



## MEDICAL SCHOOL POLICY

# Academic Workload in the Foundations Courses

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**Senior Leader:** Medical School Dean

**Responsible University Officer:** Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education

**Policy Owners:** Assistant Dean for Curriculum (TC) and Assistant Dean for Curriculum, Assessment, and Evaluation (DU)

**Policy Contacts:** Director of Education-DU

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## POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Minnesota Medical School (UMMS) and its faculty are charged with providing a learning environment that effectively balances optimal student learning with a manageable workload. The curriculum, therefore, should be structured to provide academic content through both in-class and asynchronous activities combined with independent study (including self-directed learning activities). A clear set of guidelines is essential and should be consistent with evidence-based educational best practices.

This policy clarifies the expectations for activities inside and outside of scheduled class time and the process for review.

### Limitations of Scope

There are obvious limitations to the development of a policy that seeks to quantify activities that occur outside of scheduled in-class experiences. First, the time commitment needed to complete any given activity will vary by student. Second, the actual amount of time needed for an activity may be different from what was anticipated at the time the activity was designed. Further, it is expected that the academic workload will vary from week to week based on the particular course content (including exams), availability or appropriateness of asynchronous activities, and the anticipated effort needed to master the course content. Finally, it is difficult to enforce a maximum limit on time to be spent on outside preparation when such activities are unsupervised.

Taking all of the above principles and factors into account, UMMS has approved this policy for academic workload in preclerkship courses.

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## REASON FOR POLICY

This policy clarifies the guidelines for determining overall workload in preclerkship courses.

This policy also ensures the medical school meets LCME Accreditation requirements as follows:

**Element 6.3: SELF-DIRECTED AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING.** “The faculty of a medical school ensure that the medical curriculum includes self-directed learning experiences that allow medical students to develop the skills of lifelong learning. Self-directed learning involves medical students’ self-assessment of

learning needs; independent identification, analysis, and synthesis of relevant information; appraisal of the credibility of information sources; and feedback on these skills from faculty and/or staff.”

**Element 8.8: MONITORING STUDENT TIME.** “The medical school faculty committee responsible for the medical curriculum and the program’s administration and leadership ensure the development and implementation of effective policies and procedures regarding the amount of time medical students spend in required activities, including the total number of hours medical students are required to spend in clinical and educational activities throughout the curriculum.”

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## PROCEDURES

1. The Medical School Education Committee (MSEC) is responsible for establishing guidelines for academic workload, monitoring compliance, and reporting on academic workload.
2. The estimated total academic workload will not exceed 60 hours per week with an average of 50 hours per week. The estimated total academic workload includes the sum total of time for all required synchronous and asynchronous activities plus an estimate of study/review time needed to achieve learning goals each week, determined as follows:
  - a. Although fluctuations may occur, all required synchronous and asynchronous activities are planned for 25 hours per week maximum.
  - b. It is expected that each hour of required synchronous and asynchronous activities will yield an hour of study/review time of 25 hours per week maximum.
  - c. The estimated total academic workload is therefore expected to be 25 hours of required synchronous and asynchronous activities plus 25 hours of study/review time for a total of 50 hours, on average.
3. Curriculum Leadership will enforce expectations on academic workload across course elements to ensure adherence with this policy.
4. Individual students regularly exceeding 60 hours per week limit are encouraged to seek appropriate support through the Office of Learner Development.

**Exceptions:** For students on the Duluth Campus the following exceptions apply: 1) Foundations phase elective courses are not counted towards academic workload; 2) Rural Medical Scholars Program (RMSP) is scheduled for a full week (approximately 40 hours) of largely experiential activities and does not require significant preparatory or review time. Therefore, scheduled activities in RMSP may exceed 25 hours per week, subject to adjustments as necessary based on student attestation of their total academic workload.

### Monitoring:

Academic workload will be monitored in regularly administered surveys, course evaluations, through student course Leads, and during course debrief sessions and compared to estimated workload calculations. These comparisons will help assess efficacy and appropriateness of this policy.

### Handling Violations:

Allegations of violations of this policy can be reported to the Assistant Dean for Curriculum (TC) or the Assistant Dean for Curriculum, Assessment, and Evaluation (DU) who will work with relevant Course Directors to investigate the allegation and take appropriate actions as needed to ensure compliance.

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## FORMS/INSTRUCTIONS

There are no forms associated with this policy.

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## ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

Subject	Contact	Phone	Fax/Email
<b>Primary Contact</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Fax/Email</b>
Curriculum Office - Twin Cities	Betsy Murray	(612) 626-4244	murra057@umn.edu
Curriculum Office - Duluth	Kevin Diebel	(218) 726-8874	kwdiebel@d.umn.edu

## DEFINITIONS

### Synchronous Activities

Curricular activities that take place in real-time, where a group of students are engaged in learning at the same time, whether in a classroom or through a virtual environment.

### Asynchronous Activities

Curricular activities that take place according to the student's own schedule, but are defined components designed to support the students in meeting the learning objectives. Examples may include reviewing materials prior to a session, viewing on-line learning modules, completing homework assignments, assessments with flexible time requirements, or preparation for presentations.

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## RESPONSIBILITIES

### Curriculum Committees

The Curriculum Committees are responsible for establishing guidelines for academic workload and monitoring workload across the Foundations phase curriculum. This includes regularly engaging in appropriate analysis (annually at minimum) and making recommendations to the MSEC and the Curriculum Office as needed.

### Assistant Dean, Curriculum (TC), Assistant Dean, Curriculum, Assessment, and Evaluation (DU)

The Assistant Deans are responsible for implementing and enforcing the curriculum committee guidelines regarding academic workload.

### Course Directors

Course Directors are responsible for monitoring the academic workload expectations across all course elements to ensure compliance with this policy.

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## HISTORY

**Effective:** July 2020

**Approved by:** Education Council, July 2020

**Revised:** July 2021

**Approved by:** Medical Student Education Committee (MSEC), November 2021

**Reviewed and Approved:** Medical Student Education Committee (MSEC), July 2022

**Reviewed with Minor Updates:** August 2023