



MEDICAL SCHOOL POLICY

Academic Workload in Pre-Clerkship Courses

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POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Minnesota Medical School (UMMS) is committed to ensuring its curriculum provides sufficient content for self-directed learning (*see Definitions*). In addition, UMMS takes into consideration time outside of its scheduled academic requirements for independent learning time and personal and social life activities (*see Definitions*). This supports an appropriate balance between scheduled curricular activities (including self-directed and independent learning) and personal time conducive to student wellness.

UMMS faculty and administration are expected to commit to the ideals of establishing a curriculum that aims to be in line with evidence-based education principles, providing time to fully engage in a challenging curriculum, while also recognizing personal needs. Faculty and administration also acknowledge that self-directed learning is an important curricular component for self-assessment and critical reasoning skills.

Students are expected to fully engage in the medical school curriculum including required in-class and asynchronous (*see Definitions*) educational activities, assessments, and self-directed learning – such that these activities take precedence over social, supplemental, and service activities.

The following policy clarifies the requirements 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 pre-clerkship courses.

REASON FOR POLICY

UMMS and its faculty are charged with providing a learning environment that effectively balances optimal student learning with an overall 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 and the science of learning.

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 and time for independent study to 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; and appraisal of the credibility of information sources.”

PROCEDURES

1. The calculated workload per week includes: a) scheduled in-class activities; b) an estimate of required asynchronous activities; and c) an estimate of independent preparation/study time needed to pass course content or as part of self-directed learning activities (see *Definitions*).
2. Workload is expected to not exceed 60 hours per week.
3. For each course incorporating asynchronous activities, data will be obtained that allows for the realistic determination of the time needed by students to complete them. This may be in the form of surveys, direct student feedback, course evaluations or other means as deemed helpful.
4. Course Directors are responsible for monitoring the workload expectations across all course elements to ensure compliance with this policy.
5. Student workload will be reviewed at the conclusion of each course during the course debrief session. Comments made during the course debrief will be revisited before the course schedule is set for the next Academic Year.
6. The Scientific Foundations Committee (SFC) on the Twin Cities Campus, and the Committee on Undergraduate Medical Education (CUMED) on the Duluth Campus are responsible for overall monitoring and reporting to Education Council all student workloads for their respective campuses, including the balance between scheduled activities and independent learning across the entire pre-clerkship curriculum.

Handling Violations:

The Assistant Dean for Curriculum (TC) or the Assistant Dean for Curriculum, Assessment, and Evaluation (DU) will work independently with the Course Directors to revise course scheduling to reduce workload within a course to no more than 60 hours per week.

FORMS/INSTRUCTIONS

There are no forms associated with this policy.

APPENDICES

There are no appendices associated with this policy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There is no FAQ associated with this policy.

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

Subject	Contact	Phone	Fax/Email
Primary Contact	Name	Phone	Fax/Email
Curriculum Office - Twin Cities	Betsy Murray	(612) 626-4244	murra057@umn.edu
Curriculum Office - Twin Cities	Kelaine Haas	(612) 624-6996	khaas@umn.edu
Curriculum Office - Duluth	Kevin Diebel	(218) 726-8874	kwdiebel@d.umn.edu
Curriculum Office - Duluth	Amy Seip	(218) 726-6908	amyseip@d.umn.edu
Scientific Foundations Committee (SFC)	Kaz Nelson	(612) 273-9851	kjnelson@umn.edu
Committee on Undergraduate Medical Education Duluth (CUMED)	Aubie Shaw	(218) 726-6657	akshaw@d.umn.edu

DEFINITIONS

Asynchronous Activities

These activities are included in the total allocated time for a given course, counting toward hours of instruction. However, these activities are completed according to the student's own schedule. Examples include the viewing of on-line learning modules, homework assignments (excluding assigned reading to complement in-class content), or preparation for presentations.

Independent Study

Independent study refers to time spent outside of scheduled in-class or asynchronous activities preparing for class or self-directed learning activities. This may include reading, completing assigned homework, conducting research, or such activities devoted to mastering curricular content.

Independent Learning Time (ILT): Independent Learning Time is consistent protected time during the week (within normal business hours) established by the Education Council during which scheduled in-class activities cannot be added. Students are encouraged to take advantage of ILT to prepare for their learning experiences, including, but not limited to, reading, reviewing videos and lecture material, completing study questions, or in preparation for self-directed learning activities.

Scheduled In-Class Activities

These may include lectures, small group discussions, conferences, labs, examinations, Self-directed learning sessions, and any other required instruction that occurs at a specific time and location in the presence of an instructor or facilitator, irrespective of attendance requirements.

Self-Directed Learning Activities

Self-directed learning is an instructional strategy where students, with guidance from an instructor or facilitator, decide what and how they will learn. This approach allows students to take ownership of their learning while also validating such learning through comparisons with expected outcomes. Self-directed learning activities may also require time outside of class for preparation including time spent studying and reading or attending optional review sessions not formally scheduled in the course syllabus or course calendar. UMMS aligns its definition of self-directed learning with the LCME. As such, self-directed learning includes the following characteristics:

1. The ability of a student to assess their own learning needs
2. The ability of a student to engage in independent identification, analysis, and synthesis of relevant information
3. The ability of a student to appraise the credibility of information sources

RESPONSIBILITIES

Scientific Foundations Committee

The Scientific Foundations Committee (SFC) is responsible for overall monitoring of student workload across the pre-clerkship curriculum. This includes regularly engaging in appropriate analysis (annually at minimum) and making recommendations to the Education Council and the Curriculum Office as needed. The SFC is also responsible for conducting initial reviews of suspected violations for the purposes of developing recommendations for resolution and submitting such recommendations to the Assistant Dean for Curriculum.

Committee on Undergraduate Medical Education in Duluth

See responsibilities for SFC, above.

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

The Assistant Deans are responsible for reviewing and implementing recommendations made by the SFC and CUMED regarding the workload policy and ensuring adherence to the policy and its procedures throughout the curriculum.

Curriculum Office

The Curriculum Office is responsible for ensuring this policy is up-to-date and reflects the current needs of the curriculum.

Course Directors

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

RELATED INFORMATION

There is no related information associated with this policy.

HISTORY

Effective: July 2020

Approved by: Education Council, July 2020