



UCD School of Medicine and Medical Science

Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Policy for Students registered to Medicine Programme Degrees

Introduction

The Medicine Programme is responsible for the design and delivery of four degree programmes:

Undergraduate Entry Medicine (MB BCh, BAO)

Graduate Entry Medicine (MB BCh, BAO)

Biomedical Health & Life Science (BSc)

Radiography (BSc)

The primary responsibility for the academic progress of a student registered to any of those programmes rests with that individual student. For the majority of students registered to those programmes progression through the individual stages and completion of the degree programme occurs in a relatively straightforward fashion. However, there are students for whom academic progress is not satisfactory. Failure to progress through the stages can arise for a number of different reasons. There are many support services available within UCD to students who find themselves in difficulty. For example there is a Student Advisor network, the Student Health Service and a host of academic and administrative staff with various roles and responsibilities who can provide advice and information. For some students such services can provide a means by which they can be supported through their individual circumstances and enable satisfactory progression through the student's programme. Unfortunately, there are also those students for whom progression does not occur; such students may find themselves in this position either with or without availing of the support structures in place.

The purpose of this policy document is to:

- (i) explain criteria by which unsatisfactory academic progress can be defined
- (ii) identify students for whom academic progress is not satisfactory (i.e. "at risk" students),
- (iii) describe the mechanisms through which the student can be advised of their "at risk" situation
- (iv) describe mechanisms through which the at risk student can be mentored or managed within their programme

Thus, the key words underlying the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Policy are *Identification, Communication, Advising and Management*.

This policy must be made available to students prior to their engagement with their programme.

Academic Regulations

Current Academic Regulations (Version: 28th April 2011, Governing Academic Session 2010/11) include the following rules regarding progression:

5.15 PROGRESSION

A semester GPA will be calculated, and recorded on the transcript, for each semester for which a student is registered to a programme. The semester GPA is the weighted average of the grade points awarded for all modules attempted during the semester, where the grade point for each module is weighted by the credit value of the module.

5.15.1 Where the Programme Examination Board determines that a student has successfully completed a stage or programme, that is, has been awarded credit for modules fulfilling all the requirements for a stage or programme, that student may progress to the next stage of, or complete, the programme, subject to specified programme progression and completion requirements.

5.15.2 When a student has successfully completed a stage or programme, a stage or programme GPA is awarded. The stage or programme GPA is the weighted average of the grade points awarded for the final successful attempt at all modules from the approved programme of study for that stage or programme which have been completed and passed, where the grade point for each module is weighted by the credit value of the module.

5.15.3 In programmes with more than one stage, a student may progress to the next stage of their programme despite having not passed some modules (with grades of E,F,G,NG,I,IX,IP,W,WL,WX,AU) provided the credit value of the modules not passed is at a maximum 10 ECTS credits (see General Regulation 2.3 – student workload norms).

5.15.6 Where a student cannot progress, they may register for a repeat stage. The repeat stage is considered a separate attempt at completing the requirements of the stage, where the student is exempt from modules which they have already completed and passed.

5.15.7 Where a student registers for a repeat stage, and is required to repeat modules totalling 30 ECTS credits or less, and the regulations, module requirements and timetable allow, the stage may be repeated in one semester.

5.15.8 Where a student cannot progress and is registered to a repeat stage, the student may normally register to modules from the next stage in advance of progressing to that stage, provided the student complies with the maximum workloads set forth in General Regulation 2.3, module requirements are met and the modules from the next stage do not conflict with modules from the repeat stage.

Identification of Unacceptable Academic Progress (i.e. identification of “at risk” students)

Programme Examination Review Committees (PERC) and the subsequent Programme Examination Board (PEB) meetings shall identify “at risk” students.

Compensation of a limited number of E grades is possible in the UCD grading and assessment process (currently E grades to a maximum value of 15 credits per 60 credit stage provided certain other criteria are met). Accordingly, identification of a student with E grades in modules to the value of 15 credits in one semester does not necessarily mean that that student will fall foul of

exclusion criteria or non-progression criteria when the stage performance as a whole is considered. Students will not be excluded or barred from progression into Stage 2 by means of this Unsatisfactory Academic Progress policy by the Medicine Programme Board based upon their first attempt at Stage 1 because such students would not fall foul of any of the criteria described below under “*Dealing with Unacceptable Academic Progress*”. Progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2 does not occur when the credit value of modules not passed is greater than 10 ECTS credits (see **PROGRESSION 5.15.3** above).

Students may be identified as belonging to a “Low Risk” or “High Risk” category.

A student may be considered to be Low Risk with 1 or 2 E grades.

A student may be considered to be High Risk in any of the following circumstances:

- (i) the student achieves a semester or stage GPA < 2.0
- (ii) the student is carrying modules into a subsequent stage
- (iii) the student has 3 or more E grades

Modular incomplete (I) grades may also be indicative of a student’s “at risk” status.

The Medicine Programme Board will consider the cases of “at risk” students and agree upon the appropriate course of action in each case.

Communication with “at risk” students

Students whose academic progress is deemed unacceptable will receive due notification; the nature of such notification will depend upon each student’s circumstances. Low Risk students will receive an appropriate letter from the Dean (or Associate Dean); High Risk students will receive an appropriate letter from the Dean (or Associate Dean) and must engage with an advice and mentorship plan as set out in the next paragraph.

Advising and Managing “High Risk” students: First Meeting

The Medicine Programme Board (or the Dean or Associate Dean) shall decide upon an appropriate member of academic staff to act as an academic mentor and to meet with the student. Such staff may include (but not be limited to) the Dean, Associate Dean, Programme Director, Stage Coordinators or Subject Heads. The nominated academic staff member will arrange to meet the student. The meeting will provide an opportunity for the student to discuss their particular circumstances and agree the approaches to be adopted to remedy the student’s “at risk” status.

At the end of the meeting a meeting record form will be completed and

1. The student should sign the form to acknowledge that:

- (i) the First Meeting has taken place
- (ii) the student’s situation has been explained to them
- (iii) he/she will engage in the remedial approaches agreed in the First Meeting. (Academic advice should include emphasis on the differences between *resit* and *repeat* attempts at failed modules where necessary).
- (iv) he/she will liaise with the Programme Office to ensure that appropriate registration arrangements are put in place.

2. The form should also be signed by the staff member present. Original forms must be retained by the Programme Office. Photocopies of the original form may be retained by the staff member and the student for their own records.

Advising and Managing “High Risk” students: Subsequent Meeting

Students whose academic performance continues to be deemed unacceptable will receive further notification from the Dean or Associate Dean and will be required to meet a designated academic staff member which may be the original academic mentor.

Subsequent meetings will operate in a similar fashion to the First Meeting. Specifically, the student should sign the form to acknowledge that:

- (i) the Subsequent Meeting has taken place
- (ii) the student’s situation has been explained to them
- (iii) he/she will engage in the remedial approaches agreed in the Subsequent Meeting.

It is emphasized that the primary purpose of these meetings is to help the student to achieve satisfactory academic progress. However, if such progress remains to be deemed unacceptable by the Medicine Programme Board that Board will refer the case, with a recommendation and supporting evidence, to the relevant University Programme Board.

Dealing with Unacceptable Academic Progress

Successive versions of Academic Regulations have been associated with an evolution of exclusion or non-progression criteria. Current Regulations (Version: 28th April 2011 Governing Academic Session 2010/11) state:

5.16 CONTINUATION: Where the relevant governing board (Programme Board for undergraduate programmes, Graduate School Board for graduate programmes) of a programme deems a student’s performance and progression within their programme to be academically unacceptable, the relevant governing board shall refer the case, with a recommendation and supporting evidence, to the relevant University Programme Board to decide whether the student is or is not eligible to continue in that programme.

5.16.1 Where the relevant governing board (Programme Board for undergraduate programmes, Graduate School Board for graduate programmes) of a programme receives an application to admit or re-admit to a programme(s) a student who had been deemed ineligible to continue in a programme(s) under General Regulation 5.16, the relevant governing board shall refer the case, with a recommendation and supporting evidence, to the relevant University Programme Board to decide whether the student is or is not eligible to be admitted or re-admitted.

The Medicine Programme Board deems a student’s academic progress to be academically unacceptable when:

(i) a student's GPA falls below 2.00 for four out of five consecutive semesters for which they are registered to a programme, (that student will be ineligible to continue in that programme)

and/or when a student falls foul of the following progression criterion:

(ii) A student may not progress to a Stage 3 unless they have completed all the requirements for Stage 1, and a student may not progress to any Stage **n** if they have not completed the requirements for Stage **n-2**.

These two criteria can be found in earlier, but not current, versions of Academic Regulations.

The Medicine Programme reserves the right to deem a student's performance to be unacceptable for justifiable reasons beyond the two stated criteria above. Thus, they are not the sole exclusion or non-progression criteria. Failure to achieve a passing grade in a module within four consecutive assessment offerings for that module is also deemed to represent unacceptable academic progress (except in those cases where an assessment offering was not availed of owing to a successful Extenuating Circumstance Application). Another situation where a student may be excluded from a programme would be when the student fails to meet fitness to practice criteria. A failure to engage with the Academic Mentoring process by a student who is required to do so will be taken into consideration by the Medicine Programme Board when considering that student's case.

Exclusion from the Programme

If the Medicine Programme Board deems that a student's academic performance remains unacceptable, which may include circumstances where a student meets the exclusion criteria set out above, the Board will:

(i) initiate a mechanism to recommend exclusion to the University Programme Board

and

(ii) inform the student that such recommendation will be made .

A student who will not complete their programme may be eligible for the award of an exit degree.

Appeals Procedure

Natural justice requires that a student should have the right to an Appeals Process when he/she believes that:

(i) the decision to exclude is unjust owing to extenuating circumstances that were not taken into account by the Medicine Programme Board

or

(ii) the Unsatisfactory Academic Progress Policy had not been properly adhered to.

In cases where a student wishes to appeal the decision of exclusion from their programme by the Medicine Programme Board an appeals committee shall be constituted by the Dean or Associate Dean. Membership of the committee will be at the discretion of the Dean or Associate Dean but cognisance will be given to the circumstances of the appeal. At the request of the student an appropriate officer of the Students' Union may accompany the student.