Self-Directed Learning and Independent Study Time in the Pre-clerkship Curriculum
A JABSOM Educational Policy

As a school that values the principles and practice of problem-based learning, JABSOM believes that protected independent study time is critical to the development of self-directed learning skills. These skills include the ability of to assess one’s learning needs, identify and appraise resources, review, analyze, and synthesize information, and apply it to the care of patients. Further, JABSOM believes in protecting students from excessive demands that may adversely impact their personal health and well-being. The purpose of this policy is to define:

1. Opportunities for students to participate in self-directed learning.
2. The amount of time each week pre-clerkship students are allowed to participate in required, educational activities (usually classroom, laboratory, or clinical preceptorships).
3. The amount of time each week that may be assigned to required activities that are completed outside of class time.
4. How adherence to the policy will be monitored.
5. How faculty and students are made aware of the policy.

Opportunities for self-directed learning

PBL is used as the primary instructional method at JABSOM for pre-clerkship education in part for the opportunities it provides for self-directed learning. All students process health care problems in small groups under the guidance of a faculty member or senior student tutor. Students select their “learning issues”, research them, synthesize the information, and apply it to the care of the patient in their PBL case.

The time allowed each week for required educational activities

In the JABSOM curriculum, a “half-day” consists of four hours usually between the hours of 8:00am - 12:00pm and 1:00pm - 5:00pm. In the first two years of the curriculum, students may not be asked to participate in more than seven half-days (28 hours) of required, structured, educational experiences averaged over the course of the unit.

The amount of time each week for required activities completed outside of class time.

In the first two years of the curriculum, students may not be asked to complete required, outside of class time assignments requiring more than three half-day (12 hours) per week averaged over the course of the unit.
Monitoring adherence to the policy

Compliance with the Self-Directed Learning and Independent Study Time Policy is monitored in two ways.

- When the new features of each unit are introduced at the preclerkship committee prior to its implementation, course directors will include in their presentation the average number of hours per week to ensure the PEC that all required educational activities fall within the parameters of the JABSOM policy. This is done prior to each unit in the curriculum.
- Adherence to the policy is also assessed at the end of each course via a specific question on the end-course program evaluation survey. Student responses are reviewed at the curriculum committee and violations of the policy based on student report will be reported to course directors, the Director of Medical Student Education, and the Associate Dean for Medical Education. Course directors must institute changes to address the issue and report back to the curriculum committee on how they responded and the results of that response.

Distribution of the policy

The content of the policy will be distributed in five ways:

- The policy will be posted with other academic policies on the JABSOM website.
- The policy will be placed in the Guide to the MD Program
- The policy will be included in each pre-clerkship unit handbook
- The policy will be reviewed with students during the orientation to each unit
- The policy will be posted in room 301 and 302.
LCME DCI Information on Standard 6.3

6.3 SELF-DIRECTED AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

The faculty of a medical school ensures that the medical curriculum includes self-directed learning experiences and time for independent study to allow medical students to develop the skills of lifelong learning. Self-directed learning involves medical students’ self-assessment of learning needs; independent identification, analysis, and synthesis of relevant information; and appraisal of the credibility of information sources.

6.3 NARRATIVE RESPONSE

a. Describe the learning activities, and the courses in which these learning activities occur during the first two years (phases) of the curriculum, where students engage in all of the following components of self-directed learning as a unified sequence (use the names of relevant courses and clerkships from the Overview tables when answering):

1. Identify, analyze, and synthesize information relevant to their learning needs
2. Assess the credibility of information sources
3. Share the information with their peers and supervisors
4. Receive feedback on their information-seeking skills

b. Referring to the sample weekly schedules requested below, describe the amount of unscheduled time available for medical students to engage in self-directed learning and independent study in the first two years (phases) of the curriculum.

c. Note if medical students in the first two years/phases of the curriculum have required activities outside of regularly-scheduled class time, such as assigned reading or online modules that include information to prepare them for in-class activities. Estimate the average amount of time students spend in such required activities and how this “out-of-class” time is accounted for in calculating student academic workload.

d. Describe the content of any policy related to the amount of time per week that students spend in required activities during the preclerkship phase of the curriculum. Note whether the policy addresses only in-class activities or also includes required activities assigned to be completed outside of scheduled class time. How is the effectiveness of the policy/ies evaluated?

e. Describe the frequency with which the curriculum committee and/or its relevant subcommittee(s) monitor the academic workload of medical students and their time for independent study in the preclerkship phase of the curriculum.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR ELEMENT 6.3

1. Sample weekly schedules that illustrate the amount of time in the first and second (phases) years of the curriculum that medical students spend in scheduled activities.
2. Formal policies or guidelines limiting the amount of scheduled time during a given week during the pre-clerkship phase of the curriculum.
8.5” by 11.0” framed poster in MEB 301 and 304