



Policy Title:

Roles and Responsibilities of Course/Block/Clerkship Directors

Policy Identifier:

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LCME Standards

- 4 - Faculty Preparation, Productivity, Participation, and Policies
- 6 - Competencies, Curricular Objectives, and Curricular Design
- 8.3 - Curricular Design, Review, Revision/Content Monitoring

Scope

This policy covers faculty, staff, and administrators at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia (SOMC) campus.

Purpose

This policy addresses the roles and responsibilities of course/block/clerkship directors in undergraduate medical education.

Definitions

Faculty: University personnel who are engaged in research, instruction both inside and outside the classroom, service and/or administration. (taken from [The USC Faculty Manual](#) and [ACAF 1.00](#)) Furthermore, full-time faculty includes all faculty members who are considered by the medical school to be full-time, whether funded by the medical school directly or supported by affiliated institutions and organizations. (copied from the *Glossary of Terms for LCME Accreditation Standards and Elements in LCME's Functions and Structure of a Medical School*)

Course/Block/Clerkship Director: Faculty member tasked with organizing the course/block/clerkship and who serves as the instructor of record. The instructor of record is the individual designated by the academic unit as responsible for the course, including scheduling, administrative matters, and assignments of grades. The instructor of record is the primary instructor on the class section record, identified as either “assigned instructor” or “instructor.” (taken from [ACAF 1.19](#))

Policy Statement

Educating medical students and preparing them for careers as physicians is the mission of a medical school and its undergraduate medical education program. Per LCME, “the faculty members of a medical school are qualified through their education, training, experience, and continuing professional development and provide the leadership and support necessary to attain the institution's educational,



research, and service goals.” (Standard 4) Based on criteria for tenure (tenure-track faculty) and promotion (tenure and non-track faculty), it is commonly accepted that faculty are expected to participate in teaching, research and service with the expectation for each outlined in a unit’s guidelines. While course/block/clerkship directors, selected from among the SOMC’s faculty, play a critical role in undergraduate medical education, the specific expectations and duties these individuals fulfill have not previously been outlined but inferred based on historical practice, their own teaching experience, and appointment to this role. This policy sets out specific duties and responsibilities for individuals in the position of course/block/clerkship director keeping in mind, and not infringing upon, the principle of academic freedom which allows faculty:

“The freedom to teach includes the right of the faculty to select the materials, determine the approach to the subject, make the assignments, and assess student academic performance in teaching activities for which faculty members are individually responsible, without having their decisions subject to the veto of a department chair, dean, or other administrative officer. Teaching duties in medical schools that are commonly shared among a number of faculty members require a significant amount of coordination and the imposition of a certain degree of structure, and often involve a need for agreement on such matters as general course content, syllabi, and examinations. Often, under these circumstances, the decisions of the group may prevail over the dissenting position of a particular individual.

When faculty members are engaged in patient care, they have a special obligation to respect the rights of their patients and to exercise appropriate discretion while on rounds or in other nonclassroom settings.” (AAUP 1999 statement on *Academic Freedom in the Medical School*)

“The faculty of a medical school define the competencies to be achieved by its medical students through medical education program objectives and are responsible for the detailed design and implementation of the components of a medical curriculum that enable its medical students to achieve those competencies and objectives (LCME standard 6).” The Curriculum Committee is the faculty committee that has responsibility for the overall design, management, integration, evaluation, and enhancement of a coherent and coordinated medical curriculum. “The faculty of a medical school, through the Curriculum Committee, are responsible for the detailed development, design, and implementation of all components of the medical education program, including the medical education program objectives, the learning objectives for each required curricular segment, instructional and assessment methods appropriate for the achievement of those objectives, content and content sequencing, ongoing review and updating of content, and evaluation of course, clerkship, and teacher quality. These medical education program objectives, learning objectives, content, and instructional and assessment methods are subject to ongoing monitoring, review, and revision by the Curriculum Committee (LCME 8.3).”

In broad terms, the role of the course/block/clerkship director is to oversee all aspects of the course/block/clerkship they direct, ensuring students receive a high quality and engaging educational experience while creating a culture that promotes student-directed learning. Course/block/clerkship directors work collaboratively with each other, content leads, Curriculum Committee, and administrators to ensure course/block/clerkship objectives are aligned with SOM program objectives, communicate course/block/clerkship content for the purposes of accreditation and curricular design, and to ensure there are no critical omissions or unnecessary redundancies in the curriculum.



Course/Block Director: These individuals lead courses and/or blocks in the pre-clerkship curriculum. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Treat all students, faculty and staff with respect and clearly communicate expectations to all individuals involved in the course/block
- Keep Curriculum Committee up to date regarding all course/block matters
- Ensure all instructional personnel are well prepared and informed on issues affecting students
- Manage all aspects of course design and construction including scheduling, syllabi preparation, setting attendance requirements, and monitoring student attendance when required
- Select course materials, content to be taught, and assign/coordinate content delivery among all faculty involved in course/block
- Provide feedback on lecture content and suggestions for improvement to course faculty
- Work with course faculty to develop and implement small group and interactive learning sessions
- Ensure course content is up-to-date and reflects knowledge necessary for clinicians
- Design assessments (quizzes and exams) to evaluate student learning which includes question writing, select commercially available exams or questions for customized commercially available exams.
- Consistent with the academic guidelines stated in the Faculty Manual of the University of South Carolina, course grade determination is the domain of the participating faculty and is ultimately determined and recorded by the course/block Director.
- Monitor student course performance and offer assistance to struggling students; make students aware of the Academic Success Center and related wellness services and refer as needed.
- Refer students with worrisome behavior to the Office of Student Affairs
- Deposit course content into online learning management system and promptly grade submitted work so students can reflect on their performance
- Selection/implementation of remediation programs for students
- Adhere to USC Student Disability Resource Center guidelines for students afforded accommodations and work with students and SDRC staff should the need arise
- Ensure open communication with students and serve as the primary point of contact for students with questions about content, scheduling, and grading
- Provide appropriate feedback and guidance regarding professionalism
- Communicate with other course/block directors regarding scheduling and integration of material within and across courses/blocks
- Engage in continuous course/block improvement through the formal course/block/clerkship review process indicated by the Curriculum Committee
- Attend course/block director meetings and appropriate subcommittee meetings of the Curriculum Committee
- Participate in professional development activities to stay current with best practices in undergraduate medical education and be open to new teaching modalities
- The course/block director is responsible for selecting, monitoring, and providing individualized guidance and feedback to non-faculty instructional assistants
- The course/block director makes themselves available for guidance to academic support leaders and the content used by these leaders is made available to course/block directors upon request

Clerkship Director: These individuals lead clerkships in the clinical curriculum, ensuring a well-organized, clinically valuable experience for learners. Some responsibilities below are taken from the



article by Morgenstern et al. “Expectation of and for clerkship directors 2.0: A collaborative statement from the Alliance for Clinical Education” in *Teaching and Learning in Medicine* (2021) 33: 343-354. Their, along with any assistant/associate clerkship directors, responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Serve as role models and advisors in their specialty for students interested in a career in that specialty
- Organize the clerkship, design schedule, set expectations/standards for the rotation and orient students to these expectations
- Oversee clerkship coordinator/administrator
- Provide goals/objectives for the clerkship
- Design online tools and study aids; design clinical evaluation tools
- Determine assessments, how assessments contribute to the final grade, post grades, select a uniform pass rate, and provide evaluation comments to students
- Monitor student progress and provide assistance to struggling students and refer them to the appropriate SOMC office
- Oversight of students’ remediation programs and progress should any students need remediation
- Scheduling appropriate clinical experiences and didactic education to support clinical learning, ensuring comparability between clinical sites
- Coordinate with other faculty to ensure coverage of content not restricted to one specialty and to promote interprofessional education
- Ensure faculty/residents precepting and teaching are well prepared and informed on issues affecting students
- Provide appropriate feedback to students on clinical performance and professionalism, including a mid-rotation feedback session that discusses academic/study plans and career aspirations
- Review student evaluations and decide how to incorporate evaluation feedback to improve clerkship experience
- Attend clerkship directors meetings and appropriate subcommittee meetings of the Curriculum Committee
- Keep Curriculum Committee up to date regarding all clerkship matters

Contacts

Curriculum Committee Chair

History

Date of Change	Change