



# 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, Foundational Curriculum

**Policy Contacts:** Assistant Dean, Foundational Curriculum

## 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 required 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:

- the time commitment needed to complete any given activity will vary by student;
- the actual amount of time needed for an activity may be different from what was anticipated at the time the activity was designed;
- it is expected that the academic workload will vary from week to week based on the particular course content (including assessments), availability or appropriateness of asynchronous activities, and the anticipated effort needed to master the course content; and
- 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 Foundations courses.

## Procedures

1. The Foundations Committee (FC), as delegated by the Medical Student Education Committee (MSEC), is responsible for the guidelines on academic workload, including monitoring compliance and reporting to the MSEC on academic workload.
2. The estimated total academic workload will not exceed 50 hours on average, as calculated below. The estimated total academic workload includes the sum total of time for all required synchronous and

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asynchronous activities plus an estimate of study/review time needed to achieve learning goals each week, determined as follows:

- a. Although fluctuations may occur, required synchronous and asynchronous activities are planned for 25 hours per week.
  - b. Each hour of required synchronous and asynchronous activities is anticipated to require an hour of study/review/prep time per week.
3. Curriculum Leadership will enforce expectations on academic workload across course elements to ensure adherence with this policy.
  4. Individual students regularly and/or substantially exceeding 50 hours per week are encouraged to seek appropriate support through the Office of Learner Development.

**NOTE:** Foundations phase optional non-clerkship elective courses are not considered when calculating academic workload. Students must exercise caution when choosing to take on additional academic obligations and their impacts on their workload.

### Monitoring:

Academic workload will be monitored by the Foundations Committee using data obtained through student submitted feedback cards, course evaluations, student course Leads, during course closeout sessions, time logs from asynchronous activities, 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 Foundations Curriculum who will work with relevant Course Directors to investigate the allegation and take appropriate actions as needed to ensure compliance.

## Additional Contacts

Role/Title	Contact	Email
Foundations Director	Elizabeth Bockman-Eckberg	<a href="mailto:bockm007@umn.edu">bockm007@umn.edu</a>

## Definitions

### Synchronous Activities

Required 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

Required 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 for a course. 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.

## Responsibilities

### Curriculum Committees

The Foundations Committee, as authorized by the Medical Student Education Committee, is responsible

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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, Foundations Curriculum

The Assistant Dean is responsible for implementing and enforcing the curriculum committee guidelines regarding academic workload and working with Course Directors to monitor workload within and across courses.

### Course Directors

Course Directors are responsible for being aware of, and adhering to the academic workload expectations across all course elements to ensure compliance with this policy.

## LCME Accreditation Relevance

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.”

## 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

**Reviewed and Approved:** Medical Student Education Committee (MSEC), October 2024

**Reviewed and Approved:** Foundations Committee (FC) as per RCC.8<sup>1</sup>, June 2025

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the “Roles in Curricular Components” Table in the MSEC SOP