

# Medical Student Duty Hours Policy

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Approved: June 20, 2012

1. Duty hours for medical students must be **limited to 80** hours per week, averaged over the clerkship period, inclusive of all in-house call activities.
2. Duty periods of students may be scheduled to a maximum of **24 hours of continuous duty** in the hospital.
  - Clerkship co-directors must encourage residents to use alertness management strategies in the context of patient care responsibilities. Strategic napping, especially after 16 hours of continuous duty and between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., is strongly suggested. It is essential for patient safety and medical student education that effective transitions in care occur. Students may be allowed to remain on-site in order to accomplish these tasks; however, this period of time must be no longer than an additional four hours.
  - Students must not be assigned additional clinical responsibilities after 24 hours of continuous in-house duty, but may remain for required formal learning activities such as noon conferences, scheduled didactic sessions, etc.
  - In unusual circumstances, students, on their own initiative, may remain beyond their scheduled period of duty to continue to provide care to a single patient. Justifications for such extensions of duty are limited to reasons of required continuity for a severely ill or unstable patient, academic importance of the events transpiring, or humanistic attention to the needs of a patient or family.
  - Medical students must have eight hours between scheduled duty periods. They must have at least 14 hours free of clinical duty after 24 hours of in-house duty.
3. Medical students must be scheduled for **in-house call** no more frequently than every-fourth night (when averaged over the clerkship period).
4. Medical students must be scheduled for a minimum of **one day free of all duty** every week. This can be averaged over 4 weeks only if there is a compelling educational need that has been approved by the CCS. At-home call cannot be assigned on these free days.
5. The sponsoring institution must have a process in place to allow for adequate sleep facilities or suggestions for alternate transportation if the medical student feels like driving home would be dangerous. The College of Medicine must:
  - Educate all students to recognize the signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation;
  - Educate all faculty members and students in alertness management and fatigue mitigation processes; and,

- Adopt fatigue mitigation processes to manage the potential negative effects of fatigue on patient care, learning and personal safety, such as strategic napping and personal strategies for safe transportation home.

## **Documenting Duty Hours**

Students are expected to record their duty hours. Students are exempted from this requirement while participating in clerkships that do not require call of any type.

Required Clerkships:

1. Students must complete recording of their duty hours by the last day of the clerkship.
  - Clerkship co-directors or clerkship coordinators will routinely review cumulative duty hours data and correct any systemic problems that prevent compliance with the stated duty hours policy.
  - Where students report a violation of duty hour limits, they will indicate the reason for that violation with the report.
  - Students will not be penalized for accurate reporting, nor will duty hours information be used to determine grades or for student evaluations.
  - Duty hours reports will be retained in the electronic database systems.
  - Grades will not be released until duty hours are reported by the student.
2. Where a breach of duty hours is noted in a student's report, the clerkship coordinator will report that violation and its explanation to the clerkship co-director.
  - The co-director will make a determination as to whether the breach is acceptable per the guidelines set above.
  - Where reasons indicate an unacceptable violation of the duty hour limits per the guidelines set above, the co-director will contact the site co-director, or student's supervisor to investigate and remediate those conditions leading to the violation.
3. Clerkship co-directors/coordinators will be asked annually by the Educational Policy Committee to report on compliance with the duty hour policy.

## **Rationale**

This duty hour policy is created to parallel ACGME standards, with the understanding that medical students are supervised in all patient care activities and do not make independent patient care decisions. As a result, the duty hour policy for medical students follows ACGME stipulations for a PGY 2 resident and will support maximum educational benefit for students. The specifics of the PGY 2 duty hour time limits have been changed in the most recent ACGME iteration and are reflected in this policy change. This policy was modified to include new ACGME language recognizing the potentially impairing effects of sleep deprivation particularly in the area of student safety while driving home.

**Relevant Standard**

ED-38. The committee responsible for the curriculum at a medical education program, along with program's administration and leadership, must develop and implement policies 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 clinical clerkship rotations.