

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Residency Review Committee Chairs and Executive Directors

**FROM:** Jeanne K. Heard, MD, PhD  
Senior Vice President  
Department of Accreditation Committees

**DATE:** February 26, 2008

**RE:** Proposed Common Requirements for One-Year Fellowship Programs

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After the ACGME Board of Directors approved the revised Common Program Requirements in 2007, instead of incorporating these requirements into all sets of program requirements, the Board Executive Committee supported developing a streamlined set of common requirements for programs that educate 'advanced learners' in the one-year fellowship (subspecialty) programs. During the last year a working group revised the current common program requirements into a set of common requirements for these fellowships. This memo provides background of this. At its recent meeting the ACGME Board of Directors endorsed the attached proposal for next steps.

The ACGME Review Committees accredit approximately 8400 residency programs educating over 106,000 resident 'learners'. About 2000 of the programs are one-year in duration and provide education for approximately 4000 fellows. Having successfully completed an ACGME-accredited specialty program, these fellows are 'advanced learners' and are eligible to obtain unrestricted medical licenses and to sit for certifying examinations. Twenty Review Committees are responsible for accrediting one-year fellowship programs.

The ACGME recognizes that one year fellowships differ significantly from core specialty programs. Therefore, in support of ACGME's strategic priority to increase efficiency and reduce burden in the accreditation process, the Board of Directors supported developing a streamlined set of common requirements for programs that educate these advanced learners.

Over the past year, a group with expertise in developing requirements and managing the accreditation process drafted a set of streamlined, common requirements for one-year fellowships. The work was based on the assumption that these programs contain advanced learners in a specific subspecialty area with few learners in each program. The following principles guided the work. The revised common requirements should:

- Streamline the accreditation process for one-year fellowship programs by focusing data collection on the most relevant information necessary for a Review Committee to make an informed decision about accreditation status
- Focus primarily on educational outcomes for advanced learners rather than on individual process requirements
- Facilitate collecting subspecialty-specific information related to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of fellows as advanced learners in a program of one year duration

The group developed a set of common requirements (Attachment 2) by eliminating language from the current Common Program Requirements, which were approved by the ACGME in February 2007 (and became effective July 1, 2007) and delineated a proposal for next steps for how the information could be considered by the Review Committees. This proposal (Attachment 1) was endorsed on February 11, 2008 by the ACGME Board of Directors Executive Committee, the Committee on Requirements and the Monitoring Committee for circulation to the Residency Review Committees.

**PROPOSAL FOR REVISED COMMON REQUIREMENTS  
FOR ONE-YEAR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS**

The ACGME Board of Directors endorsed the following procedure for Residency Review Committees (RRC) to consider the attached set of revised common requirements program requirements for one-year fellowship programs.

1. The RRC should consider the proposed common requirements during the spring 2008 and determine whether it will:
  - a. Accept the revised common requirements for incorporation into its subspecialty-specific requirements for one year fellowships and
  - b. Propose additions to the proposed common requirements in the areas indicated "as further specified by the Review Committee".
2. The RRC should prepare a final set of proposed program requirements for each of its one year fellowships, including the additions as specified in 1.b and submit to Kathy Malloy, Executive Director for Accreditation Standards by July 29, 2008.
3. The final draft of one-year fellowship program requirements will be considered by the ACGME Committee on Requirements at its September 2008 meeting. If approved, the effective date will be January 1, 2009. If the RRC requires additional time to finalize its requirements, the deadline for submission of program requirements for review at the February 2009 ACGME Board meeting will be December 10, 2008. The effective date for program requirements approved at the February 2009 ACGME Board meeting will be July 1, 2009.
4. RRCs that propose substantial additions (1.b. above) will follow the usual ACGME procedure for requirement revision.
5. RRCs may request that the proposed common requirements be incorporated into the subspecialty requirements for fellowships of two-year's duration since many of the two-year subspecialties have requirements for only one year of clinical experience. Each RRC should submit the request, with the accompanying rationale, to the staff of the Committee on Requirements. The proposed program requirements for the subspecialty, including additions as specified in 1.b. should also accompany the request.
6. ACGME will assess the effectiveness of this change in common requirements for one-year fellowships based on criteria determined by the RRCs, which may include:
  - o No untoward consequences as defined by the RRC occurred as a result of implementation
  - o Only data necessary to make accreditation decisions was collected
  - o Unnecessary documentation and irrelevant requirements were reduced
  - o A reduction in workload for RRC members was realized
  - o A reduction in workload for program directors and DIOs occurred
  - o The process stimulated development of requirements for new fellowships by RRCs previously hesitant to do so because of the additional work associated with the previous process for approval.

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**Common Requirements One Year Fellowships**

*(Source: Common Program Requirements, approved by ACGME in February 2007 and effective: July 1, 2007)*

I. Institutions

A. Sponsoring Institution

One sponsoring institution must assume ultimate responsibility for the program, as described in the Institutional Requirements, and this responsibility extends to fellow assignments at all participating sites.

The sponsoring institution and the program must ensure that the program director has sufficient protected time and financial support for his or her educational and administrative responsibilities to the program.

B. Participating Sites

1. There must be a program letter of agreement (PLA) between the program and each participating site providing a required assignment. The PLA must be renewed at least every five years.

The PLA should:

- a) identify the faculty who will assume both educational and supervisory responsibilities for fellows;
  - b) specify their responsibilities for teaching, supervision, and formal evaluation of fellows, as specified later in this document;
  - c) specify the duration and content of the educational experience; and,
  - d) state the policies and procedures that will govern fellow education during the assignment.
2. The program director must submit any additions or deletions of participating sites routinely providing an educational experience, required for all fellows, of one month full time equivalent (FTE) or more through the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Accreditation Data System (ADS).

[As further specified by the Review Committee]

II. Program Personnel and Resources

A. Program Director

1. There must be a single program director with authority and accountability for the operation of the program. The sponsoring institution's GMEC must approve a change in program director. After approval, the program director must submit this change to the ACGME via the ADS.
2. Qualifications of the program director must include:
  - a) requisite specialty expertise and documented educational and administrative experience acceptable to the Review Committee;
  - b) current certification in the specialty by the American Board of \_\_\_\_\_, or specialty qualifications that are acceptable to the Review Committee; and,
  - c) current medical licensure and appropriate medical staff appointment.

[As further specified by the Review Committee]

3. The program director must administer and maintain an educational environment conducive to educating the fellows in each of the ACGME competency areas. The program director must:
  - a) prepare and submit all information required and requested by the ACGME;
  - b) be familiar with and oversee compliance with ACGME and Review Committee policies and procedures as outlined in the ACGME Manual of Policies and Procedures;
  - c) obtain review and approval of the sponsoring institution's GMEC/DIO before submitting to the ACGME information or requests for the following:
    - (1) all applications for ACGME accreditation of new programs;

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- (2) changes in fellow complement;
- (3) major changes in program structure or length of training;
- (4) progress reports requested by the Review Committee;
- (5) responses to all proposed adverse actions;
- (6) requests for increases or any change to fellow duty hours;
- (7) voluntary withdrawals of ACGME-accredited programs;
- (8) requests for appeal of an adverse action;
- (9) appeal presentations to a Board of Appeal or the ACGME; and,

- d) obtain DIO review and co-signature on all program information forms, as well as any correspondence or document submitted to the ACGME that addresses:
  - (1) program citations, and/or
  - (2) request for changes in the program that would have significant impact, including financial, on the program or institution.

B. Faculty

- 1. There must be a sufficient number of faculty with documented qualifications to instruct and supervise all fellows.
- 2. The faculty must devote sufficient time to the educational program to fulfill their supervisory and teaching responsibilities and demonstrate a strong interest in the education of fellows.
- 3. The physician faculty must have current certification in the specialty by the American Board of \_\_\_\_\_, or possess qualifications acceptable to the Review Committee.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

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4. The physician faculty must possess current medical licensure and appropriate medical staff appointment.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

C. Other Program Personnel

The institution and the program must jointly ensure the availability of all necessary professional, technical, and clerical personnel for the effective administration of the program.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

D. Resources

The institution and the program must jointly ensure the availability of adequate resources for fellow education, as defined in the specialty program requirements.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

E. Medical Information Access

Fellows must have ready access to specialty-specific and other appropriate reference material in print or electronic format. Electronic medical literature databases with search capabilities should be available.

III. Fellow Appointments

A. Eligibility Criteria

Each fellow must successfully complete an ACGME-accredited specialty program and/or meet other eligibility criteria as specified by the Review Committee. The program must document that each fellow has met the eligibility criteria.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

B. Number of Fellows

The program director may not appoint more fellows than approved by the Review Committee, unless otherwise stated in the specialty-specific requirements. The program's educational resources must be adequate to support the number of fellows appointed to the program.

[As further specified by the Review Committee]

IV. Educational Program

A. The curriculum must contain the following educational components:

1. Skills and competencies the fellow will be able to demonstrate at the conclusion of the program. The program must distribute these skills and competencies to fellows and faculty annually, in either written or electronic form. These skills and competencies should be reviewed by the fellow at the start of each rotation;

2. ACGME Competencies

The program must integrate the following ACGME competencies into the curriculum:

a) Patient Care

Fellows must be able to provide patient care that is compassionate, appropriate, and effective for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of health. Fellows:

*[Further specified by the Review Committee]*

b) Medical Knowledge

Fellows must demonstrate knowledge of established and evolving biomedical, clinical, epidemiological and social-behavioral sciences, as well as the application of this knowledge to patient care. Fellows:

*[Further specified by the Review Committee]*

c) Practice-based Learning and Improvement

Fellows are expected to develop skills and habits to be able to meet the following goals:

(1) systematically analyze practice using quality improvement methods, and implement changes with the goal of practice improvement;

(2) locate, appraise, and assimilate evidence from scientific studies related to their patients' health

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problems;

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

d) Interpersonal and Communication Skills

Fellows must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families, and health professionals.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

e) Professionalism

Fellows must demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities and an adherence to ethical principles.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

f) Systems-based Practice

Fellows must demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger context and system of health care, as well as the ability to call effectively on other resources in the system to provide optimal health care.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

B. Fellows' Scholarly Activities

*[As specified by the Review Committee]*

V. Evaluation

A. Fellow Evaluation

1. Formative Evaluation

- a) The faculty must evaluate fellow performance in a timely manner.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

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- b) The program must:
  - (1) provide objective assessments of competence in patient care, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, and systems-based practice;
  - (2) use multiple evaluators (e.g., faculty, peers, patients, self, and other professional staff); and,
  - (3) provide each fellow with documented semiannual evaluation of performance with feedback.
- c) The evaluations of fellow performance must be accessible for review by the fellow, in accordance with institutional policy.

2. Summative Evaluation

The program director must provide a summative evaluation for each fellow upon completion of the program. This evaluation must become part of the fellow's permanent record maintained by the institution, and must be accessible for review by the fellow in accordance with institutional policy. This evaluation must:

- a) document the fellow's performance during their education, and
- b) verify that the fellow has demonstrated sufficient competence to enter practice without direct supervision.

B. Faculty Evaluation

- 1. At least annually, the program must evaluate faculty performance as it relates to the educational program.
- 2. These evaluations should include a review of the faculty's clinical teaching abilities, commitment to the educational program, clinical knowledge, professionalism, and scholarly activities.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

C. Program Evaluation and Improvement

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1. The program must document formal, systematic evaluation of the curriculum at least annually. The program must monitor and track each of the following areas:
  - a) fellow performance and
  - b) faculty development
  
2. If deficiencies are found, the program should prepare a written plan of action to document initiatives to improve performance in the areas listed in section V.C.1. The action plan should be reviewed and approved by the teaching faculty and documented in meeting minutes.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

VI. Fellow Duty Hours in the Learning and Working Environment

A. Principles

1. The program must be committed to and be responsible for promoting patient safety and fellow well-being and to providing a supportive educational environment.
  
2. Duty hour assignments must recognize that faculty and fellows collectively have responsibility for the safety and welfare of patients.

*[As further specified by the Review Committee]*

B. Supervision of Fellows

The program must ensure that qualified faculty provide appropriate supervision of fellows in patient care activities.

C. Duty Hours (the terms in this section are defined in the ACGME Glossary and apply to all programs)

Duty hours are defined as all clinical and academic activities related to the program; i.e., patient care (both inpatient and outpatient), administrative duties relative to patient care, the provision for transfer of patient care, time spent in-house during call activities, and scheduled activities, such as conferences. Duty hours do *not* include reading and preparation time spent away from the duty site.

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1. Duty hours must be limited to 80 hours per week, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of all in-house call activities.
2. Fellows must be provided with one day in seven free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a four-week period, inclusive of call.
3. Adequate time for rest and personal activities must be provided. This should consist of a 10-hour time period provided between all daily duty periods and after in-house call.

D. On-call Activities

1. In-house call must occur no more frequently than every third night, averaged over a four-week period.
2. Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, must not exceed 24 consecutive hours. Fellows may remain on duty for up to six additional hours to participate in didactic activities, transfer care of patients, conduct outpatient clinics, and maintain continuity of medical and surgical care.
3. No new patients may be accepted after 24 hours of continuous duty.
4. At-home call (or pager call)
  - a) The frequency of at-home call is not subject to the every-third-night, or 24+6 limitation. However at-home call must not be so frequent as to preclude rest and reasonable personal time for each fellow.
  - b) Fellows taking at-home call must be provided with one day in seven completely free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a four-week period.
  - c) When fellows are called into the hospital from home, the hours fellows spend in-house are counted toward the 80-hour limit.

E. Moonlighting

Internal moonlighting must be considered part of the 80-hour weekly limit on duty hours.

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