Implementing Honors-Pass-Fail Grading for Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences

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Background
Consistent evaluation and grade assignment across Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPEs) is difficult due to grader variability and rotation site diversity. Newly defined curricular outcomes, a desire to address perceived grade inflation on APPEs, and preceptor frustration with letter grade assignment provided the opportunity to implement a new assessment strategy and evaluation tool for APPEs. The objectives of this poster are to:
1. Describe an approach to an Honors-Pass-Fail (HPF) assessment strategy for APPEs
2. Describe the implementation process for HPF for APPEs
3. Compare letter grades to HPF designations for APPEs

Approach/Methods
• A new HPF assessment tool was created utilizing:
  o A previously used and validated clinical skill assessment tool
  o 2004 CAPE Education Outcomes and Supplements, adopted as the College’s outcomes in 2008
  o Addition of professional items
• The new assessment instrument included:
  o All items relevant to experiential education
  o Merging items to eliminate duplication/overlap
  o Organization into a CAPE subheading structure
  o Items mapped to curricular outcomes
• Developed and Established:
  o Scoring rubric
  o Performance concepts to support HPF
  o Methods to add additional rotation requirements
  o Suggested thresholds for ‘Passing’ (competent) and ‘Honors’ (extraordinary) performance
  o One form for all rotation types with not all items used for any given rotation
  o Preceptors, faculty and alumni provided input
  o Curriculum Committee approved new system
  o Explanation and training documents and programs were developed

Implementation of Honors-Pass-Fail
Preceptor Education
• New Assessment Tool and new philosophy addressed
• Change in philosophy from letter grades to performance evaluation
• Guidance to give ‘Honors’ to top 10-15%
• Training included online program, email notification, and article in preceptor newsletter
• Policies published in the preceptor manual

Student Education
• Notification at entry to first year
• Interpretation letter for employers and residency directors given to students and published on website
• Policies published in The Student Handbook and the APPE syllabus
• Assessment tool and philosophy discussed at APPE orientation session

Feedback Solicited
• Students – end of APPE year survey
• Preceptor - site visits

Results
In the three years prior to HPF implementation, 85% of APPE rotation grades were ‘A’, and three years after implementation approximately 20% of the designations were ‘Honors’ (Figure 1). Over time, the number of ‘Honors’ was unchanged and about 20% each year (Figure 2). Most students receive two or fewer ‘Honors’ during their APPEs (Figure 3). Approximately ten percent of students responded that HPF negatively affected their ability to secure a job or a residency in 2011.

Discussion
• Additional items (e.g., presentations, projects and papers) also contributed to student performance designation on specific rotations.
• Preceptors only complete items relevant to their rotation site and rotation experience.
• Goals for percentage receiving ‘Honors’ were arbitrarily determined and managed by close supervision.
• Preceptor education and experience have not resulted in changes in designations over the years.
• Specific student survey questions were initially solicited from the Class of 2011.
• Additionally, a selection of these assessment items are used in IPPEs.

Conclusions
• An HPF assessment tool for Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences that encompasses practice experience knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills was created.
• Grade inflation has been resolved by changing to HPF.
• The evaluation philosophy has moved from being grade-focused to performance-focused.
• Preceptors have limited ‘Honors’ to designation for exceptional student performance.
• Students accepted changes to grading