

Post-Baccalaureate Rigor and Curriculum

Post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and graduate degree programs are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs, and are structured (a) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (b) to ensure engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training.

Judgment

Compliant Non-Compliant Not Applicable

Narrative

The content of post-baccalaureate degree programs, as determined by faculty, is progressively more complex and rigorous than undergraduate programs. As indicated in detail in the response to Standard 10.4, the [Graduate School](#) of the university has oversight of all post-baccalaureate programs except the M.D. program(s) in the School(s) of Medicine, the J.D. program in the School of Law and the Pharm.D. program in the College of Pharmacy; these programs have their own policies, committees and accrediting bodies; other post-baccalaureate programs in these schools are administered under the oversight of the [Graduate School](#).

Post-Baccalaureate Programs with Graduate School Oversight

For those academic programs with oversight by the [Graduate School](#), the curriculum committees of the academic units and of the [Graduate Council](#) review curriculum content for graduate-level content and rigor through a formal committee process (see the [manual for the Graduate Council](#), pages 7-10). This process assures that that post-baccalaureate programs build upon the foundation established by undergraduate programs and are more complex and rigorous at the graduate level.

In particular, 500/600 level courses may have both graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in the class. These courses are reviewed on the graduate level by the senior associate dean of the Graduate School prior to review by the Committee on Curricula and Courses and of the Faculty Senate. Each 500/600 level course syllabus (see [Graduate Level Syllabus Template](#)) must specify how the requirements for the course are quantitatively and qualitatively different for undergraduate and graduate credit. Requirements for graduate credit must reflect additional depth and rigor relative to requirements for undergraduate credit. Failure to complete the differential requirements for graduate credit should result in at least one letter grade deficit for the course. Graduate students are required to complete additional graduate-level work (e.g., a research paper and/or substantive additional reading) for the course and are to be evaluated on a more rigorous basis than the undergraduates. Syllabi lacking such differentiation and rigor are returned to the academic unit for revision and approval is withheld until the appropriate content, assessment, and rigor are specified. In addition, as a reminder and indication of the importance of this differentiation, the Office of the Provost sends out a memo at the beginning of each term detailing the [policy](#) on differentiation in 500/600 courses between graduate and undergraduate work.

Each graduate program has published a set of admissions criteria that clearly reflect recruitment of students capable of building on the undergraduate foundation. See [sample program of study](#) with admissions criteria in the Document Directory. Each student in a graduate program is assigned an advisor and develops a program of study to satisfy required coursework and research. In addition, program requirements are outlined in the Academic Bulletins with learning outcomes describing what a student will be able to do upon successful completion of the program. Since the learning outcomes are published in the [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#), prospective students and the general public may examine the course of study for graduate students.

Each program has an assessment plan in place that formally measures achievements of [learning outcomes](#). More advanced degree programs have more advanced learning outcomes as well as different assessment measures and criteria. In addition, every program must complete an external program review every seven years unless the program is accredited by an external organization (e.g., Council on Education for Public Health for programs in the Arnold School of Public Health) or has completed a similarly comprehensive review by a specialized professional association (see policy [ACAF 2.20 Academic Program Review](#)). Graduate programs also place emphasis on inquiry and research. Students are expected to engage in research and often to participate in laboratory work and/or field experiences. All but the professional degree programs require a research or evidence-based thesis or dissertation. All graduate programs are required to administer a comprehensive assessment that can be a written or oral examination or an approved alternative assessment of the student's learning.

The Graduate School regularly collects data on graduate programs, including application and enrollment data, student demographics, and degrees awarded. Additionally, the Graduate School monitors the qualifications of instructors of graduate courses and members for thesis and dissertation committee service. Instructors for graduate courses must possess the terminal degree in the discipline unless justification of alternative credentials is provided (see policy [ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record](#)). Course instructors who are not members of the regular graduate faculty must be nominated by the academic unit for term or associate appointments to teach graduate courses and/or to serve on graduate student committees. Credentials of nominees are reviewed for appropriate academic degrees and experience before graduate faculty appointment status is granted. Finally, instructors are evaluated by students each term and many programs conduct faculty peer reviews. The [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) is available to all faculty to support and improve graduate level

teaching.

Evidence that the academic content is more rigorous for graduate students and that course work is differentiated between graduate and undergraduates is found in the following documents:

- [Graduate Studies Bulletin](#)
- Academic policies and procedures of the Graduate School [Academic Regulations](#)
- Reports in the [Graduate Council minutes](#); see, for example, minutes from [May 11th, 2020](#)
- Reports of the Curricula and Courses Committee in the [minutes of the Faculty Senate](#). See, for example, the detailed [Curricula and Courses Committee reports](#) as archived for each meeting at this site.
- Course Syllabi (see [example of a 700+ course level syllabi](#))
- [Academic Policies](#) governing rigor of undergraduate and graduate level courses (see [example of a 500-600 level course syllabi](#))
- Learning outcomes and the assessment plans for programs (examples included in the Document Directory)

Professional Degree Programs

The University of South Carolina Columbia has two Schools of Medicine, a Law School and a College of Pharmacy that offer the following professional degrees: Doctor of Medicine (M.D.), Juris Doctorate (JD) and the Doctorate of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.). These four professional degree programs are all accredited and in good standing and are progressively more complex and rigorous than undergraduate programs. The School of Medicine Columbia (SOM-C) and the School of Medicine Greenville (SOM-G) are both accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) for the M.D. programs. The School of Law is accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) for the JD program. The College of Pharmacy is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) for the Pharm.D. program.

School of Medicine - Columbia

The School of Medicine - Columbia Curriculum Committee is charged with "the development of and oversight of the content, structure, and pedagogy of the curriculum leading to the M.D. degree and for ensuring that students learn the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for the successful practice of medicine" ([Curriculum Committee Handbook](#), see pg. 12 for mission and charge). In the late 1990's, school-wide educational objectives were developed by a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee and adopted by the Curriculum Committee (September 1998) using a template subsequently published by the AAMC (Learning Objectives for Medical Student Education: Guidelines for Medical Schools, AAMC Nov. 2000). In addition, some courses, clerkships, and vertical curricula have their objectives based on those published by their specialty organizations. Examples of those organizations would include the Clerkship Directors in Internal Medicine, the Association of Directors of Medical Student Education in Psychiatry, the Association of Anatomy, Cell Biology, and Neurobiology Chairpersons, the American Academy of Neurology, and the American Geriatrics Society. The objectives are periodically reviewed by the Curriculum Committee, particularly as objectives began being linked to core competencies at the graduate medical education level (ACGME's General Competencies). While the University of South Carolina School of Medicine objectives are not an exact copy of these competencies, these objectives are linked to the specific domains of patient care, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism and systems-based practice. These objectives are published in the [SOM Columbia's Bulletin](#) and are used as a guide to assessment and form the basis for course and clerkship objectives.

The basic science curriculum is structured to expose students to a body of knowledge, life-long learning tools, and basic clinical skills necessary to enter their clinical years and sustain their future practice of medicine. In the clinical years, the clerkships provide opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills essential to all specialties of medical practice through a variety of clinical settings with diverse patient populations. Oversight by the [Curriculum Committee](#) ensures that a general professional education is provided. Between 2015 – 2018 through the development of a 5 year strategic plan, a curriculum innovations task force was formed by the Dean to take a comprehensive look at all four years of medical education. Through the work of this task force and with the agreement of the Curriculum Committee a number of recommendations were implemented, some ongoing, to increase opportunities for independent learning, earlier clinical experiences, and better integration of material including the formal introduction of health systems science to better prepare our graduates for work in more complex health centers.

The present [curriculum](#) addresses all content areas required for accreditation by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). Student performance on [national examinations](#) is monitored closely. Score distribution is clustered at the mean with the continuum of score intervals between -1 and +1 standard deviation from the mean. The AAMC Graduation Questionnaire (GQ) is examined in detail annually in order to determine the adequacy of the instruction.

In February 2017 the School of Medicine MD program underwent an accreditation site visit by the LCME and was notified that it had received a full eight-year accreditation by the LCME.

Supporting (non-professional) graduate degree programs in the Columbia School of Medicine are governed by a Graduate Curriculum Committee which is in place to develop and oversee the content, structure, and pedagogy of the curriculum leading to the M.S., Ph.D., and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Biomedical Sciences degrees and to ensure that students have a solid knowledge base and skills in Biomedical Sciences. A Genetic Counseling Program Curriculum Committee

oversees the M.S. in Genetic Counseling and meets annually to review curricula and incorporate changes based on course evaluations, certification data, and accreditation requirements. The M.S. in Nurse Anesthesia program has a curriculum advisory committee that meets once per semester and oversees course assessment, accreditation issues, certificate exam evaluation, and future issues concerning changing training requirements. The M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling and the Certificate Program in Psychiatric Rehabilitation have a graduate subcommittee that meets on an as needed basis to address academic program issues. In addition, an advisory council consisting of the faculty and representatives of partner agencies meet twice a year to provide feedback about the program. The M.S. in Physician Assistant Studies is our newest graduate program to receive accreditation and also has a curriculum committee which meets to review curricula and incorporate changes based on course evaluations, certification data, and accreditation requirements. These various School of Medicine graduate program curriculum committees then submit curricular proposals through the [University of South Carolina Graduate Council](#) for review and approval.

Schools of Medicine - Greenville

The School of Medicine Greenville dean has charged the Curriculum Committee, a faculty-led committee, with primary responsibility for the oversight and management of the curriculum leading to the M.D. degree. ([Curriculum Committee Charge and Membership](#)); example SOM-G Curriculum Committee minutes are included in the document directory. The Curriculum Committee "is a deliberative body charged by the Dean and given institutional authority to review, advise and make policy recommendations to the Dean for the successful design, implementation, and assessment of the curriculum for the undergraduate medical education program leading to the M.D. degree. Additionally, the Committee ensures that students develop the leadership, clinical and interpersonal skills essential to delivering the next generation of patient-centered health care with confidence and compassion. The Committee is guided by its commitment to compassionate patient care, innovative teaching and continuous improvement for the benefit of our students, faculty, administration and community we serve."

The University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville's educational program level objectives were approved by the Curriculum Committee in January 2019 and are categorized into eight core competency domains, based on the ACGME six core competencies and the AAMC Reference List of General Physician Competencies (Academic Medicine 2013). At the time of graduation, it is expected that every graduate will have demonstrated competency in each of the program level objectives. Evidence of performance will be collected and documented throughout the educational program. The eight core competency domains are patient care, knowledge for practice, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, systems-based practice, inter-professional collaboration, and personal and professional development. A full list of [program level objectives](#) are posted on the school website and included in the Document Directory. The medical school ensures that the outcome measures selected are sufficiently specific to allow a judgment that medical students have achieved each specified objective by mapping of session level objectives to module/clerkship objectives, and to the medical education program objective(s) that it supports. A link to the [Course Catalog](#) and a [Curriculum Schematic](#) are available on the [School website](#). Assessment plans and reports detail the learning outcomes and associated assessments which further demonstrate the advanced content offered through the School of Medicine Greenville's programs.

The present curriculum addresses all content areas required for accreditation by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). Students are required to take and pass national examinations, Step 1 and Step 2CK, as outlined in the [Graduation Requirements](#) policy. Student performance on [national examinations](#) is monitored closely.

The AAMC Graduation Questionnaire (GQ) is examined in detail annually in order to determine the adequacy of the instruction. In the past three years, greater than 94% of the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville students have reported that they agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with the overall quality of their education.

The University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville applied for Applicant School status with the LCME in January 2010 and was granted Preliminary Accreditation status in October 2011, which qualified the school to begin receiving applications through the American Medical College Application Service (AMCAS). The School matriculated its inaugural class in the fall of 2012. The University of South Carolina School of Medicine Greenville received Full Accreditation status from LCME in the fall of 2015. The next site visit from LCME is scheduled for February 2021.

The University of South Carolina is one of only seven universities with two separately accredited M.D. programs. Separate accreditation permits the University of South Carolina Schools of Medicine to provide separate and distinct curricula geared to the strengths and philosophies of each school. Together, these two University of South Carolina medical schools will help combat the state's ongoing physician shortage by permitting a greater combined number of M.D. graduates.

College of Pharmacy

The University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy offers a professional degree program, the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.). Admission requirements into the Pharm.D. program do not require an undergraduate degree. Therefore, the Pharm.D. program is not considered a post-baccalaureate degree program but rather a first professional degree program. To be admitted into the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy Pharm.D. program, a student must fulfill 66 credit hours of "[pre-pharmacy](#)" coursework. The University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy is accredited by

the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). The ACPE has established a series of 25 quality standards that schools of pharmacy must comply with to be fully accredited. The University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy has achieved [accredited status](#) as designated by ACPE and will receive comprehensive review by ACPE again in 2024-2025. Every year, the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy submits a "[Blueprint for Academic Excellence](#)" (which is a strategic plan that outlines annual educational goals) to the University of South Carolina Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. The College of Pharmacy has adopted the [Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education Educational Outcomes](#) which are an integral part of assessment. A copy of the [Pharm.D. assessment plan](#) has been included for review.

The Pharm.D. program builds on the academic foundation established through completion of the pre-pharmacy coursework. Many students in the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy complete their pre-pharmacy studies in the University of South Carolina system. Students pursuing pre-pharmacy studies are not eligible to take Pharm.D. courses until they have been formally admitted into the Pharm.D. program.

The content of the Pharm.D. program is focused on preparing high quality pharmacists and imparts the necessary knowledge, skills, and reasoning specific to pharmacy (see [Vision and Mission Statement](#)). The Pharm.D. curriculum and course content were created, approved, and implemented by the University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy faculty. The curriculum includes required coursework which ensures the student develops the necessary skills to appropriately analyze the medical literature and then utilize the literature to synthesize appropriate responses to clinical questions. The curriculum also requires students to complete 1,760 hours of pharmacy practice experience (300 hours of introductory pharmacy practice experience and 1,440 hours of advanced pharmacy practice experience). Those who desire to do so may also participate in basic science and clinical research endeavors alongside pharmacy faculty.

School of Law

The School of Law offers only a post-baccalaureate professional degree program for students seeking a JD degree. The School of Law is accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) and was most recently reviewed in AY 2015-16; see the [March 2017 decision of the ABA Accreditation Committee](#). [ABA Accreditation Standard 311](#), the School of Law is allowed to provide degree credit only for work performed after enrollment in the JD program. [ABA Accreditation Standard 502](#) requires student to complete at least 75% of the work required for an undergraduate degree prior to admission into the JD program. The School of Law requires that a student has received an undergraduate degree prior to enrollment, with the exception of a rarely used [program](#) in which a student in the University's Honors College may apply for admission after three years of undergraduate study and later receive both an undergraduate and JD degree. [ABA Accreditation Standard 301](#) also requires that the law school prepare "its students, upon graduation, for admission to the bar and for effective, ethical, and responsible participation as members of the legal profession."

Under the School of Law [Faculty By-law, Section 3.1](#), faculty "shall formulate policies and standards for the academic program of the school, including the selection, retention, tenure, and promotion of faculty; the curriculum; the admission of students; and the academic standards for retention, advancement, and graduation of students." A standing [Curriculum Committee](#) of the faculty is responsible for considering "all matters relating to the curriculum and curriculum planning" and "all matters relating to the graduation and any degree and program requirements." Curricular changes recommended by the Curriculum Committee must be approved by a majority vote of the full-time faculty in order to take effect.

Consistent with [ABA Accreditation Standard 302](#), the JD curriculum is designed to provide progressively more complex analytical skills and understanding of legal doctrine, to develop professional skills, and to instill an understanding of professional values and expectations.

The JD program is structured so as to ensure that degree recipients have a fundamental knowledge across a broad range of substantive doctrines and are able to apply well-developed analytical skills to resolve legal problems; as demonstrated in annual assessment reports. Students are required to progress from being able to develop and apply a basic analytical framework at the end of their first year of degree study to being able to analyze and solve complex real world problems by the end of their third year.

Legal writing and drafting skills are taught progressively through a first-year required legal writing and research program and a required upper-level writing experience. In addition, all students must complete at least six hours of courses designated as experiential courses. As defined in [ABA Accreditation Standard 304](#), an experiential course must be a simulation course, a law school clinic, or a field placement.

The degree program also provides for progressive development of professional values and professional identity. In their first semester, students receive information about the work and role of lawyers in the profession and in society. In the 2L or 3L year, students are required to receive a grade of C or better in Problems in Professional Responsibility or Professional Responsibility. Electives are also available in courses that focus on the future of the legal profession and on practical aspects of professional practice. Professionalism is a critical aspect of clinical studies.

Current curricular requirements are published in the [Student Handbook of the School of Law](#). The syllabus of each course is

required to include goals and learning outcomes for the course. The School also prepares an annual program assessment based upon the School's Curriculum Committee assessment of progress toward stated curricular goals.

Sources

-  2019-2020-aba-standards-chapter3
-  2019-2020-aba-standards-chapter5
-  ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record
-  ACAF 2.00 Creation and Revision of Academic Programs
-  ACAF 2.03 Creation and Revision of Academic Courses
-  ACAF 2.20 Academic Program Review
-  Biostatistics_MSPH Plan Assessment
-  Center for Teaching Excellence
-  College of Pharmacy - CAPE Ed Outcomes
-  College of Pharmacy Academic BluePrint
-  College of Pharmacy Accreditation
-  College of Pharmacy Mission and Vision
-  Columbia_2019_Licensure Data
-  Fac Senate Courses and Curricula 03062020
-  Grad Council Minutes 05112020
-  Graduate Academic Regulation
-  Graduate Bulletin
-  Graduate Council
-  Honor's College Pre-Law Program
-  Law School Accreditation Committee Decision - 3.15.17
-  Nursing MSN Plan Assessment
-  PharmD Academic Assessment Plan
-  Pre-Pharmacy Coursework
-  Program_ Anthropology, M.A. - Columbia Campus - Acalog ACMS™
-  SOM-C 17-18Curriculum Committee HandbookAugust2017
-  SOM-G Curriculum Committee
-  SOM-G Curriculum Overview
-  SOM-G Graduation Requirements
-  SOM-G Program Learning Objectives
-  SOMG Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes_01.09.2020
-  SOMG Curriculum Committee Meeting Minutes_12.13.2019
-  SOMG Degree Requirements
-  SOMG studenthandbook
-  Sample Syllabi 500-600 level course
-  Sample Syllabi 700+
-  School of Law Faculty Bylaws
-  School of Law Student Handbook
-  School of Medicine Columbia Bulletin
-  School of Medicine Columbia Curriculum
-  School of Medicine Greenville
-  School of Medicine Greenville Bulletin
-  The Graduate School
-  gc_syllabusguideline

