**PRINCIPLES FOR PARALLEL CURRICULA (“TRACKS”)**

*(Approved by the LCME, October 2024)*

BACKGROUND

Medical schools may wish to create a curriculum for a subset of students that includes an additional required area of focus (e.g., rural health, leadership). Defined as a “parallel curriculum,” this includes required educational experiences and accompanying assessments for additional competencies/educational program objectives for the parallel curriculum that are not included as a requirement in the “core” curriculum for all students. With the increased experimentation occurring in medical schools, it is useful to have a common set of principles, based in LCME accreditation elements, for use by schools when they wish to create a parallel curriculum.

The relevant accreditation elements are as follows:

Element 8.7 (comparability of education/assessment)

 A medical school ensures that the medical curriculum includes comparable educational experiences and equivalent methods of assessment across all locations within a given course and clerkship to ensure that all students achieve the same educational program objectives.

Element 9.9 (student advancement and appeal process):

 A medical school ensures that the medical education program has a single set of core standards for the advancement and graduation of all medical students across all locations. A subset of medical students may have academic requirements in addition to the core standards if they are enrolled in a parallel curriculum.

DEFINITION OF A PARALLEL CURRICULUM

A parallel curriculum is a set of educational experiences and assessments for a subset of students that are based on specific objectives in addition to the medical education program objectives required of all students as part of the “core curriculum.”

PRINCIPLES THAT APPLY TO THE CORE CURRICULUM OF A MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

1. There must be a set of educational program objectives/competencies for all students enrolled in a medical education program (the “core curriculum”). These apply equally to students only in the core curriculum and those in the parallel” curriculum.

3. The core set of competencies/objectives should result in a graduate with the basic knowledge and skills that the school believes are required for entry into any field of graduate medical education.

4. Medical schools should determine what content must be included in the core curriculum for all students that is related to each of the core competencies/objectives.

5. In the core curriculum, the core competencies/objectives and content may be presented in different ways across instructional sites, but THIS DOES NOT ITSELF CONSTITUE A PARALLEL CURRICULUM. For example, there may be differences within the curriculum in length (e.g., a shortened curriculum for a subset of students), in content organization and sequencing (e.g., a longitudinal integrated clinical clerkship), or in instructional methods (e.g., a problem-based format at a given site). What allows these variations to remain within the core curriculum is that all students are required to meet the same educational program objectives and that the educational experiences are comparable.

6. The curriculum must be centrally monitored by the curriculum committee and educational program leadership to ensure that the core content and clinical experiences are appropriately represented in the educational program for all students, including those students in a parallel curriculum.

7. Assessment need not occur at the same time points within the core curriculum (e.g., the timing may vary between block clerkships and an LIC) but must occur by comparable and valid methods.

8. Medical student attainment of the core educational program competencies/objectives must be demonstrated at appropriate points in the standard curriculum.

PRINCIPLES THAT APPLY TO A MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM WITH A PARALLEL CURRICULUM:

These principles apply IN ADDITION TO the principles related to the “core curriculum.”

1. Parallel curricula include competencies/objectives that are required in addition to those in the core curriculum.

2. A parallel curriculum must be based on an institutionally agreed-upon educational rationale.

3. Parallel curricula will include the additional competencies/objectives as graduation requirements. The additional graduation requirements must be related to the rationale for the parallel curriculum and to the added competencies/objectives.

4. Students in the parallel curriculum must be taught and assessed on the additional competencies/objectives in addition to those competencies/objectives in the standard curriculum.

5. The parallel curriculum must be centrally monitored by the curriculum committee to ensure that its defined objectives are being evaluated and achieved.

6. The process for assignment to and transferring from a parallel curriculum must be fair and reasonable.