

New Guidance (3/25/20):

New Guidance for MS3 and MS4 Periods 11 and 12

As the coronavirus situation continues to evolve, we wanted to offer new guidance for UPSOM, with a focus on **clinical rotations**. Briefly, effective March 30 we will **suspend clinical clerkships/electives for another month**.

March (Period 11):

Students are completing their clinical experiences remotely, with online cases, distance didactics, and the like. Assessments this week have largely been postponed—we are not holding any SHELF or OSCE exams. The new Allegheny County stay-at-home orders as well as Pitt restrictions on building usage preclude the exams, and NBME has agreed to offer SHELF exams remotely beginning April 7. Although it isn't ideal, we felt that to protect the safety of our students, staff, and patients, it was better to postpone the SHELF exams until they can be done remotely in two weeks.

Once assessments are completed, students will receive grades for their Period 11 rotations. Because of the difficulty in accurately assessing based on limited clinical experiences and, in some cases, absent final assessments, we will grade students Pass-Fail for these. We know some students will be disappointed, but this is what our sister institutions are largely doing, and it's what we feel is fairest. We will be annotating MSPEs (Dean's letters) to assure that residencies are aware of what happened—every school around the country is in the same boat and residencies, we feel, will be understanding about this.

On some rotations, depending on a student's schedule, experiences (current/past), and competency, directors may ask students to complete additional clinical experiences later in order to successfully complete that rotation. This will be uncommon and students will be notified.

For electives/AIs, course directors are encouraged to give students a grade (H/HP/P/LP/U) if they feel they have an adequate demonstration of student performance. If not, they are allowed to switch to Pass/Fail.

April (Period 12):

For next month, we had hoped to restart at least some clinical rotations, but it has become clear that will not be possible. Clinical sites lack the ability to provide students with appropriate testing, protective equipment, adequate cases, and teaching time due to the stresses on the health system. Remote teaching is possible but does not replace clinical experiences, and our telemedicine arrangements are too chaotic right now to count on for learning. We don't want to start a clerkship only to have to cancel later, when the "surge" hits our area. Resident and faculty educators are likely to become unavailable very quickly, even if they may be willing to teach right now.

Students currently enrolled in 8-week rotations (CAMPC, Surg/Anesth, Medicine) will be able to continue remote didactics. CAMPC students will be credited for a full experience and don't need to register for anything else now; the others are encouraged to register for another elective experience (see below). We plan on testing most students at the end of April as planned, which gives students time to study now and allows for more focused clinical work later. Grades for all these clerkships will also be Pass-Fail, and won't be completed until after students complete their clinical experiences later.

Clerkship	Additional Clinical?	Assessments
CAMPC	None needed—full credit for Periods 11-12	No OSCE or customized SHELF available Grade based on other components
Medicine	1mo additional to be made up later	SHELF exam at end of April
Surgery	1mo additional to be made up later	SHELF exam at end of April
Anesthesiology	None needed if already done If not already done, will need to make up later with surgery	If done, exam will be given at the end of April; if not, exam will be done after clinical completed

For students taking clinical electives, these will also be cancelled, including acting internships.

All students can go home during this month. It is possible that we will restart clinical experiences next month, but it is possible the suspension will continue.

For all students who are displaced from clerkships or clinical electives, we will have several options for you to pursue during Period 12, and the registrar will work to make sure everyone is appropriately switched. Options include:

- **Research elective:** we will be very flexible to allow students to get credit for taking a research month during this time, although keep in mind that there are restrictions on new experiments and building access. But for students who are completing an article, working on a literature review, or analyzing a remote data set, this could be a good option.
- **Clinical radiology:** we have expanded capacity and students who haven't taken this can sign up—this will be remote.
- **Pandemic experience:** we added a new elective on the experience of pandemics—current science as well as perspectives from medical humanities, with independent reading/writing and two group sessions weekly. Drs. Veldkamp and Thamman are leading this. This elective will count as an ILS for students (MS3 or MS4) who need one. Register for MSELCT 5401.

There are other non-clinical electives in our catalog, and students could do any other of those that are available. **Kim Kirk will follow up with details on how to switch for Period 12.**

Other electives/selectives will go on remotely, notably bootcamp and ILS's.

Obviously, this is far from ideal. By postponing these clerkships, we will have to struggle later with higher than usual numbers of learners in our clinical sites. But our

school is committed to doing whatever we can to insure that students meet our program learning objectives. That may mean shortening required clerkships, waiving electives when not needed, and extending the window for completion of required clerkships—all to insure that students graduate on time and having successfully met curricular goals.

We're sure that you will have questions about these changes. Please don't hesitate to contact Drs. Harvey, Rosenstock, or Buranosky to discuss your situation, and we will try to get back to you with more information about all this as plans become clearer. Thanks again for your flexibility, understanding, and dedication—to clinical service, to our school, and to each other.