



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH ALABAMA

Policy No:

Responsible Office: Whiddon College of
Medicine—Office of Student Affairs

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Whiddon College of Medicine Career Exploration

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the protocol that University of South Alabama (USA) Whiddon College of Medicine (Whiddon COM) students must follow when seeking to engage in career exploration to facilitate vocational discernment. Moreover, this policy sets out the parameters in which Whiddon COM students are able to complete career exploration experiences and remain compliant with the Whiddon COM's and USA Health System's HIPPA and liability insurance guidelines.

2. Applicability

The Whiddon COM Career Exploration policy applies to all enrolled students seeking the Doctor of Medicine degree. Students who are not actively enrolled (e.g., leave of absence, withdrawn, or dismissed) will not be eligible to complete Career Exploration as a USA Whiddon COM student-physician.

3. Definitions

- **Career Exploration:** The process of clarifying career and employment options that fit a student's interests and skills and reviewing the core elements of the medical job search process.
- **Liability Insurance:** An insurance product designed to protect students from claims out of actual or alleged incidents when the loss results from the practice of the student's profession throughout their learning experience.
- **Whiddon COM Student:** A student who has been accepted for admission to the Whiddon COM and is pursuing courses toward the degree of Doctor of Medicine.
- **Preceptor:** A University of South Alabama Health System physician who holds either a faculty or adjunct faculty appointment in the Whiddon COM and or USA Health.

4. Policy Guidelines

Choosing a medical specialty is one of the most significant decisions a medical student must make. Finding a specialty that fits one's interests, values, personality, and skills can be not only challenging but also time-consuming. The Whiddon COM approves this exploration as long as the opportunity allows students to adhere to HIPAA compliance and to function within the parameters of the student's professional liability insurance.

4.1 Liability Insurance

As a Whiddon COM student, professional liability insurance is provided for career exploration if it contributes to the student's educational experience and is performed under the guidance and supervision of a USA Health physician, faculty or adjunct faculty.

4.2 Institutional Review Board and Research

University policy requires that all research involving human subjects be reviewed and approved by the USA Institutional Review Board (IRB) before research activities begin. The IRB is a single part of a larger Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) at the University. The USA HRPP is a collaborative network of institutional officials, researchers, faculty, staff, students, and members from the community whose aim is to support ethically and scientifically sound research.

4.3 Length of exploration experience

Career exploration cannot be undertaken during the time frame wherein a student is scheduled for a curricular activity or assignment that is deemed mandatory for a module, course, or clerkship the student is currently enrolled. Moreover, a single exploration experience should not exceed twelve (12) hours.

5. Procedures

The following sections delineate the steps Whiddon COM students must complete in seeking career approval for opportunities with USA Health System and non-USA Health System physicians. This policy applies to situations where students have arranged career exploration experience with physicians prior to submission for approval. Additionally, this section outlines the approval protocol students entering related research opportunities must follow. **Note:** Failure to complete the outlined steps or provide the required information may result in a delay in a student's ability to begin the career exploration on their requested date or participate in the desired research.

5.1 Career Exploration with a *USA Health System Physician*

- Submit a Career Exploration Request Form to notify the Whiddon COM Office of Student Affairs (OSA) *at least two (2) weeks prior* to the start date. The Career Exploration Form must include the following:
 - Student's Name
 - Year in school (i.e., Class of...)
 - Name of the physician (faculty) preceptor
 - Physical location of the experience (i.e., name of the clinic, hospital, operating room, or emergency department, etc., and address)
 - Dates of the experience
 - Experience type (e.g., rounds, clinic visits, attendance in the operative room, etc.)
- Once submitted, the OSA will review the form for completeness and, if needed, follow up with Faculty Affairs to verify the appointments of physician preceptors.
- Upon approval, the student will receive an email from either the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs or Associate Dean of Student Affairs confirming the student may proceed with the requested career exploration experience.
- Some exploration experiences will require the student to wear a radiation dosimeter.
- **Note:** When interacting with patients or physicians, you *must always* introduce yourself as a "student-physician" or "medical student."

5.2 Career Exploration with a *Non-USA Health System Physician*

- Submit a Career Exploration Request Form to notify the Whiddon COM Office of Student Affairs *at least two (2) weeks prior* to the start date. The Career Exploration Form must include the following:
 - Student's Name

- Year in school (i.e., Class of...)
- Name of the physician
- Physical location of the experience (i.e., name of the clinic, hospital, operating room, or emergency department, etc., and address)
- Dates of the experience
- Experience type (e.g., rounds, clinic visits, attendance in the operative room, etc.)
- Once submitted, the OSA will review the form for completeness and, if needed, follow up with Faculty Affairs to verify the appointments of physician preceptors. If in the event Faculty Affairs confirms that the proposed physician is not affiliated with the USA Health System, the student's request may be granted in a shadow capacity only.
- Upon approval, the student will receive an email from either the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs or Associate Dean of Student Affairs confirming the student may proceed with the requested career exploration experience.
- As the experience will be granted in a shadow-only capacity, the student must inform the OSA—whether by email, phone call, or in-person contact, that they have iterated to the preceptor that the student does not carry professional liability insurance for the experience and would be operating under the preceptor's liability insurance,
- **Note:** If the student chooses to conduct a career exploration experience outside the USA Health System, they *may not introduce themselves as a student-physician or medical student, wear their USA badge, or sport their white coat displaying the imprinted USA Student Physician logo.*

5.3 Research performed as part of Career Exploration:

Students who are pursuing research at the Whiddon COM or USA Health clinical facilities under the guidance of a faculty mentor must correspond with the mentor regarding whether their participation in the project requires IRB approval. According to the USA IRB guidelines, all persons engaged in Human Subjects Research at USA must complete adequate training before becoming involved in either a new or existing study. This applies to anyone directly responsible for study management, data collection, data analysis, the consenting process, transcription, participant recruitment (or follow-up), etc. Appropriate training can be found on the USA IRB site.

Students pursuing clinical research projects that require view or read-only access to the USA Health electronic medical record must complete the Career Exploration Request Form detailing their project, listing the faculty mentor, and outlining the approximate duration of access. The form must be submitted to the Whiddon COM's OSA for review and approval.

6. Enforcement

Students found to be pursuing career exploration outside of the stated policy may be subject to a Physicianship Early Concern (PEC) Note.

7. Related Documents

- 7.1 Whiddon COM Career Exploration Form
- 7.2 Medical Malpractice
- 7.3 USA Whiddon COM Policy Regarding Student Duty Hours Limitation
- 7.4 IRB Policies and Procedures