days (excluding days when the university is closed) to the student with a copy forwarded to the PA Program Director.
- b. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course director, the student should submit in writing a request for review by the PA Program Director or designee within three (3) calendar days of the date of the response of the course director. At this time, the student may also submit any additional information for review by the Program Director or designee.
- c. The course director will be offered the opportunity to provide any additional written information regarding the appeal to the Program Director or designee.
- d. On the basis of the information provided, the Program Director or designee will make a decision on the following basis:
 1. Were the grading procedures used in the course clear and consistent for the course in general?
 2. Did the instructor fairly apply the grading procedures in the case of the student who has filed an appeal?
- e. The Program Director or designee will make a decision and notify the course director and the student of their decision. If the review finds that the procedures were clear and consistent and were applied fairly in the case of the student who has filed an appeal, this information will be given in writing to both the student and the instructor. If the review finds that the student was not fairly graded, the Program Director or designee will contact the faculty member in question to request that the student's work be re-graded in a way that eliminates the unfairness. A third possibility is that the review may show some ambiguity about fairness and the Program Director or designee may request further discussion between the student and instructor to resolve the issue. In the case where the Program Director is the course director, evaluation will be completed by the Associate Program Director.
- f. If the student is not satisfied with the results of the steps above, the student may file a final appeal with the Dean's office on procedural grounds only. This final appeal will review the above aforementioned steps, to determine whether or not all steps were completed appropriately by all parties.
- g. This final appeal, only on procedural grounds, would be determined by the Dean of the Rowan-Virtua SOM or designee, and submitted directly to the student and cc'd to the Program Director.
- h. The entire process, as outlined in steps a-g must conclude within thirty (30) days from the end of the previous semester.