

MD PROGRAM

University Park Curriculum

Penn State College of Medicine has a tradition of excellence in education that is scientifically and clinically rigorous with a deep foundation in scholarship and humanistic care. Building on our experience, and benefiting from the resources offered at University Park, we invite you to learn in an environment that fosters inter-professional team skills, curiosity and a commitment to the calling of medicine.

The University Park Curriculum has been developed to build on the strong tradition of the Penn State College of Medicine, recognizing the unique opportunities provided by the combination of:

- a community-based health care system;
- a diverse, research-intensive university; and
- medical school faculty dedicated to creating innovative and meaningful educational programs.

The full integration of the basic and clinical sciences with health systems science and health humanities, along with community engagement and active, experiential learning strategies, form the centerpiece of the educational mission of the University Park Curriculum.

Curriculum Highlights

Patient-based Experiences

Immersion with patients and health care systems from the first days of medical school, integrated with active small group discussions, will drive your professional development as you explore the basic and clinical sciences, health systems science and the health humanities.

Individualized Mentoring

Our small class size allows for one-on-one mentoring from our core faculty as well as longitudinal learning relationships with a diverse group of health professionals in our clinical practice and community service sites. This entire program of individualized "coaching" will ensure you are able to take full advantage of your experiential learning opportunities.

Experiential Learning

We all learn best when we can connect skills and knowledge to our own experience. The University Park Curriculum is designed for you to anchor and motivate your learning in the patients and healthcare communities that you encounter, supported by colleagues, faculty and ready access to the rich resources of the College of Medicine and Penn State.

Community Engagement

You will collaborate with patients, community representatives and systems sites to learn and develop community-based solutions that improve healthcare outcomes.

A Culture of Respect and Humanistic Care

Penn State College of Medicine was the first medical school in the nation to have a Department of Humanities and we remain committed to fostering the development of humanistic, curious health care professionals. The University Park Curriculum has been specifically designed to support and enhance the role of the health humanities through patient experiences, integrated small group reflection, and faculty mentorship.

Curriculum

Year 1

- **Transition to Medicine**
 - *Last half of July*
 - This time helps you transition to University Park and build skills necessary for success in medicine.
 - These first weeks are when you join the collegial ranks of the profession, and begin first steps of your on-the-job training.
- **Patients and Sciences 1**
 - *Middle of July to middle of December, with November break*
 - The clinical experiences in Patients and Sciences 1 engage students in meaningful, patient-centered roles within primary care practice sites. Students bring patient cases to inquiry group (IQ) sessions to co-create learning objectives around the four core Penn State College of Medicine pillars (Biomedical, Health Humanities, Health Systems and Clinical Sciences) with faculty facilitators. Students then research the learning objectives for collaborative discussion, practical application, and additional question generation through the rest of the week and beyond. Students learn history, physical exam, and presentation skills in PS1 and PS2 and practice these skills in their clinical immersion sites. In addition to the IQ groups and clinical immersions, students participate in collaborative science tutorials for deeper exploration of biomedical science concepts.
 - A week of reflection and assessment occurs in October and December.
- **Patients and Sciences 2**
 - *January to June*
 - The experiences in Patients and Sciences 2 build on what is learned in Patients and Sciences 1.
 - Primary Care Immersion is an integral part of Patients and Sciences 2 in the University Park Curriculum.
 - A week of reflection and assessment occurs in March and May. These weeks are reserved for reflection on educational goals and accomplishment and formal assessment.
- **Assessment Weeks**
 - Assessment periods occur at four points during Year 1.
- **Portfolio Development**
 - *Ongoing*
 - Portfolios are part of the assessment process for medical students at Penn State College of Medicine. Written reflection assignments woven throughout the substance of PS1 and PS2 become part of each student's learning portfolio, and these portfolios become the record of the students' personal and professional growth through medical school. There is time set aside at the end of the first year for students to bring their portfolios up to date.
- **Medical Student Research and Global Health**
 - *Summer, end of Year 1*
 - All students must complete a student-driven research project during the course of their studies in medical school. During the summer of the first year, students have the opportunity to do research for the Medical Student Research project (<https://students.med.psu.edu/msr/>) and/or participate in global health opportunities (<https://med.psu.edu/global-health/>).

Year 2

- **Transition to Clerkships**

- *Beginning of Year 2*
- This course focuses on successfully transitioning students from preclinical to clinical training, building on the knowledge and clinical skills covered in Phase I. It includes advanced clinical skills training through simulation as well as several fundamental medical principles from various specialties that will be expanded and reinforced in subsequent clerkships. In addition, roles and responsibilities of a second-year medical student are covered through discussions on reflection, professionalism, and communication.

- **Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships**

- *Year 2*
- Required core clinical clerkships in internal medicine, family and community medicine, psychiatry, neuroscience, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics and surgery take place in Year 2. The clerkships are structured in a longitudinal integrated clerkship (LIC) fashion, taking advantage of long-term continuity relationships with the physicians, patients and practices within the State College community

- **Patients and Sciences 3: Integrated Science, Humanities and Health Systems in Clerkships**

- The Patients and Sciences 3 (PS3) portion of the second year is a formal didactic educational experience. All second-year University Park Curriculum medical students will return to the "classroom" for sessions focused on building an integrated approach into the medical students' clinical training.
- Health Systems Sciences component of Patients and Sciences 3 is also known as Marsh Rounds (named in honor of E. Eugene Marsh, MD, who was the founding dean of the University Park Curriculum and who continues to be a valued educator in the University Park Curriculum) focuses on building an integrated sciences approach into second-year medical students' clinical training. Mastery of the processes covered by the course will enhance the student's ability to think critically about complex, clinical problems through the respective lenses of biomedical sciences, systems and social sciences. This includes one-on-one clinical reasoning coaching with core faculty, group discussion of real time clinical cases, and expert didactic sessions on important topics

- **Humanities Across Clerkships (HAC)** is a longitudinal course for medical students engaged in Phase II clerkships to reflect upon issues encountered in the clinical learning environment related to humanities and career development. This course will promote discussion of the application of concepts in humanities from the pre-clerkship curriculum to the practice of clinical medicine and skills in career development with respect to the clinical learning environment. In doing so, medical students will work together in small-groups to formulate solutions that will ultimately promote professional identity formation and advance career development while serving as a venue to talk about stressors and challenges. The sessions will be run in a virtual format and will be facilitated by a trained faculty member in a safe, nurturing, and cultivating environment.
- By the end of the course, medical students will be able to reflect the challenges of and changes to professional identity while interacting with the clinical learning environment; use individualized skills and tools to advance career development; use respectful and compassionate communication amongst

group members all while describing conflicts and tensions observed within the healthcare system, professional behaviors observed, and effective feedback methods as well as recognizing one's own biases and emotions all while delivering patient care.

- This course will run from the start of clerkships till the end in a virtual format with small-groups meeting bi-weekly for hour-long sessions. Each group will have a faculty facilitator and 1-2 student facilitators. Some sessions will be a free space reserved for medical students to feel welcome to discuss any experiences, and other sessions will have a set topic for discussion with respect to humanities or career development. Students will be assessed based on attendance, participation, and completion of reflective writing assignments.
- **Ambulatory Medicine Clerkship** is a clerkship that involves spending 4 weeks embedded within an ambulatory setting throughout Penn State Health's academic health system and the communities it serves. Ambulatory settings include physician offices, urgent care clinics, outpatient surgical facilities, and specialty clinics. Students will grow their history, physical, assessment, and plan skills for the types of patients receiving care at their particular site. Through this experiential learning opportunity, students will be challenged to understand their patients' healthcare values through their life stories. Students will utilize more in-depth history-taking during individual patient encounters. In addition, students will apply Health System Science and Humanities Principles to a core project. The student schedule will be focused on one particular ambulatory site with preceptors specific to that site. Students will have 2-3 half days with no assigned clinical duties during which they are expected to complete assessments.
- **Complex Interprofessional Care (CIC) Course**
 - Course goal is to appraise and develop competence in the delivery of age- and dementia-friendly care to both healthy and medically complex older adults across interprofessional ambulatory settings that include post-acute care (PAC), specialty care, and day hospital care settings.
 - Course Overview
 - Health systems structure and process, including Age-Friendly Health Systems
 - Geriatrics and Geriatrics Syndromes and medical complexity
 - Malignancy and aging with illness
 - Interprofessional teaming and collaboration
 - Coordination of care and Resourcing Care Partners
 - Advance care planning in context
 - Holistic care
- **Assessment**
 - There are seven clerkship exams during Year 2.

Year 3

- **Patients and Sciences 4**

- *Late July through mid-December*
- The experiences in Patients and Sciences 4 are designed to build on what is learned in Patients and Sciences 1 and 2 and 3. PS4 is offered in the fall semester of the third year in the University Park Curriculum. Basic science and clinical faculty facilitate this course, which is conducted in small-group discussions. The course is designed to elaborate and extend medical student learning in the foundational sciences as it relates and applies to the practice of evidence-based and patient-centered medical care.

- **Longitudinal Clinical Exploration**

- *Ongoing*
- During PS4, each student will continue to engage in clinical experiences, working in and exploring specialties and subspecialties of their choosing, which will help guide their decision in and prepare for their future residency.
- **Assessment**
 - There are weekly formative quizzes and two summative exams.
 - Two reflective writing exercises are submitted based on the students longitudinal clinical experience and are kept for the learner portfolio.
- **USMLE Study**
 - *USMLE study begins midway through the third year.*
 - The University Park Curriculum, with immersive and early clinical experiences, facilitates deep learning of concepts in science and medicine. This will establish a solid foundation for USMLE board preparation. In addition, collaborative science seminars, continuous exposure to board study questions, the second-year integrated clinical sciences and medical humanities and health systems sessions, the return to foundational science in PS4 and ample dedicated study time before the exam will combine with recognized external study and assessment programs to support successful student performance. Personnel from the Cognitive Skills Program schedule regular meetings with the students in order to optimize their preparation for this examination.
 - Students are required to take USMLE Step 1 prior to the start of the Translating Health Systems course.
- **Translating Health Systems**
 - *Two weeks at end of February and beginning of March timeframe*
 - Phase III begins with a two-week Translating Health Systems intersession. This course is designed to help students apply concepts of patient safety, quality improvement, value and teams to the clinical setting. It provides students with opportunities to actively identify patient safety issues and develop a quality improvement project proposal. By design, this course emphasizes teamwork, an essential component in providing quality patient care. The goal is to guide learning in these concepts so that students will have the base knowledge to help improve care of their patients and the health system in which they will work during the fourth year of medical school and in residencies.
- **Phase III: Discovery and Residency Prep**
 - Starting in March students enter Phase III: Discovery and Residency Prep following USMLE Board Prep. The Discovery portion of the phase provides students with opportunities for additional career explorations, time to synthesize principles learned in Phase II and additional time for focused research. This portion of the phase includes the Translating Health Systems course, where students apply learned health systems principles.
 - As students confirm their residency choice, they move into the Residency Prep portion of the phase. This time provides students with opportunities to refine knowledge and skills as they prepare for entry into residencies. This portion of the phase includes variety of electives, two acting internships and a Humanities selective. Students also prepare for and take the USMLE Step 2 CK in the earlier part of Year 4. The phase is completed by the capstone course, Transition to Internship, followed by graduation.

Year 4

- **USMLE STEP 2 CK**
 - *Early part of Year 4*
 - Students prepare for and take USMLE Step 2 CK towards the early part of Year 4.
- **Phase III: Discovery and Residency Prep**
 - *March to May of the following year, with breaks*
 - This portion of Phase III includes residency preparation, interviews and the following:
 - 2 acting internships at Penn State Health or Penn State College of Medicine affiliates, including:
 - 1 specialty-based core acting internship and
 - 1 critical care or emergency medicine core acting internship
 - 1 humanities selective
 - 24 weeks of electives (including at least 12 weeks at Penn State Health or Penn State College of Medicine affiliates)
 - 2 or more 4-week clinical rotations must be taken within 5 months of graduation
 - Translating Health Systems course
 - Transition to Internship course
 - All graduation requirements are confirmed to be completed during this time. The College of Medicine offers a variety of clinical, teaching and research electives for students during this phase.
- **Transition to Internship**
 - *Beginning of May to mid-May*
 - The Transition to Internship course occurs at the end of each student's medical school career and builds on these concepts in preparation for residency training. Transition to Internship is the final requirement for each graduating fourth-year medical school class, taking place just prior to medical school graduation. Its structure includes both large group workshops (involving the entire fourth-year class) and a number of small group "selective" sessions. Transition to Internship was designed with goals of providing review and practice of key clinical skills and concepts, as well as introduction of new information regarding communication and collaboration with other health professionals, teaching and evaluation strategies for interns in their educator roles and practice in effective patient handoffs. The course also includes time for reflection on professional responsibilities, personal stressors and individual support systems.
- **Graduation**
 - *Mid-May*
 - See the graduation section of this site (<https://students.med.psu.edu/graduation-information/>) for more details.