

Essential skills and attributes required for entry to a Medical Degree Program

By: Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM)

Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM) Policy Document:

Essential Skills and Abilities Required for Entry to a Medical Degree Program

The Ontario Faculties of Medicine are responsible to society for providing a program of study that graduates Doctors of Medicine with the knowledge, skills, professional behaviours and attitudes necessary for postgraduate medical training and independent practice in Canada. Graduates must be able to diagnose and manage health problems and provide comprehensive, compassionate care to their patients. For this reason, students in the MD program must possess the cognitive, communication, sensory, motor, and social skills necessary to interview, examine, and counsel patients, and competently complete certain technical procedures in a reasonable time while ensuring patient safety.

In addition to obtaining an MD degree, and completing an accredited residency training program, an individual must pass the licensure examinations of the Medical Council of Canada (“MCC”) in order to practice medicine. Therefore, MD programs have embedded expectations of competencies both knowledge- and skills- based. Prospective candidates should be aware that cognitive abilities, physical examination proficiencies, management skills, communication ability, and professional behaviours are all evaluated in timed simulations of patient encounters.

All students must therefore have the required skills and abilities described in the following Section on Technical Standards. These are standards that are necessary for success in the MD program, and to be sufficiently competent to participate in supervised residency training.

All individuals are expected to review this document to assess their ability to meet these standards. Students with disabilities that could negatively impact their capacity to meet these standards should notify their University so that appropriate accommodations may be arranged. Where a student has a disability, the University will assess the needs of that student and whether those needs can be met short of undue hardship, including any cost and issues of patient care and safety.

Technical Standards for Students in the MD Program

A candidate for the MD degree must demonstrate in a timely fashion the following abilities as they relate to the competencies:

Observation

A student must be able to participate in learning situations that require skills of observation. In particular, a student must be able to accurately observe a patient and acquire all relevant sensory information.

Communication

A student must be able to efficiently elicit verbal and non-verbal information pertinent to the patient's medical history and physical examination. A student must be able to communicate effectively with patients, families and any member of the health care team. A student must also be able to summarize coherently a patient's condition and management plan verbally and in writing.

Motor

A student must demonstrate sufficient motor function to safely perform a physical examination on a patient (e.g. palpation, auscultation and percussion). A student must be able to use common diagnostic aids or instruments either directly or in an adaptive form. A student must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general and emergency medical care to patients.

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

A student must demonstrate the cognitive skills and memory necessary to engage in clinical problem solving.

Behavioural and Social Attributes

A student must consistently demonstrate the emotional health required for full utilization of her/his intellectual abilities. The application of good judgment and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients is necessary. The development of mature, sensitive and effective relationships with patients, families and other members of the health care team are also required. The student must be able to tolerate the physical, emotional, and mental demands of the program and function effectively under stress. Adaptability to changing environments and the ability to function in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in the care of patients are both necessary.

Compassion, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation are all personal qualities that physicians must demonstrate and are expected qualities of students.

Students with Disabilities

Disability is defined by Section 10 (1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

COFM is committed to facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into the University and medical communities. Each student with a disability is entitled to reasonable

accommodation that will assist her/him to meet the standards. Students must be prepared to provide supporting medical documentation in a timely manner and to cooperate with the University in determining an appropriate accommodation.

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