



# Pre-Clerkship Work Hours

**Effective Date:** 2012

**Last Updated:** 6/17/2025

**Authority:** Curriculum Committee

**Responsible University Office:** Academic Affairs

**Responsible University Administrator:** Assistant Dean of Pre-Clerkship

**Review/Revision Schedule:** Bi-annually

**Indexed as:** LCME 8.8 Monitoring Student Time, LCME 6.3 Self-Directed Learning

**Applies to:**  Faculty       Students       Staff       Other, replace with the group, like residents.

Policy       System       Process/Procedure       Guideline/Standard

## Introduction

### Historical/Contextual Overview

In order to provide a learning environment that places an emphasis on active learning and self-directed learning (SDL) with time provided for independent study, it is necessary to set guidelines for the amount of time a student spends in required activities. The goal of this policy is to provide students with independent time while ensuring required contact hours include active learning experiences.

### Reason for the Policy/Process

This policy is intended to standardize the curricular time across the Pre-Clerkship curriculum and across campuses/tracks to maximize student learning opportunities while balancing students' need for unstructured independent learning time. This policy is intended to define the expectations for monitoring the amount of time medical students spend in required activities. (LCME Elements 6.3 and 8.8)

### Scope

State the areas this process will impact or influence and who it applies to. This is the when and where. MD program, all COM students, graduate faculty, residents teaching in clerkships

## Policy/Process Statement:

- I. Maximum Work Hours: Average of 60 hours/week
  - o For required, Pre-Clerkship medical education, the student workweek is set at a maximum of 60 hours per week on average over the duration of a course's start and end dates, including estimated time for studying, prep/review time (PRT). This encompasses all concurrent required courses, i.e., the **combined** work hours for all courses occurring during the same block of time must be no more than an average of 60 hours per week. This is intended to be a guideline for the average student to achieve proficiency.



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Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that students become more efficient learners over the Pre-Clerkship curriculum, so first semester students may expect to spend more time to achieve the same learning outcome compared to a third semester student.

- For calculation purposes only, the 60 work hours are calculated over a seven-day period, with 45 hours during the normal workweek (M-F) and 15 hours on the weekend. Students may budget their time differently.
- Scheduled Pre-Clerkship medical education activities may only be scheduled during Monday to Friday, 8am-6pm.
- All scheduled activities, unscheduled required activities, and PRT count towards the 60 work hours average. *(See Figure 1 and Definitions)*
  - In addition to the active learning activities that occur in Practice of Medicine, Preceptorship, and other clinical coursework, there should be at least three (3) hours per week of active learning activities on average over the duration of the course(s) (start to end dates). The Course Director(s) determine whether active learning activities are a scheduled and/or required activity. This minimum value may be expected to increase in future years as greater emphasis is placed on active learning.
  - For each type of scheduled or required activity occurring in a course, the anticipated amount of associated PRT expected for the average student must be estimated and accounted for by the Course Director(s), even if zero PRT hours are expected. PRT hours count towards the total work hours. Course Directors determine what the types of scheduled or required activities are for their course (e.g., traditional lecture, flipped classroom, discussion section, self-study material, laboratory, TBL session, CSIE session, exam, required online quiz, guest lecture/speaker, PETA sessions, OSCEs, etc.), which may or may not be unique to their course or track, and which may or may not have more than one session in a course. Required but unscheduled activities covering new, testable content (such as self-study material) should be assigned a lecture hour equivalent, which counts towards work hours, and any associated PRT should also be declared. For concurrent courses/threads, Course Directors, Thread Directors, and/or other pertinent leaders should work together to ensure the estimated work hours for the typical student does not exceed 60 hours per week on average.
  - Examples (non-binding): A Course Director might estimate that for every one hour of traditional lecture occurring in their course, the average student will likely need an additional 3 hours of PRT to achieve proficiency in the course. A Course Director for a different course or track may deem that value to be 2.5 hours or some other value.



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For a typical 3-hour laboratory session, a Course Director might decide that 0.5 hours of PRT is sufficient, whereas a 1-hour MSGR session may need 5 additional hours of PRT. Alternatively, zero PRT hours might be expected for orientations or non-testable clinical correlation lectures that apply previously taught material.

- Thus: 
$$\frac{(\text{all scheduled activities}) + (\text{unscheduled, required activities}) + \text{PRT}}{\text{Duration of course(s) in weeks from start to end dates}} \leq 60 \text{ hours}$$

### II. Maximum for scheduled and required activities: Average of 28 hours/week

- In addition to the above, Pre-Clerkship tracks for medical students should not have more than 28 hours per week of scheduled or required activities for a typical student per week (on average over the duration of the course). This requirement applies regardless of how many courses are running concurrently.

### III. Minimum Opportunity Time: 25 hours/week average

- Courses/Tracks must have at least 25 hours of unstructured time for independent learning (Opportunity Time) on average per week for the typical student. No course events or activities may overlap with Opportunity Time for a given student. The weekend accrues 15 Opportunity Time hours total.
- At least 10 hours of Opportunity Time per week, in a minimum of 2 to 5 contiguous hour blocks, must occur during the weekdays, excluding a one-hour for lunch.

### IV. Maximum number of lecture hours/week average

- No specific maximum on lecture hours is stipulated because the demarcation on what counts as a lecture can be difficult to determine, especially as more “traditional lectures” include Active Learning Activities, and lecture- type resources become more readily available for self-paced study online.
- Nevertheless, in real-world conditions, the above requirements are likely to impose a mathematical limit of less than 13 lecture hours/week on average. Courses with more Active Learning Activity hours and other mandatory attendance events will have less time for lectures.

There is no penalty for averaging fewer than 60 student work hours per week in a course (from start to end dates).

### Procedure

- Courses/Tracks are required to provide complete student schedules and report the expected hours for overall work hours, Active Learning Activities, Scheduled and Required Activities, and Opportunity Time (in terms of the average number of hours per week over the duration of the course) for the typical student when submitting the course syllabus and course schedule for approval.
  - This inventory must be submitted prior to Curriculum Committee or Subcommittee review and approval and will be reviewed in the pre-course planning meeting with the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA).



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- Work hours should be reported as part of the block leadership's self-study during the course review process and Curriculum Committee review process.
- Students' perception of workload will be monitored by the Office of Evaluation and Assessment (OEA).
- Workload calculations only encompass required courses in pre-clerkship medical education and do not include other curricular time expected for students in special tracks, distinctions or dual-degree programs. Communication with program directors and awareness of the medical school curriculum plan is important to ensure overall expectations of students in special tracks and programs are reasonable.
- The Pre-Clerkship and Engineering Curriculum Subcommittees (PCS and ECS) and Curriculum Committee will review this policy at least every two years with more regular review occurring as needed.

### Compliance

It is the shared responsibility of the Course Directors, the phase Deans, the Pre-Clerkship Subcommittee, the EnMED Subcommittee, and the Curriculum Committee to ensure that the specifications of this policy are followed in each course.

### Exceptions

Variances from this policy must be approved by the Curriculum Committee following Pre-Clerkship or EnMED Curriculum Subcommittees approval, with consultation from Academic Affairs.

## Resources, References, & Related Policies

### Definitions

- **Required Activities (Scheduled or Unscheduled):** Sessions or material that cover newly presented, testable content, whether presented in-person, online, or self-study; and any mandatory attendance events. Every hour of required activity is considered a contact hour, including lecture, small group discussion, laboratory sessions, assessments, as well as online activities with faculty and student interaction. Recorded lectures that can be viewed online **MUST** be counted as a required activity as the time and content must be accounted for within the contact hours.
  - Self-study material should be assigned a lecture-hour equivalent and accounted for in the student workload hours.
  - Includes all mandatory attendance events (regardless of whether they are academic or pertain to the course(s) or not) as well as events with non-mandatory attendance which cover pertinent, new, and/or testable material and/or skills, as designated by the Course Director(s).



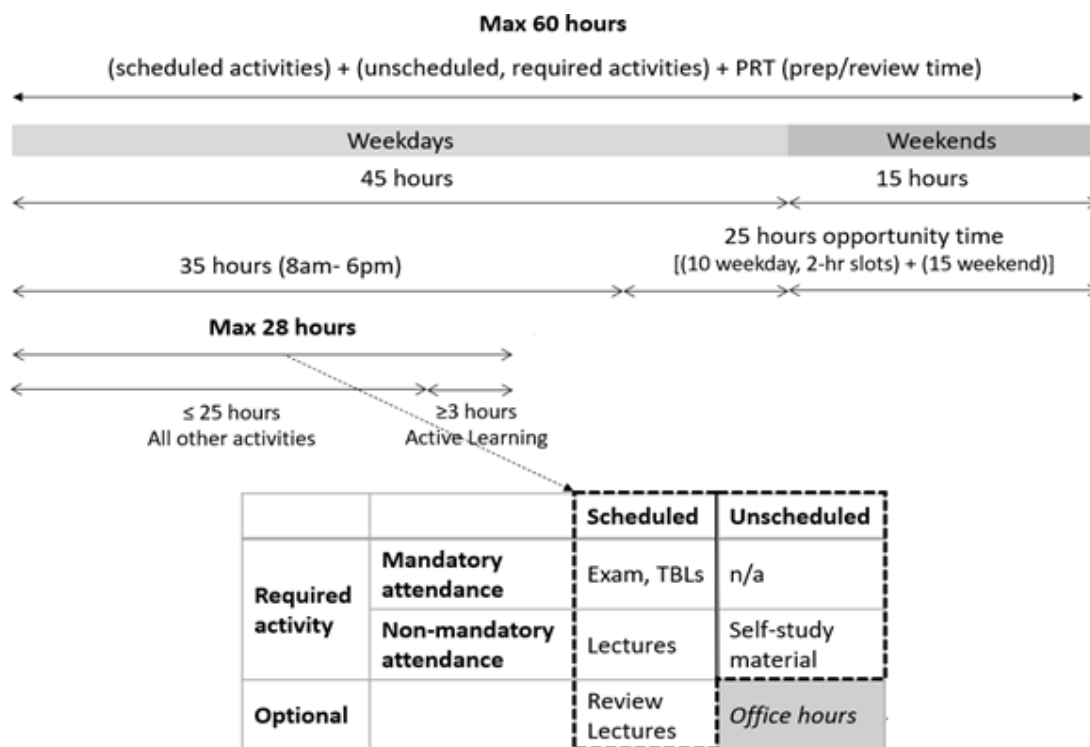
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- Required activities may be scheduled (calendared) or unscheduled.
- **Scheduled Optional Activities:** Any calendared session intended for the entire student audience (track) that does not cover new material and is not a mandatory attendance event.
  - These activities are designated by the Course Directors as such and generally include those activities which do not present new, testable material and are not mandatory attendance events. Scheduled optional activities count towards the maximum of 28 hours per week, but unscheduled ones do not (*see Figure 1*).
- **Unscheduled Optional Activities:** Office hours, special invited speakers, etc.
  - These do not count towards the 28-hour limit.
  - Do not occur at a defined time on the student calendar.
- **Active Learning Activities:** Active learning activities include, but are not limited to, laboratory sessions, case-based learning, team-based learning (TBL), problem-based learning (PBL), small group instruction, and any other format in which the students must actively participate in the class. Scheduled post-hoc review of assessments does not meet this requirement.
- **Prep/Review Time (PRT):** Activities to be completed in preparation or review for in-class activities, including but not limited to reading and online modules and other required homework. The current guideline is that students will spend an average of 3 hours in preparatory/review for each lecture or Lecture-Hour Equivalent of new, testable material. For Active Learning Activities, students may spend 1 hour preparation for each hour of activity, if any. Course Directors may determine the appropriate amount of PRT needed for all types of activities in their course.
- **Lecture-Hour Equivalent:** The approximate amount of time a faculty member would expect to take to present the assigned material at the expected level of detail via lecture.
- **Opportunity Time:** Dedicated 2-5-hour blocks of time on the calendar for independent study, required out-of-class activities, personal care, etc. A block of Opportunity Time shall not include the lunch hour and must occur entirely before the lunch hour or after it. With Assistant Dean of Pre-Clerkship approval, a 12-1 PM lunch hour may be adjusted to meet testing, testing accommodation needs, or unforeseen needs.
- **Self-Directed Learning:** Includes all of the following components as a single unified sequence that occurs over a relatively short time:
  - 1) The medical student's self-assessment of a gap in their knowledge or understanding
  - 2) The medical student's independent identification, analysis, and synthesis of relevant information to address the gap
  - 3) The medical student's appraisal of the credibility of information sources
  - 4) The facilitator's assessment of and feedback to the student on his/her information seeking skills.



# Pre-Clerkship Work Hours

Figure 1.



Schematic timeline of the elements contributing to the maximum workhours (top), and rubric of types of activities (bottom), with possible examples listed for each type of activity. The Course Directors, Academic Affairs and other pertinent parties determine which specific events fall in which category (scheduled, mandatory attendance, optional, etc.) for a given course. Only unscheduled, optional activities (grey box) do not count towards the maximum of an average of 28 hours per week

## Revision History

| Date       | Authority                  | Summary of Changes  | Document Location                                |
|------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| March 2017 | OAA - Curriculum Committee | Principles and Guidelines updated to include new PC work hours rules with curriculum change to 18 months. | Curriculum Committee folder on OAA shared drive. |



## Pre-Clerkship Work Hours

|   |                            |  |   |
|---|----------------------------|--|---|
| September 2019  |                            | Updated to include access to healthcare and converted to new format  | COM Policies and Procedures Team Drive in Google      |
| October 2019  | OAA - Curriculum Committee | Policy updated to include better monitoring and compliance processes as well as more details to tracking contact hours.  | COM Policies and Procedures Google Team Drive.        |
| April 2021  | OAA - Curriculum Committee | Policy updated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• definitions expanded,</li> <li>• changed total work hours, specified accounting for unscheduled required activities, and time to study (PRT)</li> <li>• Changed procedures to be in compliance with current practice</li> </ul> |   |
| Sept 2021   | OAA - Curriculum Committee | Policy modified to incorporate EnMed learning strategies to fall within the COM mandate  |   |
| Nov 2021  | OAA - Curriculum Committee | Combined suggestions of both committees  |   |
| Revision April 28, 2025<br><i>Approved by ECS 5/28/25</i><br><i>Approved by PCS 6/4/25</i><br><i>Approved by CC 6/17/25</i> | OAA - Curriculum Committee | Policy updated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification of lunch hour</li> <li>• Update to diagram</li> </ul>   | OAA Teams Drive and Onboard                           |
| May, 1, 2026  | OAA                        | Transferred policy to new template   | OAA Teams Drive, OnBoard, and COM Policy Page Onboard |