

Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine (VTCSOM)

Statement: Letters of Distinction

Subject: Student Affairs

Administrator: A. Knight

Rev.: 3

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1 Policy

Letters of Distinction will be given throughout the 4 year curriculum. These will be given to a limited group of students based on outstanding performance in a particular portion of one of the four Value Domains utilizing the criteria outlined below. Receipt of letters of distinction will be recorded on a student's transcript.

2 Procedures

Areas of Distinction by Value Domain:

Basic Science

	Time of Award – End of Year
Academic Performance (8)	2
PBL- Peer Selection (8)	2
PBL- Facilitators Selection (8)	2

Interprofessionalism

Interprofessional Excellence (8)	2
Teamwork in Service to the Patient (8)	4
Service Learning & Community Engagement (8)	4

Research

Best Research Project (8)	4
Scholarly/Research Productivity (8)	4
Academic Performance In Research Curriculum (8)	2

Clinical Science

Overall Performance—Clinical Skills (8)	2
Clinical Science Integration- “Domain days” (8)	3

Clinical Clerkships

Psychiatry (8)	To be awarded during 4th year (by July 31) with the exception of the Emergency Medicine clerkship.
Obstetrics (8)	
Family Medicine (8)	
Emergency Medicine (8)	
Surgery (8)	
Internal Medicine (8)	
Pediatrics (8)	
Radiology (8)	

Basic Science Domain –Distinction Criteria

Eight Letters of Distinction will be given for overall academic performance in Blocks I-VIII. Selection criteria will include cumulative performance on the multiple choice and lab assessments and the integrated case exams.

Up to Eight Letters of Distinction will be given to students nominated by Patient-Based Learning (PBL) faculty facilitators based on the performance criteria detailed on the PBL Assessment Form: Acquisition and Integration of Knowledge, Peer Teaching and Communication Skills, and Professionalism. Faculty can nominate students at the end of any Block and the ad hoc Basic Science Distinction Committee will pick up to eight from these nominations at the end of Year 2.

Up to Eight Letters of Distinction will be given by the ad hoc Basic Science Distinction Committee to students that are nominated by students based on the performance criteria detailed on the PBL Assessment Form: Acquisition and Integration of Knowledge, Peer Teaching and Communication Skills, and Professionalism. Each Student may nominate up to four of their classmates for consideration at the end of Year 2.

Research Value Domain – Distinction Criteria

Academic Performance in the Research Curriculum:

Students will be selected based on both their academic performance in the Year 1 course and on information about the students' commitment, productivity and work ethic, creativity, and reasoning on their research project provided by their research mentors. (Up to 8 awards at the end of Year 2)

Best Research Project:

During their final year of study, students will submit a written publication-quality manuscript and present their research orally to an evaluation committee composed of experts and accomplished researchers, scientists and clinicians selected by the Senior Dean for Research and Director of Research Education who also oversee the evaluation process. Immediately following the oral presentation, the evaluating committee will consider whether to recommend the student to be placed in the finalist group for consideration for a Research Value Domain letter of distinction in the category of "Best Research Project". Recommendations will be made based on the overall quality, significance, relevance, innovation, thoroughness, rigor and clarity of the students' findings as presented in their written document and oral presentation, along with their understanding, ability to effectively communicate, and response to questions during the oral presentation. Final selections for up to eight (8) letters of distinction in this category will be made by an ad hoc committee assembled and overseen by the Senior Dean for Research. The eight students selected will present their work as a formal 15-minute oral presentation with appropriate documentation in PowerPoint format at the annual VTCSOM Medical Student Research Day to which all 4 classes of medical students, the students' mentors, VTCSOM faculty, and the community will be invited. (Up to 8 Awards throughout Year 4)

Research Productivity:

Students will be asked to catalog, document, and report for their primary officially approved research project, any formally presented papers or abstracts at official meetings, any papers published, in press or officially accepted for publication, any grants submitted or awarded

on which they are listed as primary or co-principal investigator or key personnel with the granting agency, grant title, grant status, period and their role on the grant indicated, any official recognition received for their primary research project activities such as foundation or funding agency awards or fellowships, and any disclosures or patents, based partly or wholly on their research where they are officially listed as contributing to the disclosure. In addition, students should report separately on any such scholarly activities in which they are involved that are not a result of their primary research project and indicate those as “supplementary research activities.” An ad hoc committee assembled and overseen by the Senior Dean for Research will select up to eight (8) students to receive recognition in this category. (Up to 8 awards throughout Year 4)

Selection Committee:

The Research Distinction ad hoc committee will be formed to review all documents submitted and generate a list of the top eight most distinguished students in the categories of Best Research Project and Research Productivity. The committee will be co-chaired by the Senior Dean for Research and the Director of Research Education, who will select three other members. Their recommendations will be forwarded by the Senior Dean for Research to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

Clinical Sciences – Distinction Criteria

Overall Performance:

At the end of the 2nd year of medical school up to eight Letters of Distinction will be awarded to students by the ad hoc Clinical Science Distinction Committee for overall performance in Blocks I-VIII. Selection criteria will include distinguished cumulative academic performance on assessment exams which encompass patient communication skills, physical exam skills, clinical knowledge, clinical reasoning skills, and oral and written presentations skills. Demonstration of class leadership is strongly considered which includes active participation and professionalism while interacting with the standardized patient program, patient volunteers, faculty and peers.

Clinical Clerkships – Distinction Criteria

The clinical clerkships occur in the 3rd year of the curriculum and include rotations in the following clinical areas: Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Radiology, and Surgery. These core rotations foster growth of medical knowledge through direct patient-care experiences under the supervision of residents and attending physician. During the 3rd and 4th year of training, the student learns to incorporate the knowledge and experiences from the basic sciences, the clinical sciences and the research domains to become competent physicians.

Grading in the Clinical Clerkships, like the rest of the curriculum, is pass/fail; however, the student has the opportunity to receive letters of distinction recognizing outstanding performance on the clerkship. Up to 8 letters of distinction will be awarded by each of the eight required clerkships (Emergency Medicine, Family and Community Medicine, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Radiology, and Surgery). With the exception of Emergency Medicine, these letters of distinction will be awarded no later than July 31 of the 4th year. Up to six of the possible eight letters of distinction for Emergency Medicine will be awarded by August 30 with the potential for two additional awarded by February 28.

A LOD for the Clinical Clerkships recognizes the awardees' demonstration of excellence during the clerkship in the following areas:

1. Demonstration of proficiency in the acquisition and perfection of those skills which permit the student to provide the best possible patient care for his or her patients
2. Genuine compassion for the ill, regarding them as persons in need of help
3. Utilization of a scientific approach to the unique problems of the patients cared for
4. Exemplary verbal and written communication skills
5. Commitment to teamwork and interprofessionalism in the provision of care
6. Integrity in dealing with patients, classmates, and faculty

The students will be selected by a committee which includes the Clerkship Director and Chair based on the above criteria and performance toward the ACGME Competencies (Patient Care, Medical Knowledge, Professionalism, Interpersonal and Communication skills, Practice-based learning, and Systems-based practice).

The students will be selected by the Clerkship Director and Chair based on the following parameters:

- A. Students must have passed all components of the clerkship without the need for remediation of any specific required component
- B. Students must have scored ≥ 3.0 as an average for each of the 13 scored items in the Evaluation Form
- C. Each student who fulfills A. and B. above will receive a score for each clerkship; scoring will be based on:
 - The composite score on each of seven of the items (#2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 13) from the Evaluation Form. This gives students scores from each the ACGME Competencies: two for Patient Care and one each for Medical Knowledge, Professionalism, Interpersonal and Communication skills, Practice-based learning, and Systems-based practice
 - Written exam grade contribution: Divide the total percent score from the exam by 20. This would give a max score of 5. The minimum score would vary depending on the exam, but would be somewhere around 3-3.5.
 - The Maximum Score for the eight items is 40
- D. The 14 students (1/3rd of the class) with the highest score will be eligible for a Letter of Distinction. Each department can add up to one additional eligible person if they feel there are extenuating circumstances.
- E. The department will narrow the 14-15 eligible students down to the eight who receive a LOD using an agreed upon process. This can include soliciting nominations and supporting statements from faculty, a committee of faculty who meet to determine the awardees, or another process.

The **single** determining factor in choosing the eight awardees from the 14-15 eligible students should not be shelf exam score or interest in that specialty.

Clinical Science Integration- "Domain Days"

Letters of distinction will be awarded based on student attendance, participation, and performance on the various Domain Day programs. Domain Day is a required element of the third year curriculum during the four to six week rotations. These are awarded by July

31 by a committee which reviews the completed evaluations and assessments of each Domain Day program.

Interprofessionalism – Distinction Criteria

Interprofessional Excellence:

Up to 8 VTC students can receive distinction in this category, decided after completion of the interprofessionalism curriculum in years 1 and 2, by an ad hoc committee of interprofessionalism instructors. These awards will be based on clear acquisition of leadership and team skills, IPEC core competencies, enthusiasm for blocks I-VIII interprofessionalism curriculum, and the required and voluntary service learning activities. The awards will be given during an end of second year ceremony.

Team Work in Service to the Patient:

Up to 8 VTC students can receive distinction in this category, decided by an Interprofessionalism faculty ad hoc committee after their third year clerkships and given during a ceremony in the fourth year of medical school. The awards are based on acquisition of and enthusiasm for interprofessional collaboration and patient-centered team work during third year clerkships. Specifically, the awards will be based on communication skills with colleagues, patients, families, and staff (interpersonal skills), ability to work collaboratively with team members and other healthcare providers (professionalism), and awareness to the larger context in healthcare systems to provide optimal patient care (systems based practice). Finally, in all clerkships there is an opportunity to be recommended for an interprofessionalism letter of distinction which will be a strong component of consideration.

Service Learning and Community Service:

Up to 8 VTC students in their fourth-year can receive distinction in this category, decided by members of a VTC faculty and Community and Diversity Advisory Board as an ad hoc committee. The awards are based on abilities to understand personal value and meaning of service to one's community and a clear dedication for involvement in one's community as a means of personal and professional growth and commitment.