

GRADING POLICIES (STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE)

Policy Statement

The Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine faculty must ensure students have demonstrated mastery of course material, demonstrated conduct consistent with professional standards, and are suitable for the practice of medicine. The Student Performance and Advancement Committee is responsible for recommending students for promotion and graduation.

Purpose

- A. To inform the working of the Student Performance and Advancement Committee.
- B. To inform Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine (COM) students, staff, and faculty of the guidelines for evaluation of student performance and advancement in the medical education program.
- C. To ensure COM complies with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) standards for the medical education program, including LCME Standard 9.9.

Scope and Application

This policy applies to faculty, staff, and students, regardless of title or status, at the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine. The grading and promotions policies apply to all student enrolled in the courses necessary to complete the requirements for the Doctor of Medicine degree at TJFFCOM.

Procedures

II. BACKGROUND

The responsibility for evaluation of students rests with the faculty of Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine (COM). COM faculty award passing grades only to those students who have demonstrated mastery of the course material and shown behavior and conduct consistent with professional standards and suitable for the practice of medicine. These practices further ensure the academic integrity of the medical education program. As such, faculty shall be clear as to the expectations for each course and how passing grades will be earned. Course requirements specific to each course will be clearly displayed in the course syllabus.

The faculty of COM has the responsibility for recommending students for promotion and graduation. This responsibility is administered through the Student Performance and Advancement Committee (SPAC) that represents the faculty at large. Principles of fairness and due process apply when considering actions of the faculty or administration that might adversely affect the students. Comments, questions, and concerns should be directed to the Office of Student Affairs.

STUDENTS COVERED BY THIS POLICY

These grading and promotions policies apply to students enrolled in the courses necessary to complete the requirements for the Doctor of Medicine degree at TJFFCOM.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA) is responsible for monitoring the progress of medical students during their course of study in order to provide or refer students to the appropriate academic or personal counseling services, if applicable. The office of Student Affairs will provide staff support to the SPAC and will maintain permanent minutes of SPAC



actions. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA) serves as advocate for due process for students.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPAC

The SPAC is a committee elected by the faculty and is charged with the responsibility to review and evaluate the academic and behavioral progress of each medical student enrolled at COM. It is not a policy making body but rather applies the policies that are approved through the Curriculum Committee.

The committee shall be responsible for reviewing the progress of all students and determining the status of each student's academic progress. The committee shall also be responsible for the review of student conduct. The purview of the committee includes but is not limited to:

- A. Promotion to the next academic year
- B. Academic remediation or dismissal
- C. Unprofessional conduct
- D. Behavior that may jeopardize the safety or well-being of any patient or others
- E. Demonstration of any unethical or illegal behavior or activity
- F. Violation of the COM Code of Professional Conduct
- G. Recommendation of policies regarding student performance and conduct

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEAN

The Dean or their designee, has the final responsibility for actions taken regarding a student. The initial recommendation and subsequent action for each student are delegated to the SPAC. However, the Dean or their designee is responsible for executing the appeals process in which a final decision is made.

- VI. STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE
 - A. The voting members of the Student Performance and Advancement Committee consists of ten (10) faculty from TJFFCOM representing the pre-clerkship and clerkship faculty.
 - B. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA) serves as a non-voting ex-officio member ensuring due process for students and to provide information to the committee. The Associate Dean for Medical Education (ADME) serves as non-voting ex-officio member to provide information to the committee. The Assistant Dean for Assessment and Quality Improvement serves as a non-voting ex-officio member to provide information to the committee.
 - C. The Chair and Vice-chair are elected by the committee.
 - D. The proceedings of all meetings are held confidential in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. The proceedings and decisions of the SPAC are privileged information. SPAC members may not discuss specific cases or the outcome with anyone outside the SPAC.
 - E. All committee decisions requiring a vote are determined by a simple majority vote with the Chair as a voting member. Five (5) members of the committee constitute a quorum at a regular or called meeting. In urgent cases the Chair and Vice-chair may, after consulting with the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs make a decision regarding an emergency leave of absence for a student in academic difficulty, without a vote of the committee. The Chair, Vice-Chair, and Assistant Dean will set the conditions for return from a leave of absence, with approval of the Dean or their designee.

VII. REVIEW OF PRE-CLERKSHIP COURSEWORK



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- A. All courses for the pre-clerkship phase at COM are Pass/Pass*/Fail. Please consult the individual course syllabi for specific grading/evaluation criteria for each course.
- B. Definitions
 - a. Pass successfully met all course requirements on first attempt
 - b. Pass* successfully passed the re-take of the summative exam after unsuccessful first attempt in a course (a final course grade or final summative exam grade less than 69.5)
 - c. Fail failed second attempt at the summative exam
 - d. Fail/Pass- successfully completed a prescribed remediation and retesting

Progress of students will be reviewed by the SPAC at the end of each course and at the end of the academic year in the context of course work, student's professionalism, evidence of progressive improvement and personal circumstances. The SPAC may place a student on a remedial course if there are concerns regarding professionalism. If a student has recurrent professionalism issues, they may be included in the MSPE (Medical Student Performance Evaluation) narrative of professional performance or receive a notation of a "Sanction" on their MSPE.

- C. First Year First Semester: (See Table 1) The first semester delivers foundational principles that are essential to building knowledge for the subsequent phases of the curriculum. Therefore, failure of these courses has added significance The Committee will review all students who have any of the following:
 - a. Failure to achieve a passing score on a final summative exam or a final grade of fail on a first attempt in any course or in the first semester.
 - b. Students are only allowed to retake 1 (one) exam in the fall semester of the first year. A second unsuccessful first attempt in a course is not eligible for a retake of the summative exam or a grade of P*. The student will receive a grade of fail in the course and SPAC will meet with the student to recommend an action.
 - c. Failure of a second attempt on a final summative exam will result in a grade of fail and the student will be required to remediate and take another final summative exam. Objectives for course remediation must be recommended by the course director and agreed to by SPAC. In this circumstance, remediation would occur after the completion of spring semester of the first year and be complete by one week prior to the start of the next academic year. If a student is successful in the remediation and retake of the exam, they will receive a grade of F/P on the transcript.
 - d. Professionalism concern
- D. First year -Second semester: (See Table 1) The Committee will review all students who have any of the following:
 - a. Failure of the final summative exam in any course (after an unsuccessful retake of a summative exam) in the second semester.
 - b. In 2nd semester of Year 1 students are only allowed to retake 2 (two) exams in the spring semester of the first year. A third unsuccessful first attempt in a course is not eligible for a retake of the summative exam or a grade of P*. The student will receive a grade of fail in the course and SPAC will meet with the student to recommend an action
 - c. Failure of a second attempt on a final summative exam will result in a grade of fail and the student will be required to remediate and take another final summative exam. Objectives for course remediation must be recommended by the course director and agreed to by SPAC. In this circumstance, remediation would occur



after the completion of spring semester of the first year and be complete by one week prior to the start of the next academic year. If a student is successful in the remediation and retake of the exam, they will receive a grade of F/P on the transcript.

- d. Professionalism Concern
- E. Second Year All Courses (See Table 1)
 - a. Failure of any course.
 - b. Students are only allowed to retake 1 (one) exam in the preclinical phase of the second year. A second unsuccessful first attempt in a course is not eligible for a retake of the summative exam or a grade of P*. The student will receive a grade of fail in the course and SPAC will meet with the student to recommend an action.
 - c. Failure of a second attempt on a final summative exam will result in a grade of fail and the student will be required to remediate and take another final summative exam. Objectives for course remediation must be recommended by the course director and agreed to by SPAC. In this circumstance, remediation would occur prior to winter break (for courses ending before winter break) or after the completion of final course of the pre- clinical phase (for courses ending after winter break) and be completed by one week prior to the start of the clerkship phase. If a student is successful in the remediation and retake of the exam, they will receive a grade of F/P on the transcript.
 - d. Professionalism Concern
- F. Comprehensive Basic Sciences Examination (CBSE) is a milestone exam rather than a barrier exam
 - a. The CBSE will be offered 3 times during the curriculum (beginning of Year 2, after completion of the pre-clinical phase of the curriculum, after the completion of the clerkship phase of the curriculum)
 - b. All students are required to take each of the three exams,
 - c. A score predictive of high probability of passing the USMLE Step 1 is expected on the 3^{rd} attempt at the CBSE.
 - d. If on the third taking of the exam, the student falls below 25% estimated probability of passing Step 1(per NBME scoring) SPAC will review and consider if student should delay taking Step 1 and delay starting advanced clerkship phase. The student will be required to meet with Director of Academic Support and develop a study plan.
- G. Completion Deadline for Remediation:
 - a. Year 1 students—July 1 after completion of Year 1 (or prior to orientation of next Year 1)
 - b. Year 2 students—Prior to beginning clerkship phase
 - c. Student must be available for scheduled remediation and may not attend off campus school related activities until they have successfully completed their requirements
 - d. The first two (2) years of medical school (pre-clerkship phase) must be completed within three (3) years including leaves of absences or repeating of the year.
 - e. Remediation will occur following completion of other courses and scheduled by the Office of Medical Education. If the remediation requirements are



passed, there will be a notation on transcript of successful remediation (F/P). Failure of remediation activities requires that the student return to SPAC for consideration of repeat of the year or dismissal. Transcript would remain with a Fail for this course. (F)

Important Notes:

Remediation is recommended by the course director and agreed to by the SPAC.

Table 1: Grading Results and Subsequent Possible SPAC Actions

Pre-clerkship phases	Recommended action by SPAC	Standing*
Year 1 – Semester 1		
Failure of 1st attempt of summative exam in one course	May retake the final exam prior to winter break	Academic watch
Pass 2 nd attempt at final summative exam in one course. Grade P*/P	Advance to Year 1 - 2 nd semester	Academic watch
Fail one course (failure of 2 nd attempt of summative exam)	May remediate the course at the end of Year 1	Academic warning
Failure on 1 st attempt in a second course results in a fail of the course, not eligible for retake of the summative exam or P* designation	Restart the year or dismissal	Academic warning
Year 1 – Semester 2		
Failure of 1st attempt of summative exam in one course	May retake the final summative exam prior to summer break	Academic watch
Pass 2 nd attempt at final summative exam in one course. Grade P*	Advance to Year 2 – 1st semester	Academic watch
Failure of 1st attempt of summative exams in two courses	May retake both final summative exams prior to summer break	Academic warning
Fail one course (failure of 2 nd attempt of summative exam)	May remediate the course at the end of Year 1	Academic warning
Failure on 1 st attempt in a third course results in a fail of the course, student is not eligible for retake of the summative exam or the P* designation	Restart year or dismissal	Academic warning
Year 2 Preclinical (All courses)		
Failure of 1st attempt of summative exam in one course	May retake the final summative exam prior to winter break or prior to the start of the Clerkship Phase of the curriculum for courses after winter break	Academic watch
Fail one course (failure of 2 nd attempt of summative exam)	May remediate the course prior to start of clerkship phase	Academic warning



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Failure on 1 st attempt in a second course results in a fail of the course, student is not eligible for retake of the summative exam or the P* designation	Repeat of year or dismissal	Academic warning
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*See policy on Academic Standing All Grades will be reflected on the transcript.

VIII.REVIEW OF CLINICAL YEARS

- A. All courses for the clinical years (Spring Year 2, Year 3 and 4) at COM are Honors/Pass/Fail. Honors designation will not be given for Longitudinal Primary Care course which will be Pass/ Fail for all 4 years. The P* designation applies only to preclinical courses. Please consult the individual course syllabi for specific grading/evaluation criteria for each course.
- B. Progress of a student will be reviewed by the SPAC after the core clerkship phase in the context of all course work, student's professionalism, evidence of progressive improvement and personal circumstances. The SPAC may place a student on a remedial course if there are concerns regarding professionalism. If a student has recurrent professionalism issues, they may receive a notation of "Sanction" on their MSPE (Medical Student Performance Evaluation).
- C. Student Performance and Advancement Committee Review for Clinical years.

1. Competency in the Core Clerkship phase is essential prior to moving on to the advanced clerkship phase of the curriculum. The Committee will review all students who fail a core clerkship course. See Table 2 for details. *If remediation is required, the remedial work will not be counted as elective time in satisfying the conditions for graduation*.

2. Competency in Advanced Clerkship phase is essential prior to graduation. The Committee will review all students who fail an advanced clerkship or elective course. See Table 2 for details. *If remediation is required, the remedial work will not be counted as elective time in satisfying the conditions for graduation*.

Clerkship phases	Recommended action by SPAC	Standing*
Core Clerkship phase		
Fail one clerkship within the Core Clerkship phase	Remediation (student must pass remediation prior to proceeding to advanced clerkships AND by the end of the current academic year)	Academic watch

Table 2: Grading Results and Subsequent Possible SPAC Actions



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Remediation (student must pass remediation prior to proceeding to advanced clerkships AND by the end of the current academic year) OR Repeat of either the 3 clerkships (POP or FIS) or all 6 clerkships in the Longitudinal Integrated Core Clerkship	Academic warning

Fail three or more clerkships within the Core Clerkship phase	Repeat the of all 6 clerkships in the Longitudinal Integrated Core Clerkship OR Dismissal	Academic warning
Advanced Clerkship phase		
Fail one advanced clerkship or elective rotation	Remediation	Academic watch
Fail two advanced clerkships or elective rotations	Remediation	Academic warning
Fail three or more advanced clerkships or elective rotations	Restart of the year or dismissal	Academic warning

*See policy on Academic Standing

Important Notes: Remediation is recommended by the course director and agreed to by the SPAC. *All Grades will be reflected on the transcript.*

IX. TRANSCRIPT NOTATION

- A. All grades will be retained on the student's transcript.
- B. When a student receives a failing grade in a semester course that was subsequently passed with remediation and does not require a repeat of the year, a grade of F/P will be entered in the transcript. The P*/P grade will be entered for a preclinical course successfully passed with retake of the exam and does not require remediation.
- C. If a student repeats an entire academic year, the new grades are recorded on the transcript in addition to the original ones.

X. DOCUMENTATION OF STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

All grades will be recorded in the learning management system and PeopleSoft for each student and will be available in the student's electronic portfolio located on the learning management system.. UH Office of the University Registrar maintains the official transcript of all students.

XI. PROMOTION POLICIES

- A. Normal progression through COM curriculum requires that a student demonstrate a consistently satisfactory level of performance and professional behavior. Students will be expected to complete the medical school curriculum within four (4) years of the initial date of matriculation.
- B. The curriculum may be extended due to 1) a leave of absence, 2) academic difficulty requiring repetition of an academic year as per this policy. However, inability to complete Years 1 and 2 of the curriculum in three (3) years and/or the entire curriculum within six (6) years inclusive of leaves of absence will result in dismissal.



XII. GENERAL ISSUES

- A. The committee is not bound solely by categorical or arithmetic assessment of student performance but rather reviews each student in the context of their academic achievement and any other circumstances that may influence performance. If student exhibits conduct or behavior inconsistent with, or in violation of, TJFFCOM Code of Professional Conduct in a course or clerkship, a grade of Fail may be given. Such conduct or behavior that occurs beyond the boundaries of a class or rotation may also be considered by the SPAC.
- B. Failure to successfully remediate a course in Years 1 and 2 according to course standards before the start of the next academic year will result in repetition of the entire year in which the failure occurred.
- C. Final grades will be reviewed at the end of each course and semester. Students who receive a grade of Fail shall meet with the SPAC to discuss their academic performance and possible actions by the committee.
- D. Students who are required to repeat an academic year may not take courses from the next academic year during the period of repetition.
- E. Students reviewed by the SPAC will be notified in writing prior to the review and again after the SPAC decision with any stipulations for continuation in the curriculum.
- F. A final grade in each course or clerkship may be derived from the component scores. The components for evaluation are defined by each course or clerkship.
- G. Repetition of the clerkship and remedial work will not be counted as elective time in satisfying the requirements for graduation.
- H. The completion of the medical school curriculum within the above standards and the approval of overall performance by the SPAC are required for graduation. The Student Affairs Office will annually present a list of candidates for receipt of the Doctor of Medicine Degree based on the above to the Faculty Council and the Dean or his/her designee. The approved list will then be sent to the Office of the Registrar

XIII. NOTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Students with satisfactory progress will proceed through the curriculum with no formal notice of promotion. The Office of Student Affairs will notify students in writing if there are issues which require them to meet with the SPAC and the outcome of their deliberations.

XIV. DELIBERATIONS OF SPAC

- A. Each student who has demonstrated unsatisfactory progress in the curriculum as defined above will be subject to the courses of action as previously set forth in this policy. When meeting with a student on an issue related to academic performance, the SPAC shall also consider a prior history of academic performance or sanctions for misconduct.
- B. Conflict of interest As delineated in the SPAC committee charge, conflicts of interest, will be queried prior to the start of each meeting. If present, the committee member will remove themselves from the meeting and voting for that student. Conflicts of interest include but are not limited to SPAC members who:
 - 1. Previously awarded a falling grade in a course/clerkship
 - 2. Serve as the advisor or Learning Community Mentor for the student
 - 3. Are identified by the student for another stated reason. In this instance, conflict of interest to be determined by the remaining members of the committee.
- C. At a hearing with the SPAC, the student will be expected to discuss their academic performance and to propose a course of action to address the academic deficiencies.



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All deficiencies that committee is considering must be discussed with the student.

- D. Following the hearing with the student, the SPAC may then vote for a course of action. With a quorum present, the committee action will be determined by a majority vote. The committee's deliberation and vote shall be conducted in private.
- E. The determination and stipulations arising from the actions of the SPAC will be communicated in writing by the Chair of the SPAC to the student and the Dean or their designee. The student may appeal a decision by the SPAC under Sections XVII. In the case of repetition of a year or dismissal, the Office of Student Affairs, Admissions and Outreach will notify in writing Scholarship and Financial Aid, Office of University Registrar and other pertinent UH offices.
- XV. DISMISSAL

A student shall be dismissed if the SPAC determines that the student has not performed satisfactorily in academic pursuits, is not competent to pursue the assigned course of study, or has been deemed by the SPAC, for just reason, unfit to continue the study of medicine. The student shall be notified in writing of the action of the SPAC.

- XVI. APPEALS PROCEDURE
 - A. A student may appeal the decision of the SPAC. This appeal must be made to the Senior Associate Dean for Education or their designee of TJFFCOM within five (5) business days, must be in writing, and must cite the specific reasons for the appeal. Grounds for an appeal may only be based on a claim that SPAC policies and procedures were not followed.
 - B. The Senior Associate Dean for Education, or their designee, will appoint an Appeals Committee.
 - C. If there is an Appeals Committee, the Appeals Committee will be convened by the SADE within five (5) business days after appointment to consider determining whether a basis for appeal exists.
 - 1. It will be comprised of three (3) members of the faculty.
 - 2. The student shall notify the SADE three (3) days in advance of the hearing if they are to be accompanied by an attorney or other representative. An attorney or representative may appear only in an advisory capacity and may not address the Appeals Committee.
 - 3. Should the student be accompanied by an attorney, COM shall be represented by the Office of General Counsel. If necessary, the appeal hearing may be delayed up to five (5) business days of the scheduled date if needed to allow personnel from the Office of General Counsel to attend.
 - 4. The student may present a statement to the Appeals Committee relative to the appeal. The Appeals Committee may request additional information.
 - 5. Both the Appeals Committee and student may call witnesses relevant to resolution of the appeal. Should information or witnesses be either repetitious or not relevant, the Appeals Committee shall act to expedite the proceedings.
 - 6. The Appeals Committee shall meet in private to decide upon the recommendation to make to the Dean or designee. Deliberations of the Appeals Committee are strictly confidential.
 - 7. After the hearing, the Appeals Committee shall forward its recommendation to the SADE, or their designee. If the recommendation is not unanimous, any minority view will be appended.
 - 8. After reviewing the Appeals Committee recommendation (if applicable) the Dean or their designee will make a final decision. The student and the Chair of the SPAC Committee will be notified in writing by the SADE or their designee.
 - D. A student may appeal the decision of the SADE. This appeal must be made to the Dean or their designee of COM within five (5) business days of notification of the



decision of the SADE, must be in writing, and must cite the specific reasons for the appeal. Grounds for an appeal may only be based on a claim that SPAC policies and procedures were not followed.

- E. The decision of the Dean or their designee is final. The student and the Chair of the SPAC Committee will be notified in writing by the Dean or their designee.
- F. Unless suspended for some justifiable reason, the student shall remain on the class roll and may pursue appropriate course work until the appeal is resolved.
- G.

XVII. POLICY REGARDING USMLE STEP I EXAM

- A. To become fully licensed to practice medicine in the United States, individuals must have passed all 3 USMLE Step exams – Step 1, Step 2 Clinical Knowledge, and Step 3. Each state's medical licensing board determines the number of attempts individuals may make at each step in order to remain eligible for licensure. In Texas individuals are limited to three (3) attempts on each Step.
- B. Students are expected to take Step 1 following completion of the core clinical clerkship (longitudinal integrated curriculum) during a dedicated block. Students must take Step 1 by March 31st of the third year. If a student is unable to take Step 1 by March 31st, the student must meet with SPAC and develop a plan for preparation and/or completion of Step 1. If a student has a CBSE score with a low predicted chance of passing Step 1 on the 3rd attempt, they may be granted an extension of the due date of the initial attempt of Step 1. They will be required to meet with SPAC, develop a study plan with the Director of Academic Support, and meet regularly with the Director of Academic Support and/or the ADSA. If a student is unsuccessful in Step 1, they will be removed from clinical experiences (at the end of current rotation) until they pass the test. Students are expected to pass Step 1 of USMLE in order to continue in advanced clinical rotations and electives. (Year 4).
- C. Inability to pass Step 1 within three (3) attempts will result in review by the SPAC and probable dismissal.

XVIII. POLICY REGARDING USMLE STEP II EXAM

- A. Passage of Step 2 Clinical Knowledge will be required for graduation. Initial attempt at Step 2 must be taken by August 15th of the year preceding graduation. Students are strongly encouraged to take Step 2 CK by June 1 of the year preceding graduation to facilitate advising in the residency application process. Students who fail to do so will not be allowed to participate further in clinical rotations/electives until these exams are taken. Passing scores must be documented no later than May 1 of the year graduating. Failure to document a passing score by May 1 may result in a delay in graduation.
- B. Failure of Step 2 CK after three (3) attempts will be grounds for referral to the SPAC and probable dismissal.

XIX. PROCEDURE FOR AMENDING OF SPAC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- A. A proposal to amend the policies and procedures may be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Curriculum Committee (CC) by any person or group who believes a need for revision exists. The proposal shall be considered by the full committee for review and discussion.
- B. Clarification or non-substantive rewording of policy may be performed by the SPAC. The clarification will be reviewed by the Office of General Counsel and copies forwarded to the CC.

SECTION 8. Responsible Official & Additional Contacts



Responsible college of medicine officer: Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Approval Body: Curriculum Committee

SECTION 9. Policy History

Original Approval Date: October 12, 2020

Revision 6: 02/13/2024 (Revision of committee membership, clarification of ex officio roles, clarification of COI, removal of faculty concern, revision of appeal process)
Revision 5: 07/11/2023 (Revision of criteria for students in the pre-clinical phase, removal of CBSE as a barrier exam, addition of deadlines for USMLE Step 1 and Step 2)
Revision 4: 10/14/2022(Updated CBSE policy)
Revision 3: 04/12/2022 (Updated summative exam retake and P* grade designation)
Revision 2: 02/08/2022 (revision to LIC Grading and Remediation)
Revision 1: 06/15/2021 (revision regarding licensure)

SECTION 10. Related Policies/Guidance Documents

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.