

Scientific Foundations Committee
Meeting

November 5, 2010

7:30 – 9:00 am, B-646 Mayo

In attendance: M Becker, A Bleas, A Edverson, G Filice, B Fleischmann, G Giesler, L Henson, S Katz, R Kempainen, K Lee, S Levine, E Medina, A Minenko, C Niewoehner, J Norrander, P Pant, D Powell, P Schlievert, M Woods

Absent: E Coleman, R Hoffman, M Hordinsky, M Lee, T Mackenzie, K Nordby, L Perkowski, M Sanders, L Schimmenti, S Thayer, J Thompson, B Varda, D Wangensteen, K Watson, T Weinhaus

I. Minutes

October 1, 2010 meeting minutes were approved with no corrections or additions.

II. Information

Dr. Catherine Niewoehner, Chair of the Scientific Foundations Committee, introduced guest Jordan Kreuser, MS-2 representative to the Education Council.

LCME Update

Vice Dean, Dr. Lindsey Henson spoke briefly about the upcoming quarterly Curriculum Committee Subcommittee-TC (CC-TC) being held on November 12th. She noted that the bulk of the CC-TC session will focus on the compilation of the LCME database and on the work that needs to be done on the part of course and clerkship directors to provide course objectives and sessions objectives. Dr. Henson added that Dr. Linda Perkowski, Associate Dean for Curriculum and Evaluation will provide a framework of the competencies of the Educational Program and will also share details of the next phase which includes collecting data for each course and clerkship in keeping with the revised format of the Domains of Competency recently approved by the Education Council

To ensure the most current information is used to complete the data base, course/clerkship directors will receive partially populated templates for their review. They will be required to make additions and/or any updates not available in the Office of Medical Education. The information will be used by the LCME Subcommittees to write the sections of the Self Study Report. Dr. Henson encouraged all Course Directors who are able, to attend the quarterly meeting on November 12th, to help facilitate collection of accurate and up-to-date course information.

Discussion

Exam Development Requirements

Dr. Niewoehner introduced a draft document (Exam Development Requirements) noting that the recently implemented curriculum changes have affected exam formats. The integration of disciplines within courses requires questions that reflect the elements of those disciplines, such as FCT cases and small group discussions. These changes, the variation in exam formats and in course directors' methods of writing exams are all factors related to problems that have occurred with exams this semester. In the past exams have been 4 hours in length but are now 3 hours long. To facilitate the move to integrated exams the Office of Medical Education has developed a set of requirements and has asked for feedback and input for modification on a draft of the Exam Development Requirements before its put into practice.

Dr. Kempainen spoke about experiences with the exam for HD-1 and the problems he encountered. The exam was too long, due in part to discipline directors desire to get an appropriate number of questions representing each discipline to ensure student knowledge is assessed in the best manner. He voiced concern about the goal to test core concepts and how rigorously they are currently being tested, and at what level of difficulty should they be assessed.

Feedback from Year-2 students was favorable with regard to integration of the course and how well disciplines were cross referenced throughout the course. But the exam was not representative of an integrated exam. Students agreed the accuracy of assessing student knowledge in the 3-hr time frame is a challenge. Their greatest hurdle is having the individual 70% pass applied to each component of the exam instead of the aggregate. Students favor splitting-up the exam for HD2 (greater volume content) into 2 days of 4-hour exams. Because the exams are still being developed as individual sections it supports splitting the exam structure into 2 days.

Year-1 students felt the exam went well, but there was anxiety before the exam because it is a new curriculum. Concerns centered on whether the sample exam questions they were given would be reflective of the difficulty of the test. For the most part the examples were reflective and students now feel more confident in the exam process. Yr-1 students do have some of the same concerns as Yr-2 students, about the volume of information exams will include in a shorter test.

Dr. Niewoehner focused the discussion on the mechanics of developing the exams as described in the draft of the *Exam Development Requirements*, stating that the document would be brought to the Education Council for consideration at their November 16th meeting. The purpose of the requirements is to avoid last minute submission of questions, which prevents course directors from reviewing the exam as a whole and collaborating among discipline directors to create an appropriate exam. Specific aspects of the timeline for submitting exams to the course director and to the OME staff do not relate to content, but do address structure of the exam, i.e. integration of disciplines, points per question and where essay questions are placed in relation to other question formats.

Course directors across both year-1 and year-2 concerns included the following:

- Level of difficulty of questions when testing core concepts
- Recommended exam submission timing be different for integrated and non-integrated
- Independent courses have had success with their current model and recommend continuation
- Concerned regarding early submission of questions before lectures given

Dr. Woods agreed that non-integrated courses can continue to produce and score their own exams. OME will distribute them and manage the “Challenge”, which course directors have approved of in the past. She noted the current consideration for having OME administration closely involved with the exam development and production process is that LCME requires OME to have oversight of the curriculum, which includes assessments. It may be possible for the independent courses to continue their process, but to submit them to OME for the record. She added that with more courses becoming integrated in the future, the interaction between OME and course director become more the norm

Dr. Anne Minenko spoke about the process being used for HD-2, an up-coming 9 week course. She provided information for how meetings and communication with faculty are structured. To this point their progress fits with the timeline set out in the *Exam Development Requirements*. In regard to the length of the exam, she added there are advantages to both short & long exams. She reflected on the value of the “Requirements” at the current point of curriculum revision but expressed concern that the Policy would have to change as the new courses evolve.

Students asked for an explanation regarding the rationale for shorter exams. Dr. Woods reported that the test load was criticized as too heavy, by a large number of students over several years, and OME

responded to those concerns. Dr. Schlievert offered background, noting that over time for courses that gave quizzes students were passing at a higher rate than those without quizzes. Students recognized this and requested more quizzes as a way to measure their own progress and course directors responded by adding them.

Dr. Niewoehner focused on the draft document, noting there is an absolute timelines, including challenges to occur within 24 hours. Dr. Lindsey Henson asked if a 2-week turn-around is more workable. The response was mixed, some course directors want greater authority to put pressure on the other faculty to get questions in earlier and for some the culture of their department is a shorter turn-around process. Dr. Niewoehner reiterated that exams will be of a 3-hr length, but that each course director can determine what weight they want to place on an exam and what other measures they want to add to their grading process. Dr. Woods indicated this document is more procedural with the Policy yet to be written. The exam retake decisions fall under a different Policy and are a combined effort between OME and the course director. Anne Edverson recommended open and frequent communication with the OME Course Managers to provide better examination experiences for students and faculty. In summary, Dr. Niewoehner stated the consensus of SFC course directors of integrated courses, is to try working with the document as “guidelines”, but if problems arise, the *Exam Development Requirements* will be revisited.

Year 1 and 2 – Revisit Exam Grade Policy

After discussion, it was decided that there would be a simple cutoff for passing of 70% for the course as a whole plus 70% for the mid-term and final exam. The Year 1 & 2 Exam Retake Policy will be revised to match the new Year 1 & 2 Exam Grade Policy to reflect that students who fail the exam will have to take the entire course exam. The resulting Policies will be brought to the SFC members for information. It was agreed that scores for components will be tracked for each student with regard to areas where there may be specific deficits. How tracking and remediation will occur will be decided at the OME administrative level. Course directors will provide students with adequate examples of sample test questions with formats that match formats that will appear in exams. A discussion focusing on how “Honors” appear within the MSPE (Dean’s Letter) will be continued at the January 7th meeting, with a presentation by Dr. Kathleen Watson, Associate Dean for Students and Student Learning.

Next Meetings:

Curriculum Committee – November 12, 2010

Scientific Foundations Committee – December 3, 2010

