STATEMENT: Optional Clinical Learning Opportunities (Formerly “Observerships”)
Undergraduate Medical Education

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I. PURPOSE

The Doctor of Medicine or Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) Program (“Program”) in the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry (“School”) at Western University is a competency based curriculum that supports student experiential learning to advance competency. An Optional Clinical Learning Opportunity (OCLO) is a Program learning activity where students choose a clinical discipline or immersion as a single or multiple event(s) that allows for developing competency while assisting students in exploring career interests.

These learning events can occur with any physician or health professional with a valid Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry faculty appointment in an academic or rural / regional centre. OCLO’s were formerly known in our Program as “Observerships”.

This statement will outline processes to complete an OCLO.

II. DEFINITIONS

Optional Clinical Learning Opportunity: A learning experience (formerly “Observerships”) where a student learns approaches to patient care under a faculty educator in an affiliated School learning facility.

III. STATEMENT

Optional Clinical Learning Opportunities (OCLOs) are self-directed learning opportunities for students within Program Year 1 or 2 studies, which are undertaken outside the curriculum. These may be completed during the single weekday for self-directed student learning or during evenings, weekends and during summer break.

Faculty and students must be aware of the terms and limitations of an OCLO including mandatory registration, approval, assessment (if any) or evaluation.

By accepting the student as an Observer, the preceptor is accepting legal responsibility for the student. OCLOs may only take place within Canada. Students are not permitted to complete OCLOs outside of the country.

Students in each OCLO are expected to maintain the standards of School Professionalism and meet the ethical behavior as outlined in the CMA Code of Ethics: (https://www.cma.ca/En/Pages/code-of-ethics.aspx)

An OCLO must follow the process described below:

a. Opportunities
Students are to arrange an OCLO by contacting a clinical teaching faculty member in London, Windsor or one of the distributed education (DE) (rural/regional) who are willing to host the OCLO. Additionally, an OCLO can be arranged by direct communication with the clinical Department or Division education office.
b. **Scheduling**

An OCLO is supplemental to Program curriculum and will not replace the requirements for mandatory session attendance as outlined in the Program Attendance Statement. The Program visions students utilizing OCLO’s for deeper curricular understanding using clinical experience in a discipline aligned with curriculum content, to advance competency in clinical care skills and explore career interests across disciplines of medicine.

In scheduling and completing an OCLO the following must be true:

i. Attendance at all mandatory Program curriculum sessions as per the policy will always take priority over approval of an OCLO.

ii. An OCLO may occur outside hours of Program learning and in days not scheduled for Program learning.

iii. Absence from mandatory curriculum learning (including active large-group learning; small group learning; labs; simulated learning; special Program learning events) to attend an OCLO will not be approved under any circumstances.

iv. An OCLO is a student privilege and may be deferred or denied if there arise learner concerns with professionalism or a need for mandated Program remediation.

v. Approval for an OCLO must be recorded by Program staff using the single sign on electronic processes in Elentra.

vi. All OCLOs must be approved by the Program before starting. Such approval is mandatory to allow student coverage with insurance, disability and to ensure faculty compliance with School and CPSO regulations.

vii. If a student misses a scheduled mandatory Program learning session to attend an OCLO, this will be addressed as an issue of professionalism under the MD Program Assessment Policy.

viii. OCLO outcome(s) aligned with meeting Stages of Program Enabling Competencies, will be entered in Elentra using the competency journal tool.

ix. Students are encouraged to undertake a variety of OCLOs in many clinical disciplines to meet Program and personal goals or objectives.

c. **Registration**

All OCLOs must be registered through the Program. This is mandatory for learner safety, providing student insurance coverage; and tracking of faculty teaching hours. OCLOs are registered with Single Sign On and require approval by the Program Office prior to taking place. A minimum of ten (10) working days is required to process the registration.

At the start of each OCLO, the student must provide an OCLO introductory letter to faculty and/or the clinical department as well submit the completed checklist to the appropriate UME contact outlined in the checklist prior to starting the OCLO.

d. **Preparation**

To meet the regulatory requirements of the health care facilities and the province, all learners must complete annually prior to entering clinical care learning, all required modules for quality and safety:

- LHSC/WRH: online modules provided by LHSC
- DE site: as requested by the host hospital or health care affiliates

e. **Learning Experiences**

Medical students will be involved in observation and interaction with patients from the start of their undergraduate medical education. The supervisor and/or Most Responsible Physician (MRP) are responsible for ensuring that the educational status of medical students and nature of their role are made clear to the patient, the patient’s family,
and members of the health-care team as early as possible during the educational process. Students must be introduced as medical students and it should be made clear to patients that they are not physicians. An explanation could be provided that the student is a member of the health/clinical care team and the experience forms an important part of their undergraduate medical education program. Where appropriate, medical students may introduce themselves to patients instead of relying on a supervisor and/or MRP to make a formal introduction.

f. Supervision and Education of Medical Students

The supervisor and/or MRP must provide appropriate supervision. This includes:

- determining the medical student’s willingness and competency or capacity to participate in the clinical care of patients, as a learning experience;
- closely observing interactions between the medical student and the patient to assess:
  - the medical student’s performance, capabilities and educational needs,
  - whether the medical student has the requisite competence (knowledge, skill and judgment) to safely participate in a patient’s care without compromising that care, and
  - whether the medical student demonstrates the necessary competencies and expertise to interact with patients without the supervisor being present in the room;
- meeting at appropriate intervals with the medical student to discuss their assessments;
- ensuring that the medical student only engages in acts based on previously agreed-upon arrangements with the MRP;
- reviewing, providing feedback and countersigning documentation by a medical student of a patient’s history, physical examination, diagnosis, and progress notes as soon as possible;
- managing and documenting patient care, regardless of the level of involvement of medical students; and
- counter-signing all orders concerning investigation or treatment of a patient, written under the supervision or direction of a physician. Prescriptions, telephone or other transmitted orders may be transcribed by the medical student, but must be countersigned.

In addition, appropriate supervision and education requires clear communication between the MRP and supervisor in order to ensure the best possible care for the patient.

Source: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION – CPSO.ON.CA

**NOTE:** It will be the responsibility of the preceptor to supervise the student in all patient interactions.

OCLOs serve as excellent opportunities for students to complete self-directed learning in demonstrating or understanding each Enabling Competency by Stage. Therefore, students are encouraged to document these activities in Elentra.