

## Explore & Focus Committee Minutes

<b>Date</b>	September 27, 2021
<b>Time</b>	4:00 – 5:30PM
<b>Co-Chairs</b>	<i>Mark Whipple, Esther Chung</i>
<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Academic Chair:</b> <i>Esther Chung</i> ; <b>Executive Chair:</b> <i>Mark Whipple</i>
QUORUM REACHED: No	<b>Voting Members:</b> <i>Alson Burke, Amanda Kost, Doug Schaad, Matt Cunningham, Roger Tatum, Sarah Thomson, Susan Merel</i>
	<b>Guests:</b> <i>Eric LaMotte, Kellie Engle, Laura Yale, Emily Myers, Erin Gunsul, Gina Franco, Michael Champion, Alisa Ulrich-Herrara, Claire Sandstrom, Gloria Rayo, Margi Trenary, Judy Swanson, Ivan Henson, Jake Gross, Julie Bould, Karla Kelly, Jong Kim, Kristen Seiler, Michelle Mudrovich, Paul Borghesani, Ross Kessler, Tara Gates, Eric Kraus, Nick Cheung, Lan Nguyen, Kelley Goetz, Lena Sibulesky</i>
<b>Regrets</b>	<b>Voting members:</b> <i>Barb Doty, Chelsea Denney, Jacob Romm, Jaryd Unangst, Matthew Hollon, Mike Spinelli, Nam Tran, Thomas Payne, Troy Johnston</i>

## Agenda

	ITEM	LEAD	TIME	ATTACHMENT(S)	ACTION
1	Approve June Minutes	Esther Chung	5 min	Attachment A	Decision
2	Clinical Encounters Spring 2021 Report	Erin Gunsul	10 min	Attachment B	Discussion
3	Advance Information Policy	Mark Whipple	30 min	Attachment C	Discussion
4	Grade Challenges/Appeals Discussion	Esther Chung	20 min		Discussion

**Next Meeting: October 18, 2021**

1. Approve June Minutes

**Discussion:** The committee reviewed June meeting minutes. Quorum was not reached, so the minutes will be approved via e-vote.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DECISION REQUIRED? E-VOTE OUTCOME:	[11] VOTES FOR	[0] VOTES AGAINST
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**Decision:** The Explore & Focus committee approved June meeting minutes.

2. Clinical Encounters Spring 2021 Report

**Discussion:** The committee reviewed the clinical encounters data for the three required Explore & Focus phase clerkships (Emergency Medicine, Neurology, and Neurosurgery) for the 2021 Spring Quarter, including total completion and alternative methods data. Total completion for the three clerkships was above 95% for this quarter. Additionally, all clerkships were well below the LCME's 25% threshold for alternative methods.

See meeting handouts for details.

3. Advance Information Policy

**Discussion:** The Faculty Council on Academic Affairs (FCAA) has drafted a new policy with the goal of improving student support and learning. The new policy would require the Chair of the Student Progress Committee (SPC) to inform course and clerkship directors (or other appropriate faculty member) in writing of a student's area(s) of deficiency before the student begins the course/clerkship.

This drafted policy was presented to the Explore & Focus committee for their review and feedback. The associated procedures for this policy include the following directions: "The Associate Dean for Student Affairs provides the student with the course chair/clerkship director contact information and encourages the student to contact the faculty member at least 6 weeks prior to the beginning of the course to set up a meeting. It is the student's responsibility to initiate contact."

An important note: this process is very similar to, but separate from, the DRS (Disability Resources for Students) process in which DRS sends an advance letter to clerkship directors informing them of a students' accommodations. The Advance Information policy is strictly focused on student progress and academic performance.

If you have feedback on the Advance Information policy, e-mail Dr. Mark Whipple or Dr. Joshua Jauregui.

4. Grade Challenges/Appeals Discussion

**Discussion:** The committee discussed grade reviews, challenges, and appeals in the fourth year, specifically: the recent increase in grade reviews and challenges in some departments. Questions for the committee to consider include:

- Are other departments seeing the same thing?
- How are people across WWAMI dealing with this?
- There is a need to improve communication to ensure all faculty know the grade review, challenge, and appeal process.
- Are there suggestions for process improvements?

The committee reviewed the grade review, challenge, and appeal process:

University of Washington policy allows students to challenge a grade if they feel the established process was not followed. The grade challenge is reviewed by the department chair. Prior to 2015, Foundations Phase courses were departmentally based, and the UW School of Medicine followed the UW's process. However, in 2015 the Foundations Phase curriculum was reworked, and courses became integrated across multiple departments. Considering this new structure, the UWSOM, in consultation with the Medical School Executive Committee (MSEC) and department chairs, established and gave authority for the grade appeal process to the Grade Appeal Committees (one for Foundations Phase and one for the clinical phases). In the three years the committees have been active, no student has appealed a Foundations block grade, so it was recently decided to merge the two committees into a single Grade Appeal Committee. All grade appeals have been from the clinical phases (between a half dozen to a dozen).

The three step process students follow to dispute a grade includes:

- **REVIEW:** The student sets up a meeting with the block or course administrator for a guided review of the evaluations (if any), exam scores, and/or final examination score. If after the grade review, the student is still unsatisfied, they may initiate the grade challenge process.
- **CHALLENGE:** Following an unsatisfactory grade review, a student may submit a written grade challenge request to the block or course director. The director will review the relevant grading and evaluative materials and elicits related materials from faculty or department resources to determine the uniformity and impartiality of the grade or summative comments. After the director completes this review, the student and director will meet to discuss the challenge. After the meeting, the director will inform the student in writing of the grade challenge decision.

There are a high number of challenges, but they typically do not get elevated to the level of an appeal.

- **APPEAL:** Following an unsatisfactory grade review and grade challenge, a student may submit a grade appeal to the Grade Appeal Committee. The Grade Appeal Committee will meet to review all materials related to the appeal and make the final determination to retain or revise the grade.

The Grade Appeal Committee does not review the content of faculty evaluations/observations of students. Rather, the committee reviews whether established processes were followed. Examples of grounds for a grade appeal include: a faculty member submitted an evaluation late and it was not included in determining a final grade, there was a clerical error in transmitting a grade from one form to another, etc.

The Grade Appeal Committee will review the materials, make a determination, and send a letter to the clerkship director detailing the decision. The letter also includes suggestions for potential process improvements (i.e., improve information listed on your website or improve communication on the purpose of evaluator feedback and how it is considered when determining the final grade). The student receives a similar letter and Dr. Whipple offers to meet with them to discuss the Grade Appeal Committee's decision.

Other departments have also seen a recent increase in grade reviews and challenges. The committee discussed potential factors for this increase:

- The process has been much more publicized in recent years.

- There is a discordance in what students think their grade should be based on faculty feedback and what their final grade is. Faculty and residents are more comfortable giving positive feedback and may not be providing as much feedback for areas in need of improvement. This could be an area for potential faculty development efforts.
- Grade inflation could also be a contributing factor. High Pass is seen as the average at UWSOM, and a Pass is something to be concerned about.
- Some students may feel there is no harm in challenging a grade. However, there have been instances when a grade challenge has lowered a student's grade.
- Depending on the clinical site, there could be a small number of evaluations that were submitted. A student may feel their grade wasn't based on enough feedback and they have grounds for a grade challenge.

Suggestions for addressing the issue included:

- Improve communication to students, specifically around mid-clerkship feedback. This feedback occurs at the halfway point and is not the final grade you. Many clerkships use the grading form to guide the mid-clerkship feedback discussion. Departments should move away from using this form for this purpose.
- Increase transparency and communication around how final grades are determined. Many of these disputes are resolved at the review level after the student is shown the process of how their grade was determined. There are many factors that go into determining a grade that students are not privy to and going through the process is beneficial.
- The Clerkship Grading Policy was recently updated. Students do not need to pass the final exam in order to pass the clerkship. There might be a decrease in grade reviews and challenges (about half of the challenges have been about the clerkship exam).
- The Program Evaluation and Assessment Committee (PEAC) is developing recommendations around clerkship grading. This could be addressed in their recommendations.
- Students have asked for more objective measures in fourth-year clerkships (like the final exams administered in the Patient Care Phase). Reasons exams should not be administered in APCs and Sub-Is include:
  - Many Sub-Is are short (4 weeks).
  - Interns do not have examinations and the UWSOM wants students gaining clinical, hands-on experience as opposed to textbook learning.
  - Some students do poorly on the Patient Care Phase Internal Medicine final exam and do very well in the Internal Medicine Sub-I.
  - There is well documented bias in many exams.

Looking ahead:

- Will Step 1 moving to pass/fail impact grade reviews? What will shift in residency applications? Will clerkship grading become more important to residency programs?
- Fourth-year faculty leadership should continue to keep an eye on this. It's good that most grade reviews do not get elevated to a grade appeal, this means departments are handling the reviews and challenges effectively and providing constructive feedback to students.
- **ACTION:** The Explore & Focus Phase Committee will revisit this issue in Spring quarter 2022 to discuss the number of grade reviews and any departmental processes put in place (to increase process efficiency).