UCLIC FAQ’s for students

How does the University of Calgary Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (UCLIC) compare to Rotation Based Clerkship (RBC)?

The UCLIC program places students in experienced teaching sites throughout Alberta and Yellowknife for the clerkship year. UCLIC students are exposed to all disciplines in a longitudinal fashion simultaneously in a clinical environment with students working beside their preceptors on a regular basis. This model not only follows sound pedagogical principles but also contributes to strong relationships with the local health care team. The model includes three immersion experiences in surgery, internal medicine and pediatrics which are usually provided in an urban center. UCLIC students undergo the same evaluative process and exams as rotation based clerks. Outcomes on exams (OSCEs, ITERS, MCQs) and CaRMS placements are equivalent.

How are sites and preceptors selected?

Sites selected must meet the following criteria:

- Minimum of 500 consultations in the practice per week (all ages)
- 24 h and 7-day week cover by family doctors
- Ability to provide minimum of one operating list per student per week
- Minimum 10 obstetric deliveries per student
- Inpatient management of common family medicine, internal med, obstetrics, pediatric and psychiatric problems
- Access to video conferencing, teleconferencing, and high speed internet

All sites selected have hosted medical students for the rural family medicine rotation and/or rural elective. Many are residency training sites.

Preceptors are selected based on teaching experience, positive feedback from students and peers and their willingness to devote a significant amount of time for ‘the care and feeding’ of medical students. Students will have the opportunity to work with many other physicians at their site as well.

The duties of the primary preceptors are listed as follows:

- Devote sufficient time to the UCLIC program.
- Coordinate and schedule UCLIC clerks.
- Provide regular feedback and evaluations (ITERS).
- Participate in faculty development.
- Participate in development of Primary Preceptor feedback and evaluation processes.
- Promote and support the UCLIC program within community.
- Maintain faculty appointment with Department of Family Medicine.

A summary of current UCLIC sites is attached in Appendix 1
Will I have exposure to acuity and surgical specialties (or resident/program directors in those fields)?

The longitudinal design of the UCLIC program takes into account the fact that while the ‘concentration’ of acuity is less compared to certain urban rotations, over the time in UCLIC sites (approximately 9 months) students will see a wide variety of acute cases. UCLIC students are more likely to be the first to see acute cases and be more involved in the diagnosis and management of these cases than their urban peers. All UCLIC students do a 4-week immersion in Internal Medicine, 4 weeks in Pediatrics and 4 weeks in Surgery, which provide further opportunities to see acuity and experience inpatient medicine. These immersive experiences also expose students to specialists and sometimes program directors in these areas as well. It has been shown over the years that UCLIC students are NOT disadvantaged in the CaRMS match in any discipline they seek. All sites have access to surgical specialties during UCLIC time.

Will I be able to match to a specialty other than family medicine?

The CaRMS match rate to 1st choice of discipline shows no significant difference between Rotation Based Clerks (RBC) and UCLIC students. UCLIC students have matched to the following specialties: pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine, urology, community medicine, ophthalmology, internal medicine, psychiatry, orthopedics, general surgery, anesthesiology, family medicine and public health. While 72.5% of UCLIC students have matched to family medicine as their career choice, UCLIC sets the student up to achieve their career goals regardless of discipline.

Will I be able to bring my family with me?

You are encouraged to bring your family with you as this is part of the experience. Most UCLIC-funded lodging is provided with families in mind. All sites have housing with at least two bedrooms, some with three and many are pet friendly. Over the years, several of our students have brought their families, some with 3 children, to their sites. Several ‘UCLIC babies’ have been born at the sites while their parents study. For accommodation specifics contact UCLIC Coordinator at uclic@ucalgary.ca. Accommodations are supplied through RhPAP and are subject to change from year to year.

Will I experience social isolation?

In a word . . . yes. Clerkship in general is isolating due to various rotational assignments, call and study, all of which interfere with relationships with peers. While this has not been studied directly, the degree of isolation experienced does not seem to be significantly more than RBC students. But, based on previous student experience, the isolation is only temporary and is counteracted by local interactions and online interactions with friends, family and other students. Almost all UCLIC students have another student at their site. All sites have had students previously and understand the potential for isolation and individuals there help to reduce the isolation. All UCLIC students are provided with tools that allow for easy communication with peers and loved ones. The satisfaction of UCLIC clerks is consistently higher than that of RBC clerks as noted by year-end surveys. The overall rating of the UCLIC clerkship experience by the class of 2015 was an impressive 4.8/5.

What about reference letters?

Primary preceptors are responsible for completing all ITERs for students assigned to them. Students are also able and encouraged to ask other physicians with faculty appointments to fill out evaluations.
Because students have been in one site for several months rather than a few weeks, the quality of the reference letters increases based on observation over time (assuming the student does well). Program Directors report that they specifically look for the length of time a referee has been on contact with students. The impact of a letter that states not only how long referee has worked with a student, but also various examples of the student performance, is much greater than a letter written after 2-4 weeks of student contact.

UCLIC students who have been interested in specialties in the past have been in contact with someone of that specialty early in their UCLIC time and have received letters describing that longitudinal relationship (even if it was, for example, only 1 day every 2 weeks over the 9-month period.) A preceptor, seeing a student over time, is much better able to see progress, even if the actual time spent is equivalent to a block. The letters therefore are of higher quality.

**Will I see enough?**

UCLIC students consistently speak very highly of their experience. Although anxiety is high in the first 3 months, as they speak to their peers in specialty rotations, students realize that by about the 6 month point (2/3 of the UCLIC experience) logbooks show that most of the clinical presentations and procedures are nearing completion. UCLIC student performance on ITERs, MCQ’s and OSCE’s are not statistically different from RBC students.

**What happens if I don’t get along with my preceptor?**

Steps are taken early on to identify potential concerns (which have been rare so far) between student and preceptor. Every action will be taken to allow the student to remain in the site, if agreeable to both the student and the preceptor, but if reconciliation is impossible, or improbable, students have the option to join the urban rotation based clerkship.

**What happens if I think UCLIC is not for me after arriving at the site?**

Once at the site, barring preceptor/student concerns, all students are expected to stay for at least 3 months to be certain of their decision. Several studies done in longitudinal clerkships around the world demonstrate that the first 3 months of this experience are the most stressful and that most students are feeling much more at ease after that point. This has been the case with UCLIC as well. Should a student still feel uncomfortable with continuing with UCLIC they are able to ‘eject’ at that time and join their peers in the RBC.

**How do electives work in UCLIC?**

UCLIC students have the same number of weeks of electives as their rotation based peers. 10 weeks upfront and 4 weeks during UCLIC.

**Will I get hands-on experience?**

Yes. This has consistently and universally been described as a strength of the program.

**What about work-life balance?**

This has also been described as a strength of our program. All sites are keenly aware of the
importance of work-life balance and model this to the students.  

**How is my site placement determined?**

Once selected to UCLIC through the interview process, formal offers will be made. Students will have 24 hours to accept or decline. Once you have accepted the offer, you will be randomly allocated to a site. Students will be allowed to swap sites if they choose, upon approval from UME. If a student decides to decline their offer, they will be entered into the clerkship lottery for the rotation based clerkship with no disadvantage.

**Can I match to a site with a friend/partner?**
Yes, this is a possibility. Please indicate in the application form who you would like to be matched with. There are no guarantees, but it will be taken into consideration if you both are chosen.

**Can I bring my pet?**
Although many sites do allow pets, please be aware you may not be able to bring them to your assigned site and will need to make other arrangements if that happens.

**What happens when I come back to the city for mandatory components? Is there housing provided?**
No, it is not provided. You will be reimbursed for your mileage both ways to and from your site, but you are expected to pay for or find accommodations for the designated time frame.
Appendix 1

Current UCLIC Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Start Year</th>
<th>Population (approx.)</th>
<th>Distance (km)</th>
<th>Physicians</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pincher Creek</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drumheller</td>
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<td>138</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>116</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taber</td>
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<td>7,500</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>71</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canmore</td>
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<td>Yellowknife, NWT</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lethbridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>23</td>
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