

MEDICAL STUDENT DUTY HOURS POLICY THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Preamble:

Medical students in the final two years of their education should be expected to assume a level of supervised patient care responsibility commensurate with their level of training and their demonstrated clinical skills. In order to advance their clinical competency and prepare them for postgraduate medical education, this level of responsibility should be established at the highest level that is consistent with exemplary patient care and safety. Medical students should not be expected to assume clinical responsibilities that exceed their level of training nor substitute inappropriately for tasks best accomplished by resident or faculty physician supervisors.

In addition to advancing their clinical skills, medical students must have ample opportunity to consolidate their learning through self-study. Their level of clinical responsibility should allow adequate time for study, review, and preparation for required formative and summative evaluations. Finally, student responsibilities should be commensurate with a balanced life-style that allows adequate time for other non-educational tasks and healthy behaviors.

In the following policy statements, the words 'should' and 'must' are used in conformance with LCME standards for medical school accreditation. The word 'should' implies that limited, reasonable exceptions may be made in unique circumstances. Circumstances justifying an exception should be carefully explained to students, residents, and faculty IN ADVANCE of all clinical education experiences. The word 'must' implies that deviations from the policy are not permitted.

Duty Hours Policy:

- Student duty hours should conform to the current ACGME standards applied to resident education. Specifically, students should not exceed an AVERAGE 80 hour weekly schedule across any four week period. All required clinical and scheduled educational and assessment activities are to be included in the duty hour estimates. Students should not be required to exceed '24/6' policy pertaining to continuous duty hours.*
- Students must be allowed 1 full day off in 7 or 2 full days off in 14. Teaching days, examination days, and other scheduled educational activities (eg. POM III) do not count as days off.
- Students must not be required to complete overnight call on the evening prior to an examination or performance-based assessment.
- Religious holidays must be respected. Students requesting time off for religious observances must notify supervising faculty in advance and assure appropriate clinical coverage by another student, resident, or faculty member. Students

should be required to make up any missed academic or clinical work at the discretion of the course director or supervising faculty.

- Mandatory University Holiday observances must be respected (these apply to third year students ONLY). These days may be counted as days off in compliance with the “1 in 7 or 2 in 14” policy.
- Students must not be required to stay past midnight prior to POM III sessions. They must not be required to complete morning rounds or attend other educational activities during the morning prior to POM III sessions. Students can be required to resume clinical responsibilities or take overnight call in the evening after POM III concludes.

*Limited and carefully justified exceptions to this policy may be permissible. It is recognized that students do not work the consistently demanding and lengthy hours of resident physicians. In addition, their educational experiences in many areas are of limited duration. Maximizing their opportunity to experience some clinical or educational opportunities may from time to time justify exceeding the normal duty hours policy. Examples of justifiable exceptions might include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Prescheduled educational conferences or ‘rounds’ that must occur beyond the ‘24/6’ limits.
- A student-initiated request to participate in or observe a medical activity or procedure (eg. surgery, diagnostic study, specialty consult or treatment, etc.) that must occur beyond the “24/6” or 80 hour policies.
- A student-initiated request to waive or alter the ‘days off’ policy in order to accommodate a special event (eg. attend a special conference, attend a wedding, birth, or funeral, etc) or ensure continuity of care or experience with a particularly valuable or interesting clinical case.

It is anticipated that such exceptions will be infrequently invoked. Any regularly anticipated exceptions must be reviewed and approved by the Year 3-4 Working Group.