

ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES REQUIRED FOR THE STUDY OF MEDICINE* **REVISED SEPTEMBER, 2014**

The College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan is responsible to society to provide a program of study so that graduates have the knowledge, skills, professional behaviours, and attitudes necessary to enter the supervised practice of medicine in Canada. Graduates must be able to diagnose and manage health problems, and provide comprehensive, compassionate care to their patients. For this reason, students in the MD program must possess the cognitive, communication, sensory, motor, and social skills necessary to interview, examine, and counsel patients, and competently complete certain technical procedures in a reasonable time while, all the while, ensuring patient safety.

In addition to obtaining an MD degree, and completing an accredited residency training program, an individual must pass the licensure examinations of the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) in order to practice medicine. Prospective candidates should be aware that cognitive, physical examination, management skills, communication skills, and professional behaviours are all evaluated in timed simulations of patient encounters. All students must have the required skills and abilities as described in the following section on Technical Standards.

All individuals are expected to review this document to assess their ability to meet these standards. Students who anticipate requiring disability-related accommodation are responsible for notifying the medical school.

Because of the comprehensive, additive, and integrative nature of the curriculum, students are expected to complete the MD degree within four years. Students with a disability may be granted an extension of time within which to complete the MD program. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis. All other requests for a leave-of-absence are handled separately.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS IN THE MD PROGRAM

A candidate for the MD degree must demonstrate the following abilities.

(1) Observation

A student must be able to participate in learning situations that require observation skills. In particular, a student must be able to accurately observe a patient and acquire visual, auditory, and tactile information.

(2) Communication

A student must be able to speak, to hear, and to observe patients in order to effectively and efficiently elicit information; describe mood, activity, and posture; and perceive non-verbal communication. A student must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients, families, and all other members of the health care team. A student must also be able to coherently summarize a patient's condition and management plan verbally and in writing.

* This policy document is adapted with permission from the policy document approved in November, 2003, by the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine.

(3) Motor

A student must demonstrate sufficient motor function to safely perform a physical examination on a patient, including palpation, auscultation, and percussion. The examination must be done independently and in a timely fashion. A student must be able to use common diagnostic aids or instruments, either directly or in an adaptive form (e.g., ophthalmoscope, otoscope, sphygmomanometer, and stethoscope). A student must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general and emergency medical care to patients.

(4) Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities

A student must demonstrate the cognitive skills and memory necessary to measure, calculate, and reason in order to analyze, integrate, and synthesize information. In addition, the student must be able to comprehend dimensional and spatial relationships. All of these problem-solving activities must be done in a timely fashion.

(5) Professionalism

A student must consistently demonstrate the emotional health required for full utilization of her or his intellectual abilities. The application of good judgment and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients are necessary. The development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, families, and other members of the health care team is also required. A student must consistently display integrity, honesty, empathy, compassion, fairness, respect for others and dedication. Students in the MD program must interface with patients regardless of a patient's age, gender, race, culture and other personal life circumstances.

The student must be able to tolerate the physical, emotional, and mental demands of the program and function effectively under stress. Adaptability to changing environments and the ability to function in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in the care of patients are both necessary. This acknowledges that central to the success of a student with a disability in completing the MD program is her or his responsibility to demonstrate self-reliance and to identify needs requiring accommodation in a timely fashion.

POLICY DISSEMINATION

The documents: *“Essential Skills and Abilities Required for the Study of Medicine”* and *“College of Medicine University of Saskatchewan Implementation Policy: Students with Disabilities in the MD Program”* have been posted on the College website www.usask.ca/medicine. Both policies fit with the University of Saskatchewan Policy on Students with Disabilities (Student Affairs and Activities; version 6.02). Students are informed of the procedures to request accommodation for disabilities via Orientation Sessions organized just prior to classes for in-coming students and through an e-mail sent to all students at the beginning of each academic year.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE MD PROGRAM

The College of Medicine adheres to Saskatchewan's Human Rights legislation with respect to the duty to accommodate and to the University of Saskatchewan's Academic Accommodation and Access for Students with Disabilities Policy (<http://policies.usask.ca/policies/student-affairs-and-activities/students-with-disabilities.php>) and is committed to providing appropriate services and supports to students with disabilities enrolled in the MD program. Accordingly, the *“Essential Skills*

and Abilities Required for the Study of Medicine” recognizes the needs of students with disabilities in its implementation.

Each student with a disability is entitled to reasonable accommodation that will assist her or him to meet the standards and facilitate his/her progress. However, such accommodation cannot compromise patient safety and well-being. Reasonable accommodation may require members of the University community to exercise creativity and flexibility in responding to the needs of students with disabilities while maintaining academic and technical standards. The student with a disability must be able to demonstrate the knowledge and perform the necessary skills independently. There are a few circumstances in which an intermediary may be appropriate. However, no disability can be accommodated if the intermediary has to provide cognitive support, substitute for cognitive skills, perform a physical examination, and/or in any way supplement clinical judgment. The appropriateness of an intermediary will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES: ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Office of Student (OSA) is the designated office within the College of Medicine responsible for facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into the MD program and is the initial contact for students wishing to request accommodation. The services and support of the OSA are confidential and at “arm’s length” and independent of the College’s academic offices. Disability Services for Students (DSS) is the University of Saskatchewan’s official repository of disability information and documentation. DSS works in close collaboration with the OSA in determining what, if any, accommodations are appropriate for students with disabilities in the MD program. The receipt of particular accommodation(s) in a previous setting does not automatically indicate that identical accommodation(s) will be provided by the College of Medicine. Before any accommodation can be granted, students must first register with DSS by submitting documentation of their diagnosis/disability provided by qualified clinician(s) who must be at arm’s length from the student's family. Please visit <http://students.usask.ca/current/disability/> to learn more. Information and accommodation requests can be made at the stages and through the channels outlined below:

- **Pre-admission (including pre-application):** The admissions information posted on the College website www.medicine.usask.ca/admissions contain the statement “Students concerned about the extent that they meet the technical standards (as outlined in the Essential Skills and Abilities Required for the Study of Medicine policy) are advised to contact the OSA of the College of Medicine”. Advice is confidential and provided at arm’s length, independent of a student’s admission file. The OSA will work with the Admissions Office concerning any accommodation required for the Admissions interview process.
- **Post-admission:** Students with temporary or permanent disabilities requiring accommodations are to first contact the OSA for information on process and procedure for obtaining accommodations.
- Advice is confidential and provided at arm’s length, independent of a student’s academic file.

Student Responsibilities

While policies, guidelines and services of the College of Medicine promotes a healthy and enabling learning environment for learners with disabilities, it remains the responsibility of the student to advise the College through the OSA of their need for accommodation in a timely proactive manner. Specifically, it is the responsibility of students to:

- Advise the OSA of the need for accommodation related to a temporary/permanent disability,

- Answer questions or provide information regarding relevant restrictions or limitations, including information from health care professionals, where appropriate, and as needed to DSS,
- Co-operate with any experts whose assistance is required,
- Work with the OSA to manage the accommodation process, and
- Advise the OSA of any difficulties in the implementation of accommodation plans accommodations.

Accommodations are intended to ensure that students with disabilities are encouraged to use the services and supports available through the OSA so they can have the opportunity to learn on an equal basis to their non-disabled peers. It is important to note that accommodations cannot be made retroactive to an unfavorable result on an exam or evaluation during pre-admission, post-admission, or at any stage during the MD program.

Document Review

The Technical Standards Committee will review this document biannually.