Dartmouth
GEISEL SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Pre-Clerkship Student Contact Hours Policy

Summary of Purpose

The Geisel School of Medicine makes every effort to create an optimum environment that facilitates medical student learning. The school strives to promote a balance between scheduled classroom learning in a variety of formats, independent learning, and time for attention to personal health and well-being during the pre-clerkship curriculum.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all faculty and curriculum administrators overseeing courses and responsible for counting student contact hours.

Definitions

Pre-Clerkship: Refers to the period of medical education where teaching and learning are devoted to the basic sciences and the basics of history taking and physical exam skills (Phase 1). This period precedes the clinical rotations when students begin their clinical studies in clerkships, electives, and sub-internships.

Contact Hour: A unit of measure that represents: 1) 50 minutes of scheduled instruction with a 10-minute break; or 2) 60 minutes of formal assessment; or 3) 60 minutes of asynchronous content. This unit of measure does not include activities that are assigned to students in direct preparation for a class.

Policy Statement

- The scheduled contact hours shall not exceed 24 hours per week on average over the course of the block, pro-rated for holidays. Course leaders are strongly encouraged to ensure the schedule does not exceed 24 contact hours per week in any given week, however if necessary, a particular week may have up to 26 contact hours. Scheduled contact hours should never exceed 26 hours per week, pro-rated for holidays.

- Required non-course/curriculum related activities should not exceed 4 contact hours per week. Course/curricular time should be scheduled first, and non-course/curricular hours scheduled subsequently in weeks when scheduled course hours are 24 hours or less.

- Students are provided with a minimum of 12 hours of unscheduled time per 40-hour week to engage in self-directed learning, career exploration and professional development.

Procedure

1. The Associate Dean for Pre-Clerkship Education (ADPE) is responsible for maintaining the list of activities that do or do not count as contact hours. Illustrative examples are described below. However, in deciding whether to count individual sessions or types of sessions not listed below, the ADPE shall make the final determination, guided by the principles outlined above.

   Examples of contact hours from learning experiences include:
   - Asynchronous sessions, e.g., videos, eLearning modules, iBooks
   - Clinical experiences, e.g., direct patient contact experiences, preceptor visits, required clinical shadowing
   - Interprofessional Education (IPE) sessions
   - Laboratories
   - Large group sessions e.g., case discussions; panel discussions; sessions with patient interviews
   - Lectures e.g., in person or recorded
   - Problem-based Learning (PBL) sessions
   - Simulation exercises
   - Small group sessions
   - Team-based Learning (TBL) sessions

   Examples of contact hours from assessment experiences include:
   - Exams, e.g., benchmark exams, final exams, practical exams, National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) subject exams
   - Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE)

   Examples of activities that <u>are not</u> considered to be contact hours:
   - BLS (Basic Life Support) training
   - Board review sessions
   - Community service orientation activity
   - Enrichment opportunities in Phase 1
   - Fingerprinting for the Veteran's Administration Hospital
   - Flu shots
   - Intravenous/Phlebotomy training
   - NBME mock exams for USMLE Step 1 (CBSSA, CBSE)
   - Orientation sessions, e.g., Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) training, criminal background checks, anatomy lab orientation
   - Preparatory activities to prepare for participation in class, e.g., assigned readings, ScholarRx modules, videos

- Purified Protein Derivative (PPD) testing
- Reading day
- Review sessions (optional)

2. As each block schedule is drafted, the Director of the Pre-Clerkship Curriculum will provide the ADPE with the contact hours for each week of the block. Average contact hours will be normalized relative to a five-day week with the following equation:

   Total number of contact hours ÷ (total number of days with scheduled contact hours) x 5

3. If the block contact hour count exceeds the parameters stated in this policy, the ADPE will work with the appropriate course leaders and pre-clerkship director to reconcile the differences.

4. The ADPE will provide students, faculty, and staff with access to the contact hour schedule. Concerns about contact-hour compliance may be directed to the Director of the Pre-Clerkship Curriculum. Students may also bring questions to the attention of the student curriculum representatives, who can forward them to the pre-clerkship curriculum leadership for resolution.

5. If the issue cannot be resolved by the pre-clerkship curriculum leadership, the Associate Dean for Medical Education will be contacted to reconcile the differences.

LCME Standard

Standard 8.8 – Monitoring Student Time

The faculty committee responsible for the medical curriculum, together with the education program's administration and leadership, ensure the development and implementation of effective policies and procedures 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 throughout the curriculum.

Related Information: Documents, Policies, Links, Etc.

- GSM Clinical Student Work Hour Policy (UME-CURR.CE-0001)

Policy Administration

Policy Number	UME-CURR.PCE-0002		
Reviewed By	Phase 1 Subcommittee	**Effective Date**	January 21, 2014
Approved By	Medical Education Committee	**Last Date Approved**	May 20, 2026

Policy Contact Information

Office of Pre-Clerkship Education
Preclinical.Office@dartmouth.edu

History

Date	History
January 21, 2014	Policy was written to address the LCME's 'compliance with monitoring' citation for ED-5A. Policy was approved by the Medical Education Committee.
May 19, 2015	Policy was reviewed and revised by the Medical Education Committee. The Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education added the procedure on counting contact hours.
November 1, 2018	Policy was reviewed and revised to align with the MEC's Principles of Pedagogy to support the new curriculum.
November 20, 2018	Policy was revised and approved by the Medical Education Committee.
May 9, 2019	Policy was amended to clarify contact hours per recommendation from the Associate Dean for Preclinical Curriculum.
July 16, 2019	Policy was revised to reflect curriculum schedule changes and hour per week average. Revisions were approved by the Medical Education Committee.
February 25, 2020	Policy was reviewed and approved by the Medical Education Committee.
March 16, 2021	Policy was reviewed and revised. Policy was approved by the Medical Education Committee.
November 16, 2022	The policy was revised to provide more clarity around work hours. The number of hours for non-course/curriculum activities was revised to read should not exceed 4 hours. The phrase "with the intention" was removed from the policy, meaning these activities must be scheduled in weeks with 24 hours or less and eliminates the possibility of scheduling them in weeks with 26 hours. This allows for 12 unscheduled hours per week to students.
May 23, 2025	Policy was updated to new template.
May 20, 2026	Policy was revised to streamline language and to reflect current processes and terms. Process for counting contact hours was updated and approved by the Medical Education Committee.

Background

This policy was written to establish the amount of time medical students spend in required activities, including the total number of contact hours medical students are required to spend in scheduled instruction and assessment, and ensure that curriculum contact hours are counted in a consistent manner across courses and across years in the preclinical phase of the School's educational program.