Clinical Curriculum Duty Hours Policy

The LCME expects that medical schools develop and implement policies and procedures regarding the amount of time medical students are required to spend in clinical and educational activities during clerkships.

LCME Element 8.8 Monitoring Student Workload

The medical school faculty committee responsible for the medical curriculum and the program’s administration and leadership ensure the development and implementation of effective policies and procedures regarding the amount of time medical students spend in required activities, including the total number of hours medical students are required to spend in clinical and educational activities during clerkships.

Attention should be paid to the time commitment required of medical students, especially during the clinical years. Medical students may voluntarily exceed the duty hours limits based on their motivation to learn. Medical students should not be pressured to exceed duty hour limits by attending faculty or residents. However, medical students’ hours should be set after taking into account the effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation on learning, clinical activities, and health and safety.

The Clerkship Directors recognize the implementation of new duty hours rules as of July 1, 2017 may create a disparity between students and teams. The Office of Curriculum and the Clerkship/Subinternship Directors are responsible for disseminating this policy to students, residents, fellows and faculty.

For the core clinical clerkships, required activities for students will be scheduled according to these guidelines:

1) No more than 80 hours per week of required activities.
2) A minimum of one day out of seven away from the hospital, off duty, averaged over four weeks.
3) Clerkships will maintain a goal of eight hour interval between daily required activities periods. It is also recognized that medical students may opt to stay in the hospital for additional educational opportunities, such as discussions with house officers, observing a unique case, etc. Given the shortened duration of learning in the discipline that is available to students and the lack of direct patient care decision-making by students, the committee feels it is reasonable to suspend the “eight-hour” rule when appropriate, and allow two additional hours for transitions of care, and/or if the student chooses, medical student education. The total number of hours per week may not exceed 80 hours.
4) Night float must occur within the context of the 80-hour and one-day-off-in-seven requirements.

For advanced clerkships, subinternships and clinical electives, required activities for students will be scheduled according to these guidelines:

1) No more than 80 hours per week of required activities.
2) A minimum of one day out of seven away from the Hospital, off duty, averaged over four weeks.
3) Night float must occur within the context of the 80-hour and one-day-off-in-seven requirements.
4) Medical students must be scheduled for in-house call no more frequently than every third night (when averaged over a four-week period).
5) No more than 24 hours consecutive for clinical activities with four additional hours allowed for transitions of care, and/or if the student chooses, medical student education.
6) Students must have at least 14 hours free of clinical work and education after 24 hours of in house call.

The Office of Curriculum and the Clerkship Directors are responsible for communicating the policy to residents, faculty, and students.