

Writing High-Quality Evaluations of Student Performance: Best Practices and Examples

Best practices in writing evaluations:

- Discuss expectations when you start working with a student.
- Know the School's competencies and the expectations for students in your clerkship.
- Keep personal notes while working with the student of what you have observed and feedback you have discussed, to use when writing your summary evaluation.
- Complete your written evaluations promptly, within a week of working with the student.
- Describe specific behaviors and concrete examples in your evaluation.
- Discuss midpoint feedback using competency-based language.
- Build upon your midpoint feedback in your written evaluation and comment on student achievement of the expectations you discussed.

Well-written evaluations include comments that:

- Use competency-based language
- Are appropriate length: one paragraph
- Illustrate behaviors with specific examples
- Highlight growth and learning as strengths

(see description of what to avoid in written evaluations on page 3 of this document)

Examples of well-written evaluations

- *Student brought a very good fund of knowledge and especially strong common sense and clinical-reasoning skills to her evaluations. She knew our inpatients very well and was fluent with the most important information. She was especially helpful to the team, with a keen perception of procedural skill that allowed her to participate in operating room procedures far above the usual skill level expected of a student. She brought uncommon maturity and situational awareness and these allowed her to function with an uncommon level of independence in the daily management of our patients. Although the statement is frequently overused, student did actually function in all respects at the level of a good intern. She was very efficient. Her H&Ps were remarkably thoughtful and captured even the complex nuances of lengthy discussions with our patients.*
- *Student demonstrated an exceptional fund of knowledge and she applied her understanding at the bedside in managing our patients with the level of skill we typically see in a second-year resident. She was well prepared with all the information needed to formulate treatment plans and her ability to prioritize and integrate bits of evidence into a cohesive and logical story was especially noteworthy. Student also has a sensitive ear for elements that don't fit into the accepted narrative and digs in to uncover the truth when needed. She initiated literature searches to supplement her understanding and to*

address questions raised by the team. She has a high level of emotional intelligence and this helps her connect effectively with a wide variety of patients, and also to function as an outstanding team member. Student was both efficient and thoughtful in her management of our inpatients and in the busy clinics. She was generous in teaching other students and nurses in a kind, respectful manner. She was an eager learner and a quick study with deft technical ability. Her performance was exemplary.

- *Student is a bright, hardworking, and capable medical student who approached this rotation with diligence and attention. Patients responded well to his calm demeanor, and his interpersonal skills reflected his maturity and thoughtfulness. I greatly appreciated his enthusiasm for the work, and he asked excellent questions to enhance his understanding of his patients, systems issues, and the consultation model. He demonstrated a strong fund of knowledge throughout the rotation, and his thoughtfulness about clinical care was consistently reflected in his notes. His assessments accurately and coherently laid out the differential diagnoses for his patients and the reasoning behind them. He gave an extremely interesting and thought-provoking presentation on XX disorder. He was a true asset to our team, and an absolute pleasure to work with during this rotation.*
- *Student was an undeniable asset to our team as a sub-i. Her enthusiastic and proactive attitude led her to engage in many patient care endeavors during her rotation, during which she proved herself to be a bright, capable and empathetic provider. She was always open and seeking feedback, and she was quick to incorporate it. Her presentations on various topics were always well researched, succinct and high yield for all those listening. She knew her patients well and was always a helpful and pleasant member of the team. For a patient with a complex discharge plan, she coordinated with the case manager, family and team members to ensure a safe discharge to home. We were particularly impressed by her assessment of a patient's literacy level, and not only accommodating in a very sensitive way by providing more picture-based patient education materials, but also bringing this to the attention of the team. She was always advocating for patients and reminding us of our inherent biases and assumptions in caring for and educating patients. She will definitely be a strong intern at whatever program is lucky enough to have her.*
- *Student did a stellar job on her rotation. Attending physicians she worked with commented on her teamwork, broad knowledge, and impressive procedural skills. She thoroughly reviewed patient records ahead of time, gathered appropriately focused histories, performed a targeted physical examination, presented in a well-organized and thoughtful manner, and wrote excellent notes. She was able to independently synthesize the information to formulate her own assessment and plan, often requiring little modification by the attending. Her knowledge level exceeds expectations. She worked well with all members of the team.*

- *Student performed exceptionally well during his rotation. His teams universally praised his performance, noting that he exhibited independence and skill at the level of an intern in the workup and management of his patients. He confidently led the team when rounding on his patients, and served in the role of the primary provider. His patient-care skills were accurate and reliable; his history-taking and physical examinations were appropriately detailed and thoughtful. For example, he reported only the pertinent positives and negatives in his oral presentations, and regularly tailored his physical examinations to the chief complaint rather than simply running through a screening exam. Student was highly motivated, performed a tremendous amount of reading about his patients' disorders, and regularly used evidence from the medical literature in his patient management plans. Additionally, he added significant value to team discussions by bringing to rounds what he had learned; for example, when managing a patient with X condition, he read extensively on the disorder and how to best manage the patient, which he then taught to his team. He is poised, compassionate, and a true team player.*

Avoid these comments in written evaluations of students:

- comments are very brief and don't cite specific, competency and behavior-based skills
- comments refer to a student's future subspecialty or career path
- comments include references to grading or test scores
- comments are just a list of quotes or fragments of sentences and have not been synthesized into a well-written paragraph

Examples to avoid (as the only narrative comment)

- *Overall outstanding job on service. One of our best Sub-Is this year.*
 - Problems: too brief. No performance-based comments.
- *Smart, enthusiastic, responsible.*
 - Problems: too brief. No performance-based comments.
- *Student was professional and diligent during her rotation.*
 - Problems: too brief. Does not address other competencies beyond professionalism.
- *Student was engaged and interested; she asks relevant questions.*
 - Problems: too brief. Does not address important competencies including patient care.
- *Very helpful to the team. Integrated well with the residents and faculty. Will be a great (specialist) We are excited that he is pursuing (our field) as a specialty interest.*
 - Problems: focuses more on predicting future and on interest in the field than on performance.

- *Excellent work on service. He was enthusiastic, considerate and thoughtful.*
 - Problems: does not explain what behaviors were excellent.

- *Student performed admirably during his rotation in our department and will make an outstanding house officer and eventually a superb medical practitioner. I sincerely hope that he will eventually pursue a career in (our specialty). He will be a clinician we can all be proud of!!*
 - Problems: focuses more on predicting future and on interest in the field than on performance. Does not explain what behaviors were 'admirable' or address competencies.