Town Hall – Class of 2024
Aug. 5, 5:00-6:00pm
FAQ

ASSESSMENTS

How will students be assessed?

Students will be assessed in a variety of ways depending on the competency being assessed. Different assessment strategies will include the following: Modular exams with MCQs, extended matching, short answer, and/or key features questions, SP/OSCE, workplace direct observation tools, and/or mini-CEX, Rubrics and checklists. MCQ exams will be delivered online.

There will be 1 – 3 exams per module depending on the length of the module. The knowledge checks (those that do not contribute to competency attainment) occur at different frequencies within each module but, on average, you will get some questions every week.

What is our exam schedule going to be for the first 2 modules?

A draft of the Module 1 schedule is distributed here. This is NOT final and we are finalizing the assessment schedule for Module 1 now. We do not finalize the schedule until 2 weeks prior to the start of the Module. The assessment schedule for Module 2 is not complete. In addition, because of COVID, there may be faculty who get ill or need to cancel, so we will all need to be somewhat flexible through this.

Will all examinations count towards our pass/fail grade, or will we have formative exams as well? What is the schedule for bigger (high-stakes) exams vs. smaller quizzes?

We have knowledge checks which do not contribute to decisions of competency attainment. They are there to help guide you in understanding strengths and areas that need attention or prepare you for upcoming sessions. These are purely formative (for you only). There are low stakes assessments - usually associated with team-based learning, case-based learning or LACE (three of our more common teaching strategies) - that do contribute something towards competency attainment and are also there to help you understand your progression across a module. These contribute a small amount to the overall attainment of competence. There are higher stakes assessments that contribute the most towards competency attainment- these include many of the things noted above.

Will exams be in-person or conducted remotely/online?

Written exams will be conducted online but you will have the option to take the exam on campus if you desire.
COMMUNITY BUILDING

Will all students be able to meet each other even though the school is not allowing for large gatherings? Also, how can we connect with our classmates? Will there be organized social activities that follow social distancing guidelines?

In person student gatherings are allowed as long as they are in compliance with local Department of Health regulations and our Washington University rules. The Office of Student Affairs will be a resource for students as the landscape is ever changing in the community. We strongly support online engagement and there will be both formal and informal opportunities hosted by the school, student groups, and your class/school reps.

What are some community engagement activities that will be available during Phase 1?

There will be a variety of activities available for community engagement. Some of these include:

- Virtual health education outreach
- Packing PPE kits
- Distribution of PPE kits & other health essentials
- Food delivery
- Poll workers for the Nov. 2020 election
- Homeless outreach
- COVID contact tracing
- River clean up
- Diaper bank drive
- Any opportunity through organizations we are in relationships with such as: Alive & Well, PrepareSTL, and Regional Health Commission etc.

COVID

Since it was mentioned that some of our clinical skills sessions can still be held in-person, I was wondering what the structure of these sessions will be. How many people will be in a group together and who will run these sessions?

Clinical Skills is run by Drs. Mullin and Yau. In Module 1, these are largely communication sessions and those will be mostly online. As COVID improves, we will move these into in person sessions where possible. You will learn how to take vital signs in person in Module 1 and this is currently planned as occurring in small groups, in person, physically distanced and supervised.

If we need to miss an in-person session (such as a clinical skills session or time during a clinical immersion) because we present with symptoms, what will be the policy in terms of making up work, opportunities to still learn the material we missed, etc.? And will this affect our grade in any way? What will happen if, for instance, a student feels sick and then has to miss 2 of the 3 weeks of a clinical immersion block because they need to quarantine?
We will work with each student personally to develop a make-up plan for any work missed. Content that requires in person training will be made up with those instructors or their designee.

EXPLORE

At what point in the year will we need to decide which EXPLORE track we want to choose for the 4-week explore period (and start identifying research mentors, choosing what type of project we want to pursue, etc.)? Will we need to produce some sort of "end product" during those 4 weeks?

We will ask you to commit to one of the explore paths for the four week explore immersion in late March prior to the immersion. This commitment will only be for the duration of the four-week immersion. If at the end of the four weeks, you are interested in something else, that is completely fine. Each pillar will have a small deliverable at the completion of the four-weeks. Examples of a deliverable might be a draft protocol for a research project, a team teaching activity, or a position statement/white paper.

FINANCIAL AID

When will loans be disbursed? When is the tuition due?

Disbursement for M1s is scheduled for 10 days prior to the start of classes...8/31. Tuition is due on September 8, 2020.

MSTP

Will the new plan for the medical curriculum impact future MSTP research rotations?

There is no impact on MSTP research rotations. These can be done prior to starting with approval of the MSTP office, during the four-week Explore immersion, and after the completion of Phase 1.

RESEARCH

How can students connect with faculty mentors and explore professional interests and research opportunities? I recall current students being encouraged to pursue research and learn about potential career paths through lunchtime talks, shadowing, and other events -- will alternative options be organized or will there be other ways to connect? I'm particularly concerned about research and the level of support that M1 students should expect to receive for remote projects throughout the school year.

Students will have a number of opportunities to connect with faculty and learn about research and other project opportunities. Throughout Phase 1, Explore will host optional sessions—one per week—where faculty talk about their careers, key topics in the academic domain, and processes for identifying a mentor and project. In addition, there are several specialty-based career interest groups that will also provide noon sessions and afternoon sessions, providing exposure to those specialties and career paths.
The Office of Medical Student Research as well as the Explore Leads can also work with you one on one to discuss options and identify potential projects and mentors.

**ORIENTATION**

Is the Dean’s Welcome party still going to happen? What will it look like?

Yes, the Dean’s Welcome Party is still scheduled to occur, but in a different format than in previous years. Each of the Deans and a number of other core faculty will open their homes to you in small groups, appropriately physically distanced, and with food! These will likely occur outdoors in our backyards and will be casual and low key. If weather does not permit, we will reschedule.

Previously orientation was 2 weeks long. Since it is now 1 week, where is the time that was supposed to be for the 2nd week being allocated to? Will we have some substitute for WUMP since we won’t be able to have it in person? Past students have emphasized the importance of a 2 week orientation to allow for proper transitioning to medical school and to form strong bonds with classmates, so how will the school ensure that this will still happen now that orientation is shortened and mostly virtual?

Content and experiences from WUMP was felt to be pivotal to your experience, so much so that we’ve created the Patients, Physicians, Systems, and Society (PPSS) and community engagement parts of the Gateway Curriculum. These run throughout the curriculum providing longitudinal exposure to this content. We agree that forming strong bonds with classmates is vital and through the Gateway Coaching Program and other planned activities such as the Academic Societies, you’ll have the opportunity to build relationships with classmates in both structured and social venues. We plan on having some events prior to orientation, during orientation, and throughout the curriculum to help with this.

**RESOURCES**

If we struggle with the adjustment to medical school either academically or personally (especially with the added stress due to COVID), what resources will be available to help us improve study strategies, ease the transition, etc.? Will these resources be solely virtual?

There are many resources to support your transition to medical school including the Gateway Coaches, the Office of Student Affairs, and peer support including Peer Advocates, Big Sibs and Wellness representatives. We also have a learning specialist and tutors available. These resources will be available virtually and some are available in person.

**SCHEDULE**

Is the academic calendar set for at least the first semester? (i.e., for buying plane tickets home for winter break, are we certain that winter break will begin Dec. 18th?)

See attached final calendar.
When we get our calendar on Keystone during the first week of orientation, how far in advance will it map out (e.g. a few weeks, the whole module, until the end of the year, etc.)?

The full calendar of events for Module 1 will be published in Keystone on or before Tuesday, Sept. 8th. Looking ahead, event calendars will be published two weeks before the start of each module and immersion.

We previously were told that most afternoons would be free for students to have their own study/personal time. I recall this being at least 3 free afternoons per week. On the sample schedule we were shown during town hall, every afternoon looked blocked with activities or classes. Especially having classes be mostly virtual, I think it’s important that the deans prioritize these free afternoons for students to not be swamped with zoom calls and classes. Can you speak on if the free afternoons are still going to happen?

See attached draft schedule for Module 1. This is representative of what a regular weekly and module schedule will look like. In addition to the scheduled synchronous sessions on the calendar, there will be asynchronous materials and prep work. In total, the average number of hours that will be dedicated to prep work plus class time will average 28 hours per week.

Will lectures still be non-mandatory? Will they still be recorded?

Yes, lectures will all be recorded. Some lectures may be mandatory, particularly if they include a patient who is present for the session or if there is content that will be taught through online small groups integrated in the session. This will be clearly shown on the calendar.

**SPACES**

Do students still have individual/assigned study spaces at the school?

No, the carrel spaces are undergoing a renovation based on feedback from the prior classes. They will be complete in mid to late October. The spaces include a combination of different kinds of spaces- quiet study alone or in small group, active study, and social.

**SPECIALTY/SHADOWING**

Given that shadowing won’t be possible, will there be alternative ways of exploring different medical specialties?

The clinical immersions will provide opportunities to explore specialties. In addition, we are quite hopeful that shadowing will be allowed later this year as the clinical spaces evolve to meet this challenge. In addition, there are a large number of specialty-based interest groups. These will provide opportunities to learn more about the specialties, meet faculty, and meet other students interested in or pursuing these specialties.
**TEXTBOOK/STUDY RESOURCES**

Do we need to order textbooks for class? If so, when?

The majority of resources such as textbooks are available to students electronically through Bernard Becker Medical Library. Instructors provide extensive additional resources via the learning management system. In certain circumstance, students may choose to purchase additional resources.

Will Wash U provide students with study resources such as Sketchy, Anki decks, etc.?

Generally speaking, we attempt to provide the resources that will be the most broadly useful to our students. Individual study methods vary greatly. We do provide access to UWorld. Anki decks are often passed down from class to class.

Will there be any study groups set up by the school? (either in person or virtual). It would be helpful to have something like this in place to help students still be able to study and collaborate together.

While we do not specifically set up study groups, students very frequently collaborate in this way, self-selecting into group based on factors such as study style, areas of relative strength, and personal interests.

**VIRTUAL**

Dean Aagaard stated that we would not be all virtual after thanksgiving through winter break since this is mainly for schools with dorms. However, several other medical schools (also without dorms) have adopted this model so that students will not have to travel twice back and forth, including flying, during the winter season for both thanksgiving and winter break. I am concerned that even though we don’t have dorms, we are still putting student safety at risk. If we still have in-person activities after thanksgiving break, that is immediately putting everyone at risk from those who just traveled. Additionally, forcing students to have to travel more times than necessary to go home during these two breaks is already increasing individual risk of COVID greatly. Wouldn’t it make most sense to also adopt the model that many other medical schools are taking and have classes be all virtual between those two breaks so those students who do want to visit home can just stay home?

Additionally, we are greatly increasing the risk of our family members as well if we have to meet with our classmates (who just traveled all over the country for thanksgiving) in between thanksgiving and winter break, then travel back home for winter break again. I strongly urge the administration to consider going all virtual at least from thanksgiving to winter break to ensure student and family safety, especially when flu season will also be at its peak.

We hear your concerns. We feel there are many elements of the curriculum that are best learned in person and the focus of an integrated curriculum is to learn clinical skills and clinically related content in context as much as possible — this is a fundamental principle of our new curriculum. There are a number of choices that you can make to protect yourself and your family in this situation, including masking,
limiting the number of people you come into contact with, etc. You can also choose not to travel for one or more of the holidays if you have concerns about your family being exposed to you.

In the winter (during flu/COVID peak), is it possible that we will have to go all virtual? Has our curriculum been prepped for this worst case scenario?

Yes, we have prepared for the worst-case scenario. All sessions are being planned for a virtual delivery if needed.

At the start of the pandemic, WUSM decided to delay the start of classes by eight weeks. Presumably, this delay would have been used to develop strategies for the start of the year which were minimally disruptive. Now that we have been informed that approximately 90% of our education will be online-only and there will be no anatomy labs, it appears as though nothing was gained by delaying the start of our medical school year.

With the benefit of hindsight, was delaying the start of medical school a mistake? Otherwise, what was accomplished by the delay?

In the delay, we were able to markedly expand the quality of the online education not only for Gateway, but also for the legacy curriculum. The decision to delay was made to ensure we were able to do the right thing for ALL of our students. We were also able to prioritize and develop plans for those sessions that would truly benefit from being in person. This requires complex schedule adjustment—again, not just for one class, but for multiple.
Town Hall – Class of 2024
Aug. 12, 4:00-5:00pm
FAQ


CAREER EXPLORATION OPPORTUNITIES

As someone who doesn't have any clue what specialty they want to go into, I was banking on shadowing to gain some insight early on. Given the COVID situation, I understand that shadowing isn't possible (at least for the foreseeable future), so could you clarify some other ways students can explore specialties (besides immersions and ultimately Phase 2/3)?

How to explore research and career exploration opportunities?

We remain hopeful that shadowing will be allowed later this year as the clinical spaces evolve. Students will have opportunities to learn about specialties and research in a couple ways outside of shadowing. One is in the Explore curriculum and the Explore Immersion. Explore will have weekly noon-time seminars on topics relevant to each of the four pillars. It will also introduce you to people are careers in those pillars. As the Explore Immersion approaches, you will choose one of the pillars, meet with the pillar lead and identify opportunities for projects. Throughout, they will be available to you to help identify mentors. The other is with Specialty Interest Groups https://md.wustl.edu/student-groups/student-groups-guide/ which provide opportunities for talks, workshops (even virtually), and mentoring in many different fields.

Is virtual shadowing a possibility? Could students participate in telemedicine?

We are not currently offering virtual shadowing because of concern with regard to HIPAA (patient privacy). Telehealth is an option in some circumstances.

WELLNESS

I wanted to ask about information regarding opening of the med school gym/ any physical activity resources that will be provided during the year

Currently the Medical Student CORE gym, as well as the WashU Danforth campus Sumers Recreation Center are closed. Re-opening of the gym will coincide with declines in community transmission. Forest Park is adjacent to the medical school campus and provides beautiful places and spaces for working out, running, walking and biking. WashU Rec offers online programming including classes and workout videos. https://students.wustl.edu/online-bearfit-programming/. Meghann has received great reviews from our students recently! There are also student groups that will be offering outdoor or virtual activities, like the Yoga Club, WUSM Fit, and the KrebsCyclers.
STUDENT GROUPS/ACTIVITIES

Will extracurricular student groups still be active in the fall? Will there be a virtual activities fair and are there current ideas for how the fair would be put together?

Absolutely! We will introduce you to these in orientation, and have a virtual Student Group Fair in the first few weeks of school. Student Group Gatherings will be mostly virtual.

COACHING AND PROFESSIONALISM

What type of clothing/attire will we be expected to wear (in addition to a mask of course) when we come to campus for in-person Coaching sessions (and later for clinical skills sessions)?

For in-person sessions with your coach and coaching cohort, casual attire can be worn. Interactions with real patients and standardized patients require professional dress.

When can we meet with advisors/coaches?

You’ll get to meet your coach the first day of orientation and then will be meeting with them during regularly scheduled coaching group or individual sessions during Phase 1.

ASSESSMENT

Since competencies span across phase 1, phase 2, and phase 3, will the same people stay on the competency committee for the full 4 years or 8 years for the MSTP students?

Competency committees can remain stable over a specific phase or for the entirety of a curriculum. The current plan in Gateway is for the same people to stay on the Competency Attainment Committee across 4 years. The likelihood that someone would stay on the CAC for 8 years is very low.

I saw that on the schedule for the first town hall that there would be a Pre-MCAT exam on the first afternoon. Will we still be having this? What information should we review to prepare?

The Pre-MCAT exam is no longer occurring.

CURRICULUM/SCHEDULE

How often can we expect to be on campus during M1 year? Will reassessment take place along the way to gauge whether or not in-person instruction can return?

M1 students can expect to be on campus one to two times per week.

From the tentative schedule you sent for module 1, it looked like all the virtual things were synchronous. Are there any asynchronous lectures or classes? Or will we be expected to be logged on at those times for all of our virtual learning?
There will be some asynchronous sessions during the modules. These will be noted with “async” before the session title. You will not be expected to be logged on during these sessions. However, you will be provided guidance on when these sessions will need to be completed. Many of these sessions will tie into later synchronous sessions.

**How different will our basic science classes be?**

This is an integrative curriculum. Basic science content will be covered throughout all of the modules as it related to the specific theme of the module. There will not be a formal Pathology or Histology course, rather these content areas will be covered and specific to each of the modules.

**TEXTBOOK/STUDY RESOURCES**

Will there be any formal info-session explaining how to navigate all of the study materials students typically use (such as Anki & sketchy)? I have heard a lot of current and incoming students talking about these platforms, but have never had any exposure to them before, and it can feel a little overwhelming to know where to start. I wasn’t sure if these were things we would be shown how to use in a formal setting or whether it would be better to try to find an upperclassman to help teach us informally.

There will be a session with upper level medical students who will introduce these study materials during orientation. Your Big Sib will also be a great resource to help navigate these resources. Also, in Phase 1, there will be sessions on learning theory and skill development.

Is the books & supplies portion of our budget reserved for required purchases or are we able to use that money how we see fit?

Tuition/fees/student health are the only cost of attendance/budget items that are fixed and specific. Once a student receives a refund check, they can spend those funds as needed. If books/supplies only cost a student $238 and the budget states $700, then the student can spend the remaining $438 on other costs or borrow less, because they need less funding.

**Are there recommendations for books we may want to purchase?**

The majority of resources such as textbooks are available to students electronically through Bernard Becker Medical Library. Instructors provide extensive additional resources via the learning management system, Keystone. In certain circumstances, students may choose to purchase additional resources. Information will be provided early in the curriculum. There is no need to purchase books prior to Phase 1.
Education Technology

A few other students and I were talking about how we best learn online and what we find difficult and a lot of us stated that having subtitles/captions can be really helpful when listening to recorded lectures or other people talking electronically. I was wondering if it would be possible to have our lectures and classes closed captioned to make them more accessible? I completely understand if this is too difficult with medical terminology or not possible on zoom!

All recorded sessions will be hosted on Keystone through the Kaltura video player. The player will always include an option to turn on or off captions when watching video content. They are not always perfect given the complexities of medical terminology, but the captions are pretty good! The player also allows you to choose your preferred playback speed for any video.

PPE

We will be provided with any sort of PPE (i.e., masks)?

All PPE needed for clinical interactions will be provided by the school or medical facility where assigned. This will include all masks, eye protection, gloves, gowns as needed for SP sessions, OSCEs, immersions.

Masks are required on campus. For non-clinical presence, all WUSM students, staff and faculty must provide their own masks.

TRAVEL

How will travel be addressed in regard to holiday breaks? Will there be any travel restrictions for Thanksgiving Break?

Currently, there will be no travel restrictions. Students are expected to attend all required in person sessions before and after Thanksgiving Break. When there is community transmission across most of the country, travel to or from different regions does not appreciably change the risk of transmission or require quarantine. If the St. Louis area, or certain destinations, have minimal to no transmission around Thanksgiving this guidance could change but that is an unlikely scenario.

Will students be allowed to return to campus if they travel outside of STL for Thanksgiving or Winter Break?

Yes, students will be allowed to return to campus after breaks.
Dr. Lawrence’s Savvy-Safe Travel Advice

- Don’t travel if you’re sick. If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or loss of taste or smell), stay home.
- Bring masks or face coverings and hand sanitizer with you and use both while traveling.
- Wear a mask or face covering at all times in airports, on planes, or in any closed space with other people. If you have access to a disposable surgical mask (also known as an isolation mask), consider wearing one during flights, or while riding trains or buses.
- Stay at least six feet away from other people as much as possible.
- If you are flying, double check to make sure you choose an airline that requires and enforces masking for everyone on board. Same with train or bus travel – be sure to check the policies of the transportation companies you choose and only travel with one that requires masks.
- If you are seated near a passenger who is not wearing a mask or face covering, ask to be moved to another seat.
- Use hand sanitizer after touching surfaces in airports or other transportation hubs.
- Avoid gathering with groups of people, paying particular attention to boarding areas, information desks, and other places where a crowd may form.