

Listed below you will find some of the commonly asked questions that have been received in the past week.

**What if I find out in the fall that MAERB does not approve the method I used to satisfy the requirements of the practicum and students?**

As the statement outlines, the MAERB is giving the Program Directors, in consultation with their communities of interest, the ability to consider what types of alternative pedagogies and techniques can be put into place up **until October 31, 2020**. We will be gathering information about what you have done, but it will not be a situation of denial or approval. You also will be keeping detailed records about all the students, so the documentation remains in your hands. Many programs are continuing with the plans that they developed in March, as they are shifting teaching competencies later in the program, giving incompletes, and altering sequencing.

**What types of activities, virtual simulation tools, simulation lab activities, and case studies exist for achieving the psychomotor and affective competencies? Can you give me specific advice on what to do?**

We are dealing with uncharted territory, on a national level with the pandemic crisis and on an educational level with the movement to a completely online environment. As you all know, MAERB cannot recommend any specific vendors or tools, so we are placing it on your shoulders for finding the right tools. Therefore, it may be that, after consultation with your communities of interest, you are not able to put into place the resources that you were hoping upon. In such a case, you will have to wait for things to open up. For example, it may be that, although you have simulation labs on your campuses, those labs are currently not available for you to use, or perhaps you are simply not able to obtain the appropriate simulation resources, as, unlike nursing, not much simulation has been developed for medical assisting. Therefore, we anticipate that, even with new alternatives being offered to medical assisting programs, there will still be delays in student progress.

**In considering alternatives for the practicum, I can find acceptable alternatives for students whose practicum was interrupted, but what about students who haven't yet begun their practicum experience?**

The alternatives that MAERB outlined in its statement fits the needs of students whose practicum was interrupted, but it doesn't really address situations for students who have not started the practicum experience. Putting aside the issue of how many simulation hours might be acceptable or appropriate for the practicum, we know that there are some medical assisting skills that are needed in the ambulatory healthcare environment which simply cannot be simulated, but are skills upon which employers of medical assisting graduates frequently depend. There are many programs that are setting up simulated exercises now with the hope and expectation that students will be able to enter a full or partial practicum experience this summer, once ambulatory health care setting sites allow for students. Your task is to ensure that the students receive the experience that they pay for. Some programs have asked if they are able to do the entire practicum through simulation. First, you would need to have the

simulation tools and environment to be able to do that, as creating a practicum-like simulation. In addition, it's hard to plan because most campus' simulation labs are closed. Also, you will need to evaluate if your communities of interest (your practicum sites, your employers) would still hire such students and if those students would be getting the experience that they need in order to be successful at an entry-level position. In addition, you do need to look at your state regulations and institutional accreditation. The majority of programs are still finding that there are delays and simulation is being used as a bridge to lead into the practicum.

**I am able to find practicum sites, but they are not offering students the full experience, as there is a reliance on telehealth services.**

Here again you need to evaluate the usefulness of the experience. The good news is that the students are working with patients in a real-life environment. At the same time, you might see how you can split the practicum up into two sites. It is a balancing act. Again, you have the authority to make that type of substitution for a limited time period.

**My state/city/county has put into place temporary positions for students due to this national emergency. Can I use those hours toward a student's practicum?**

There are programs that have experiential learning policies or prior learning policies that allow for transfer credit for the practicum, and if your institution allows for it, you have the discretion to use those hours as practicum if you wish, as long as it is achieving the outcomes of the practicum experience for students.

**Has MAERB developed a recommended percentage of hours to be used for simulation? Is there an equivalence that has been developed by MAERB, such as 2 hours of simulation is equal to 1 hour of practicum time? If the experience warrants such a move, is it acceptable to graduate a student with less than 160 hours of a practicum experience?**

MAERB has intentionally not developed a rule about the percentage of hours used or a rule for equivalence, as this is a temporary measure that is meant to be in place only until **October 31, 2020**, with the goal of giving you the leeway and discretion to meet the Standards in new ways. As has been stated, the quality of the experience is more important than the hours. Again, we anticipate that there will be delays with graduations and experiences, just simply because there are limited options available.

**Do I need to tell MAERB what I plan to do?**

No, you do not need to notify MAERB prior to implementing any changes that you have planned. However, you will be submitting a report by September 1, 2020, outlining what you have done. MAERB has sent you a DRAFT of that Status Report in a previous email. Our goal in sending you a draft and soliciting your feedback about the development of this form is to get your feedback before we finalize it. MAERB is an organization that supports learning; MAERB is also a learning organization. We want to gather information that will help us take advantage of this time so that we can learn from it. You will receive the final version of that Status Report in a few weeks, after we get feedback. Then in September, you will receive a report from MAERB with the results of that survey.