

The University of Utah School of Medicine
Qualifications for Doctor of Medicine Degree Candidates

I. Introduction

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education 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 Doctor of Medicine Degree Candidates" (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 the Qualifications. The signed form is kept as a permanent part of the record of all matriculating candidates.

II. Technical Standards

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.

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. Candidates for the degree of Doctor of Medicine must be capable of performing in five areas: Visual, Oral-Auditory, Motor, Cognitive, and Social. Reasonable accommodation will be made for some limitations in these areas, but a candidate must be able to function in an independent manner.

A. **Visual**

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 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 is necessary.

B. **Oral-Auditory**

Candidates must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients. Candidates must also be able to communicate effectively and efficiently with other members of the health care team. In emergency situations, candidates must be able to understand and 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.

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. These skills require coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and integrated use of the senses of touch and vision.

D. **Cognitive**

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 spacial relationships of structures.

E. **Social**

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. Candidates must be able to tolerate physically 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.

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.

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.

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, reasonable accommodation will be made in the form or manner of administration of these evaluations.

H. Clinical Assessments

Demonstration of clinical competence is also of fundamental importance to the career and curriculum progression of the candidates. Therefore, the process of faculty evaluation of the clinical performance of candidates, especially in the third and fourth years of medical school, is an integral and essential part of the medical 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.

I. 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, as well as the ability to perform, or to learn to perform, the skills as 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 age, race, gender, sexual orientation, color, national origin, religion, political beliefs, disability, status of a disabled veteran or veteran of the Vietnam era.

III. 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 are as follows. Although a candidate's self-identification as a person with a disability is voluntary, the School of Medicine can only accommodate known disabilities.

A. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the definition of disability can be located 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 CDSS. The candidate must then follow the procedures of the CDSS to document the existence and nature of the disability.
2. Once the need for and availability of reasonable accommodations have been established, the CDSS and the School of Medicine, in consultation with the candidate, will decide on appropriate accommodations and 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. In general, a candidate should claim and establish the existence of a disability prior to the onset of academic problems. If a candidate comes forward after failing a course or courses, and maintains that the reason for the failure was a disability not previously claimed, the Promotions Committee will consider this information as appropriate in making its decision as to what remediation, if any, must be made. However, the committee is not obligated to consider this information unless the candidate establishes the existence of a disability through CDSS as provided in paragraph 1 above.
6. If a candidate is dismissed from the School of Medicine and appeals, asserting that the reason he or she failed was a previously unrecognized disability; the School of Medicine may consider the effect of the unrecognized disability in making a decision as to the candidate's appeal. The factors on which a decision will be made include whether the candidate is qualified to meet the technical standards and any other relevant information. The candidate must provide documentation of the claimed disability through the CDSS as provided in paragraph 1 above.

7. 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 about this policy, please contact the Office of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action at 801.581.8365.