



UCR School of Medicine

Block Director's Handbook

2020-21

Welcome to our team! This handbook aims to provide current and prospective Preclerkship Block Directors with a baseline overview of their key roles and responsibilities. The job of Block Director is not easy — it demands considerable time, thought, organization, and dedication. Although challenging, few other roles in the medical school offer as many opportunities to positively influence the education of our future physicians and, in turn, the well-being of their future patients.

All Block and Thread Directors work in partnership with the Associate Dean for Preclerkship Medical Education in a spirit of mutual support, open exchange, and shared mission. Leadership, engagement, and faculty mentorship are the secret ingredients of a successful block.

Remaining questions should be addressed to: Byron Ford, PhD, Associate Dean for Preclerkship Medical Education, byron.ford@medsch.ucr.edu; 951-827-2473

The UCR SOM values the contributions of Block Directors and instructors to its educational mission. In recognition of exemplary service, Block Directors may be provided additional compensation (Z-component) or appropriate release time from other responsibilities. This bonus will be awarded at the end of each academic year, based on performance that year. In addition, faculty and department chairs will be urged to acknowledge exemplary teaching and block leadership as important factors in all merit and promotion deliberations and in the chair's letter to the Committee on Academic Personnel.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Block Directors will be directly responsible for developing and implementing the instructional program of the block and will collaborate with the AD Preclerkship Medical Education and other block/thread directors in coordinating the overall curriculum. Block Directors will be supported by the professional services of Medical Education Coordinator; the Manager of Assessment & Evaluation Systems; Learning Specialists in the Office of Academic Counseling & Student Support; the Office of Faculty Development; and Instructional Support (IT). As a supplement to this handbook, you should become familiar with the current policies and guidelines outlined in the "**Medical Student Handbook**" (<https://somsa.ucr.edu/som-handbook>) and with the instructional resources and services offered by the **UCR SOM Office of Faculty Development** (<https://facdev.ucr.edu/writing-learning-outcomes>).

In partnership with the Associate Dean for Preclerkship Medical Education, Block Directors are expected to:

BEFORE THE BLOCK:

- formulate a Block Syllabus (*see Section-A-1*)
- plan the content and sequence of instruction, but not the scheduling (*see Section-A-2*)
- assist faculty in planning their lecture content that prioritizes core Learning Outcomes
- ensure that each lecture includes a list of 3-6 Learning Outcomes (*see Section-A-3*)
- encourage the use of techniques that promote student participation and collaborative learning
- ensure that faculty submit materials (Learning Outcomes; PowerPoint slides, case presentations, self-assessment and exam questions) in a timely manner

DURING THE BLOCK:

- monitor lectures for instructor effectiveness (organization; speaking skills; appropriate level; enthusiasm; time management; professional behavior)
- respond promptly to concerns raised by the class reps or faculty
- review and edit weekly self-assessment questions for clarity, alignment to content, and recommended format (*see Section-A-5*)

- monitor student performance on assessments and notify the SAD Academic Affairs (Dr. Simmons, emma.simmons@medsch.ucr.edu) and the Director of Academic Counseling & Student Support (Dr. Granillo, christina.granillo@medsch.ucr.edu) of any student with unsatisfactory progress.
- provide students with information on the block exams at least 2 weeks prior to exam week (*see Section-A-6*)
- compile and review the end-of-block exams (*see Section-A-5*)
- proctor the exam and/or be immediately available throughout the exam to answer questions

AFTER THE BLOCK:

- review student performance on each question (item analysis, statistics) and discard invalid questions (low %, low point bi-serial)
- review scores for assigning grades
- review student evaluations of instructors and provide constructive feedback (*see Section-A-7*)
- encourage instructors to make use of the workshops and consultation services offered by the UCR SOM Office of Faculty Development (<https://facdev.ucr.edu/>)
- attend the End-of-Block Review session (typically 1-2 weeks after exams)

YEAR-ROUND

- endeavor to improve the block based on annual feedback (student survey; evaluations; Block Review)
- promote a culture of excellence in teaching among your faculty
- attend bi-monthly Block Director meetings
- attend Preclerkship Curriculum Subcommittee meetings
- attend Medical Education Committee meetings (3rd Thursday of each month from 4:00-5:30PM)

KEY PERSONNEL

Coordinator: provides administrative support for your block. This includes, but is not limited to:

- scheduling all instructional sessions
- assembling and posting instructional materials and assessments/exams online
- maintaining time limits on teaching sessions
- working with Instructional Support Analysts to ensure that podcasts are properly recorded
- serve as liaison with students in all daily activities

YEAR-1 Coordinator: Tracy Bereal, tracy.bereal@medsch.ucr.edu, 951-827-7596

Block-1	MDCL-231	Foundations of Medicine I
Directors:	Monica Carson, PhD	monica.carson@medsch.ucr.edu
	Sika Zheng, PhD	sika.zheng@medsch.ucr.edu
Block-2	MDCL-232	Cardiovascular, Renal and Respiratory Sciences I
Director:	Christian Lytle, PhD	christian.lytle@medsch.ucr.edu
Block-3	MDCL-233	Gastrointestinal, Endocrine, and Reproductive Health I
Directors:	Declan McCole, PhD	declan.mccole@medsch.ucr.edu
	Mallory Stuparich, MD	mallory.stuparich@medsch.ucr.edu
Block-4	MDCL-234	Musculoskeletal Medicine

Directors: Mo Entezampour, PhD mo.entezampour@medsch.ucr.edu
 Byron Ford, PhD byron.ford@medsch.ucr.edu

Block-5 MDCL-235 Clinical Neurosciences I

Director: Iryna Ethell, PhD iryna.ethell@medsch.ucr.edu

YEAR-1 THREADS

ANATOMY: Mo Entezampour, PhD

BIOSTATISTICS/EPIDEMIOLOGY: Adam Godzik, PhD

CBL: Rebecca Gavan, MD

CLINICAL SKILLS-1: Adolfo Aguilar, MD

DOCTORING-1: Rebecca Gavan, MD

HEALTH EQUITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ANTI-RACISM: Adwoa Osei, MD; Carlos Cortes, PhD

LACE: Moazzum Bajwa, MD

PHARMACOLOGY: Maurizio Pellecchia, PhD

YEAR-2 Coordinator: Michelle Mwazae, michelle.mwazae@medsch.ucr.edu, 951-827-6251

Block-6 MDCL-236 Foundations of Medicine II

Directors: Meera Nair, PhD meera.nair@medsch.ucr.edu
 Nandini Gowda, PhD nandini.gowda@medsch.ucr.edu

Block-7 MDCL-237 Cardiovascular, Renal and Respiratory Sciences II

Directors: Christian Lytle, PhD Christian.Lytle@medsch.ucr.edu
 Hina Mohsin, MD Hina.Mohsin@medsch.ucr.edu

Block-8 MDCL-238 Gastrointestinal, Endocrine, and Reproductive Health II

Directors: (interim) Christian Lytle, PhD christian.lytle@medsch.ucr.edu
 Rebecca Gavan, MD rebecca.gavan@medsch.ucr.edu

Block-9 MDCL-239 Clinical Neurosciences II

Directors: Seema Tiwari-Woodruff, PhD seema.tiwari-woodruff@medsch.ucr.edu
 David Franklin, PsyD david.franklin@medsch.ucr.edu

YEAR-2 THREADS

ANATOMY: Mo Entezampour, PhD

BIOSTATISTICS/EPIDEMIOLOGY: Adam Godzik, PhD

CBL: Rebecca Gavan, MD

CLINICAL SKILLS-2: Rebecca Gavan, MD; William Hunt, MD

DOCTORING-2: William Hunt, MD

HEALTH EQUITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ANTI-RACISM: Adwoa Osei, MD; Carlos Cortes, PhD

LACE: Moazzum Bajwa, MD

PHARMACOLOGY: Maurizio Pellecchia, PhD

A-1: BLOCK SYLLABUS

The first responsibility of a block director is to formulate a complete and accurate Block Syllabus that includes:

1) Contact information for **Block Director** and **Med-Ed Coordinator**;

- 2) **Block Outcomes/Objectives** that define the overall goals of instruction within the block; lesson outcomes should be aligned with Block Goals and encompass core concepts listed in the USMLE Step-1 Content Outline;
- 3) **Policies** for examinations (exam schedule, format, and relative contribution to block grade), weekly assessments, attendance, podcasting, and grading (including passing score);
- 4) **Requirements** regarding course materials (e.g., required/recommended textbooks; computer software);

The format of all syllabi should be comparable, and the prescribed policies should be consistent with the mission, educational objectives and policies of the UCR-SOM, as specified in the Student Handbook.

Block Directors are urged to submit an updated syllabus to the Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the block.

A-2: PLANNING CONTENT AND SEQUENCING

OVERVIEW: The 20-month pre-clinical curriculum consists of 9 interdisciplinary blocks. In Year-1, the primary goal of instruction is to establish a core knowledge base of the human body through a survey of the biochemistry, cell biology, genetics, histology, anatomy, immunology, physiology and pharmacology of each major organ system in health and disease. Building on this foundation, Year-2 provides a second pass through each organ system with an emphasis on the diagnosis and treatment of their diseases using evidence-based approaches. Woven across all blocks are curricular threads that explore biostatistics and epidemiology, patient interviewing and physical examination, cultural components of health and disease, health policy, professionalism and ethics. Instruction is driven by cases explored through problem-based learning, labs, clinical correlations, workshops, and independent study. In Year 1, students begin a 3-year Longitudinal Ambulatory Care Experience (LACE) where they care for a panel of patients under the supervision of a physician-mentor.

Each Block Director is urged to take ownership of their block, but understand that it is but one part of an overall curriculum that is carefully and coherently organized and sequenced. Your most important (and difficult) task will be ensure that the block curriculum presents the prescribed core content at the appropriate level in an effective way. In the end, what we teach is less important than what the students learn.

Time is precious. Block Directors should monitor weekly contact time and avoid the common tendency to add sessions, extend in-class time, and assign out-of-class content (“curriculum creep”). By formal policy, scheduled student activities are limited to an average of 24 hours per week to allow time for independent study. Of these 24 hours, no more than 10 hours on average are to be didactic lectures. Since activities are constrained by curricular planning and faculty availability, some weeks might have more contact hours than others, but Block Directors and Coordinators should endeavor to schedule no more than 24 total hours per week. Research has demonstrated that, after some point, additional hours of scheduled activities result in disproportionately less time in independent study and counterproductive student anxiety.

Attendance is required at all sessions designated as such on the Student Calendar. Required sessions include, but are not limited to, clinical skills instruction (Doctoring, Clinical Skills, LACE), Case-based learning (CBL) modules, and laboratory activities. Block Directors, in consultation with the AD Preclerkship Medical Education, may designate additional sessions (e.g., interactive sessions using active learning formats) as mandatory attendance. Although attendance at all didactic lectures is strongly encouraged, it is not required.

The Block Directors and the AD Preclerkship Medical Education will jointly be responsible for planning and implementing an up-to-date block curriculum that is appropriate (aligns with the overall curricular plan) and that addresses concerns raised in previous block reviews.

Reading assignments should be carefully tailored to be focused toward specific learning objectives/outcomes; assigning numerous pages that include peripherally-relevant topics can be overwhelming and counterproductive.

A-3: CREATING LEARNING OUTCOMES

The UCR SOM is required, per LCME accreditation, to identify the specific, observable, and measurable outcomes for each component of our instructional program (lesson; block; program). A **Learning Outcome** is something that we expect the student to know, or be able to do, at the end of a lesson, block, or program. Learning Outcomes not only guide the student, but are indispensable for mapping the curriculum. Block Directors should ensure that each lesson includes a list of 3-5 Learning Outcomes that focus attention on the most important “core” concepts. Learning Outcomes are typically listed on the second slide of the lesson’s PowerPoint deck (after the Intro slide). Well-written learning objectives use descriptive verbs and state what the learner should be able to do after the session. A succinct overview on writing Learning Outcomes by Rosemary Tyrrell, EdD, can be found on the **UCR SOM Faculty Development** web site (<https://facdev.ucr.edu/writing-learning-outcomes>).

A-4: WEEKLY SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Each week concludes with a mandatory online quiz. These frequent, formative assessments are intended to: a) identify students who may need individual assistance; b) illustrate the depth and breadth of understanding that is expected of the student; c) guide the student’s studies by identifying areas of strength and weakness; and d) incentivize the student to keep abreast of weekly material. Research has shown that frequent quizzing (retrieval and reflection) has a powerful effect on learning and long-term retention, but only after the student has acquired a framework of basic knowledge (e.g., from lectures, assigned reading, and initial study).

Assessment questions may come from lectures, labs, CBL, Doctoring/Clinical Skills, and LACE. Questions should focus on material covered in the past week, but may review material from previous weeks within the block. The assessment will normally consist of 25-35 multiple-choice questions. Students have 1-hour to complete the assessment and are encouraged to take it as “closed book”.

Block Directors will be emailed assessment scores, statistics, and item analysis by mid-week. Block Directors are urged to monitor student performance each week; struggling students (e.g., with scores consistently below 60%) should be brought to the attention of Dr. Emma Simmons (Senior Associate Dean, Student Affairs) and Dr. Christina Granillo (Director, Academic Counseling & Student Support).

All students are expected to complete assessments each week. In Year-1, assessment scores do not contribute to the block grade. In Year-2, assessment scores contribute 35% of the block final grade.

Instructors are asked to email questions (2-3/lecture hour) to the Coordinator no later than noon on Thursday. After this deadline, the Coordinator will, as a contingency, post questions from the previous year, if any are available.

A-5: REVIEWING SELF ASSESSMENT & EXAM QUESTIONS

Before posting the assessment, the Coordinator will email it to the Block Director for review and approval.

Block Directors should urge instructors to:

- submit end-of-block exam questions (2/lecture hour) along with self-assessment questions (2-3 lecture hour)
- write questions that emphasize and align with the core learning outcomes
- write questions that assess the ability of students to integrate and apply what they have learned, and to analyze new information in light of what they have been taught in lecture; questions should NOT emphasize memory-recall of isolated facts or terminology
- use NBME question format (as illustrated by retired USMLE Step-1 Exam questions)
 - encourage use of clinical case vignettes
 - avoid question formats that are no longer used by the NBME; do NOT use:

- complex (“Type-K”) questions with multiple correct answers (“A, B, and E”)
- True/False questions
- negative questions, e.g., “Each of the following is correct EXCEPT...”
- “None of the above”; “All of the above”
- include explanations to each correct answer

Tips on writing effective, NBME-style questions can be found at: (<https://facdev.ucr.edu/writing-effective-test-questions>).

The coordinator will email each instructor a packet of retired USMLE Step-1 Exam questions that pertains to their topic; these may be used as templates for writing NBME-style questions provided they are not distributed to students in any form. They have been assembled from 4 sources:

- *USMLE Q&A Step-1*
- *Kaplan Qbook Step-1*
- *First-Aid Q&A USMLE Step-1*
- *NBME Samples*

At present, packets of questions in 16 subject areas are available (**# questions**).

Anatomy (Gross, Neuroanatomy, Neuro Embryology, Neuro Histology) 50	Histology & Cell Biology 120
Behavioral Science and Biostatistics 161	Immunology 130
Biochemistry 170	Microbiology 141
Cardiovascular/Cardiology 50	Musculoskeletal & Connective Tissue 50
Embryology 120	Neurology 50
Endocrinology 50	Renal/Nephrology 50
Gastrointestinal 50	Reproductive Health 50
Hematology/Oncology 50	Respiratory/Pulmonology 50

More questions will be added as additional sources are acquired, vetted, and categorized.

A-6: EXAM WEEK NOTIFICATIONS

Block Directors should inform students of the schedule and format of the block exams at least 2 weeks prior to exam week. Students will often ask:

1. How many questions will be on each exam? *Ordinarily 85-120 for a standard 3-hour block exam.*
2. How much time will be allotted for each?
3. Will we be provided with a reference value sheet (normal lab values)? *Our policy has been to provide reference values, either within the question or on a separate handout.*
4. Will there be a need for headphones (cardiac auscultation, chest/bowel sounds)?
5. What rooms will student groups be assigned to?
6. Will calculators be necessary/allowed? *If helpful, calculators will be provided.*

Exam Policies— Security

- The class is divided into groups of ≤35, e.g., one in Room G650 and the other in Room 1670.
- Exams will be given online using a secure utility/configuration (copy/print/save functions disabled).
- Each group should be continuously proctored by the Block Director, or the Coordinator, or the TA.
- Desktops should be cleared of all notes, books, backpacks, calculators, cellphones, purses, etc.
- Only one student at a time is permitted to leave the room for a short (≤10 min) bathroom break.
- Students are not permitted to bring cellphones or backpacks on bathroom breaks.

GRADING POLICIES

Only two grades are possible: **Pass** (Satisfactory) or **Fail** (No Credit). In order to receive a Pass, each component of the block (Didactic lectures; CBL; Clinical Skills/Doctoring; LACE) must be completed in a satisfactory manner.

There are important differences in grading policy between Year-1 and Year-2:

In Year-1 (Blocks 1-5), the standard format for Exam Weeks is:

Monday: **Didactic Lecture Exam**, 1:00-4:00PM

Tuesday: **Clinical Skills/Doctoring Exam**, 12:00-5:00PM

Weds: **Anatomy/Histology/Pathology Practical Exam**, 1:00-4:00PM

Weekly self-assessments: do not contribute to block grade

For passing, the weighted sum of these exam scores must be $\geq 70\%$.

In Year-2 (Blocks 6-9), the standard format for exam week is:

Monday: **Customized NBME Exam**, 8:00AM-12:00PM (65% of block grade)

Weds: **OSCE**, 8:00AM-12:00PM (required pass)

Weekly Quizzes (Monday morning) contribute 35% of the block score.

For passing, the weighted sum of these exam scores must be $\geq 65\%$ or greater than 2 standard deviations below the mean (whichever is lower).

Students who do not achieve the minimum passing score will be tracked using an internal failing grade.

Unsatisfactory performance in one block will require remediation of the block. Normally, remediation would occur after the end of the academic year, following a time period of study determined in consultation with the responsible block directors, but with no less than two weeks of study before the re-examination. Following consultation and approval by the appropriate block directors, a remediation re-examination for either block 1, 2, 6, or 7 may be held during the first or second week of January. Regardless of when the re-examination occurs, an unsatisfactory performance on the re-examination will require repetition of the entire academic year. Two unsatisfactory block performances in one academic year will necessitate repetition of the entire academic year. Students will not be allowed to advance to the next instructional year until all blocks have been successfully completed. Promotion to the next year of medical school will be determined by the Medical School Progress & Promotions Committee.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF FACULTY INSTRUCTION

All mandatory evaluations must be completed at the end of the block. There are optional weekly evaluations to comment on the week's learning activities. Small group sessions will be compiled for evaluations at the end of the block. Each evaluation is ~8 questions. Everyone must complete the small group evaluations (5-10 per block) and evaluation for the block itself.

Teaching evaluations become a permanent part of the individual faculty member's record and are considered very seriously by the administration in all merit and promotion decisions. They should be used to constructively critique or praise the teaching efforts of a faculty member, and should be taken seriously. Missing an evaluation deadline, or failure to complete assigned evaluations may result in a referral for professionalism concern..

A-7: PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO EACH INSTRUCTOR

Direct conveyance of raw evaluations — without interpretation, balance, perspective, context, or advice — has proven to be ineffective method of providing feedback and has had an erosive effect on faculty morale and participation.

At the end of the block, Directors are expected to email major instructors a cover letter that includes the following:

- a lead-off sentence that acknowledges the instructor's contributions and expresses gratitude on behalf of the UCR SOM and its students.
- a synopsis of the student comments that provides a balanced overview of the class consensus.
- your suggestions on how the instructor might address the major concerns and recommendations; e.g., consultation with the Block Director or with the Director of Faculty Development (a description of the

many services and programs offered by this office is appended to the end of this document); or use of the SOM student assistant to improve the formatting and consistency of PowerPoint slides.

- an offer to provide unedited student comments upon request


POLICY ON UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Students are urged to attend all scheduled educational activities, and are required to attend all sessions labeled as mandatory. Required sessions include, but are not limited to, laboratory sessions, CBL modules, clinical skills, doctoring, and LACE. Block Directors may designate additional sessions as required in the course syllabus.

The preclerkship curriculum is designed to have on average a maximum of 24 hours total contact time per week – this includes both required and recommended educational activities. Efforts are made to provide one or more unscheduled afternoons within each week for self-study. With this scheduling strategy, students should be able to plan their appointments outside of required educational experiences.

Coordinators will record attendance at all required educational activities. Required sessions include, but are not limited to, clinical skills instruction (Doctoring, Clinical Skills, LACE), CBL modules, and laboratory activities. Block Directors, in consultation with the AD-Preclerkship Education, may designate additional sessions (e.g., interactive sessions using active learning formats) as mandatory attendance. ***Although attendance at all didactic lectures is strongly encouraged, it is not required.***

Any absence from a required session must be excused *in advance* by both the Block Director and the Dean of Student Affairs (see the Request for Approved Absence form for details). Typical excused absences may include religious holidays, weddings, illness, death of an immediate family member, or presentation or leadership position



Request for Approved Absence

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Today's Date: _____

Date(s) of Absence: _____

Reason for Request:

NOTE: Documentation confirming reason must be attached (e.g. doctor's note, conference invitation, etc.)

Educational Component(s) Missed:

NOTE: Student is responsible for all material and missed assignments as determined by the Block Coordinator.

Approved
 Approved with condition
 Not approved
 Condition: _____

Block Coordinator: _____

Approved
 Approved with condition
 Not approved
 Condition: _____

Dean of Student Affairs: _____

NOTE: Request MUST be approved by both the Block Coordinator and the Dean of Student Affairs PRIOR to the absence date.

at a national conference. Unexcused absences will be reported and may result in a professionalism referral by the Senior Associate Dean of Student Affairs.



Programs & Services offered to all faculty by the SOM Office of Faculty Development

Faculty Development Workshops

The Office of Faculty Development presents workshops on topics relevant to teaching and student learning. Most workshops are on the UCR campus or at the UC Intellicenter. To request a workshop for your clinical location, please contact the Office of Faculty Development.

Webinars and Podcasts

Can't come to campus? We also regularly offer webinars on subjects related to teaching, particularly on teaching in a clinical setting. Most of these webinars are "mini" webinars, taking only 30 minutes and are held during a normal lunch period. In addition, most of the Office of Faculty Development programs are recorded and available in podcast form.

One-on-One Consultation

No time to attend a workshop? Meet with an educational consultant. One-on-one consultation can help you with a variety of issues, from simple matters like creating better PowerPoints to more complicated challenges like instructional design, the Office of Faculty Development stands ready to assist you.

Teaching Observation

Some professors find it helpful to have an objective individual observe their teaching and provide feedback. An outside observer can see things you may not be aware of and has no ulterior motive in providing feedback other than to help you. An educational specialist can sit in on your class, CBL, or other teaching session and meet with you privately to provide feedback. The Office of Faculty Development teaching observation is completely confidential and will not affect your promotions or other administrative evaluations. Feedback will not be shared with anyone other than you.

Small Group Instructional Diagnosis

Do you find student evaluations of teaching confusing and unhelpful at times? Many professors find the Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) is a far more effective and constructive way of gaining student feedback on teaching.

The SGID is facilitated by an educational specialist in your absence. The facilitator asks questions, including those you provide, and then distills and organizes content into useful threads of information. You can learn in a productive way:

- Techniques help students learn well in class
- Techniques are not as helpful for student learning
- Constructive suggestions for improvements

The results are presented to you in a private meeting with your facilitator. The SGID process is completely confidential and does not affect your promotions or other administrative evaluations. No information is shared with anyone other than you.

