

Academy for Performance Excellence (APEX)

The Academy for Performance Excellence at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center encourages a culture of performance excellence and patient safety. The Academy provides training and a recognition program for UT Southwestern Medical Center faculty, fellows, residents, students, nurses, and staff who are committed to lifelong learning, improvement activities, and scholarship in patient safety and performance improvement (PI).

The program rewards competency-based education, practical application of performance/quality improvement knowledge, and scholarly activities related to leadership, performance improvement methodology, and high-reliability principles. Individuals who accomplish defined milestones in performance improvement education, project completion, and scholarly activity can progress through a process that recognizes their achievements and competence.

All submitted applications are reviewed by a committee of Quality Professionals. Applicants not recognized are provided feedback and encouraged to reapply.

Competence Levels

Individuals will be recognized and advance in APEX by demonstrating defined [levels of activity and competence](#) in performance improvement education, project participation, and scholarship. The defined competence levels are:

- Blue
- Bronze
- Silver
- Gold
- Platinum

Program Activities

APEX Program participants accumulate activity points in the areas of:

- Personal education
- Participation in performance improvement activities
- Publication or presentation of performance improvement activities
- Successful quality/performance improvement grant application
- Mentoring of performance improvement mentees

The APEX program is intended to recognize UT Southwestern faculty, staff, trainees, and students.

Qualifying Activities

The APEX program requires activities in these areas:

Personal Education Activities

- Performance Excellence and Quality Management (PEXQM) Course – a comprehensive UTSW course that includes quality improvement methodology and tools
2 points. Another point is earned when the course project is completed and presented (through the participation category).
- Quality Improvement Boot Camp – intensive one week course for medical, engineering, nursing, and health professions students
2 points
- Lean Basics (classroom) training
0.5 points
- Rapid Improvement Event (classroom) training
0.5 points
- UT Southwestern Quality Improvement Methodology in Taleo (with evidence of completion certificate)
1 point
- Twelve weeks of medical student scholarly activity
2 points
- Lean Six Sigma Green Belt certification (with evidence from a recognized certification body)
1 point
- Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt Certification (with evidence from a recognized certification body)
3 points
- [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#) Basic Certificate in Quality and Safety
1 point
- [IHI Open School](#) Online Courses – Certificates and Continuing Education
1 point
- Participation in an equivalent improvement education activity
Points per award committee review.

Participation in Performance Improvement Activities

Performance Improvement projects must meet defined criteria (see definitions)

- Completion of a performance improvement (QI) project as a project team member
1 point
- Completion of a performance improvement project as a project team leader
2 points
- Completion of a performance improvement project as a project team facilitator
3 points
- Project champion 1 point

- Completion of medical student summer work program in QI
2 points
- Completion of medical student scholarly activity course
2 points
- Equivalent performance project participation activity per award committee review

Scholarly Activities

- Publications and Presentations
 - Abstract of performance improvement project (not peer-reviewed)
0.5 point
 - Abstract of performance improvement project (peer-reviewed)
1 point
 - Local (UTSW*) presentation of performance improvement project
0.5 point
 - Regional (State) or national presentation of performance improvement project
1 point
 - Published performance improvement article (peer-reviewed)
2 points
 - Published performance improvement article (not peer-reviewed)
1.5 points
 - Lecture (one hour minimum) involving performance improvement principles
1 point
- Performance improvement grants and mentoring activities
 - Competitive grants awarded
 - Federal
4 points (PI), 2 points (Co-PI)
 - Non-federal (competitive)
2 points
 - Pharma, non-competitive grants, or institutional
1 point
 - Mentoring one QI professional who has advanced to Silver Level
1 point

Competency Levels (points are cumulative)

Blue

The Blue Performance Improvement professional is one who has an awareness of quality and performance improvement, primarily through education activities. At this level, there is a basic understanding of how to effectively function as a member of a team, show accountability for organizational success by recognizing and elevating the need to improve in their work area.

Education	1
Project Participation	1
Scholarship	1
Total	3

Bronze

The Bronze Quality Improvement professional is one who has achieved the knowledge and experience to participate effectively in quality improvement projects as a team member or as a team leader for simple projects. The Bronze level recipient can lead a QI project by developing a plan based on examination of the extent of the problem by using appropriate PI methodology and tools.

Education	3
Project Participation	3
Scholarship	2
Total	8

Silver

The Silver Quality Improvement recipient must complete the Bronze requirements and undertake increasing leadership responsibilities with quality improvement activities and more complex projects.

Education	4
Project Participation	6
Scholarship	4
Total	14

Gold

The Gold Quality Improvement recipient must complete all of the Silver requirements, demonstrate a deep understanding of QI methodologies and tools, and successfully direct QI projects. The candidate at this level has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to scholarly activity.

Education	5
Project Participation	9
Scholarship, grants, mentoring	8
Total	22

Platinum

The Platinum Level is reserved for QI professionals who have demonstrated long-term commitment and success in health care quality education, improvement, and scholarship activities. Recognition at this level is by nomination.

Education	6
Project Participation	12
Scholarship, Grants, Mentoring	15
Total	33

Definitions

Here are the definitions of some key terms used in the APEX program.

Completed PI Project

A completed PI project is one where a project team has finalized an improvement activity that meets all of the following criteria. The project summary submitted with the APEX application must describe each of these required elements.

- Project methodology
- Problem statement
- Project Aim statement including measure of success
- Background
- Baseline Data
- QI tools used
- Rationale for intervention
- Post-intervention data and analysis
- At least two PDSA cycles
- Results
- Benefit to Organization/Alignment to Organizational Goals
- Sustainability plan

Mentor

For APEX,, a QI mentor is defined as an individual who has attained at least the [Gold Level](#) and, over time, provides guidance and advises less experienced QI professionals on proper performance improvement methodology and use of tools in completing PI projects, publishing projects, obtaining grants for a PI projects

or presenting PI projects at professional venues. The mentor's less experienced mentee(s) has at least obtained the [Silver Level](#)