

Technical Standards

MD Program at Mercer University School of Medicine

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Updated with University-wide Accommodations application process September 30, 2019

The policy, all forms, and contact information can be found on the website <http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/disabilityservices/>

The MD degree is a broad undifferentiated degree attesting to general knowledge in medicine and the basic skills required for the practice of medicine. Essential abilities and characteristics required for completion of the MD degree consist of certain minimum physical and cognitive abilities and sufficient mental and emotional stability to assure that candidates for admission, promotion, and graduation are able to complete the entire course of study and participate fully in all aspects of medical training. The School of Medicine intends for its graduates to become competent and compassionate physicians who are capable of entering residency training (graduate medical education) and meeting all requirements for medical licensure. **The avowed intention of an individual student to practice only a narrow part of clinical medicine, or to pursue a non-clinical career, does not alter the requirement that all medical students take and achieve competence in the full curriculum required by the faculty.** Graduates of medical school must have the knowledge and skills to function in a broad variety of clinical situations and to render a wide spectrum of patient care. Since the treatment of patients is an essential part of the educational program, Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) must act to protect the health and safety of patients.

The Admissions Committee of Mercer University School of Medicine acknowledges Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and asserts that the ability to meet certain essential technical standards with or without reasonable accommodations must be present in the prospective candidates. Disclosure of a disability is voluntary; however, applicants who want to request accommodations during the admissions process should contact the Mercer University School of Medicine Office of Student Affairs.

All students must review the Technical Standards at the time of admission and at the beginning of each academic year. The Technical Standard Student Review Acknowledgement form must be completed and submitted to the Office of Student Affairs.

A candidate for the M.D. degree must have aptitude, abilities, and skills in five areas: Observation; Communication; Motor; Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative; and Behavioral/Social. Technological compensation can be made for some disabilities in certain areas but a candidate must be able to perform in an independent manner.

Candidates for the M.D. degree must have somatic sensation and the functional use of the senses of vision and other sensory modalities. Candidate's diagnostic skills would be inadequate without the functional use of the senses of equilibrium and smell/taste. Additionally, they must have sufficient exteroceptive sense (touch, pain, and temperature), sufficient proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement, stereognosis, vibratory) and sufficient motor function to permit them to carry out the activities described in the section below. They must be able consistently, quickly, and accurately to integrate all information received by whatever senses employed, and they must have the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data.

Technical Standards

Observation

Medical students must be able to observe demonstrations, experiments, and personal encounters in the classroom, small group, large group, and clinical settings. These experiences may include but are not limited to dissection of cadavers, physiologic and pharmacologic demonstrations, and microscopic studies of microorganisms and tissues in normal and pathologic states. A candidate must be able to observe a patient accurately at a distance and close at hand. Candidates must be able to accurately acquire information from patients and assess findings. They must be able to perform a complete physical examination in a timely fashion in order, to integrate findings based on this information, and to develop an appropriate diagnostic and treatment plan. These skills require the use of vision, hearing, and touch or the functional equivalent. In addition, medical students must be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures.

Communication

Medical students must be able to communicate and observe people in a variety of settings. In particular, students must be able to interact with patients in order to elicit information, describe changes in mood, activity and posture and perceive nonverbal communications. Medical students must be able to communicate effectively, sensitively, and rapidly with peers, faculty, staff, members of the health care team, and patients. They must be able to give and receive constructive feedback. Medical students must demonstrate the ability to process feedback and utilize it to conform their behavior to expected professional standards. Candidates and students must be able to read and write in standard format and must be able to interact with computers in rendering patient care. Candidates must be able to obtain a medical history in a timely fashion, interpret non-verbal aspects of communication, and establish therapeutic relationships with patients. Candidates and students must be proficient in English in order to be able to prepare a legible patient workup and present the workup orally in a focused manner to other health care professionals.

Motor

Candidates should have sufficient motor function to elicit information from patients by palpation, auscultation, percussion, and other diagnostic maneuvers. By the completion of training, a candidate must have the ability to perform both a complete and an organ system specific examination, including a mental status examination. Additionally, candidates completing training must have the ability to perform routine technical procedures, including but not limited to, venipuncture, inserting an intravenous catheter, arterial puncture, thoracentesis, lumbar puncture, inserting a nasogastric tube, inserting a Foley catheter, and suturing lacerations. A candidate should be able to execute motor movements reasonably required to provide general care and emergency treatment to patients. Examples of emergency treatments include, but are not limited to, adult and pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation (including two-rescuer scenarios and use of the bag mask), the opening of obstructed airways, automated external defibrillation, the administration of intravenous medication, application of pressure to stop bleeding, and the performance of simple obstetrical maneuvers. Such actions require quick and immediate reaction. Coordination of both gross and fine muscular movements, equilibrium and functional use of the senses of touch and vision are required.

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative, and Quantitative Abilities

Medical students must be able to integrate information received by whatever sense(s) employed. They must be able to problem-solve rapidly. This critical skill demanded of physicians requires the ability to learn, to reason, to integrate, to analyze and synthesize data concurrently in a multi-task setting where there may be a high level of stress and distraction. Problem solving, the critical skill demanded of

physicians, requires all of these intellectual abilities. In addition, the candidate should be able to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand the spatial relationships of structures. Candidates and students must possess a range of skills that allows mastery of the complex body of knowledge that comprises a medical education. Candidates and students must be able to recall large amounts of information, perform scientific measurements and calculations, and understand and cognitively manipulate three-dimensional models. Candidates and students must be able to learn effectively through a variety of modalities including but not limited to: classroom instruction, small group discussion, demonstration and observation of skills, individual and collaborative study of materials, preparation and presentation of written and oral reports, and use of computer-based technology. Candidates and students must exhibit reasoning abilities sufficient to analyze and synthesize information from a wide variety of sources. The ultimate goal of the student will be to render patient care by solving difficult problems and making diagnostic and therapeutic decisions in a timely fashion. Candidates must be fully alert and attentive at all times in clinical settings.

Behavioral and Social Attributes

A candidate must possess the emotional health required for full utilization of intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients and the care team. Medical students must demonstrate empathy, and concern for others while respecting appropriate personal and professional boundaries. Medical students must demonstrate integrity as manifested by truthfulness, acceptance of responsibility for one's actions, accountability for mistakes, and the ability to place the well-being of the patient above their own when necessary. They must be able to tolerate demanding workloads and to function effectively under stress. They must be able to adapt to changing environments, to display flexibility and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the medical education and clinical practice settings. The candidate must be willing to interview, physically examine, and provide care to all patients regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, culture, religion, or sexual orientation.

Process for Student Review of Technical Standards for Accepted First Year Medical Students and Accepted Transfer Students

All recently accepted students, First Year and Transfer into Third Year, are required to review the Technical Standards for the MD Program at Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) and they must indicate as a requirement of their enrollment whether or not that they will need reasonable accommodations while attending MUSM. They must submit a signed acknowledgement within **two weeks** of receiving their acceptance letter indicating that they either require reasonable accommodations or that they do not.

For those students who note that they have reviewed the Technical Standards and **do not require** reasonable accommodations, no further action is required and their signed acknowledgement will be kept on file in the Office of Student Affairs in the Registrar's Office. All students will be required to review the Technical Standards each year and asked to sign an updated form which will be kept on file in the Office of Student Affairs in the Registrar's Office.

For those who note that they have reviewed the Technical Standards and **do require** reasonable accommodations, they will be required to submit an application and supporting documentation from their physician which will be submitted through the Mercer University Office of Accommodations at <https://access.mercer.edu/students/new>.

All students may apply for accommodations at any time during the academic year.

Further information on policies, procedures and documentation requirements may be obtained by contacting the Director of Access and Accommodation at 478-301-2778.

All policies and procedures including Disability Grievance Procedures may be found at <http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/disabilityservices/>.

Process for Student Review of Technical Standards for Continuing Medical Students

All continuing medical students are required to review the Technical Standards for the MD Program at Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) and they must indicate as a requirement of their continued enrollment whether or not that they will need reasonable accommodations while attending MUSM. They must submit a signed acknowledgement **four weeks** prior to the beginning of each academic year indicating that they either require reasonable accommodations or that they do not.

For those students who note that they have reviewed the Technical Standards and **do not require** reasonable accommodations, no further action is required and their signed acknowledgement will be kept on file in the Office of Student Affairs in the Registrar's Office.

For those who note that they have reviewed the Technical Standards and **do require** reasonable accommodations, they will be required to submit an application and supporting documentation from their physician which will be submitted through the Mercer University Office of Accommodations at <https://access.mercer.edu/students/new>.

All students may apply for accommodations at any time during the academic year.

Further information on policies, procedures and documentation requirements may be obtained by contacting the Director of Access and Accommodation at 478-301-2778.

All policies and procedures including Disability Grievance Procedures may be found at <http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/disabilityservices/>.

Testing Accommodation Policy

The school will consider for admission, matriculation, continuation, and graduation those individuals who demonstrate the knowledge and ability to perform or learn to perform the skills described in this document. Individuals will be assessed not only on their scholastic accomplishments but also on their physical and emotional capabilities to meet the requirements of the school's curriculum and to graduate as skilled and effective practitioners of medicine.

Accommodations must be requested through the Office of Access and Accommodation at <http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/disabilityservices/>. The Director of Access and Accommodation can be reached at 478-301-2778. The Office of Student Affairs oversees applications for accommodations in accordance to the Technical Standards Advisory Committee.

Mercer University School of Medicine will, if requested, provide reasonable accommodations to otherwise qualified, enrolled students and applicants with disabilities unless:

such accommodations threaten harm to the health and safety of others or impose an undue hardship to the institution due to the disability

or

such accommodations fundamentally alter the educational program or academic standards of the university.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for qualified individuals with limitations due to a documented disability. Applicants for admission and current students, with or without reasonable accommodations, must be able to satisfy the technical standards for acceptance into, progression through and graduation from the School of Medicine.

At the discretion of the School of Medicine, a student whose behavior or performance raises questions concerning his or her ability to fulfill these technical standards may be required to obtain evaluation and/or testing by a healthcare provider designated by the school, and to provide the results to the Technical Standards Advisory Committee (TSAC) for the purpose of determining whether the student is fit to pursue the educational program. If a student is deemed fit to pursue the program, the school reserves the right to require actions recommended by the healthcare provider, including further testing, counseling, monitoring, leave of absence, etc.

Applicants

Once admitted, students will contact the Office of Access and Accommodation at <http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/disabilityservices/>, who will work with the Office of Student Affairs and the Technical Standards Advisory Committee to establish accommodations. Throughout a student's career, the Office of Student Affairs will work to make sure that a disability is reasonably accommodated.

Students

A student who seeks accommodations will be required to submit an application and supporting documentation from their physician which will be submitted through the Mercer University Office of Accommodations at <https://access.mercer.edu/students/new>.

Once a student has submitted an application, they should schedule an appointment (in person or via Zoom) with Candi Nobles-James, M.D., Associate Dean of Student Affairs to discuss the application. The student provides documentation (prior accommodations for SAT/ACT, MCAT, or undergraduate studies, if applicable, and a completed physical examination form (a letter from an appropriate healthcare provider may be utilized but must contain all of the information found in the University Physical Form)). All

documentation provided will be reviewed by the Deans of Student Affairs and the Technical Standards Advisory Council. Once all documentation has been reviewed then the student meets with Dr. Nobles-James and they complete the Accommodations Acceptance form, the Student Agreement, the Semester Request, and will complete all documentation for the student's file. Dr. Nobles-James will forward approved accommodations to the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Head Proctor. The student is required to submit a Semester Request each semester that they require accommodations.

The financial cost for documentation, assessment or evaluation will be the sole responsibility of the student. If it is determined that accommodations are necessary to allow a medical student to meet the School of Medicine technical standards, then the application and all supporting documentation will be forwarded to the Technical Standards Advisory Committee. The TSAC will review the request to see if the accommodations are feasible.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will be notified in writing of the committee's decision. If the accommodations are deemed appropriate and feasible, the Office of Academic Affairs will be given the responsibility for implementing them. If the accommodations cannot be made, the student will be informed by letter. If the student is unable to meet the technical standards, the student will be dismissed. A medical student who is dismissed on the basis of inability to meet the technical standards of the School of Medicine will have the right of appeal to the Dean through the established appeal process used in academic dismissals.

It is the intent of Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) to create a transparent accommodations environment for those students receiving testing accommodations. Those students requiring additional time for written tests will be given the opportunity to test in an environment separate from those students not receiving accommodations to minimize bias.

A confirmatory letter of test accommodations offered should be sent to the Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to ensure that accommodations are administered by test administrators. There should be no form or indicator in the student's academic record indicating that they have received accommodations. A full copy of the student's accommodations information is on file at the Mercer University Office of Access and Accommodations.

For students receiving extra time to complete examinations, the total time available and the exam start time will be provided prior to the start of the examination. Should the student feel that there were inconsistencies concerning their accommodations during an examination, that information should be documented and the student should provide a brief, written description to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs promptly upon completion of the examination.

Testing venues eligible for accommodations are based **upon the physician's recommendation** and the School's **ability to reasonably accommodate** but *may* include:

- Written Formative Examinations
- Written Summative Examinations
- Medical Practice Exams
- Shelf Examinations

Registering with the Office of Access and Accommodation

Registering with the Office of Access and Accommodation is required of all students wishing to be recognized by the institution as a student with a disability regardless of whether accommodations are being requested.

Documentation for most disabilities consists of a recent formal letter of diagnosis from an appropriate licensed medical professional or licensed psychologist who is not a relative and should include a diagnosis, current impairments in functioning, and recommendations for specific accommodations to reduce the impact of the impairment. Use of the Mercer University Medical Verification of Disability Form includes all requirements.

Some types of disabilities may require that diagnostic testing results such as a psychological evaluation report, vision testing, allergy testing or an audiogram be submitted in addition to the Mercer University Medical Verification of Disability Form or letter of diagnosis. Specific documentation requirements may be found on the Mercer University School of Medicine Medical Verification of Disability Form and more information is available upon request.

Requesting accommodations is an interactive process and should be completed in a timely manner to allow adequate time for accommodation arrangements to be made. Accommodations may be requested at any time during the academic year regardless of when the student is diagnosed. Last minute requests may be denied.

Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by appropriate documentation. Additional or updated documentation may be required in order to receive specific or ongoing accommodations. An accommodation may be denied even if it has been recommended by an appropriate medical professional or has been granted by another agency or institution in the past.

Provisional accommodations may be provided for up to one semester in cases where the documentation submitted is determined to be out-of-date, incomplete or otherwise insufficient to allow the student sufficient time to obtain adequate documentation.

A request for accommodations must be made on a semester basis by completing a semester form found at <http://access.mercer.edu/students/registered/>.

Accommodations granted to students within the MUSM curriculum do not assure that accommodations on examinations that are not directly a part of the MUSM programs will be granted (for example the USMLE licensure examinations).

All forms are available at <http://studentaffairs.mercer.edu/disabilityservices/>.

Technical Standards Student Review Acknowledgement

The goal of the ACCESS and Accommodations Office is to improve the accessibility of Mercer University Programs, Services and Facilities for persons with disabilities and ensure institutional compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADAAA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (504).

The School has established Technical Standards for the MD Program to ensure that all students can meet the requirements of the school's curriculum and graduate as skilled and effective practitioners of medicine with or without reasonable accommodations.

Each student is required to review the Technical Standards at the time of admission and annually thereafter until graduation and to certify their ability to meet those standards with or without reasonable accommodations. Recently admitted students have **two weeks** from the receipt of their acceptance letter to return this form and to submit a Student Request For Accommodations form. Continuing students will be emailed this form prior to the start of each academic year. All students may apply for accommodations at any time during the academic year.

Based upon a review of the Technical Standards, please check the appropriate boxes below:

I have reviewed the Technical Standards and I believe that I can meet them **without** reasonable accommodations at this time. I understand that I may do so at a future date without penalty.

OR

I have reviewed the Technical Standards and I believe that I can meet them **with** reasonable accommodations.

I **plan to submit** a Student Request For Accommodations and Annual Update form.

I **do not plan to submit** a Student Request For Accommodations and Annual Update form at this time. I understand that I may do so at a future date without penalty.

Students should contact the representative on their campus with questions.

Macon Campus
Chief Contact for MUSM
Candi Nobles-James, MD
478-301-2531
nobles-james_cn@mercer.edu

Columbus Campus
Alice House, MD
706-223-5179
house_a@mercer.edu

Savannah Campus
Robert Shelley, MD
912-721-8146
shelley_rj@mercer.edu

I understand that fulfillment of the technical standards for graduation from Mercer University School of Medicine does not ensure that a graduate will be able to fulfill the technical requirements of any specific residency program.

Student's Printed Name

Signature

Date