



The University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School

ACADEMIC WORKLOAD AND DUTY-HOUR POLICY

Updated July 2021

Scope

Medical student workloads must support students' learning while maintaining an appropriate level of engagement with the learning environment. The specific details of these expectations will vary somewhat depending on the phase of the educational program, clinical specialty or rotation, but must take into account the impact of fatigue on learning and patient safety, reinforce the fact that duty-hours restrictions, like other compliance requirements for physicians, are consistent with the necessity of meeting professional standards and ensure balance between educational priorities, service needs of the clinical setting and the students' personal wellness. The duty-hour restrictions on students during clinical clerkships and courses are modeled after the American Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) guidelines for residents.

Policy

Course and Clerkship Directors are expected to plan and manage courses, including all scheduled activities and expected independent work, within the academic workload and duty-hour parameters approved by the Dell Medical School's Undergraduate Medical Education Curriculum (UMEC) Committee. It is the responsibility, as a part of professionalism, for the student to abide by medical school requirements regarding duty-hour restrictions. Violations of the Academic Workload and Duty-Hour Policy should be reported to the Office of Medical Education.

Preclerkship Curriculum (MS1)

The preclinical courses are organized into module blocks of varying lengths, using various teaching and learning formats. The preclinical curriculum includes block and longitudinal courses that have scheduled activities and learning events.

Workload Limits

- Maximum of 20 hours of required scheduled activities per week
- Approximately 2 hours of assigned preparation materials per each hour of required scheduled activities averaged over the course of a week.
- Students in good standing may take student enrichment electives, which will not count towards required activities or duty-hour limits.

For all required content, no matter the venue (lecture, case discussions, small group discussions and exams), a scheduled hour is logged as a formal instruction hour.

The total workload for an average student in the MS1 preclinical year must be kept to a maximum of 60 hours per week. This should provide time for the student's personal wellness and social engagement.

Clinical Clerkships and Clinical Selectives (MS2 and MS4)

Clinical clerkships and rotations vary in length. Students are assigned to various clinical sites and work under the supervision of designated faculty and residents. During clinical clerkships and courses, medical students are

expected to participate in all required clinical and didactic activities. Examples of such activities include: direct patient care, patient rounds, patient documentation, case conferences and interactive lectures. Students are expected to assume increasing levels of responsibility and accountability for healthcare delivery, as appropriate under the supervision of faculty and residents. The amount of time needed for a student to adequately meet his or her responsibilities varies depending on rotation, and can include overnight call.

Duty-hour expectations include all required activities in the clinical years; therefore, if a student has clerkship duties and additional expectations from a longitudinal course, the hours are added cumulatively and in total must remain within the duty-hour limits.

MS2 and MS4 students are expected to abide by the following duty-hour limits (modeled after ACGME guidelines for residents):

- Must be limited to 80 duty hours per week.
- Must be scheduled for in-house call no more frequently than every third night, when averaged over a four-week period.
- Must be limited to a maximum of 24 hours of continuous duty in the clinical setting and up to four hours of additional time may be used for activities related to patient safety, such as providing effective transitions of care, and/or education
- Must not be assigned additional clinical responsibilities following 24 hours of continuous in-house clinical duty.
- Should have 8 hours free of clinical duty between shifts. They must have at least 14 hours free of clinical duty after 24 hours of in-house clinical duty.

Students should report duty-hour violations to the Clerkship Director or Coordinator.

The Office of Medical Education will continuously monitor violations to the Academic Workload and Duty-Hour Policy and will alert the clerkship director, or other departmental leadership, and the Undergraduate Medical Education Curriculum Healthcare Delivery Subcommittee of any violation during a student's MS2 and MS4 years.

Non-clinical Courses (MS3)

The courses scheduled in the Innovation, Leadership and Discovery phase of the curriculum are highly individualized and variable based on a student's customized plan of study. On average, a student should not be expected to have a total workload of greater than 60 duty hours per week.

Approved by the Policy & Bylaws Committee on September 15, 2016

Approved by the Faculty Senate on September 26, 2016

Approved by Undergraduate Medical Education Curriculum
Committee on July 6, 2021