



VCU

Direct Observation Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose

This policy establishes the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine's (VCU SOM) centralized system of direct observation to provide formative feedback and to assess a student's acquisition of the knowledge, core clinical skills, behaviors, and attitudes required to demonstrate competency with institutional learning objectives for the MD program related to these items, in accordance with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) requirements. Direct observation is essential to ensure medical student development in performing appropriate histories, physical examinations, communication, and other clinical skills.

Stakeholders

The faculty, staff, and students of the VCU School of Medicine are responsible for knowing this standard operating procedure, its contents, and provisions.

Definitions

VCU SOM: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

CC: Curriculum Council.

LCME: Liaison Committee on Medical Education. The group with authority to accredit medical education programs leading to the MD degree in the United States and Canada.

ADCME: Assistant Dean for Clinical Medical Education.

OME: Office of Medical Education.

CD: Clerkship Director.

DO: A Direct Observation (DO) is an assessment based on the direct observation of a medical learner's clinical skills that is designed to provide feedback on skills essential to the delivery of high-quality clinical care.

H&P: Direct observation of the relevant portions of a history and physical or mental status exam.

EPAs: Direct observation of the Association of American Medical Colleges core entrustable professional activities. The list of these EPAs requiring direct observation, as recommended for each clerkship, is reviewed and approved by the Curriculum Council on an annual basis.



VCU School of Medicine

Responsibilities

Students: Students are responsible for reviewing clerkship syllabi to ensure they understand specific DO requirements for each clerkship. Additionally, students are responsible for submitting all DO requests within the timeframes specified within this policy.

Faculty, Residents, and other healthcare professionals providing instruction or supervision of medical students: These individuals are responsible for completing DO requests submitted to them in a timely manner in order to provide students with formative feedback on their performance.

CD: CDs are responsible for ensuring that direct observations are submitted by students as outlined in these procedures. CDs are also responsible for advancing issues that may impede the completion of direct observations to the Assistant Dean for Clinical Medical Education so that they may be addressed in a timely fashion.

Procedures

Direct Observation of H&P

- Students are required to be observed at least once per M3 required clerkship completing the relevant portions of a history and physical or mental status exam

Direct Observation of Other Core, Required EPAs

- Students are required to submit DO requests for a variety of core EPAs beyond a H&P throughout the M3 curriculum
 - The total number of specific DO requests to be submitted for each clerkship is determined by the CC, in consultation with the ADCME and input from the CDs
 - The list is reviewed and approved by the CC on an annual basis, prior to the start of clerkships in each academic year
 - The list of required EPAs for which students must submit a DO request is listed in the syllabus for each clerkship

Timeline for Requesting DOs

- Students are provided instructions regarding the submission of DO requests during the Transition to M3 course, as well as during clerkship-specific orientation sessions
 - Students are required to submit at least 50% of the DO requests required for the clerkship by the midway point of the rotation

- Students are strongly encouraged to submit at least one (1) DO request per week throughout the duration of the rotation in order to stay on track to satisfy the DO requirements for the clerkship
- Because DOs are a critical piece of formative feedback, it is imperative that students submit DO requests in a manner that allows enough time for feedback to be received and used to guide their learning process throughout the remainder of the clerkship
 - Students who fail to submit all required DO requests prior to the end of the clerkship will be issued a grade of incomplete
 - Students with a grade of incomplete may be required to complete clinical make-up time in order to satisfy all DO requirements for the clerkship if additional observation time is needed
 - All make-up requirements will be discussed with the student by the CD, and must be satisfied prior to the incomplete grade being resolved
 - Compliance with the established timelines for submission of DO requests is considered to be part of the professionalism expectations for learners
 - Students who fail to submit DO requests as required will be subject to the procedures outlined in the Professionalism Policy

Compliance Monitoring

Clerkship-Level Monitoring

- The CD, with support from the OME, will utilize reports generated from the LMS to monitor compliance with each student's progress toward requesting all required DOs
 - CDs will review individual progress with each student during the mid-rotation feedback meeting and work with the student to develop a plan to complete any outstanding DO requests prior to the end of the rotation
 - Students are required to submit all DO requests prior to completion of the clerkship, and CDs should issue a grade of incomplete for any student who has not satisfied the DO requirements as outlined in the clerkship syllabus

Central Monitoring

- The ADCME, with support from the OME, will monitor compliance with DO requirements as outlined in this policy
 - The ADCME will provide a report of compliance with procedures and timelines related to directly observing students completing the relevant portions of a history and physical or mental status exam on a quarterly basis to the CC



- The ADCME will provide a report of compliance with procedures and timelines related to the submission and completion of DO requests by students regarding all other required EPA-related direct observations on a semi-annual basis to the CC

Related Policies

Formative Assessment and Feedback Policy
Professionalism Policy

Review Cycle and Revision History

The policy is reviewed and may be revised by the Curriculum Council as necessary, but at least every three years.

Current Approved Version

- **03.28.2024**

Previously Approved Versions

- **08.10.2023**

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

LCME Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the MD Degree:

- LCME Standard 9, Element 4

