



Narrative Description in Assessment Policy

Office of Accountability:	Associate Dean, MD Program
Office of Administrative Responsibility:	MD Program
Approver:	MD Curriculum & Program Committee
Scope:	Compliance with this MD Program policy extends to all members of the Undergraduate Medical Education community.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that where possible, a narrative description of medical student performance is provided to enhance detailed assessment to the student as formative and/or summative feedback.

This policy addresses element 9.5 of the CACMS accreditation standards, which states that “a medical school ensures that a narrative description of a medical student’s performance, including the student’s non-cognitive achievement, is included as a component of the assessment in each required learning experience in the medical education program whenever teacher-student interaction permits this form of assessment.”

POLICY

To ensure compliance with the CACMS element 9.5, the MD Program ensures that narrative feedback is provided in all required learning experiences.

Narrative assessment may include peer evaluation and/or preceptor/instructor observation and may be part of both formative and summative assessment.

Narrative formative feedback is provided to students near the mid-point of a course, active learning component, or clerkship to identify their areas of strength and weaknesses. Formative feedback should be made available to students in a timely and relevant manner, for student reflection, and may be reviewed for consideration for context in academic standings.

Narrative summative feedback is required to provide additional context about the student's performance. Summative feedback comments may be included as part of a student's overall academic records (such as the MSPR letter).

This policy applies to all required learning experiences.

Inclusion of narrative feedback in all required learning experiences will be monitored by the Assessment Committee.

DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.	
Narrative assessment	A written description of a student's performance that is provided to help guide learning.
Required learning experience	An educational unit (e.g., course, block, clerkship rotation or longitudinal integrated clerkship) that is required of a student in order to complete the medical education program. These educational units are usually associated with a university course code and appear on the student's transcript. Required learning experiences are in contradistinction to electives, which are learning experiences of the student's choosing.
Formative Assessment	A range of formal and informal assessment procedures conducted during the learning process that are not part of the summative assessment at the end of the educational unit. Narrative feedback that can be used by students to identify strengths and weaknesses and target areas for improvement.
Summative Assessment	Formal assessment at the end of an educational unit. Serves to evaluate student learning by comparing it against a pre-determined standard or benchmark.

RELATED LINKS

No related links for this policy.

APPROVAL HISTORY

APPROVER	STATUS	DATE
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved	March 9, 2017
Dr. Tracey Hillier, Associate Dean	Minor edits for consistency in formatting.	12 June 2020
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved	24 June 2021
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved Reviewed as part of a quality improvement process with an eye to updates that bring the policy in line with current processes and to ensure clarity in language.	21 December 2023