

DATE: Friday, April 10, 2020
TO: Class of 2020
FROM: The Office of Academic Affairs
RE: **IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION TO D4 CLASS ON ELIGIBILITY FOR MAY GRADUATION THROUGH CHALLENGING ALTERNATIVE CLINICAL ASSESSMENTS IN LIEU OF CLINICAL COMPETENCIES: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

Dear Class of 2020,

With each passing week, the uncertainty of a return to “normal” increases anxiety for everyone in the College of Dentistry Community and worldwide. The burning questions that you have etched in your minds are the same for ours; when will we be permitted to return to school and resume patient care? What should I tell my patients who are in the midst of treatment? My residency or future employer is asking if I will graduate on time to transition into the next phase of my life. How will I complete my clinical requirements and competencies? For the College’s administration and senior faculty our focus in answering these questions is on how to assure that the plans that we put in place meet the requirements set by regulatory agencies governing professional education.

In recent communications, Deans Bertolami and Schreiber have informed you of several important aspects to the decisions that directly impact your ability to graduate “on time.” Specifically, it is important that you understand that the College of Dentistry cannot make these decisions unilaterally. The regulatory agencies to whom we report, namely the New York State Department of Education and the Commission on Dental Accreditation **MUST** approve any changes to the curriculum and the methods with which all requirements and competencies for graduation will be satisfied absent the ability to do so during the provision of patient care. **What has been made clear to all dental schools is that there can be no compromise in the completion of all graduation requirements and competencies. The alternatives means that we present for accomplishing this MUST meet state education and accreditation standards.**

First and foremost, the College administration and faculty recognize that our commitment to your education and to assuring the safety of the public, is one and the same; we are obligated to graduate competent and confident young practitioners. These responsibilities are non-negotiable.

WHAT DOES “ELIGIBILITY FOR MAY GRADUATION THROUGH CHALLENGING ALTERNATIVE CLINICAL ASSESSMENTS IN LIEU OF CLINICAL COMPETENCIES” MEAN?

Eligibility for May graduation through challenging alternative clinical assessments in lieu of clinical competencies means that students who have yet to challenge or pass required clinical competencies will have the opportunity to do so by an alternative assessment method if they have had sufficient clinical experience as defined by each department to do so. This is in recognition of the inability to complete these competencies in the usual manner on patients due to the disruption of clinical care by the pandemic. **Eligibility does not guarantee on time graduation.** Students **MUST STILL** successfully challenge the alternative assessments and **MUST** fulfill all other requirements for graduation.

WHAT IS THE PLAN?

The first step is to identify the students who were on track for on time graduation at the time of the Covid-19 disruption of clinical operations, and those who were not. While this is a process that occurs every year; the difference this year is that the opportunity to complete clinical requirements and competencies has been cut short by the pandemic. Since approximately 80% of the D4 year was completed before the disruption of clinical activities, the data necessary to identify students who have demonstrated sufficient clinical experience to complete requirements and challenge competencies by alternative means exists. The Chairs, Course Directors, Group Practice Directors, Class Promotions Committee, faculty, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and Academic Advising have been meeting regularly to examine each individual student's academic and clinical record to determine who has met the minimum clinical thresholds to be considered eligible for on time graduation by challenging clinical competencies via alternative means. To that end, we have asked the Department Chairs, Course Directors and Group Practice Directors to provide detailed reports for each individual student, and using this data, determine how best to quantify, transfer and apply credit for the clinical requirements as well as to create alternative clinical experiences to earn and achieve these requirements without compromising your education. This is a detailed process which is, and which must be, executed carefully.

The information and recommendations received from each Department will form the basis for decisions made by the CPC . The specific plans for completion of requirements, rotations, and competencies by alternative means will be forwarded to the senior leadership of the College who will propose these alternatives to the NYSED and CODA for approval. Again, **these regulatory agencies govern education, licensure and accreditation and they MUST approve any changes made to existing programs and how requirements are fulfilled.**

In the meantime, please be aware:

- If you are a student with outstanding requirements for D3, a May graduation was never a realistic or achievable goal. Depending on the extent of your deficiencies, the earliest you will graduate is either September 2020 or January 2021.
- If you are a student who has to re-challenge the NBDE Pt II, you have a total of 5 opportunities to achieve a passing grade; and 14 months post the original date of graduation in order to be awarded a DDS degree from the University. Please know that under the current circumstances with the testing agencies closed due to the pandemic, an extension of the 14-month deadline corresponding to the length of time that testing centers are closed will be considered if necessary. This does not require approval by the NYSED or CODA.
- All students will be notified of their status regarding **eligibility for May graduation by challenging alternative clinical assessments in lieu of clinical competencies** on or before April 20, 2020.

Until the list of eligible D4 students is finalized, Course Directors cannot administer the alternative clinical assessments. However, during this time, it is imperative that you continue to actively participate in every aspect of your education through remote instruction: completion of all non-direct patient care course requirements, academic engagement, attendance, and participation are mandatory if you are to receive credit for coursework.

Course Directors may extend instruction time to ensure that the objectives for each course are met. Utilizing Zoom for alternative clinical experiences must continue and will require documentation such as a rubric, for example, that outlines criteria for a competency and how it will be administered and passing grade achieved in accordance with the objectives in the respective syllabus. In all cases the competency assessment tool and the criteria applied to success will be the same as those required when demonstrating competency on a patient.

Please know that your NYU faculty, staff, and leadership are working tirelessly, advocating for and committed to you and the community we serve.