

## Policy - Student Assessment

**Origin Date:** November 1, 2013

**Last Evaluated:** October 20, 2015

**Responsible Party:** Director of Didactic Education

**Minimum Review Frequency:** Annually

**Approving Body:** Principal Faculty

**DPAS Associated Forms:** DPAS Behavioral and Professional Evaluation form

**ARC-PA Associated Standards:**

- **C3.01** - The program must conduct frequent, objective and documented evaluations of students related to learning outcomes for both didactic and supervised clinical education components.  
*ANNOTATION: Student assessment is both described and applied based on clear parallels between what is expected, taught and assessed. Thorough assessment includes both formative and summative evaluations and involves multiple assessment approaches with multiple observations by multiple individuals. Performance is assessed according to the program's pre-specified criteria.*
- **C3.02** - The program must document student demonstration of defined professional behaviors.
- **C3.04** - The program must conduct and document a summative evaluation of each student within the final four months of the program to verify that each student is prepared to enter clinical practice.  
*ANNOTATION: Evaluation products designed primarily for individual student self-assessment, such as PACKRAT, are not to be used by programs to fulfill the summative evaluation of students within the final four months of the program. The ARC-PA expects that a program demonstrating compliance with the Standards will incorporate evaluation instrument/s that correlates with the didactic and clinical components of the program's curriculum and that measures if the learner has the knowledge, interpersonal skills, patient care skills and professionalism required to enter clinical practice.*

## Background and Purpose

Student assessment is an important and integral aspect of all facets of PA education, ensuring that students adequately meet program expectations and have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for entry-level PA practice. The purpose of this policy is to define the assessment policy for the HPU Department of Physician Assistant Studies (DPAS).

# Program Assessment Tools

## Definitions:

- **Quizzes:** These are brief formal assessments usually given at the beginning of class. The purpose of quizzes is to ensure that students are prepared for class and that they understand basic concepts. They are usually of relatively low point value and the quiz average usually contributes 10-20% of the course grade, at the discretion of the course director. There is no remediation required for a failed quiz.
- **Written examinations:** These are formal written assessments used to assess a student's mastery of instructional objectives, course outcomes and program learning outcomes. The average of these assessments typically comprises at least 50% of the overall course grade in the predominantly content-based courses in the didactic phase. Question types can include, but are not limited to, Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs), patient management essays, short answer questions and data analysis questions.
- **Skills assessment/Practical Exams:** These are direct observations and assessments by a faculty member of a skill or skill set using an anchored rubric.
- **Written Assignments:** These may include, but are not limited to, SOAP notes, instructor-defined problem sets, written Problem-Based Learning (PBL)/Team-Based Learning (TBL) learning issues or summaries, and reflective writing. Some will be assessed on a Pass/Non Pass basis whereas others may average 10-20% of the course grade at the discretion of the course director.
- **Oral assignments:** These may include, but are not limited to, content-based presentations to classmates, role-playing, and patient presentations. Contribution to the overall course grade is at the discretion of the course instructor and will be found in the course syllabus.
- **Simulated Patient Scenarios:** These are experiences with specifically trained individuals that will role play a clinical encounter with the student. These may be assessed directly by the simulated patient or by an observing faculty member. Percentage of overall course grade is at the discretion of the instructor and will be found in the course syllabus.
- **Clinical Simulation:** These are assessments utilizing some degree of programmed technology to test diagnostic and clinical skills. Percentage of overall course grade is at the discretion of the instructor and will be found in the course syllabus.
- **End-of-Program Summative Evaluation:** This evaluation is mandated by ARC and is designed to assess students for competency in Program Learning Outcomes. Multiple assessment methods are used in this evaluation including, but not limited to, Written Exams, Skills Assessments/ Practical Exams, Oral presentations, SOAP notes, Simulated Patient scenarios and clinical simulations. Failure in any portion of the end-of-program summative evaluation must be remediated.
- **Professional Behavior Assessment:** The Student Progress Committee evaluates students' professional behavior at the completion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> semester of the program. During this evaluation the committee will meet and assess each student's professional behavior using the following criteria:
  - Attendance: Does not miss class or other required events
  - Punctuality: Is on time for class and labs
  - Class participation: Participates actively and consistently in class discussions and assignments
  - Writing Skills: Clear, concise write-ups with appropriate documentation, correct grammar, spelling and utilization of accurate medical concepts and terminology
  - Verbal Skills: Speaks clearly, concisely and logically using appropriate medical terminology
  - Deportment: Positive attitude, accepts constructive feedback, demonstrates maturity
  - Dress and Attitude: Consistently presents a professional demeanor in dress and attitude for class, labs and events

- Interaction: Consistently demonstrates respect and sensitivity to fellow students, faculty and staff
- Learning: Consistently takes responsibility for own learning, shows motivation for self-learning
- Initiative: Consistently demonstrates flexibility and initiative
- **Supervised Clinical Practice Experience Behavior Assessment:** During the clinical phase, students are assessed via preceptor evaluations and direct observation by faculty on clinical site visits. Criteria for evaluation of Attitude and Behavior are listed below:
  - Reliability
  - Professionalism (Responsiveness to patient needs, rights, confidentiality, and accountability to the patient and the profession)
  - Initiative
  - Recognition of Limitations
  - Effective use of time
  - Interpersonal Skills with Patients and Families
  - Interpersonal Skills with health care workers
  - Interpersonal Skills with Preceptors and Instructors
  - Work Ethic

## Policy Statement

Note: Assessment policies associated with Clinical Phase are listed in the Academic Performance, Professionalism and Progression Policy.

### **I. Academic Performance**

Students enrolled in the High Point University DPAS must maintain adherence to the program standards of academic performance. A final course grade of 80% (B) or above represents acceptable professional achievement for the PA education program. A lesser grade is considered below program standards and must be remediated (See the Academic Performance, Professionalism and Progression Policy).

Grades  $\geq$  XX.495 will be “rounded up” to the next integer grade.

Extra credit is not given in any course. This is defined as any point value exceeding 100% for the course or additional assignments given to make up for poor performance. Extra credit problems may be given on exams but they cannot result in an exam grade higher than 100%.

PANCE-style MCQ exams will constitute a percentage of the grade for most content-based didactic courses, and a high percentage of the grade for end-of-rotation exams.

### **II. Academic Dishonesty**

It is the policy of the High Point University DPAS that any form of academic dishonesty by a PA student shall be dealt with by referral to the Student Progress Committee. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Copying test answers or other assigned non-group work from classmates.
- Plagiarism of another’s work.
- Recording or transmitting test questions or test materials.
- Accessing previous program exams and collaborating on graded assignments unless expressly permitted to do so.

**Incomplete:** The grade of “I” is given only when circumstances beyond the student’s control prevent completion of the course work within the official dates of a semester. To obtain a grade of Incomplete a student must make arrangements with the responsible faculty (course director), as well as the DDE (during didactic phase) or DCE (during clinical phase), before the end of a course to postpone completion of the course. A grade of Incomplete must be made up no later than the end of the next semester. Incomplete work after the deadline will be graded F.

## Procedures

The specific objective performance criteria are absolute — they are not guidelines. A student who wishes to appeal a final course grade must declare so in writing at each level of appeal and must follow the outlined hierarchy. An appeal does not guarantee a change in the decision.

### Grading Appeals:

1. Faculty member who awarded the grade;
2. Department Chair;
3. School Dean;
4. Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs;
5. President of the University

### Process:

1. All appeals must be submitted to the Program Director in writing within five working days of receiving the action/decision being appealed.
2. Appeals will be reviewed during a meeting of the Principal Faculty Committee and a decision will be rendered to the student within five working days of receipt of the appeal. Students will be invited to attend the Principal Faculty Committee meeting at which the appeal is considered to present their case and respond to any questions the committee may have. As this meeting is a purely academic proceeding, no legal counsel will be allowed to attend or participate. The appellant student may, however, request participation by other students or non-program faculty with approval of the Program Director. Proceedings may not be recorded in any manner (audio, video, digital, etc.)
3. Students who wish to challenge the Program’s appeal decision may initiate a subsequent appeal to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences. This appeal must be initiated within five working days of the Program’s appeal decision and must be submitted in writing.
4. Students who wish to challenge the Dean of the School of Health Sciences appeal decision may initiate a subsequent appeal to Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs within 5 working days.
5. The decision of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will be considered final and become effective upon ratification by the President.

Appeals concerning the correctness of answers can be made to the Course Director (see 7. below). All decisions of the Course Director are final in these matters.

## Examinations

The following procedures are to be followed for DPAS examinations:

1. All principal course examinations will be proctored.
  - a. The proctor may not necessarily be the course instructor.
  - b. Students may not ask questions of the proctor other than to clarify problems with the exam itself, such as numbering sequences, ability to access the exam, etc.

2. Once an exam has begun, students will not be permitted to leave other than to use the bathroom facilities until they have completed and submitted the exam. Any time taken for personal needs will come out of the allotted time for the exam.
3. Students are not permitted to talk among themselves during the examination.
4. The area surrounding a student taking an exam must be free of books, cell phones, personal computers (including iPads), PDAs, papers, etc. If students are using their own computer for the exam, they are permitted to access only the exam during this time period. Students will be given one sheet of blank paper to be used for “scratch”. This must be handed in to the proctor, labeled with the student’s name, at the end of the exam.
5. All students must take the exam in the same assigned area. Exceptions include:
  - a. Students who have current documented need for accommodations through the HPU Committee on Students with Disabilities.
  - b. Students who must miss an exam for illness or who have a prior-approved alternate make-up time.
6. Grades will be accessible via the online learning management system.

In most cases, DPAS written exams are administered electronically using ExamSoft®. ExamSoft® is an exam testing software that blocks access to all applications and stored files on the laptop during the exam. Once the exam begins, students can work only on the exam and cannot regain access to their files until they exit the exam. Even if the laptop is shut off, crashes, or freezes, upon rebooting the computer a dialog box appears informing the student that an unfinished exam has been located and gives the student an option of continuing the exam or, if the student is finished and wants to exit, of exiting the exam. The application saves the student’s exam every 60 seconds and creates multiple backup copies, all of which are stored in encrypted format on the student’s hard drive. If the student’s laptop crashes during an exam and there are problems with rebooting it, an encrypted copy of the exam will be on the laptop, which only authorized personnel can retrieve. At the end of an exam, students upload their exam answers to a secure server via the internet. The answer files are retrieved and graded by the professors.

#### Basic Information:

1. Students must install the software and complete the process of registering their computers with ExamSoft® prior to the first day of class. This can be completed by following the installation instructions provided by the ExamSoft® link that is e-mailed to the students.
2. It is the student’s responsibility to provide his/her own laptop and power cord and to install the ExamSoft® software on the laptop.
  - a. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure the laptop/computer is working condition.
  - b. Students are expected to be fully familiar with the equipment and ExamSoft® program.
  - c. Training in the ExamSoft® program is the responsibility of the student.
    - i. Training video may be viewed at: <http://learn.examsoft.com/exam-takers>
    - ii. Technical Support is provided by ExamSoft® at <http://support.examsoft.com/ics/support/> or by phone at 1-866-429-8889
    - iii. SUSOP’s faculty and tech support staff are not trained to provide ExamSoft technical support and will only be able to assist with maintaining internet connections.
3. In the event of a catastrophic computer failure or other extenuating circumstances (not due to lack of student ExamSoft training/installation or equipment preparation), the student should immediately notify the proctor. An alternative testing method may be provided by the proctor at the exam proctor’s discretion.
4. Any attempt to disable or tamper with or otherwise circumvent the security features of ExamSoft® will be treated as a violation of the HONOR CODE.
5. Students who accidentally use the “Practice” mode to type their exam will receive a grade of zero (0) for the exam. Exams typed in the “practice mode” are not saved, printed or produced.

#### Before the Exam:

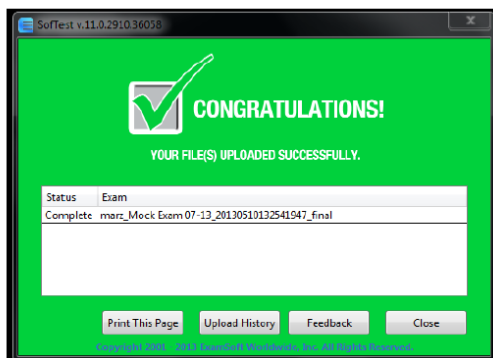
1. Student must download the exam. This must be **completed** prior to the scheduled start time for the examination period. Additional time will not be allowed to accommodate students downloading exams.
2. Updates that automatically run on student's laptop should be scheduled for non-exam times.
3. Students must resolve any ExamSoft® technical problems prior to arrival for the exam. Technical support information is provided above.
4. Students must have the appropriate materials for the exam which may include:
  - a. Functioning laptop with ExamSoft® installed, **power cord**, and charged battery pack (required)
  - b. Pen, pencil, calculator, and/or scratch paper if allowed by course instructor.
  - c. Student login and ExamSoft® password

#### During the Exam:

1. Start Time: Students are not allowed to write/type until instructed to do so by the proctors.
2. ExamSoft® users who experience software/computer failure should
  - a. Notify proctor immediately
  - b. Proctor will provide further instructions
3. In the event of a computer issue, due to lack of student preparation as described above, consequences may include the following at the proctor's discretion:
  - a. Assignment of a failing grade
  - b. Other consequences as defined by course syllabus
4. Questions about the Exam are limited to those of a technical nature only. No questions about content or wording of questions are permitted. Refer to examination policy defined by course syllabus.

#### After the Exam:

1. Calling Time: When proctors say "stop," students must stop writing/typing immediately.
2. Students must upload their exam files immediately upon completion of the exam.
3. When the exam is uploaded, proctor must confirm successful submission of the exam prior to student leaving the room.
  - a. Proctor will confirm notification on computer screen



4. Following verification of exam submission by the proctor, students should exit the room as quietly as possible.
  - a. If a student finishes with 5 or less minutes remaining for the examination, the student may not leave the exam room early. Students should sit quietly with laptop closed until the end of examination period.
5. **Students MAY NOT** remove any of the exam materials, scratch paper, etc. from the classroom.

### **Examination Review**

DPAS course examinations are considered secure documents and as such all examination items and related material are considered confidential and are not to be released or shared in any forum outside of the testing/review setting. Students have the opportunity to challenge examination questions and to review examinations and their own answers during scheduled time, in a secure environment soon after the examination has been given and scored.

In an effort to provide consistency, expedite student feedback, and ensure test integrity the following procedure will be followed for examination review in the MPAS program.

1. Examination Review Sessions will be scheduled during Program Time
2. DPAS staff will supervise examination review sessions. In the event that a staff member is not available, a faculty member who did not administer the examination will supervise the examination review.
3. Students have 1 hour to review an examination. Any change to this timeframe will be at the discretion of the Course Director.
4. The area surrounding a student must be free of books, cell phones, personal computers (including iPads), PDAs, papers, etc. The following will be provided to students for examination review purposes.
  - a. Examination with answer key
  - a. Individual incorrect student answers
  - b. Worksheet to submit questions to the Course Director
5. When a student completes their review, they will submit all items to the examination review supervisor. Taking the examination or any material out of the room will not be permitted.
6. Individual student worksheets will be collected by the supervisor and provided to the Course Director following the examination review session.

The course Director will respond to each query in a manner that is best suited to the nature of the question. This may include any of the following:

1. E-mail students individually regarding specific test item question(s). If the student continues to have questions about a particular item or concept, they may request a meeting further clarification.
2. Schedule individual student meeting to clarify questions or concepts.
3. Respond to a group of students via e-mail or in person regarding common questions or which require further review.

A student who believes he or she should receive credit for a question following review must:

1. Make an appointment with the course director within one week of the examination review.
  - a. Bring adequate evidence to the meeting that backs up his or her assertion. In most cases this means a citation from the course materials as described in the course syllabus or, at the discretion of the course instructor, from a standard, referenced medical textbook. Other sources may be considered at the discretion of the course director provided they are representative of current clinical standard, e.g. practice guidelines from a specialty board.

- b. When possible, the student will be notified of the course director's decision within five working days of receipt of the student's challenge.

### **Skills Assessments/Oral Assessments**

These assessments, when given for grade, will be graded by anchored rubric, which will be made available to the student prior to the exam. Acceptable performance that constitutes a passing grade will be determined by the course director and communicated to students in the syllabus.

### **Exam Start Time**

Students are expected to arrive 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of an examination to set up computers. Exams will begin on time. Students arriving within 10 minutes of an exam start time will be allowed to take the examination, but no additional time beyond the scheduled end of the examination period will be allowed. Students arriving more than 10 minutes after the scheduled start of the examination will not be permitted to take the exam and must meet with the course director to determine the cause of tardiness and decide upon a make-up time. Made-up exams for unexcused tardiness will result in an automatic deduction of 10 percent of the total point value for the exam. Recurrent tardiness is considered unprofessional and may result in formal evaluation by the Student Progress Committee.

### **Missed examination**

In order to be eligible to make up a missed examination, the absence must be an excused absence as determined by the DDE/DCE and course director. Students must be prepared to take the exam on the day they return to classes, but will take the make-up exam when scheduled by the course director. Except under unusual circumstances, there will be no early examinations given. The need for early exams will be decided by the Course Director and the DDE/DCE on a case-by-case basis. Unexcused absence from an examination without reasonable extenuating circumstances (e.g. personal MVA, personal injury, personal severe illness, personal hospitalization or severe illness, injury, or hospitalization of an immediate family member such as child, spouse or parent) as determined by the DDE/DCE/PD will result in a grade of zero (0) on that exam.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

Circumstances sometimes arise that may prevent a student from performing their best on an assessment. A student who experiences exceptional circumstances beyond his/her control (for instance, a death in the immediate family) that he or she believes will result in being unable to perform to capacity must communicate with their Course Director prior to the scheduled evaluation (if reasonably possible). Rescheduling of the evaluation will be at the discretion of the course director.

### **Physician Assistant Clinical Knowledge Rating and Assessment Tool (PACKRAT)**

As a tool for student self-assessment, each student is required to take the PACKRAT twice during the program. The examinations will be given:

- 1) Upon completion of the didactic curriculum.
- 2) Upon completion of the supervised clinical practice experience (SCPE) curriculum.

There are no minimum performance requirements associated with the PACKRAT. Students should use their performance to identify deficiencies in knowledge and develop a plan to address areas of weakness.

### **End-of-program Summative Evaluation**

A minimum score of 80% is required for each component in order to pass the exam and be a candidate for graduation.



**Assessment Considerations for Program Faculty**

- All course outcomes must be assessed. This can be achieved by using any combination of items listed in the “Program Assessment Tools” section above.
- All assessment items must be linked to an instructional objective and all instructional objectives and course outcomes must be listed in the syllabus.
- There should be balance of assessment across outcomes/objectives.
- All skills assessments must have a rubric that defines the levels of performance.
- Style of assessment tool will generally reflect the domain (cognitive, psychomotor, affective) being assessed.

**Approved by:** Principal Faculty

**Modified:** February 5, 2015; October 20, 2015

**Next Review:** February 2016