

## **Temporary Revised College of Medicine Medical Student Handbook Policies due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Effective Only for Academic Year 2020-2021**

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in substantial disruption in the delivery of medical education that has required flexibility and innovation of medical schools to ensure a continued supportive and healthy learning environment for their students while maintaining the educational learning objectives of the medical school program.

Several FAU College of Medicine (COM) Student Handbook Policies have been revised temporarily for academic year 2020-2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unless otherwise provided in these “Temporary Revised COM Medical Student Handbook Policies,” the policies currently found in the COM Medical Student Handbook remain in effect. This document highlights the key policies affected, but revisions to policies and practices will occur as deemed necessary and/or appropriate by the College of Medicine and may not be reflected in this document. Furthermore, this document will be updated as the pandemic evolves if further revisions and/or updates are deemed necessary and/or appropriate by the College of Medicine. If any changes are made to this document, students will be informed by the Office of Student Affairs. All students are required to attest to reading, acknowledging, understanding, and agreeing to abide by the contents contained in this document.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the contents of this document, please contact the Office of Student Affairs.

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## **1. UNITED STATES MEDICAL LICENSING EXAMS (USMLE) POLICY**

### **USMLE-Step 1 Examination**

Scheduling of Step 1 – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Prometric Test Centers were closed and Step 1 examinations were canceled, leaving students unable to take the exam as scheduled in April 2020. On April 14, 2020, the COM Step 1 exam requirement for promotion to M3 year was waived by the COM Curriculum Committee and the Medical Student Promotions and Professional Standards Committee (MSPPSC) with a deadline for students to take their first attempt of the Step 1 exam that would be determined based on how the pandemic evolved. Students who met all other requirements for promotion to M3 year were promoted by the MSPPSC. Due to continued social distancing guidelines, Prometric Test Centers subsequently reopened, but with significantly reduced capacity resulting in rescheduling many students to much later exam dates. In addition, the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) made arrangements with the University of South Florida in Tampa to serve as a testing site for the USMLE for all Florida medical schools to create enough available testing dates for students to sit for their USMLE Step exam in June and July 2020.

Students are highly encouraged to take the Step 1 exam prior to the start of the Synthesis and Transition course (S&T) which was postponed from April to a start date of July 13, 2020. Any students who are not scheduled to take their Step 1 exam before July 13, 2020 are required to contact Dr. Lizotte-Waniewski and the Deans of Student Affairs to discuss their individual circumstances and determine the best available date to take the exam. All students must have taken their first attempt of the Step 1 exam by the end of Block 1 of M4 year. Students who do not take the Step 1 exam before the start of M3 clinical rotations will not have any additional explicit Step 1 dedicated study time during M3 year. Block 1 of M4 year will serve as the Step 1 and Step 2 exam study period for those students who have not taken their first attempt of the Step 1 exam before the start of M4 year, and there will not be any additional elective time available to these students to schedule for Step 2 exam preparation. Students electing to delay taking the Step 1 exam until after the start of their M3 clinical clerkships will also need to actively participate in their Year 3 clerkships and prepare for NBME subject exams throughout M3 year which will likely result in very limited time available to focus on preparation for their Step 1 exam.

All current M3 students will need to have registered a passing score on the Step 1 exam prior to the final day of rotation block 1 of Year 4 in order to be promoted to M4 year. Students who elect to take the Step 1 exam during block 1 of M4 year will be promoted to M4 year contingent upon meeting all M3 requirements and receipt of a passing score on the Step 1 exam taken during block 1 of M4 year. Any of these students who do not pass the Step 1 exam they elected to take during block 1 of M4 year will be removed from the M4 curriculum and placed on an academic enhancement leave of absence (LOA) until at least the start of the new M4 academic year. These students must also comply with the deadlines for second and third attempts of the exam as stated in the “Failure and Retaking of Step 1” policy below.

Students who do not complete their first attempt of the Step 1 exam by the end of Block 1 of M4 year will be required to take an academic enhancement LOA until at least the start of the

next M4 academic year. During the LOA, the student will be required to prepare for the Step 1 exam and complete their first attempt of the Step 1 exam by July 15th of their LOA. If a second or third attempt to take the Step 1 exam becomes necessary, such students must comply with the “Failure and Retaking of Step 1” policy described below.

### **Failure and Retaking of Step 1**

All current M3 students who fail USMLE Step 1 during their M3 year will likely benefit from taking an academic enhancement LOA due to:

- the lack of significant time to prepare thoroughly for a second attempt of the Step 1 exam while also participating in the ongoing medical curriculum.
- the residency application timeline.

These students will be required to meet with the Deans of Student Affairs to discuss their circumstances and determine the best approach for their academic success.

Students who need to retake Step 1 will be required to complete their second attempt by September 30, 2021. Students who fail their second attempt must complete their third attempt to pass Step 1 by December 31, 2021. Students on an academic enhancement or academic enrichment LOA are also required to meet these testing deadlines. Students who fail Step 1 and receive notification of such failure while on a LOA for another reason, such as but not limited to a research year, fellowship, or pursuit of an additional degree, are required to adhere to the same deadlines for their subsequent attempt(s), as stated in the preceding sentences.

### **USMLE- Step 2 Examinations**

All current M4 students must take and pass the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) exam prior to graduation.

#### Step 2 CK

Initial attempts to pass the Step 2 CK exam should be completed by October 1, 2020. Students who do not obtain a passing score on USMLE Step 2 CK before the final date for submission of the NRMP rank order list may be withdrawn from the residency match by the Office for Student Affairs. At the discretion of the Deans for Student Affairs, such students will be allowed to participate in their class commencement ceremony if it is anticipated that they will have met all graduation requirements within a reasonable time after commencement. Diplomas, however, are not awarded to any student until all graduation requirements have been met. Passing scores must be documented no later than April 15th of the same academic year if the student expects to graduate on time. Failure to document a passing score for the Step 2 CK exam by this deadline will result in a delay in graduation.

#### Step 2 CS

On May 26, 2020, the USMLE announced a 12-18 month suspension of the Step 2 CS exam, resulting in the inability of the Class of 2021 to take this exam prior to the COM’s anticipated date of graduation. Therefore, the Step 2 CS exam, will not be a graduation requirement for the Class of 2021.

## **2. HONORS IN YEARS 1 & 2 AND AOA**

### **AOA**

Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) is the honor society for medical students. FAU students are elected into AOA by a committee of FAU faculty members who are members of AOA. Due to the revised grading of the M3 curriculum for AY 2019-2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic described in the M3 syllabus, the following modifications were made to the calculation of the overall GPA/academic performance to determine AOA eligibility for AY 2020-2021. These modifications were made solely for the purpose of calculation of overall academic performance and will not result in modifications to any final grades received and documented on students' transcripts and MSPE. The intent of these modifications was to be as inclusive as deemed reasonable for AOA eligibility given the unique circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. All year 3 clerkships were credited equally for AY 2019-20.
2. The final COVID-Impacted rotation was credited as Honors for every student completing their third year in AY 2019-20.
3. Students who did not have a COVID-Impacted clerkship were given credit for Honors for their final inpatient clerkship or their lowest graded clerkship, whichever was lower.
4. The resulting GPA spreadsheet was reviewed by the Office of Medical Education, the Office of Student Affairs, and the FAU COM AOA Chapter Faculty Councilor for consistency and fairness, and the decision was made to expand AOA eligibility for academic year 2020-2021 from top 25% to the approximate top 30% of students.

The AOA selection Committee members review de-identified materials on all eligible students whose academic performance is considered to be in the approximate top 30% at the beginning of Year 4 for AY 2020-2021. From the approximate top 30% of students, the AOA Selection Committee elects up to 16% of the projected number of students that will graduate during AY 2020-2021. Those students selected from the approximate top 30% are chosen not only for their high academic standing, but also for demonstrated leadership among their peers, professionalism, a firm sense of ethics, promise of future success in medicine, and a commitment to service. Academic performance alone does not determine eligibility.

## **3. MEDICAL STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION (MSPE) POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

For the purpose of calculating the current M4s' overall academic performance to be used as part of the determination of "[MSPE Grouping as a Candidate for Post-Graduate Training](#)," the following modifications were made. These modifications were made solely for the purpose of calculation of overall academic performance and will not result in modifications to any final grades received.

1. All year 3 clerkships were credited equally for AY 2019-20.

2. The final COVID-Impacted rotation was credited as Honors for every student completing their third year in AY 2019-20.

3. Students who did not have a COVID-Impacted clerkship were given credit for Honors for their final inpatient clerkship or their lowest graded clerkship, whichever was lower.

#### **4. REQUIREMENTS FOR MATRICULATION AND RETENTION**

In addition to the requirements stated in the COM Medical Student Handbook, students will be required to complete additional compliance requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including those which ensure the health and safety of patients, students, staff, and faculty. This will include, at minimum, a 14 day self-quarantine prior to returning to the FAU campus and/or clinical activities if a student traveled domestically or internationally. Training in appropriate use of personal protective equipment is required for all students entering clinical environments. Clinical onboarding and ongoing compliance requirements are subject to change as clinical sites respond to the evolving pandemic. Additional testing may also be required based on the requirements of affiliate clinical sites and are subject to change. These requirements will be communicated to the students by the Office of Student Affairs, tracked through CastleBranch, and are subject to change.

#### **5. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION AND GRADUATION**

##### **Promotion**

Students were waived the requirement of receiving a passing score on the USMLE Step 1 examination prior to promotion to Year 3 due to the initial cancellation of the Step 1 examination as a result of the pandemic. Refer to the temporary revised USMLE Policy found in section 1 of this document for further details regarding Step 1 exam deadlines.

##### **Requirements for the Doctorate of Medicine Degree**

Students must complete all College of Medicine requirements within a six (6) year period from the time of matriculation in order to receive the Doctorate of Medicine (M.D.) degree. The foregoing requirement shall not apply to (1) joint MD/PhD students, who will have a separate timetable as determined by the College of Medicine and the Scripps Research Institute, Scripps Florida or (2) students under circumstances reviewed and approved by the MSPPSC. Any time delay in a student's ability to complete curricular requirements for AY 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic will not be counted within the "6-year time period" described above.

Licensing exams: See above policy revisions.

## **6. VOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY**

**COVID-19 LOA:** The safety and well-being of its students remain the COM's priority. The College understands that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in health concerns for students who may be considered at higher risk for complications of COVID-19 if infected, or students with concerns of potentially exposing loved ones who may be at higher risk. For these reasons, the COM is offering the students an opportunity to opt-in or opt-out of participation in curricular clinical activities for AY 2020-2021. Since curricular clinical activities, including, but not limited to, preceptorships, clerkships, and rotations, are necessary to achieve the required educational program objectives of the COM, students who elect to opt-out will be placed on a COVID-19 LOA with an anticipated return date of no earlier than the start of the next academic year. In addition, any student who does not feel comfortable returning to the medical school or participating in any part of the curriculum that is in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be permitted to request a COVID-19 LOA for AY 2020-2021, with an anticipated return date of no earlier than the start of the next academic year. The COVID-19 LOA would not count within the "6-year time period" to meet all COM requirements to receive the Doctorate of Medicine degree. Students must meet with the Deans of Student Affairs to discuss their circumstances, in consultation with the Office of Medical Education, to develop and determine the details of the LOA based on the requirements of the curriculum necessary to meet educational program objectives before the LOA may be approved. If a student is unsure about his or her risk regarding the potential complications of COVID-19, he or she should consider seeing a healthcare provider to determine his or her risk before meeting with the Deans of Student Affairs.

## **7. MEDICAL STUDENT ROLES AND SUPERVISION POLICY**

In addition to the requirements stated in the COM Medical Student Handbook:

- Students will not provide direct care for COVID-19 patients in order to preserve PPE.
- Students will not be present for aerosol generating procedures unless universal testing is being done for all such procedures.

## **8. POLICY ON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

In addition to the requirements stated in the COM Medical Student Handbook:

- Medical student screening before starting clinical rotations will include:
  - Temperature and symptom screening will be practiced at most clinical sites.
  - Any mandatory COVID-19 testing is to be decided and will be communicated to students prior to the start of rotations.
  - All medical students must attest to at least 14 days without domestic or international travel and following CDC social distancing guidelines.
- COM clinical sites and all medical students will be required to continue strong practices of infection control precautions at participating facilities (i.e. adequate supply of PPE at

all times, social distancing wherever possible with respect to the specific clinical setting, good hand hygiene, regular cleaning of high touch surfaces, universal masking, limited visitors, cohorting of COVID patients, etc).

- Medical students are expected to follow the protocol below as well as CDC guidelines including practicing social distancing, wearing masks in public, and limiting interactions with groups. Students must report any travel (international and/or domestic) or exposures to the medical school Office of Student Affairs. Students must complete the [Travel Reporting Form](#) if they plan to travel outside of Florida, including international travel. The information submitted will be sent to FAU Student Health Services who will determine if self-quarantine is required upon return to Florida.
- Medical students must notify their immediate faculty or clinical rotation supervisor/attending/preceptor, course/M3 clerkship/M4 year director, and the Deans of Student Affairs, Dr. Markowitz or Dr. Caceres, via e-mail or phone at [stuartm@health.fau.edu](mailto:stuartm@health.fau.edu) / (561) 699-9878 or [jcaceres3@health.fau.edu](mailto:jcaceres3@health.fau.edu) / (561) 419-5561 if they test positive for COVID-19, are exposed to or test positive for COVID-19, or develop symptoms of COVID-19 which include, but are not limited to, fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, new loss of taste or smell, vomiting or diarrhea, and/or sore throat. **Students are also required to complete the online Medical Student COVID-19 Report Form immediately, which can be found on the COM website under the "Students -> Reporting" Tab (<http://med.fau.edu/students/covid-report.php>).**
- Medical students must take the following steps if exposed to or test positive for COVID-19, or if they develop any symptoms.
  1. Immediately contact FAU Student Health Services (SHS) at 561-297-3512.
  2. The student will be screened over the phone by a FAU SHS staff member to determine if the student needs to be seen in-person and/or evaluated for and/or tested for COVID-19.
  3. If it is determined by SHS that the student needs an in-person medical evaluation, he or she will be given instructions on the procedures for the appointment by SHS staff (separate entrance and appropriate PPE used for patients who are being evaluated for possible COVID-19).
  4. SHS will then determine the next steps (i.e. COVID-19 testing, 14 days self-quarantine, referral to Emergency Room, etc.) based on clinical assessment.
  5. If the student tests positive for COVID-19, he or she will need to remain in quarantine until deemed safe by SHS. SHS will also determine when it is safe for the student to return to clinical activities. The student may be required to have additional tests (i.e. repeat COVID-19 testing, COVID-19 antibody testing) done to confirm that he or she no longer has COVID-19 based on the requirements of affiliate clinical sites.
  6. If SHS feels that the student likely has COVID-19 based on the history and physical exam, the SHS healthcare provider may presume the student has, and will treat for, COVID-19 even with a negative COVID-19 test.
- Students must stay home if they:

- are sick (especially if with fever greater or equal to 100.0 F, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, new loss of taste or smell, vomiting or diarrhea, and/or sore throat), and if it is a medical emergency, go to the closest Emergency Room or call 911,
- have been tested for COVID-19 and awaiting results, and/or
- have been in close contact (i.e., household contact) with anyone being tested for or infected with COVID-19.



## **9. MEDICAL STUDENT ATTESTATION FORM**

I attest to reviewing the current online *“Temporary Revised FAU College of Medicine Medical Student Handbook Policies due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Effective Only for Academic Year 2020-2021.”* I affirm that I accept, understand, and will abide by all the policies and procedures contained in the *“Temporary Revised FAU College of Medicine Medical Student Handbook Policies due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Effective Only for Academic Year 2020-2021.”* By signing this attestation form, I agree to abide by all the regulations, policies and procedures contained herein, including by reference or hyperlink, and any amendments that may occur from time to time.

I understand that the College will periodically review its policies and procedures in order to serve the needs of the University and the College and to respond to mandates of the Legislature, the Florida Board of Governors, the Florida Atlantic University Board of Trustees, the federal government, and other regulatory and accrediting agencies. Florida Atlantic University and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine reserve the right to change, rescind, or include additional regulations, policies and procedures in the College of Medicine’s Student Handbook and the *“Temporary Revised FAU College of Medicine Medical Student Handbook Policies due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Effective Only for Academic Year 2020-2021.”* I understand that such changes may occur without notice, and I agree to periodically check the online version of the College of Medicine Student Handbook for the latest version and the *“Temporary Revised FAU College of Medicine Medical Student Handbook Policies due to the COVID-19 Pandemic Effective Only for Academic Year 2020-2021.”*

Printed Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class of 20\_\_\_\_\_ M year (circle one): 1 2 3 4

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_