



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC**

30 Mar 2020

**MEMORANDUM FOR AIR FORCE HEALTH PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM (HPSP) STUDENTS AND ASSOCIATED MEDICAL SCHOOL STUDENT
AFFAIRS OFFICES**

FROM: HQ AFPC DP2NP Chief, Physician Education

SUBJECT: Information for Air Force HPSP Students and Associated Medical
Schools in the COVID-19 Environment

1. The COVID-19 outbreak is affecting all aspects of American life, particularly its healthcare system. Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) is no exception. We have already seen the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) suspend clinical rotations for at least two weeks. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has likewise provided guidance for Graduation Medical Education (GME) trainees. Clinical experiences and guidance will certainly change over the next few weeks to months. This memorandum will provide guidance specific to our Air Force HPSP students enrolled at civilian allopathic and osteopathic medical schools.

2. Some medical schools are considering graduating MS-IV students early. We suggest against graduating students early for the following reasons. First, the Department of Defense currently has a Stop Movement order in effect until mid-May that prevents Airmen and their families from moving from one location to another. Students would not be allowed to move to their residency sites until late May. Secondly, our GME platforms are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and likely would not have the additional personal protective equipment (PPE) and additional providers available to provide adequate supervision. Thirdly, students who arrive early are unlikely to receive the ideal medical education experience as most GME platforms are suspending many educational activities, non-emergent outpatient care, elective procedures, etc. to focus solely on COVID-19 patient care. Finally, students that are graduated early lose their HPSP stipend and other benefits until they start their residency. It would be helpful for medical schools, prior to students reporting for residency training, to educate students on COVID-19, educate students on the indications for PPE by suspected disease, ensure that students can correctly and safely don/doff PPE, and update students on resuscitative training (e.g., BLS/ALS/ACLS/PALS). We recognize that availability of instructors and social distancing rules may make some of these trainings difficult.

3. The pandemic also impacts HPSP students not yet in their final months of training. First, due to the Stop Movement order, all planned ADT's until 31 May have been canceled. At present, students may schedule rotations at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) that begin on/after 1 Jun 2020, though this date could be pushed to a later time depending on local conditions such as availability of instructors, appropriate clinical experiences, requirements for quarantine on arrival, etc.

4. HPSP students are required to apply for the Joint Services Graduate Medical Education Selection Board (JSGMESB, sometimes called the “Military Match”) held each November. In order to best position themselves to successfully compete for a residency position, HPSP students typically rotate on ADT’s to programs they are interested in during the end of their MSIII and start of their MSIV years. Students from the Uniformed Services University (USU) also complete their audition rotations during this time. Due to the Stop Movement order and cancellation of all rotations until 1 June, the summer interview season will be shorter and more crowded than usual. Therefore, we will be limiting both HPSP and USU students to just one audition rotation this summer. Students may complete additional in-person and telephone interviews for other programs they plan to apply to for residency. This will ensure an equal and fair process for all students applying for the JSGMESB.

5. Depending on the length of the COVID-19 pandemic and inability of students to meet some medical school graduation requirements, some students may graduate late/off-cycle. Students already selected for residency will be permitted to arrive late for training and will not lose their residency positions. Students who will be off cycle from delays in their 3rd year may still apply to the JSGMESB this fall. Students will remain on scholarship and stipend/benefits will be extended as needed as long as they are making academic progress and the delay is due solely to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students and their student affairs offices should notify our office if any students are graduating off-cycle due to the pandemic.

6. The requirement to pass the USMLE or COMLEX Level 1 and 2 exams to remain in good-standing with the HPSP program and qualify for GME remains. However, due to closure of testing centers, as well as delays in clinical experiences that prepare students for the exams, we will have low threshold to extend the deadlines to achieve passing scores (Step/Level 1: 15 Sep 2020; Step/Level 2: 15 Oct 2020). Approximately 60 days prior to the deadline, we will provide further guidance based on the situation at that time. Essentially, as long as a student is making a good faith effort to prepare and take the exam, and the delay is due to COVID-19, we will grant a waiver. Please note that a USMLE/COMLEX exam failure must be reported to this office within 14 days of receiving the score and the student will be subject to due process proceedings, just as they would have been prior COVID-19. Lastly, students may apply for the JSGMESB this fall as long as they have passed USMLE Step 1/COMLEX Level 1. The requirement to have scheduled Step 2/Level 2 exams in order to apply for JSGMESB remains, but may be waived depending on situation at the time.

7. COVID-19 represents a challenge unlike any other we have seen in medical education. Our office remains committed to supporting the students in HPSP. Please contact us if you have further questions. AFPC.DP2NP.PhysicianEducation@us.af.mil is our Organizational email box. My email is michael.forgione@us.af.mil.



Michael A. Forgione, MD
Colonel, USAF, MC
Chief, Physician Education