Best Practices for Course Directors (Years’ 1 and 2)

General

- Be passionate about teaching. But it all about the students’ needs, not your passion.
- Remember you are training future physicians.
- Take ownership of your course, but understand that your course is not isolated. It is part of the UTMB School of Medicine Curriculum. Typically the students are engaged in two courses simultaneously: Practice of Medicine (POM) and a Basic Science Course. There should be an effort made to integrate the two whenever possible.
- Develop appropriate course goals and objective that align with the goals and objectives of the Curriculum.
- Understand the Curriculum guidelines for instruction and the reason for these guidelines.
- Consult the Curriculum Map and interact with other Course Directors to assure appropriate depth and breadth of content to avoid gaps and unnecessary redundancies.
- Clearly define the roles and efforts of all of the Course Co-directors.
- Clearly define the roles and assignments of all Course Committee members.
- Attend Course Directors’ Meetings.
- Attend the SOM Annual Curriculum Educational Conference.
- Attend regional and national meetings on medical education.
- Try new things, but solicit faculty and student input when appropriate prior to implementation. When adding something innovative to the course, be sure to also add the item to the final course evaluation to receive formal feedback.
- Review end of course evaluations and latest course reviews for suggestions to improve the course.
- Utilize the educational expertise of the Office Educational Development.

Examinations and Grading

- Produce high-quality, blue-printed examinations that test important concepts. Do not test minutiae. Proofread the examinations
- Produce equally high-quality practice examinations with feedback so the students are able to assessment there understanding of the material.
- Please schedule your time to review the statistical data immediately after the exam to make decisions about the exam items and final scores.
• Clearly define course components and the passing criteria.

**Teaching modalities**

• Understand that the foundational principle of the School of Medicine curriculum is active, self-directed learning. We accomplish this primarily through small group, case-based learning in POM and Problem Based Learning (PBL) in the basic science courses.

• PBL cases, small group sessions, lectures and laboratories should be designed to complement, not duplicate, each other. Please ensure that PBL cases and facilitators versions of those cases are of high quality.

• Reading assignments should be carefully identified to be focused toward specific course learning objectives. Assigning many chapters and articles, with many pages each, can be overwhelming and not productive. For all course activities and resources (e.g. self-study tutorials, journal articles and book chapters), clearly state how the item is aligned with the course goals and objectives. Course faculty and the students should know if a resource is meant to allow the student to extend beyond the scope of the course by supplementing other course activities, or if it contains unique, critical material the students must access to accomplish the objectives of the course?

• Provide lecturers with specific learning objectives, not just topics that you wish then to address. The lecturers should understand the objectives of the PBL cases during the week of the lecture.

• Try to attend, or review, every lecture to ensure that the objectives of the lecture are accomplished and that those objectives align with course objectives.

**Working with the Instruction Management Office (IMO) Staff**

• Much of the work of running the course falls on the Course Coordinator, who can only work a 40-hour work week. Consequently, planning well in advance is critical to the smooth operation of a course, and the IMO in general.

• For basic science courses, changes to syllabus, PBL cases and course material should occur before the course begins. Half of a faculty salary is paid for directing a course, which includes preparation time before the course begins.

**Working with students**

• Become familiar with the Academic Advancement Policies.

• Know the appropriate person or office to which a student should be directed for academic, medical and emotional issues.