

MSPE Reference Guide for Clerkship Administrators – Updated for 2018

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- Calculates “Summary Word,” which weighs student’s performance against peers’

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What is the MSPE?

Medical Student Performance Evaluation

A written transcript of a student’s medical school performance, intended to give residency program directors an idea of an applicant’s academic/clinical performance and overall strengths/weaknesses. It is:

- **Not a letter of recommendation**
- **Not directed to any specific specialty**

Role of the Clerkship Administrator

Based on our understanding; your department may differ

Clerkship administrators take the preceptors’ ratings and comments and enter them into E*Value. The procedure, format, and content of evaluations varies by department, but administrators may help ensure some basic consistency across departments and clerkships.

Guidelines

The evaluative comments in this section should be prepared as *ready to go in the final MSPE*. Because of increased class size, along with the increasing number of clerkships included in the MSPE due to clerkships starting earlier, Student Affairs has limited capacity to review and make edits to (over 2,600) evaluations. Following the guidelines below will help ensure that our letters are consistent in style, format, and quality of content.

Content

Student Affairs will assume that anything in the “For Dean’s MSPE section” is meant for the MSPE. Students who come to SA with content concerns will be directed to the clerkship administrators.

A note about WRITE: If the evaluation is just one long one for the whole WRITE experience, please be mindful about not including comments that seem like they are for another clerkship. In addition, evaluations should be evaluating the clerkship, not their WRITE experience as a whole.

Evaluative comments are **required** for each clerkship. These should be a *minimum of 3 sentences*, and should ideally be sentences of substance.

LESS HELPFUL: Mr. X did a good job. He was always on time and dependable. He will make a good doctor.

MORE HELPFUL: Mr. X met or exceeded all requirements for the clerkship. He was hardworking and made significant progress with his write-ups and his presentations. He was professional—always on time and dependable—and is expected to be a good physician.

Maximum of 350 words. Longer ≠ Better

The AAMC recommends that the MSPE be no longer than 5 pages total. Overly long evaluations are problematic, especially now that more evaluations are included in the letter.

Consider taking out redundant information. For example, some evaluations contain multiple quotes with repetitive information. Other information that is unnecessary includes the length of the clerkship and whether it was their first clerkship, etc., as this information is included elsewhere.

Formative comments belong in the Descriptive Feedback (not for use in Dean's MSPE) section. Formative comments tend to be comments that would be more helpful for the student in their subsequent clerkships.

Examples:

- We wish her the best. *This should be directed to the student; it is not evaluative.*
- He should continue to expand his knowledge base. *Not really helpful in an evaluative sense, as it's something that is generally assumed. It could be considered advice to the student.*
- He should work on making his presentations more succinct. *This one could go either way. If it was a deficit, it should be included. If it was general feedback, it should go in descriptive feedback.*

Grading Breakdowns should be included in the For MSPE section for all required clerkships. Ideally, the format would be the same across departments, but at least should be consistent within the department. **Please use whole words** when reporting grades, etc.

Examples:

- **Clinical HP exam 62 Final P**
→ Clinical: High Pass; Exam: 62; Final: Pass
- **Clinical grade 4.03 (Range: 1 lowest - 5 highest). Final exam score 74 %. This yields a final grade for the clerkship of High Pass.**
→ Clinical Grade: 4.03 (Range: 1 lowest - 5 highest); Final Exam Score: 74%; Final Grade: High Pass

Style

Past tense: Comments will be read by residency programs months or even years after the student completed the rotation; comments should be in the past tense unless it's a quote attributed to a preceptor.

Complete sentences: evaluation comments should be in complete sentences unless attributed in quotes to a speaker.

Third person: Since the MSPE letter comes from Student Affairs, either convert first-person quotes or attribute them to a preceptor or evaluator. Comments directed to the student do not belong in the MSPE section and should be moved to the feedback section or converted to third person.

BEFORE: We all think she is the best student we have had rotate with us.

AFTER: The department (or unit, or team, etc.) felt she was the best student to rotate with them.

OR: Her preceptor commented, “We all think she is the best student we have had rotate with us.”

BEFORE: Michelle, you did a great job overall on this clerkship.

AFTER: Michelle did a great job overall on the clerkship.

Commonly Seen Issues

- **Recommendations:** Comments such as “I highly recommend her for residency!” or “I would be happy to write him a letter of recommendation,” do not belong in the Required Feedback section.
- **Specialty-directed:** Don’t use wording/phrasing that assumes a specific specialty. Keep in mind that this letter stays with the student and they may not match in that specialty. Rather than saying “*She will be an excellent ophthalmologist,*” it would be better to say “*She would make an excellent ophthalmologist.*”
- **Endorsements:** Don’t endorse student in *another* specialty. E.g. an Ob/Gyn rotation should not say “He will make a fantastic psychiatrist.”
- **Shrinking violet:** Be mindful of language that could be considered sexist or inappropriate. E.g. Shrinking violet, blossoming, blooming. There are words to describe student growth/performance that have better connotations and are more appropriate for a graduate-level evaluation.

The following problematic sentences were taken from actual evaluations:

“When you first meet her, you are not expecting much because she has a quiet demeanor. However, you immediately realize that she possesses a unique ability to synthesize information in a very intelligent and mature way that far exceeds her training level.” The first sentence is disparaging to the student and is not appropriate for the MSPE. It is making a judgment based on her physical appearance/demeanor, and says more about the evaluators’ own biases/expectations than it does about the student.

Consider instead:

When you first meet her, you immediately realize that she possesses a unique ability to synthesize information in a very intelligent and mature way that far exceeds her training level.

- OR -

It was immediately apparent that she had a unique ability to synthesize information in a very intelligent and mature way that far exceeded her training level.

“He was curious, inquisitive, highly mature and focused and has developed interests and an area of knowledge and gave a presentation on LBGT issues in medicine and psychiatry that was more sophisticated than most in its presentation of data and his deeper knowledge of the data.” Rambling sentence.

Consider instead: He was curious, inquisitive, highly mature, and focused. He gave a presentation on LBGT issues in medicine and psychiatry that was more sophisticated than most in its presentation of data and in his deeper knowledge of the data.

“She always does not ignore the subtle comments that patient will make that actually are very important.”

Confusing sentence, poor wording.

Consider instead: She was always mindful of the subtle comments that patients made, which were actually very important.

“At the end of rotation, she presented an overview of atypical vulvar lesions that sparkled.” **Think about word choice...**

Consider instead: She presented an excellent end-of-rotation overview of atypical vulvar lesions.

“Always an eager beaver and hungry unicorn.” **What does this even mean? Does this seem appropriate for a graduate-level education evaluation?**

Consider instead: He was always eager to learn and sought out additional opportunities.

EXAMPLES

1. Harry has been an outstanding medical student. He communicates clearly with patients and peers, and has not only a strong knowledge base, but more importantly, shows a great ability to synthesize his knowledge and clinical information into very well developed and graduated differentials as well as plans. He is well ahead of his level in his clinical abilities. Harry is additionally very clearly focused on patient care and very conscientious throughout. His approach to learning and his performance were very clearly centered on managing patient comfort and respect as well as seeking to improve his patient care in the future. He has a solid knowledge base, but is not afraid to show ignorance or faults in order to clarify his own gaps. He clearly presses people to challenge him and seems to thrive on challenge. I think he will make an outstanding resident and physician, committed to patient care. I recommend him to any specialty. **ISSUES:** *not past tense, typos, first-person sentence, recommendation.*

Fixed: Mr. Potter was an outstanding student. He communicated clearly with patients and peers, and had a strong knowledge base. More importantly, he showed a great ability to synthesize his knowledge and clinical information into very well developed and graduated differentials as well as plans. He was well ahead of his level in his clinical abilities. Additionally, Harry was very clearly focused on patient care and very conscientious throughout. His approach to learning and his performance were clearly centered on managing patient comfort and respect as well as seeking to improve his patient care in the future. He had a solid knowledge base, but was not afraid to show ignorance or faults in order to clarify his own gaps. He clearly pressed people to challenge him and seemed to thrive on challenges. His preceptor commented, “He will make an outstanding resident and physician, committed to patient care.”

2. Exceptional 3rd year student, bright, capable, outstanding clinical skills, eager to learn and to do. She is hard-working, self motivated, dependable, professional. She relates very well to children, teens and families. She acquires knowledge easily and applies it appropriately to the clinical situation. Independent yet works well with others. **ISSUES:** *not past tense, incomplete sentences, typos.*

Fixed: Ms. Granger was an exceptional third-year student; she was bright and capable, had outstanding clinical skills, and was eager to learn and to do. She was hardworking, self-motivated, dependable, and professional. She

related very well to children, teens, and families. She acquired knowledge easily and applied it appropriately to the clinical situation. Hermione was independent yet worked well with others.

MSPE Quick Reference

- **Minimum of 3 sentences**
- **MAX 350 words:** reduce redundancies & unnecessary/irrelevant details
- **Grading breakdown** in MSPE section of all required clerkships
- **Style:** past tense, 3rd person, either convert first-person quotes or attribute them to evaluator.
- **NO:** recommendations, assumptions of future specialty, cross-specialty endorsements, personal patient details, sexist/inappropriate language