

Post-CODA Meeting Guidance on Interruption of Education Related to COVID-19 for the Class of 2020 (April 3, 2020)

The Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA) conducted a special, closed meeting on April 2, 2020 to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on dental and dental-related education programs. The Commission considered the flexibility that may exist based on guidance CODA obtained from the United States Department of Education.

First and foremost, the Commission recognizes the struggle and hardship that COVID-19 has placed on the dental education community, and especially the students, residents, and fellows. The Commission wishes all of you well during this difficult time.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation understands that dental education programs have implemented innovative approaches to maintain the quality of dental education for students, residents, and fellows, including but not limited to the use of distance education, enhanced simulation activities, and other valid and reliable educational modalities.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation also recognizes that all CODA-accredited dental and dental related education programs have an obligation and responsibility to ensure the competence of the program's graduates, including the Class of 2020, in accordance with the requirements of CODA's Accreditation Standards, policies, and procedures.

Below is a summary of key actions and guidance for programs and students/residents/fellows.

Interruption of Education:

- The Commission directed that all CODA-accredited programs must submit a report on the use of distance education to confirm either no changes, no use, or to provide information on *temporary* use of distance education and compliance with student/resident/fellow identity verification, in response to COVID-19. Programs that have already submitted a report to CODA that conforms to the Commission's prior guidance will be acknowledged. Programs that have not submitted a report to CODA, or if the previously submitted report does not address the guidance on distance education, must submit a distance education report using the Guidelines that will be issued after April 13, 2020.
- The Commission directed each discipline specific Review Committee to consider the potential, ***temporary flexibility*** to discipline-specific Accreditation Standards for the Class of 2020 that ***may be applied*** related to: 1) Alternative Assessment Methods (for example, patient vs simulation), 2) Modification/Reduction of Curriculum Content or Curriculum Requirements (for example, modification/reduction of program-dictated requirements, CODA competency requirements, and/or CODA quantitative numbers-based requirements), and 3) Program Length or Program Component Length (for example, rotations, services, etc.), with a report to the Commission on specific Accreditation Standards that may be ***temporarily flexible*** to address circumstances surrounding Class of 2020 student/resident/fellow completion of educational programs due to COVID-19. The report of each Review Committee on the potential flexibility that may exist, and its guideline document, will be considered by the Commission at its April 13, 2020 meeting. The Commission will publish the resulting Guidelines for each discipline along with a *Guideline for Interruption of Education* for COVID-19, following the April 13, 2020 meeting. Programs will be expected to submit reports within 30 days of the April 13, 2020 notice, but may certainly submit sooner.
- Again, the Commission recognizes that each educational program has an obligation and responsibility to ensure that its graduates of the Class of 2020 are competent and that the program complies with CODA's Accreditation Standards. Programs may choose to apply the temporary flexibility that CODA will issue after April 13, 2020 in a number of ways, which results in comparable assessment and evaluation of the Class of 2020 student/resident/fellow to ensure that each Class of 2020 student/resident/fellow is eligible for graduation from a CODA-accredited program. The program's modifications to address the temporary flexibilities must be reported to ensure the program complies with CODA Accreditation Standards when determining (or when it determined) graduation eligibility for the individuals in the Class of 2020, including those eligible for immediate graduation using alternative mechanisms of education and evaluation.
- Programs are also encouraged to confer with institutional administration to ensure that the overall program objectives, course and program requirements, and program competencies are fully satisfied in determining a student's/resident's/fellow's eligibility to graduate in the Class of 2020. If the Class of 2020 student/resident/fellow has not satisfied the aforementioned program expectations, additional time and/or experiences in the program may be necessary. Additionally, there may be licensure or other credentialing implications

as a result of the program's temporary curricular modifications, which must be considered by the program and institution and are outside of CODA's purview.

Considerations for Modifications to Program Length Related to Title IV Funding (Outside of CODA's Purview):

As noted above, programs are expected to comply with the Commission's Accreditation Standards where there are specific references to program or rotation length, though further guidance will be provided after April 13, 2020.

If the program length is significantly shortened, the institution should notify the institutional accreditor (even for dental education programs) and seek further guidance from the United States Department of Education (USDE) Federal Student Financial Aid office on what must be reported related to program length in relation to Title IV funding. It is the program's obligation and responsibility, not CODA's, to ensure the program/institution has followed through with the institutional accreditor and USDE Student Financial Aid Office, as necessary. Additionally, in the case of postgraduate programs, it is the program's obligation and responsibility, not CODA's, to inform the office for Graduate Medical Education (GME) as this may impact GME allocations.

Final Notes:

Students/Residents/Fellows should work directly with their educational program to determine requirements for graduation based upon the guidance noted above. The Commission office will not engage with students/residents/fellows on this matter.

Additionally, Commission staff is unable to advise programs on individual programmatic solutions to address interruption of education; each CODA-accredited program has an obligation and responsibility to ensure that its graduates are competent and that the program complies with CODA's Accreditation Standards, policies, and procedures.

If you have further questions, please contact [Commission staff](#).