

Academic Support & Remediation

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INTRODUCTION

Attaining academic success is a cornerstone of undergraduate medical education. When students begin their journey at NOSM it can be challenging to learn how to navigate our complex and acronym-coded system. We want to ensure that academic supports are readily available to students throughout the academic year. Our goal is to create a user-friendly guide to accessing academic support at NOSM, long before remediation is a consideration.

Students appreciate the dedicated remediation support made available by NOSM staff and faculty. The non-standardization of the remediation program is a major contributor to the success of the program. Students receive individualized and focused attention, directed at their specific learning needs. We are not looking to change the implementation of the remediation program; but rather, our goal is to reduce the number of students who find themselves in a position where remediation is necessary. In order to understand the impetus for addressing academic support we will first outline the current challenges.

Concern One: Students require a designated list of academic supports (tutors) available throughout the year, organized by Theme, Module, or Phase.

When students identify an unmet learning need, they have expressed uncertainty as to who they should turn to for assistance. Should they approach: Learner Affairs; the Assessments Department; Theme Chairs; Module Coordinators; the Dean of UME; or Class Peers? And in what order should they contact the various stakeholders?

Concern Two: Students require multiple avenues to access academic support. Peer support may be preferred by one student, while another may be more comfortable meeting privately with a member of Faculty.

It is a common theme that medical students have a past history of high success. As such, many students have expressed feeling hesitation or embarrassment when attempting to access academic support. Furthermore, the NOSM curriculum is self-directed and students must self-identify when they are experiencing undue difficulty in meeting the module learning objectives. If students encounter obstacles in accessing academic support, they may be discouraged from pursuing early intervention and continue unnoticed until remediation is the only answer.

Recommendation One: Distribute a survey to all Faculty, Students, and Researchers regarding their interest in becoming an academic support person for students.

Students will feel more comfortable approaching someone for academic support knowing that they have already expressed an interest and availability. The survey should include information regarding which Theme, Module, or Phase they prefer to provide academic support. The list generated from this survey can then be circulated to students in all years of the UME program. This will serve to significantly ease the burden for students in terms of identifying appropriate resources.

Recommendation Two: Implement theme-specific drop-in support sessions with an 'expert' in the designated Theme/Module/Phase.

The intention of this recommendation is to follow a model that is currently being utilized by Laurentian University. A calendar is distributed to the students with pre-scheduled times that academic support persons will be made available. There is no need for students to make appointments in advance. For example: support for Theme 4 during Module 106 will be available every Monday afternoon for one hour. Students can drop in, participate in small group learning, or ask questions for clarification. This reduces the anxiety students experience when asking for help. Additionally, this format makes efficient use of the support person's time by accommodating multiple students within a single scheduled appointment.

Recommendation Three: Tap into existing academic resources and support persons available on the two host campuses: Lakehead and Laurentian University

We acknowledge that not all course material will be available for academic support on the two host campuses. However, foundations in science such as: anatomy, physiology, and genetics are likely to be widely available and applicable to the undergraduate medical education curriculum. Given that NOSM students contribute to ancillary fees on either campus, any available academic supports provided to undergraduate students at the host Universities should be extended to NOSM students.

In closing, we thank the Student Assessment and Promotion Committee for considering these requests. Students in all stages and phases of the undergraduate medical education have identified academic support availability as an area of concern. We believe that NOSM has the capacity to address this need by implementing simple strategies. The students look forward to working with all interested stakeholders to achieve these goals.