



Cleveland Clinic

School of Health Professions

Mercy Diagnostic Medical Sonography Program

**Supplemental Student Handbook
2026-2027**

Contents

Sponsor's Responsibilities	3
Description of Profession	3
Competency-based Criteria	3
Required Clinical Competencies & Lab Assessments.....	4
Competency & Lab Assessment Time Limit	5
Proof of Competency in Performing Procedures	5
Overtime Compensation	6
Scheduling – Total Time Allowed	6
Clinical Rotation Schedules.....	6
Daily Shift Assignments	6
Distribution of Clinical Experience	7
Validation of Clinical Competency Requirements	7
Clinical Supervision.....	7
Student Capacity.....	7
Didactic Curriculum - Content	8
Class Schedules.....	8
Student Status vs Employee Status.....	8
Appointment of Student Liaison	8
Merit/Demerit Program	8
Post-Graduation Employment	9

Sponsor's Responsibilities

Cleveland Clinic shall develop, operate, manage, and conduct health professions education programs; including, but not limited to, undergraduate and post-graduate programs for students.

Description of Profession

From CAAHEP Standards & Guidelines 2020

The diagnostic medical sonographer is an individual who provides patient care services using ultrasound and related diagnostic procedures. The diagnostic medical sonographer must be educationally prepared and clinically competent as a prerequisite to professional practice. Demonstration and maintenance of competency through certification by a nationally recognized sonography credentialing organization is the standard of practice in sonography, and maintenance of certification in all areas of practice is endorsed.

The diagnostic medical sonographer functions as a delegated agent of the physician and does not practice independently.

Diagnostic medical sonographers are committed to enhanced patient care and continuous quality improvement that increases knowledge and technical competence. Diagnostic medical sonographers use independent, professional, and ethical judgment, and critical thinking to safely perform diagnostic sonographic procedures.

The sonographer is generally able to perform the following:

- Obtain, review, and integrate pertinent patient history and supporting clinical data to facilitate optimum diagnostic results.
- Perform appropriate procedures and record anatomic, pathologic, and/or physiologic data for interpretation by a physician.
- Record, analyze, and process diagnostic data and other pertinent observations made during the procedure for presentation to the interpreting physician.
- Exercise discretion and judgment in the performance of sonographic and/or other diagnostic services.
- Demonstrate appropriate communication skills with patients and colleagues.
- Act in a professional and ethical manner.
- Facilitate communication and education to elicit patient cooperation and understanding of expectations and responds to questions regarding sonographic examination.

Competency-based Criteria

Minimum acceptable levels of performance have been established for clinical education. These address both quantitative and qualitative standards.

QUANTITATIVE:

Minimum numbers and types of procedures are required for each quarterly grading period. Completion of these competencies is necessary to receive a passing grade. The student must successfully complete a minimum of two similar, "practice" exams with the clinical instructor, Program Director or their designee prior to receiving a competency in an exam.

All failed competency forms must be turned in to the Program Director. After three failed attempts at competency, the student will be given additional lab instruction/clinical assistance before another attempt

for that competency can be made. Two additional “signed practices” must be documented prior to re-attempting that exam for a competency.

QUALITATIVE:

Minimum acceptable performance standards for procedures have been established. To be considered competent in performing the procedure, the student must receive an 80% or higher grade. This is the minimum acceptable standard.

Required Clinical Competencies & Lab Assessments

During the 12-month education, the student must prove to be competent in the following:

Achilles tendon*
Aorta
RUQ /Abd Lim
Spleen
Kidney
Bladder
Pelvis
Transvaginal
Breast
Abdomen Complete
Abdomen Complete w/pathology
OB 1st, 2nd and 3rd trimester
Biophysical profile
Thyroid
Thyroid w/pathology
Scrotum
Liver Vascular
GI/Appendix*
Lesions
Biopsy/Needle procedure
ARFI
Renal Doppler*
Mesenteric Doppler*
Non-cardiac chest
Abdominal Wall*
Cervical LN map
LN map*
Ped Adrenals*
UA Doppler*
Portable
Scan Lab-Phantom:
2nd Tri Biometry*
Breast*

Equipment Comps:

Doppler*
3D imaging*
Sequoia*
GE*
S2000*
Trophon*

Other:

Transport
Sterile Field*
PPE don/doff*
Vital signs and venipuncture*

*= Lab Assessment

Competency & Lab Assessment Time Limit

To ensure that patients receive care in a timely manner, bioeffects are minimized, and that students are given an adequate amount of time to complete a competency exam, a time limit will be placed on the competency.

The student will be given 50% of time over the appointment time.

For exams scheduled as a 30-minute appointment, the student will be given 45 minutes of scan time to complete the competency.

For 60-minute exams the student will be given 90 minutes to complete the competency.

If the student does NOT complete the exam in the allotted time, it will be considered an automatic failure.

30-minute exams include:

RUQ	Spleen	Kidney	Aorta	Pelvis or TV
Transvaginal	Bio	Thyroid	Testicles	Breast
LN map	Lesion/Mass	Fetal growth	ARFI	Bladder
GI/Appendix	Non-cardiac chest	1 st trimester OB		

60-minute exams include:

Fetal Anatomy	ABD complete	Liver Vascular
Renal Doppler	Mesenteric Doppler	

Biopsy/Needle Procedure competencies have no time limit, as it is mainly dependent upon the Radiologist and patient condition.

Proof of Competency in Performing Procedures

Under no circumstances will any student be permitted to perform any procedure without immediate supervision prior to being evaluated for competency for that procedure. Competency checks will be performed by a registered staff sonographer (minimum 2 year's experience), clinical instructor, or the Program Director.

Competencies and lab assessments may only be performed during normally scheduled clinical hours (no afternoons or weekends, unless pre-approved by the program director).

A list shall be posted in the Program Director's office indicating all procedures for which a student has been competency checked. This list will be updated on an ongoing basis by the Program Director.

Overtime Compensation

All justified overtime will be documented on the student's attendance record. This time will be reviewed on a regular basis and the student will be advised as to available time.

Compensatory/Overtime time may not be used to obtain early graduation or to miss scheduled classes. Compensatory time may be applied toward sick time, professional days, or personal business.

Compensatory time will be granted at the discretion of the Program Director. Permission or denial will be based on the policies concerning academic standing, sick time, and class schedule.

Scheduling – Total Time Allowed

The total number of hours a student spends in the training program shall not exceed 40 hours per week. This will include classroom instruction and clinical experience. No averaging of variable hours or weeks will be permitted.

To ensure quality patient care, a student will be permitted to remain past the normal shift ending time. All overtime compensation must follow the Overtime Compensation information listed above.

Make up time falls under a different ruling.

Clinical Rotation Schedules

The clinical rotation schedules are posted in advance. Every effort is made to ensure that all students will have equal opportunity to experience all possible clinical learning situations.

***NOTE:** No changes will be made in the rotation schedule without permission from the Program Director, clinical instructor or designate.

Students that have completed all required clinical competencies for the current quarter may request a rotation through another area for educational purposes. These areas include, but are not limited to:

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| - Radiologist | - Vascular lab | - Cardiac lab | - Ultrasound off-site |
| - Radiology | - MRI | - CT | - Nuclear medicine |
| - Mammography | - Specials | - Radiation therapy | - Ultrasound off-shifts |

The Program Director will coordinate with other areas to schedule the student's rotation and will inform the student of the scheduled time. Allowed time length of each rotation will be based on the student's clinical performance and the educational value of the rotation. Every effort will be made to accommodate reasonable requests.

Daily Shift Assignments

Students will be scheduled 40 hours per week. This will include weekdays only and will encompass both clinical time and classes.

****NOTE:** No changes will be made in the schedule without permission from faculty of the program.

Distribution of Clinical Experience

Clinical assignments include the following approximates for types of clinical experience and are subject to change based on student needs:

Abdomen Extended	84.6%
Obstetrical/GYN	20.7%
MSK	0.3%
Pediatrics	0.5%

Validation of Clinical Competency Requirements

The required clinical competencies are listed in the Required Clinical Competencies and Lab Assessment sections and will be reviewed annually by the Program Director and appropriate faculty. The following criteria should be used in updating clinical requirements:

- Availability of procedures in ultrasound department
- Availability of clinical assignments for each student
- Difficulty level of required procedures
- Time constraints of training process
- Requirements of potential employees
- CAAHEP and ABHES standards and guidelines

*NOTE: The Program Director is responsible for conducting external validation studies of the program and reporting to the Advisory Board. The Program Director may seek advice from other personnel either internally or externally.

Clinical Supervision

A registered sonographer shall be always present on the premises in the Ultrasound Department for assistance when students are performing exams. This includes exams for which the student has proved competent.

Sonographer preceptors must:

- Hold ARDMS registries in at least Abdomen and OB/GYN
- Complete preceptor modules in My Learning
- Have at least two years' scanning experience

Students must have a sonographer preceptor present when performing an exam for which competency has not been proven.

To support the development of student confidence and independence, a student may perform a procedure without the sonographer continuously present in the room, provided all the following conditions are met:

- (1) Student has proven competent to perform exam
- (2) The student is performing a 3rd or 4th quarter exam
- (3) The registered sonographer is in the room for patient identification prior to beginning the exam
- (4) A registered sonographer reviews exam/rescans before the patient is dismissed and is immediately

available if the student requires assistance.

Student Capacity

The number of students enrolled in the program shall not exceed recommendations of the JRC-DMS and CAAHEP. The JRC-DMS and CAAHEP must be notified if a change in capacity of students is requested.

Didactic Curriculum - Content

A file shall be maintained for all updated course objectives and outlines. This file is open for review by all students and members of the faculty and staff.

The Program Director shall keep copies of all tests, exams, and evaluations in a locked file/ secure electronic file. These are to be open to authorized faculty for their use only.

Class Schedules

The master class schedule shall be planned for the school year and provided to all students at orientation.

Clinical rotation schedules will be posted in advance.

Quarterly class schedules for tests and assignments will be given to the students in the course syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to attend all scheduled classes.

No classes shall be scheduled on weekends, evenings, or on days when students are routinely scheduled off. Students requesting days off when classes are scheduled are responsible for making prior arrangements with the instructor.

Student Status vs Employee Status

Students may not be employed in the ultrasound department to perform sonographer's functions nor may students be counted on as primary manpower in the function of the department.

Appointment of Student Liaison

The student liaison members of the advisory board shall be elected by the student body each year. The advisory board shall reserve the right to object to nominees selected. This objection shall be based primarily on, but not limited to, unacceptable academic or clinical performance.

Merit/Demerit Program

The demerit system was designed to ensure that sonography students comply with program and hospital rules and objectives. Demerits can only be issued by the Program Director or the clinical instructor. Certain violations, as listed below, will warrant a verbal warning first. If the student violates the same a second time, a demerit will be issued. Other violations, as listed below, will be an automatic demerit with no verbal warning. Any demerit given in a quarter will be a deduction of two points off the final clinical grade.

The merit system was designed to reward students for exceeding expectations required by the program. A merit is worth two hours of clinical time or plus 2 points on their clinical grade (if it will increase their final letter grade for the quarter). Merits may only be given by the Program Director or the clinical instructor.

A **verbal warning** (documented) will be issued first followed by a demerit for any further violations for the violations listed below:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Dress code violations | 5. Taking longer than allotted lunch times |
| 2. Neglecting room duties | 6. Early departure or late return from class |

3. Not participating in exams
4. Leaving clinical area without informing sonographer
5. Not turning in log sheets/clinic forms
7. Forgetting to clock in or out
8. Tardiness

Automatic two-point demerits:

1. Eating in non-designated areas
2. Not calling off prior to start time for illness
3. Not having images checked by staff
4. Not following professional standards or objectives
5. Not turning in failed competencies
6. Not wearing ID badge

Merits will be given for the following:

1. Perfect attendance in a quarter
2. Written thanks from a physician, staff member, or patient
3. Repeated exceptional competency evaluations, compliments from staff, and observed acts of kindness.
4. QI slip for an exceptional exam from a Radiologist

Post-Graduation Employment

Graduates of the sonography program are eligible to apply for the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography (ARDMS) Abdomen and OB/GYN registries for certification.

ARDMS
1401 Rockville Pike
Suite 600
Rockville, MD 20852-1402
P: (301) 738-8401
T: (800) 541-9754
F: (301) 738-0312
www.ardms.org

Students are highly encouraged throughout their training to apply to sit for the ARDMS Abdomen and OB/Gyn registries as soon as possible for the greatest chance of success. Obtaining ARDMS certification is desirable to potential employers and may help students obtain employment after graduation.

If there is a position to be filled in Mercy Hospital's ultrasound department, graduating students will be notified and considered for the opening. Selection will be based upon scholastic and clinical performance during the one year of education. Graduating students seeking employment by the hospital or by other Cleveland Clinic facilities should apply through the Cleveland Clinic website.

The Diagnostic Medical Sonography program does not guarantee graduating students' employment.

The Mercy Hospital employs only registered sonographers. Recent graduates may be hired if they attended a CAAHEP-accredited program and are given one year to become registered or employment will be terminated.

The program does not have a formal placement service, but all known available jobs are posted.