

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 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, and generate "learning issues". 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 per week, averaged over the entirety of the course. This excludes time spent in elective courses during MD 2-7.

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 entirety of the course. This does not refer to time spent studying and reviewing material.

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 course are introduced at the pre-clerkship education 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 course 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 course handbook
- The policy will be reviewed with students during the orientation to each course
- The policy will be posted in room 301 and 304.