

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT POLICY

PURPOSE:

To outline the rationale and requirement for providing a narrative assessment of medical student performance within the curriculum.

The policy relates directly to LCME ELEMENT 9.5, which states “.....*a narrative description of a medical student’s performance, including non-cognitive achievement, is included as a component of the assessment in each required course and clerkship of the medical education program whenever teacher-student interaction permits this form of assessment.*”

DEFINITION:

Narrative assessments are written comments by faculty that are descriptions of a student’s performance and/or behavior, usually at least 2-3 sentences in length. The descriptions are intended to provide students with additional information about their strengths and opportunities for improvement beyond numeric data. They may be provided entirely for formative purposes, or alternatively, may be summative in nature as a part of a graded assessment.

POLICY:

Courses

Narrative assessments will be provided in any pre-clerkship course where the Central Curricular Authority (CCA) has determined that the pedagogical structure of a course provides sufficient opportunity, time, and longitudinal instructor-student interactions to allow an instructor to independently observe and evaluate an individual student’s performance and/or behavior, to permit the formulation of a meaningful narrative assessment of that student.

- Typically, narrative assessments will be required in courses where a student has five or more sessions in a small group encounter in which 12 or fewer students meet with the same faculty instructor at each session.
- Formative narrative assessments will be used solely to provide feedback to the students for the purposes of self-improvement and personal growth, whereas summative comments will be included as part of the final grade and may be reported in the final Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).

Narrative assessments can be provided in courses that do not meet the above criteria, provided there is evidence that the nature of the interaction allows for the formulation of meaningful feedback.

Clerkships and Clinical Electives

The provision of a narrative assessment is required as a formal summative component of the student's final performance evaluation and grade in each of the required clinical clerkships and clinical electives. These narrative assessments may be included in final Medical Student Performance Evaluation ("the Dean's letter").

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE:

The CCA will monitor compliance with the narrative assessment policy on an annual basis. Each individual course and clerkship is required to indicate their continued compliance with the policy on the annual course/clerkship inventory forms. Any proposal to change or modify the provision of a narrative assessment by a course or clerkship director must be fully justified and submitted on the annual inventory forms. Such proposal will be reviewed by the curricular year directors, who will then forward the proposal along with any recommendations to the Competency Evaluation and Assessment Review Committee (CEARC), which after careful consideration will provide a recommendation to the CCA. The CCA will evaluate any request, together with the recommendations of the curricular year directors and CEARC, then render a final binding decision.

Reviewed by:	Central Curricular Authority
Date of approval:	August 10, 2015
Revised:	September 14, 2026
Review cycle:	Three years