



TITLE OF POLICY

UNC Medical Degree Program Controlled Substances Testing Policy

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to identify and address problems associated with controlled substance use or other impairment. This policy describes the conditions under which UNC School of Medicine (UNC SOM) students may be required to undergo testing for controlled and/or restricted substances and to describe the outcomes of a positive screening for controlled and/or restricted substances and/or when concerns arise that a student's use of substances is impairing performance.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE

The Office of Student Affairs will review the policy on an as-needed basis. Other campus and community professionals will be consulted as appropriate. The Education Committee will be responsible for approval of the policy.

LCME REFERENCE(S)

NA

HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES

Approved by Education Committee July 2024

Approved by Education Committee September 2020

Approved by Education Committee April 2019

Approved by Education Committee June 2011

DEFINITION

Controlled Substances: Include, but are not limited to cannabis, opioids, amphetamines, barbiturates, and similar drugs whose possession and use are prohibited under state or federal law; so-called "designer drugs," "look-alikes," synthetic drugs, and similar substances.

Restricted Substances: Prescription drugs, unless validly prescribed by a student's physician and used as prescribed, and other substances whose use may cause impairment although they are available legally (such as alcohol, cough syrup, and other over-the-counter medications), and substances not intended for human consumption (such as glue).

Positive Test: Positive result from testing for the presence of medications, controlled substances or restricted substances. For controlled substances, any positive test for a controlled substance. For restricted substances classified as drugs, a positive test for the drug in its pure form or its metabolites at or above the specified cutoff levels by the laboratory performing the test is considered a positive test.

Impairment: State of function in which any substance use is affecting a student's academic progress or ability to perform expected duties, including in the clinical setting. Individuals taking over-the-counter medications or medications prescribed by a physician should adhere to the terms of the prescription and to any activity restrictions recommended by the physician or manufacturer.



Screening: Examination performed for the purpose of assessing use of controlled or restricted substances.

Reasonable Suspicion: An objective, justifiable presumption that is based on specific facts, observations, or circumstances that justifies the screening of a student for use of controlled substances and/or restricted substances.

POLICY

The illegal use, possession, manufacture, dispensation, distribution of, or impairment by controlled substances or restricted substances are prohibited for medical students while enrolled at UNC, on duty, on call, or otherwise engaged in UNC SOM business, on or off the UNC SOM premises.

UNC SOM students will be screened for controlled and/or restricted substances before starting their Application Phase year via the School's selected third-party vendor to ensure chain of custody and consistency of evaluation. The results of screens that are performed by any other entity will not be accepted.

Some clinical rotation sites require controlled substance and/or restricted substance screening as a condition of starting a rotation at their site and may not accept other recent screening results.. Students participating in these rotations will be required to undergo screening according to the clinical site requirements. The cost of the screening will be borne by the student unless it is covered by the clinical rotation site.

Students may voluntarily request to undergo drug screening. Voluntary testing is most often requested for extramural (away) electives. Students undergoing screening for away electives should contact the Health and Safety Officer (healthandsafety@med.unc.edu) for information about recommended laboratories and procedures.

UNC SOM students may also be required to undergo screening for controlled substances and/or restricted substances under the following conditions:

- Reasonable suspicion that substance use is causing impairment
- Conviction for a criminal offense involving a controlled substance or restricted substance
- Evidence of drug tampering or misappropriation

In these cases, the cost of the screening will be borne by the student.

PROCEDURES

Students who anticipate a positive test due to legally prescribed medications must provide documentation of the prescription from a physician to avoid an investigation and removal from the clinical rotation site. Documentation can include a signed letter from physician, pill bottle with student's name/date of prescription, or signed prescription, and should be submitted to the designated Medical Review Officer (MRO).



A student with a positive test for controlled substances or restricted substances will be removed from the student's clinical rotation site until the positive test can be investigated. This removal may result in the student receiving a grade of either "Incomplete" or "Withdrawn" for the clinical rotation.

In the case of a confirmed positive test result that is not the result of a legally prescribed medication, the student may be referred to UNC-Chapel Hill Campus Health Services/Student Wellness for a clinical evaluation and supportive therapy. The student may also be referred to the University Emergency Evaluation and Action Committee (EEAC) to assess whether the student presents a danger to themselves or to the campus community. The policy and procedures for the EEAC can be found at <https://policies.unc.edu/TDClient/2833/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=132459>. Students violating this policy may also be referred to the Honor System or to the UNC SOM Student Progress Committee.

Students with active substance use disorders must adhere to all University substance use protocols to enable continuation of studies at UNC School of Medicine (<https://police.unc.edu/about/security-fire-safety-report/sfsr-2018/university-policies-on-drugs-and-alcohol/>). Additionally, students struggling with substance related matters may opt in to confidential substance use counseling through the Department of Student Wellness (<https://studentwellness.unc.edu/programs/a-surc/>). If a student desires to instead engage with an off-campus provider, Student Wellness can confidentially connect them with vetted local therapists, intensive outpatient programs, and inpatient treatment programs.

We follow the UNC policy on [cannabis](#). It is illegal to grow, buy, sell, or possess cannabis-containing products in the state of North Carolina. A positive test for cannabis will be investigated regardless of whether or not cannabis was consumed in a state or country where cannabis or related substances are legal. This may include current over the counter cannabis related products such as Delta products and other synthetic edibles.

The [Illegal Drugs Policy](#) provides additional information on prohibited substance possession, use, and manufacture, along with enforcement and penalties.