

Townhall #9 May 13, 2020

USMLE Questions

According to USMLE, they are expected to start administering Step 1, 2 CK and 3 at medical schools as early as May. Has UNC been contacted as a school that could administer these tests? If not, could we reach and get that process started? This would greatly alleviate a lot of stress my classmates and I have had given cancelled tests across the state for the next few months and lack of available test dates until late August.

Last week, USMLE had announcement that they were expecting to proctor STEP 1 and 2 CK at medical school starting this month. Is that going to be a possibility at UNC?

Can you talk about the new usmle update: ck beginning to test at schools and virtual CS?

We have been approached by the NBME to identify an IT contact person. We have not heard more details since but have made it clear that we are prepared to administer NBME exams at UNC. Last week the NBME wrote that several schools had been selected as pilots but we do not yet know which schools. We will notify you as soon as we hear something.

Will there be more flexibility in changing Block 5-10 courses should our schedules change with regards to Step 2 CK dates. For example, I plan on doing taking 2 weeks off the month I am scheduled to take CK. As of now, the earliest date I was able to reschedule for was late August. However, if I find that there is an alternate test delivery mode available that allows me to take the test earlier, I will need to schedule those 2 weeks off earlier. Will there be greater flexibility in rescheduling blocks if this comes up? I realize we will be putting in Block 5-10 preferences soon but we won't know about these testing changes until later.

We will try to be as flexible as we can during a clinical rotation to allow you time off to take the exam. It would however not be possible to take off 2 weeks during a clinical rotation. Since programs (and our school) are offering much greater flexibility in when to take the exam, you may want to consider taking it later in the fall. There should be more exam availability then and it will be easier for you to plan your schedule accordingly

Foundation Phase Questions:

This question is in regard to a comment from last week's town hall that said foundation phase for MS2s in the Fall may be partially in person for some classes and partially online. Could tests please be administered in person (potentially in smaller groups in different classrooms) so that we are able to take NBME exams again? These NBME exams, especially the NBME given after the summer and the baby step NBME given at the end of the semester, are important indicators of our progress in step 1 studying. Since step 1 is still a very important career determining factor for our class, I would really appreciate if the return to NBME exams could be made a priority for us as we gear up for step 1. Thank you!

NBME has just announced the ability for home institution use of customized NBME exams. We will continue to use NBME baby step exams to measure progress. Virtual proctoring should be available for those exams this fall if we cannot proctor in person.

Application Phase Questions

Hi all! I am an MS3 and I have a quick question regarding potential travel restrictions prior to the app phase restart at the end of June. I am aware that MS4s have been advised to return to NC 14 days prior to the beginning of block 4 and am wondering if there will be similar requirements for MS3s. If so, could the administration consider making an announcement sooner rather than later so that MS3s who are out of state can plan accordingly? Thanks!

For class of 2021 - what travel restrictions are we subject to (if any) once we return to clinical rotations?

As we have mentioned, students have to meet the expectations of the University and also the health systems in which they are working and learning. With COVID "hot spots" across the country, health systems are concerned about spread by health care workers such as students and residents traveling to start work/rotations. UNC Health will release revised guidelines today to tomorrow. We will post that link on the UNC SOM COVID page. Chicago, New Orleans, Philadelphia/SE Pennsylvania, Denver, Detroit, Miami, Washington DC, Indianapolis or SW Georgia will be on that list. Students returning from those locations will require a 14 day quarantine, symptoms checks, and clearance from Occupational Health via phone call prior to entering clinical settings. Students who have spent time in a factory, prison, group home, and/or congregate living facility that has been designated by a health department as having an outbreak of COVID-19 (i.e., two cases of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 attributed to the facility) in the past 14 days must be assessed and cleared by Occupational Health prior to starting on clinical rotations as well. We will work closely with you to get you back on clinical rotations after the 14 days. Please contact Student Affairs if you are in that situation. We will closely monitor if other health systems release new travel guideline restrictions

Thank you all so much for all the work you are putting in. I know it must be very difficult, and you are all doing a great job. Regarding those re-entering Application Phase, I was hoping you would be able to give more details about what the ramp up period from May 26-June 19 will look like. I personally have a wife who is working full time from home and a 9 month old son (taking care of him is pretty much like a full time job). Because daycares are still not open, we will need to figure out how we are going to juggle our schedules. The uncertainty is a bit stressful for us because we don't know what to expect and how we should be preparing. At the very least it would be helpful to know: 1) Will it be remote learning, or will we be expected to be at the hospital in person? 2) How many hours a day should we expect to give to this ramp up period? Thanks. Also, if there is anyway to make these Qualtrics responses a large paragraph instead of a single line, that would be much easier to proofread our responses.

Application Phase students will shortly receive guidelines for studying. At the Central Campus, this preparation will all be virtual. Charlotte and Asheville will likely have limited in person sessions. This preparation should not be overwhelming. We hope that the month of June will give you a bit of a breather and a chance to re-energize.

Thanks for the suggestion re formatting for the Qualtrics form. I changed it to a paragraph format :)

Individualization Phase Questions

- **Clinical rotations**

Per your latest email re: quarantining prior to starting rotations, can you describe a little bit more which areas are considered high risk areas?

See answer above. Please touch base with Student Affairs if this creates a problem for you restarting on May 26.

Will MS4s definitely be going back May 26 or could this change given that NC moved to phase 1 on Friday? If we do go back, do you anticipate pulling us back out of the hospital in the future when/if there is a second peak?

We anticipate a continued slow rise in COVID positive patients across NC. We however now have an adequate supply of PPE for the whole health care team and have protocols in place for safe care (and safe learning). The health setting is likely a safer environment given the careful attention to protocols and widespread use of PPE. Students will not be taking care of known or suspected COVID positive patients. We do not anticipate having to pull students back off rotations even in the face of a second wave.

The University will likely ask all students to sign a waiver to return to clinical environments. This is intended to make sure students understand the risks of re-entry. We want to re-emphasize that certain risks have always existed in medicine and that we are doing everything we can to minimize that risk (see above)

What student health services are available this summer?

We are coordinating with student health services & counseling to be available to continuously enrolled medical students without additional fees other than those paid earlier this semester for summer.

Hello! I was wondering what would happen if we are notified that we have come in contact with a confirmed covid case once we restart rotations. Would contacts from rotations (patients or coworkers) be treated differently than non-medical contacts (family, roommates, etc)? What would happen if a student needs to self-quarantine multiple times over the course of the next few months? Alternatively, would we have access to testing as healthcare workers that would allow us back to work sooner than two weeks? Thank you!

The following protocol was shared with Indy Phase students. It will apply to Application Phase students starting June 29 as well. We will work with you if you miss time away from your rotations in similar ways we have always worked with students who miss time away from rotations due to illness. In these extraordinary times we will focus on learner competence over process measures like total days in clinic

Stay home if you are: (1) sick (especially if with fever greater or equal to 100.0 F or a cough or shortness of breath, or URI symptoms) (2) if you have been tested for COVID-19, or (3) if you have been in close contact (i.e., household contact) with anyone being tested for COVID-19:

- If it is a medical emergency, go to the Emergency Room or call 911.
- Notify your immediate onsite clinical supervisor. If this is a possible work exposure, consult the work/rotation site's occupational health provider and follow their recommendations (students will receive contact information for the different health systems). For example if working at Atrium Health, call 704-631-0200 and contact Jacqueline.Campbell@AtriumHealth.org.
- Notify Student Affairs about your situation (919-962-8335) and if you are working at a regional campus also notify student administration at the regional campus

- Notify UNC Campus Health (919-966-6573) if you are being tested for COVID19 , have a recommendation to get tested at Campus Health, or have questions regarding your health

For class of 2021, is there any chance there will be flexibility in how courses count for graduation credit? For example, could an AI potentially count for an ACS?

We have reduced the number of required courses in Indy Phase to allow increased flexibility in reaching graduation requirements. Because the AI and ACS courses have different course objectives, those two course can not "count" for each other.

Is there anything being done to address AHEC housing in chapel hill? Since there is no housing that means branch campus students have to pay for a months rent in chapel hill if they want to do a rotation at the main campus.

AHEC housing in Chapel Hill was very limited and even then underutilized. For that reason the lease on that housing was discontinued. If you are having financial trouble securing housing, please contact Student Affairs

- **Residency Selection**

In light of interviews going virtual, will the SOM be able to provide interview space for people who don't have the best home office conditions?

What are yalls thoughts on the AAMC recommendations this week for moving to virtual residency interviews?

We will begin to offer training this summer on improving skills during a virtual interview and will also make space available on campus to do virtual interviews this fall.

Individualization Q: Since ERAS has moved to submission on Oct 21, what does that mean for interviews, and what blocks should we schedule off for them? OR, should we plan not to schedule off since they will be via the web?

Virtual interviews will hopefully allow you to interview more efficiently and take less time off. You may still want to dedicate time to interview and we recommend considering taking time off in November and December. How much time you take off will also depend on your specialty choice. Please be in close contact with your career advisor, college advisor and with Student Affairs

- **Misc**

Thank you faculty colleagues for all your hard work and dedication to us students! For students about to start their LOA (formerly c/o 2021), will it be possible to waive summer tuition/fees associated with taking courses during blocks 5 and 6? It appears that students in the c/o 2021 will be prioritized for AIs and critical care electives during block 4. Has the administration considered waiving summer fees to allow rising LOAers to get clinical exposure during blocks 5 and 6 while also optimizing block 4 capacity for the c/o 2021.

Unfortunately there isn't a mechanism for us to register you for only a summer course without payment of tuition. Students taking courses in summer blocks who are going on a LOA have always paid summer tuition

I know this is far off, but just for planning purposes for the class of 2021, what is our predicted graduation date in May 2021?

University graduation is Sunday, May 9, 2021. We do not yet know if the SOM hooding ceremony will again happen on Friday, May 7 or over the weekend.

Will it be possible to audit Indi Phase clinical courses like we are able to for COVID courses in the future (ie. during fall or spring semester)? If so, are there restrictions on which courses we may audit?

It is not possible to audit clinical courses. We will work to make virtual COVID courses available this fall if there is demand for those courses

Will reduced tuition for Spring 2021 still be an option?

Reduced tuition for spring 2021 will be the same as it has been in past years. We anticipate implementing a new tuition policy in the fall of 2021 as we have mentioned previously. This policy will allow students access to services and a reduced tuition if they step away from the core curriculum but will not dis-incentivize students from taking additional clinical courses as they approach graduation. Making sure that students are well prepared clinically as they enter residency is one of our highest priorities. We will discuss this policy in more detail with the Class of 2022 as they are oriented to Individualization Phase later this summer

COVID Courses:

I have a concern regarding inconsistencies of difficulty and time commitment between different Covid Electives. After checking the schedule for the upcoming Mass Casualty elective, the schedule seems to be quite intense. I do not like to complain about workload and I appreciate the opportunity to learn about the topic that the class is providing but multiple days with 6-7 hours of virtual class in addition to readings and modules, along with journal club and presentation assignments seems quite excessive, especially when compared to the workload of other Covid electives. This schedule will also likely prevent me from continuing my volunteer efforts during the class.

Several other students have mentioned that workload in different COVID-2 courses varies widely depending on what elective you're in (especially some of the two week electives). Some involve so much face time that we have little other time to volunteer or participate in service learning. Could we just get some insight into the intended number of contact hours and how the curricula for different courses was put together?

I am very appreciative of all of the faculty who have created some really interesting courses for us to take part in online. I know that all of this had to be put together very quickly and all your effort to maintain our education and continuous learning does not go unnoticed at all and I'm really thankful. However, there seems to be clear imbalance in course time commitments with some courses of the same credit amount having a significantly larger and inconvenient burden than others. Students were never told of the time commitments of the courses before signing up and now some courses have

mandatory lecture for 5-7 hours straight every day as well as several modules that take between 3-6 hours each and that seems quite inappropriate. Many of us have taken previous electives worth the same credit amounts with nowhere near this amount of excessive work and time commitment. It is already difficult enough maintain wellness and a sense of normalcy during this time and I don't understand why UNC is making that more difficult with these courses that only an inequitable fraction of students have to deal with. We are all excited to go back full force to the busyness of rotations, but I just don't think this is an appropriate time to add so much of a burden with a three credit pass/fail course when it is already so difficult to navigate life right now. Is there anything that can be done right now that can make these courses more equitable?

I am wondering if there was a workload limit on courses for COVID 2? My mass casualty elective has us in 9-5 most days, leaving no time for research or volunteer work, and upon talking to peers, this seems very disproportionate to their 2 hours total a week requirements for their COVID 2 courses. We were not told of the course load until the day classes began.

Establishing courses quickly is quite challenging. We appreciate the feedback and have communicated your feedback to the course leaders. But remember that clinical electives have always varied in time. Also know that it is expected that on clinical rotations you work at least 40 hours per week.