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## 25 The Off-Service Letter of Evaluation....the Over-Ranked Service Letter of Evaluation?

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**Learning Objectives:** To review the results of the Off-Service Letter of Evaluations (OSLOEs) in the 2020-21 academic year and analyze their utility and value in the emergency medicine residency application process.

**Background:** Standardized Letters of Evaluation (SLOEs) are designed to objectively compare medical students to their peers for completed emergency medicine (EM) rotations. Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) mitigation efforts decreased medical students' ability to obtain multiple SLOEs for their application to the EM match. To compensate, the Council of Residency Directors in Emergency Medicine (CORD) implemented "off-service" SLOEs (OSLOEs). The purpose of our study is to summarize the OSLOEs submitted during the 2020-21 academic year and assess for grade inflation and overall utility of the letters for applicant selection.

**Methods:** A retrospective review of OSLOEs submitted during the 2020-21 academic year to a single EM residency program was performed. Summary statistics for global rank (top 10%, top 1/3, middle 1/3, and lower 1/3), grade (honors, high pass, pass, low pass, fail) and specific category (knowledge, work ethic, communication, teachability, respectfulness, admits mistakes, accountable, and reliability) ranks were calculated.

**Results:** A total of 270 OSLOEs were reviewed and summarized. Global assessments revealed 61.9% were ranked at the top 10% of their class, with 95% being ranked in the top 10% and top 1/3. No student was ranked in the bottom 1/3 of their class. Over 90% of students were graded as honors or high pass; no students received low pass or failing grades. Over 75% of students were ranked in the top 1/3 for each specific OSLOE category.

**Conclusion:** In an attempt to adapt quickly to the lack of availability of in-person EM rotations due to COVID-19, the OSLOE was a logical alternative. However, our findings reveal signs of grade inflation providing evidence that the ranking distribution of the OSLOE may have little value in the evaluation of student performance. Given our findings, the OSLOE may not carry the same weight as a SLOE when objectively evaluating prospective students for a match into EM.

## 26 Transitioning to Pass/Fail USMLE Step 1: Will Students from Less Prominent Schools be Adversely Impacted?

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**Background:** In January 2022, USMLE Step 1 scoring will be pass/fail (P/F). Although this change aims to decrease applicant stress, it will impact the way EM program directors (PDs) review applications. Little research exists on how the transition will impact applicants.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to determine if a change in Step 1 scoring will affect the likelihood to interview (LTI) an applicant. We hypothesized that transitioning to P/F scoring may negatively impact the LTI for students from less prominent schools.

**Methods:** A survey of mock residency applications from strong, fair, and poor applicants was distributed to EM PDs via the CORD list serve. Respondents rated the LTI of applicants on a 5-point Likert scale. Applications from allopathic (MD), osteopathic (DO), and international medical graduates (IMG) were included. School prominence was determined by the 2020 US News & World Report rankings. Survey respondents were randomized to review applications with either numeric or P/F scores. Independent sample t-tests were calculated in SPSS 23.0 to compare mean ratings for applications based on scored or P/F scenarios for MD, DO, and IMG groups separately. This study was approved by the institutional review board at the study site.

**Results:** Of 149 responses, poor performing MD students from highly prominent schools had a higher LTI with P/F scoring than poor performing students from less prominent schools (2.03 vs. 1.55,  $p < .01$ ). For strong and fair performing MD students, no significant difference in LTI existed amongst high and less prominent schools with P/F scoring (Table 1). Strong DO ( $p < .01$ ) and IMG ( $p < .001$ ) applicants had higher LTI with P/F, while fair DO ( $p < .01$ ) and IMG ( $p < .001$ ) applicants had higher LTI with a numeric score (Table 2).

**Conclusions:** When only P/F scoring is reported, poor performing students from low prominence schools have a significantly lower LTI than poor performing peers from high prominence schools.