

From: Drouin, Jacqueline <Jacqueline.Drouin@med.uvm.edu>

Sent: Friday, February 12, 2021 10:45 AM

Subject: Class of 2023: Clerkship Grading Communication

~~~~~*Send on behalf of Level Director for the Clinical Clerkships Dr. Elise Everett*~~~~~

Dear Class of 2023,

The Medical Curriculum Committee and the Clerkship Sub-Committee, with input from the C/O 2022 and student leaders, recently made the decision to continue with a Pass/Fail grading system in the clerkship for the Class of 2023. This decision was made for several reasons. First, the pandemic is not over and we still foresee challenges with delivering curriculum in person, hybrid, and remotely. We still foresee challenges with access to certain types of patients and disease pathology. We still foresee challenges with a 7-14 day quarantine and travel to and from different sites. We still have larger than normal cohorts of students at our UVMHC site because HHHN LIC is closed and West Palm Beach is closed. We still see the pandemic affecting different groups, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, women, single parents, students with school age children, etc. in inequitable ways and we do not want to disadvantage anyone. We still anticipate that some students or family members may become sick. Lastly, we need to address bias in the clerkship grading system as demonstrated to Clerkship Directors in our most recent discussion with the Social Justice Committee at the February 2021 Clerkship Sub-Committee meeting.

It is also worth noting that we saw a positive change in student behavior as a result of going Pass/Fail. We saw students put down their question banks and the memorization of Q and A, and engage more in patient care. Students were more collaborative with each other. Students were more willing to say "I don't know" and more willing to ask for help and more willing to try something that they might not be great at, and felt more at ease to practice, fail, and improve without the pressure of honors. We saw students more willing to stay late on the wards or in the OR, rather than rush home to study for the shelf exam. We saw students who were less stressed (resulting in better wellness) about grades, and more focused and engaged in patient care.

Lastly, this seems to be the direction that medical education is going nationally. During the pandemic a large percentage of schools have modified their grading systems for similar reasons. There is growing recognition that the Clerkship is still very formative and should not be summative. In general, the concern about a P/F system tends to center around residency applications and how students can stratify themselves to compete for residency positions, particularly in more competitive specialties. This same concern is raised by residency program directors. It is important to note that neither the USMLE exams nor clerkship grades were designed for the purpose of residency selection. Removing these shortcuts forces a more holistic review of one's application and leads to a more fair, just, equitable system. It also holds the promise of doing a better job at matching the right student with the right program.

There remain numerous ways in which students can continue to demonstrate excellence and remain competitive in residency applications, and those include AOA, Gold and Humanism Honor Society, honors in the Advanced Integration year, letters of recommendation, leadership/service/advocacy/ and educational activities, and scholarship.

It is for all of these reasons that we have made a decision to go P/F for the C/O 2023.

As always, we encourage students to reach out to [Dean Zehle](#) during her Friday coffee hour, or set up a drop-in meeting with [Dean Lee Rosen](#) or [Dean Ellen Kulaga](#) to discuss individual concerns. Your class leadership members are encouraged to reach out if your class would like to meet with me to discuss further.

Regards,

Elise N. Everett, MD

Associate Professor

Gynecologic Oncologist

Level Director for the Clinical Clerkships