

Working with Students

Clarifying Goals and Objectives: Preceptors and students have found that it is useful to meet on the first day of the selective to review the course goals and to discuss the student's individual goals. This is also a good time to talk about expectations, especially how much independence the student will have in evaluating patients.

Integrating the Student Into Your Practice: Some preceptors have found that students benefit from initially "shadowing" their preceptor, so they can learn a preceptor's style of practice before seeing patients more independently. When you feel comfortable, allow them to begin making initial assessments of patients to whom you or your staff have introduced them. As the month progresses, students ought to be able to present a cogent differential diagnosis and eventually to propose a reasonable management plan. A licensed care provider should always be available when a student is providing care for a patient. Although all ACS students will have completed their third-year clinical clerkships, students who visit your practice later in the year will have had even more clinical experience and should be able to take on more patient responsibility.

Staying in Touch: If practical, begin and/or end each clinical day with a review of the patients seen or to be seen. This would also be a good time to "check in" on how things are going and to redirect the student's work if necessary.

We encourage you to meet with the student midway through the month to discuss his/her progress toward meeting the course goals and objectives. This would also be a good time to discuss any concerns or questions you or the students may have.

At the end of the month, as you complete the evaluation form (Form 2A), please meet with the student to discuss your evaluation of his/her performance.

Supplemental Activities: You may want to suggest relevant readings from your library or files or you may want to ask the student to look up a topic at your hospital or AHEC library. Also, you might ask your student to phone patients at home to follow up on an office visit. Students learn a lot from the experience and patients usually appreciate hearing from students.

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance to students of having you as a role model. Seeing you in action with patients, with staff, in your community, and, if time permits, personally, gives them a feel for what it is like to practice medicine in an ambulatory setting.