UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE
REQUEST FOR DECISION

PRESENTED BY: Susan Detmer, chair, Academic Programs Committee

DATE OF MEETING: February 20, 2020

SUBJECT: Admissions Qualifications change – Doctor of Medicine (MD) program

DECISION REQUESTED:

It is recommended:

That Council approve the proposed changes to the admissions qualifications for the Doctor of Medicine (MD) program, effective the 2021-22 admissions cycle

PURPOSE:

Changes to admissions qualifications require approval by University Council and confirmation by University Senate.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

The College of Medicine is seeking to add an online test of non-academic competencies as a requirement for admissions. The college will use the test score to rule out candidates prior to the interview stage only if the z-score is less than or equal to minus 2 standard deviations below the mean or if red flags (such as egregious comments or cheating) are demonstrated on the text. The College of Medicine will continue to use the multiple mini interview to measure personal factors.

Adding this test of non-academic competencies at the interview stage provides the admissions committee with an additional means to screen applicants aside from academic performance, which will be particularly useful when considering non-Saskatchewan residents.

The College of Medicine is committed to monitoring the impact of the additional cost of this test and will develop a program to off-set the costs where it is creating a barrier to applying to the College of Medicine.

The Academic Programs Committee considered the proposed changes to the admissions qualifications at its February 12, 2020 meeting and supported the use of an online test of non-academic competencies prior to the interview stage for admission to the MD program and recommends that Council approve the change.

FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:

University Senate will be asked to confirm this decision at its April 25, 2020 meeting.
ATTACHMENTS:

1. Background and Rationale for Introducing CASPer as a College of Medicine Admission Requirement
MOTION

That the College of Medicine (CoM) introduces the completion of the CASPer online situational judgment test as a requirement for admission for October 2020 application cycle (applicable to the incoming class of 2021).

A motion approving this new College of Medicine admission requirement was unanimously passed at the Faculty Council of Medicine meeting held January 29, 2020.

We are now submitting this motion for consideration by the University Council (through the Academic Programs Committee) and, if approved there, subsequently will submit the motion to the University Senate for final approval.

Submitted on behalf of the College of Medicine,

[Signature]

Dr. Trustin Domes
Director of Admissions
College of Medicine
February 2, 2020
Background and Rationale for Introducing CASPer as a College of Medicine Admission Requirement

For reference, the current admission requirements for the MD program are attached (see USASK COM ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS 2020 document).

WHAT is CASPer?

CASPer (Computer-based Assessment Sampling Personal Characteristics) is a Canadian-based and designed online situational judgement test that was first used as an admission requirement for Medicine at McMaster University in 2010. CASPer consists of 12 sections (video or word-based scenarios) and candidates have five minutes per section to complete 3 open-ended questions based on each scenario. Each applicant’s test is scored by 12 blinded highly trained raters, is norm-referenced and the applicant’s performance is assigned a z score. Given the nature of the examination, it is very difficult to prepare for it prior to administration and is meant to reflect core personal beliefs and human reactions to situations.

CASPer can only be taken once per year and the score is valid only for the year of administration. Unsuccessful applicants would have to retake CASPer the following year if they wished to reapply to the program.

To learn more about CASPer visit: https://takecasper.com/about-casper/

Today, numerous health science colleges from around the world have been using CASPer to assess personal (non-cognitive) attributes, such as: collaboration, communication, empathy, equity, ethics, motivation, problem solving, professionalism, resilience and self-awareness. In Canada, nine out of the 17 medical schools use CASPer as an admission requirement. The University of Saskatchewan currently requires all applicants to the College of Medicine post-graduate residency programs to complete the CASPer administration specifically designed for this group of learners, which is somewhat different than the one designed for undergraduate students. Additionally, the University of Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy and Nutrition have just recently required CASPer completion for all of their applicants.

HOW will CASPer be used for admission to the College of Medicine?

Applicants enroll for CASPer online and there is a $40 administration fee and a $12 distribution fee for each school the result is distributed to. The applicant is not given their result at any point during the application cycle. The Admission Committee plans to initially use the CASPer score very conservatively, ruling candidates out prior to the interview stage of application if the z-score is less than or equal to minus 2 standard deviations below the mean or if any red flags are demonstrated (red flags are rare in CASPer administrations and are used to flag very offensive and egregious comments or
if there is evidence of cheating on the exam). We plan to correlate the CASPer score with our other measures of personal factors (multiple mini interview/reference calls/Issues of professionalism).

**WHY do we want to introduce CASPer as an admission requirement?**

Assessing personal factors is a very important and challenging aspect of medical school admissions. CASPer is a tool to further assess personal factors in a reliable and standardized way. By introducing CASPer prior to the interview phase of the application cycle, the Admissions committee has an additional means to screen applicants for interview other than just academic performance. This additional metric is especially important when we consider non-Saskatchewan residents for an interview, where the vast minority of applicants are interviewed and currently the academic performance required to obtain an interview is extremely competitive.

**WHAT other considerations are there regarding CASPer?**

CASPer is a relatively new tool used to assess personal factors and although research assessing the reliability and validity of CASPer has been looked at in a few institutions, there still is a paucity of data linking CASPer results with success in medical school and future issues with professionalism. The University of Saskatchewan post-graduate experience with CASPer has been encouraging at this point, with less issues with professionalism identified in postgraduate trainees post-CASPer (manuscript in preparation, A. Saxena). As part of our ongoing program evaluation, we plan to correlate the CASPer results with other admission metrics and also performance and success in our medical program (both academic and professionalism domains).

There are concerns that Indigenous and minority applicants may be disadvantaged though the CASPer process compared to non-Indigenous and non-minority applicants. Data does not support this and instead demonstrates Indigenous applicants score similarly to non-Indigenous applicants (see figure below).

The cost of CASPer to the applicant is also a concern, however the cost is very reasonable at a maximum of $52 for an applicant that only applies to the University of Saskatchewan or only $12 if an applicant is applying to another medical school that requires CASPer as well. We will monitor if cost is a barrier and if it is we will develop a program to off-set this additional cost for applicants where this is creating a barrier to apply to our College.
Source: Altus Group; CASPer Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Subgroup Differences 2018/19
2020-21 Admission Requirements

College: Medicine
Program(s): M.D.

Admission Qualifications:

- Saskatchewan Residents
  Academic performance for Saskatchewan residents is based on all courses taken up to the awarding of a four-year Baccalaureate degree. The degree must be completed prior to entry into Medicine. Academic performance is reviewed for consistency or improvement, and to ensure that the MCAT requirement has been met.

  o Online Situational Judgement Test:
    - All Saskatchewan resident applicants (including self-identified Indigenous applicants) will be required to complete an online situational judgement test of personal attributes and competencies (i.e. CASPer) prior to the application deadline.

  o MCAT Requirement:
    - All Saskatchewan resident applicants (including those eligible to apply through the Aboriginal Admissions Program) must complete the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) prior to the application deadline.
    - For application for fall of 2019 for entry fall of 2020, no minimum MCAT section or sum scores will be required to apply, but the Admissions Committee will set a minimum acceptable MCAT sum score percentile once the scores of all applicants are known. MCAT scores must be obtained in one sitting prior to the application deadline. The earliest accepted scores for application 2019 for entry fall of 2020 are from January 2016. Only the most recent MCAT will be considered.
    - The Admissions Committee, in assessing an individual's application, will review the MCAT section scores for consistency and for concordance of the MCAT total score percentile with the individual's university academic average (UAA). Inconsistency within the MCAT section results, or discordance between the MCAT total score percentile and the UAA (e.g., MCAT result unexpectedly low based on the UAA), can serve as grounds for the Admissions Committee to remove an individual's application from further consideration.
    - While prerequisite courses are not mandatory, applicants are strongly encouraged to complete courses in the subject areas of Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, English, Physics, Psychology, Sociology, and Statistics to ensure readiness for the MCAT, as well as, the basic sciences covered in the first-two years of the undergraduate medical curriculum.

  o Degree Requirement:
    - Application by Saskatchewan resident applicants (including those eligible to apply through the Aboriginal Admissions Program) can be made only during or after the final year of a four-year degree. The degree must be completed by the end of April of the year they are seeking admission.
    - The degree must be completed in ≤5 years.
    - A minimum university academic average (UAA) of 75% is required.
    - Applicants in a non-direct entry college can apply if ≥90 credit units have been completed prior to application. At least 120 credit units must be completed by the end of April prior to entry to the college.
    - Graduate level courses and degrees will be considered if it works to the applicant's advantage.
2020-21 Admission Requirements

- **Out-of-Province Residents**
  Academic performance for out-of-province resident applicants will be based on the MCAT total score percentile along with a required minimum UAA of 85%.
  
  - **Online Situational Judgement Test:**
    - All out-of-province applicants will be required to complete an online situational judgement test of personal attributes and competencies (i.e. CASPer) prior to the application deadline.
  
  - **MCAT Requirement:**
    - All out-of-province applicants must complete the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) prior to the application deadline.
    - For application fall of 2019 for entry fall of 2020, a minimum of the 80th percentile for the test sum score and for each of the four section scores is required. MCAT scores must be obtained in one sitting. The earliest accepted scores for application 2019 for entry fall of 2020 are from January 2016. Only the most recent MCAT will be considered.
    - While prerequisite courses are not mandatory, applicants are strongly encouraged to complete courses in the subject areas of Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, English, Physics, Psychology, Sociology, and Statistics to ensure readiness for the MCAT, as well as, the basic sciences covered in the first two years of the undergraduate medical curriculum.
  
  - **Degree Requirement:**
    - Application by out-of-province applicants can be made only during or after the final year of a four-year degree. The degree must be completed by the end of April of the year they are seeking admission. The degree must be completed within a 5-year period.
    - If applicants are in the final year of a four-year degree, a minimum of 90 credit units must have been completed in the 48 months prior to the end of August immediately before application.
    - All courses completed by the application deadline (or up to the awarding of the degree in the case where the degree has been awarded prior to application) will be used for the calculation of the UAA.
    - The minimum UAA required for application will be 85%.
    - The four-year degree must be completed by the end of April prior to starting medical training. All remaining courses completed after the date of application must minimally average 85%.
    - Graduate level courses and degrees will be considered if it works to the applicant’s advantage.

**Selection Criteria:**

- **Weighting**
  - An online situational judgement test of personal attributes and competencies (i.e. CASPer) will be used by the Admissions Committee only as a screening tool prior to selection of applicants for interview and will not be factored into the final ranking calculation.
2020-21 Admission Requirements

- The weighting of academic performance to personal qualities (College of Medicine Multiple Mini Interview – MMI) for Saskatchewan resident applicants is 20% MCAT; 30% UAA; and 50% MMI.
- Out-of-province resident applicants invited for an interview will be ranked for admission based on 100% on the applicant's performance in the MMI.

- References
  - The names of three referees and their contact information will be requested from applicants at the time of application.
  - Referees must have supervised the applicant in a research, employment or volunteer role.
  - References are not scored; they are used on a rule out basis.

- Criminal Record Check
  - All applicants offered admission will be required to submit a criminal record check, including vulnerable sector screening, to the College of Medicine by the first day of Orientation of the year of entry.

Categories of Applicants:

Ninety-five of the first-year seats are reserved for Saskatchewan residents. To increase the number of Aboriginal physicians, 10 of the first-year seats are available for qualified, self-identified First Nations, Métis and Inuit applicants through the Aboriginal Admissions Program (Note: these seats are included in the 95 allocated Saskatchewan seats).

All applicants must have lived in Canada for at least three years prior to August 1 of the year in which admission is being sought and they must be a Canadian citizen or have Permanent Resident status by the application deadline of October 1.

Saskatchewan Residents

To be eligible to apply as a Saskatchewan resident, applicants must have physically resided in Saskatchewan for the three years immediately preceding August 1 of the year in which admission is being sought. However, applicants who have left the province, but have previously lived in Saskatchewan for an accumulated period of 15 years (permanent residency) will be treated as residents.

Applicants who have previously lived in Saskatchewan for an accumulated period of less than 15 years, and do not qualify under the three-year condition, will receive credit of one year toward the three-year requirement for every five years of residency in the province.

An exception to the three-year ruling may be made for members of the Armed Forces of Canada or RCMP, or for an applicant whose spouse, parent or guardian is a member of the Armed Forces of Canada or RCMP, who has moved to Saskatchewan due to being reassigned. In these cases, the applicant must have resided in Saskatchewan for at least 12 consecutive months immediately preceding October 1st of the year of application and obtained written approval prior to the application deadline to waive the three year requirement.

Individuals who have been in three years of full-time study at the University of Saskatchewan or the University of Regina directly preceding the date of entry being sought are considered to be Saskatchewan residents.
2020-21 Admission Requirements

Applicants who meet the same criteria based on residency in Yukon, Northwest or Nunavut territory can apply as a Saskatchewan resident.

Canadian Out-of-Province Residents

Up to five the first-year seats may be offered to out-of-province resident applicants.

Aboriginal Admissions Program

Ten of the first-year seats are reserved for persons of Canadian Aboriginal descent (with a preference for applicants meeting the Saskatchewan residency requirement and a maximum of five Aboriginal Admissions seats open to out-of-province resident applicants of Aboriginal descent) accepted through the Aboriginal Admissions seats each year. Note: Applicants of Aboriginal ancestry are first considered within the Saskatchewan pool, and if not competitive, then within the Aboriginal Admissions pool.

Diversity and Social Accountability Admissions Program (DSAAP)

The DSAAP will involve six of the first-year seats. The DSAAP seats are reserved for applicants that meet the Saskatchewan residency requirement. Saskatchewan residents will first be considered through the regular Saskatchewan admission rank number (ARN) process. If unsuccessful in achieving a regular offered seat, Saskatchewan residents who qualify through the answers they provide to a DSAAP supplemental admissions questionnaire will then be considered for a DSAAP seat. Self-declared Aboriginal applicants are not eligible for the DSAAP, instead they are similarly first considered through the usual Saskatchewan ARN process and then subsequently through the Aboriginal Admissions Program.

Dean’s Signature: ____________________________________

Date: ____________________________________