Qualifications for Medical School Admission, Continuation and Graduation

I. Introduction

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education, which accredits the School of Medicine, has recommended that all medical schools develop technical standards to assist them in determining whether applicants for admission to the School of Medicine or candidates seeking the degree of Doctor of Medicine are qualified to pursue a career in medicine. This document, "Qualifications for Medical School Admission, Continuation and Graduation" (Qualifications), contains the technical standards of the University of Utah School of Medicine and the procedures a candidate must follow to establish the existence of a disability and to request reasonable accommodation from the School of Medicine. The technical standards are based on guidelines produced by the Association of American Medical Colleges. This document is also published in the Student Handbook distributed to all matriculating candidates. All applicants who reach the interview stage will be required to read the Qualifications and to sign a copy of the attached form to indicate that they understand and meet the Qualifications. The signed form is kept as a permanent part of the record of all matriculating candidates.

II. Policy Statement

The School of Medicine has determined that a broad-based, undifferentiated and patient-oriented curriculum is critical for developing the knowledge and skills of future physicians. The School of Medicine seeks to graduate students with the tools necessary to function in a broad variety of clinical settings and the ability to render a wide spectrum of patient care.

Medicine is a physically and mentally demanding profession in which practitioners are asked to place the interests of their patients above their own. It requires commitment to a life of service and dedication to continuous learning. The rigorous four year medical school curriculum is where candidates begin to develop the qualities necessary for the practice of medicine. It is during this period of undergraduate medical education that the candidate acquires the foundation of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors that he or she will need throughout his or her professional career. During this period, it is critical for the School of Medicine to evaluate whether the candidate is qualified to receive the degree of Doctor of Medicine. The School of Medicine has a responsibility to society to train physicians competent to care for their patients with critical judgment, broadly based knowledge and well honed technical skills. The abilities that physicians must possess to practice safely are reflected in the technical standards that follow. Thus, applicants and candidates must be able to meet these standards and successfully complete all identified requirements to be admitted to the School of Medicine, to progress through the curriculum and ultimately, to receive the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Utah School of Medicine.

The School of Medicine is supportive of the philosophy underlying Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and seeks to provide opportunities for qualified individuals with disabilities. In order to be a qualified applicant or candidate an individual must meet these technical standards. The standards have been established to ensure that an applicant or candidate has the ability to perform the requirements of the School of Medicine academic curriculum and to practice medicine safely and responsibly.
III. Technical Standards

Candidates for the degree of Doctor of Medicine must be capable of performing in five areas: Observation; Communication; Motor; Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities, and Behavioral and Social Abilities. Students must also successfully meet curricular requirements, pass tests and evaluations, and successfully participate in clinical experiences. Reasonable accommodation will be made for some limitations in these areas, but a candidate must be able to achieve a minimum threshold in all areas and must be able to function in an independent manner.

A. Observation

Candidates must be able to observe and participate in experiments in the basic sciences. (For example, physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations and microscopic studies of microorganisms and tissues.)

In order to make proper clinical decisions, candidates must be able to observe a patient accurately. Candidates must also be able to acquire information from written documents, films, slides or videos. Candidates must also be able to interpret X-ray and other graphic images, and digital or analog representations of physiologic phenomena, such as EKG’s, with or without the use of assistive devices. Thus, functional use of vision, hearing and sensation is necessary.

B. Communication

Candidates must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients in order to collect relevant information, describe changes in mood, activity and posture, perceive non verbal communications, and convey necessary medical information. Candidates must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other members of the health care team. Communication includes not only speech but reading and writing. In emergency situations, candidates must be able to understand and verbally convey information essential for the safe and effective care of patients in a clear, unambiguous and rapid fashion. In addition, candidates must have the ability to relate information to and receive information from patients in a caring and confidential manner. Since the health care team communicates in English, the candidate must be able to communicate effectively and efficiently in English, not only in speech but in reading and writing.

C. Motor

Candidates must possess the motor skills necessary to perform palpation, percussion, auscultation, and other diagnostic maneuvers. Candidates must be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general and emergency medical care such as airway management, placement of intravenous catheters, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and application of pressure to control bleeding. In addition to general and emergency care, different types of specific medical procedures and treatments must be performed depending on the course or rotation, and candidates are expected to perform all of the procedures and treatments as may be required by a particular course or rotation. These skills require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and integrated use of the senses of touch and vision. In addition, these skills often require a candidate to maneuver his or her own body depending on the location and positioning of the patient (for example, a patient might be lying on the floor, on an exam table, on an operating table, or in any number of other positions depending on the condition of the patient).

D. Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

In order to effectively solve clinical problems, candidates must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, integrate and synthesize in a timely fashion. In addition, they must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Candidates must have the ability to remain awake and alert.
E. Behavioral and Social Abilities

Candidates must possess the emotional health required for the full utilization of their intellectual abilities, for the exercise of good judgment, for the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and for the development of effective relationships with patients and colleagues. Candidates must possess qualities of compassion, integrity, concern for others, commitment and motivation. Candidates must develop mature, sensitive and professional and effective relationships with patients of all genders, ages, races, lifestyles, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds, as well as with their families, with other health care providers, and with all members of the learning and working community. Candidates are expected to accept and assimilate appropriate suggestions and criticism and, if necessary, respond by modifying their behavior.

The unpredictable needs of patients are at the heart of becoming a physician. Academic and clinical responsibilities of students may require their presence during day and evening hours, any day of the week, at unpredictable times and for unpredictable durations of time. Candidates must be able to tolerate physically and mentally taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of patients.

F. Curriculum Requirements

In addition to the abilities specified above, candidates must be able to successfully complete, with or without accommodation, all required components of the curriculum. Candidates are expected to attend and participate in all learning experiences in classroom, hospital, clinic and community settings.

G. Tests and Evaluations

In order to evaluate the competence and quality of candidates, the School of Medicine employs periodic examinations as an essential component of the medical school curriculum. Successful completion of these examinations is required of all candidates as a condition for continued progress through the curriculum. If required by the American's with Disabilities Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, reasonable accommodation will be made in the form or manner of administration of these evaluations.

H. Clinical Assessments

Demonstration of clinical competence is of fundamental importance to the career and curriculum progression of the candidates. Therefore, the process of faculty evaluation of the clinical performance of candidates is an integral and essential part of the curriculum. If required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be made, however, participation in clinical experiences and the evaluation of that participation is required.

IV. Conclusion

The Admissions Committee of the University of Utah School of Medicine will consider any qualified applicant who demonstrates the ability to acquire the knowledge necessary for the practice of medicine, and who possesses the qualifications to perform the skills described in this document. Applicants will be judged on their scholastic accomplishments and on their ability to meet the requirements of the school's curriculum and to graduate as skilled and effective practitioners of medicine.

The University of Utah is fully committed to policies of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination. University policy prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment, or prejudicial treatment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, gender identify/expression, religion, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.
V. Definitions and Procedures

The following are the procedures of the University of Utah School of Medicine with regard to the identification of candidates with disabilities and the provision of reasonable accommodations as follows. Although a candidate's self-identification as a person with a disability is voluntary, the School of Medicine can only accommodate diagnosed disabilities.

A. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the definition of disability can be found in the Americans with Disabilities Act, with the exclusions as referenced in the Act. That definition is as follows, "an individual is disabled if he or she, 1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the individual's major life activities; or 2) has a record of such an impairment; or 3) is regarded as having such an impairment."

B. Procedures

1) In order to establish the existence of a disability and to request accommodation, candidates must contact the University's Center for Disability Services ("CDS"). The candidate must then follow the procedures of the CDS to document the existence and nature of the disability.

2) Once the need for reasonable accommodations has been established, the CDS and the School of Medicine, in consultation with the candidate, will decide on reasonable accommodations. These accommodations will be specified in a written document, signed by all parties. All documents relating to the candidate's disability will be placed in a confidential file separate from his/her academic records. The School of Medicine will then direct the appropriate course masters to provide the accommodation.

3) If the School of Medicine offers a candidate a reasonable accommodation and he or she refuses it and subsequently experiences academic difficulty, the candidate will be treated as any other candidate who experiences academic difficulty.

4) A candidate may seek to establish a disability and request reasonable accommodation at any time before or after matriculation.

5) A candidate should claim and establish the existence of a disability prior to the onset of academic problems. The School of Medicine shall have no obligation to remediate an academic failure resulting from a claimed disability that was not brought to the attention of the School of Medicine and addressed in a timely fashion.

6) All claims and proceedings under this provision will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law and University policies. Dissemination of information related to the existence of a disability will be restricted to University administrators with a legitimate need to know this information. Except as provided by law, no mention of the candidate's disability will appear in any School of Medicine correspondence with external agencies unless the candidate specifically requests such disclosure in writing.

If you have questions regarding this policy, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action at 801.581.8365.

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