

**University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine**  
**Department of Surgery, Division of General Surgery**  
**General Surgery Postgraduate Education Committee**  
**Leaves of Absence and Training Waivers Policy**

1. This policy is based on the University of Toronto's Faculty of Medicine Postgraduate Medical Education document entitled "Guidelines for Residency Leaves of Absence and Training Waivers," developed to provide guidance on a range of issues relating to leaves of absence taken during residency training including the granting of leaves, salary level implications, and impact on certification exam eligibility.

**Definitions:**

2. A leave of absence is defined as an approved interruption of training for any reason. Leaves may be taken for a variety of reasons, but are generally categorized into leaves with pay and leaves without pay. In all cases, the General Surgery Program Director, in discussion with the returning resident, should determine:
  - a. the training level to which the resident will return following the leave; and
  - b. the necessary educational experiences required for the resident to complete the residency requirements and goals and objectives of the training program.
3. Unless required by the General Surgery Program Director or for purposes of the Record of Employment, leaves of one week or less are not required to be submitted to the central Postgraduate Medical Education Office.

**Paid Leave:**

4. Entitlement to pregnancy and parental leave is addressed in Section 15 of the PAIRO-CAHO Agreement.
5. Residents are entitled to 6 months of paid sick leave. Further details on Long Term Disability and other entitlements regarding illness or injury are addressed in Section 14 of the PAIRO-CAHO Agreement.
6. The PAIRO-CAHO Agreement describes Professional Leave as 7 days per year in Section 12, as well as time to take Canadian or American certification examinations. This time will not be considered to be a leave for the purposes of this guideline or reporting to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO), or granting of waivers of training.
7. Residents are entitled to 4 weeks of paid vacation per year. There is no adjustment to vacation entitlement for residents who take pregnancy leave or parental leave e.g. the resident who has taken a one-year pregnancy and parental leave will return with 4 weeks of vacation entitlement. The 4 weeks vacation time must be taken within the academic session and cannot be rolled over or "stockpiled" to the next year, or counted towards waived training time. In addition, vacation time should not be carried over when the resident enters a sub-specialty program. Hospitals may not restrict the amount of vacation a resident can take in a rotation, but do have the right to delay a vacation request with regard to professional and patient care responsibilities.
8. A resident may request a leave due to a death in the immediate family or a person with whom the resident had a close relationship. A leave may also be requested due to family illness, injury, medical

emergency, or other urgent family matters to which the resident must attend. Five consecutive working days may be granted by the General Surgery Program Director for this paid leave.

**Unpaid Leave:**

9. A resident may request an unpaid educational leave on the basis that the time away from the residency program is relevant to his/her current program. This must have the support of the General Surgery Program Director, and the approval of the Postgraduate Dean or designate. The maximum educational leave period is usually one year. Leaves beyond one year will be assessed by the General Surgery Postgraduate Education Committee, Program Director and the Postgraduate Dean or designate.
10. A resident may request a unpaid leave of absence due to a personal situation or career uncertainty. These leaves will be considered on an individual basis by the General Surgery Program Director in consultation with the Postgraduate Dean or designate. The maximum leave period in this category is normally 6 months.

**Salary Classification:**

11. Residents will normally advance to the next pay level at the successful completion of 12 months of training. Residents who have taken a leave of absence of more than one month during the training year, will proceed to the next level only at the discretion of the General Surgery Program Director.
12. Factors to be considered in promotion to the next level will include the resident's full completion of the goals and objectives of the training year as measured by ITERs, and all other evaluation tools such as in-training exams, case logs, and completion of academic projects.
13. The General Surgery Program Director may also decide to re-appoint residents to the next pay level at the beginning of an academic session to allow them to stay with their cohort, and require them to make up the leave in their final year of training.

**Return to Training:**

14. Residents returning after medical leave will provide a written medical certificate from their treating physician indicating the resident's capability and fitness to return to the program. The General Surgery Program Director or the Postgraduate Dean or designate may wish to request an additional independent medical opinion to ensure the resident's capability to resume his/her residency program, or the case may be referred to the Faculty of Medicine's Board of Medical Assessors.
15. Residents returning to training after a prolonged absence may need to return to an earlier level of training and/or require a modified educational program. For specialty residents, no assurance can be given that all training taken prior to the interruption will still be acceptable, even though previously recognized by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC).
16. In order to decide on the appropriate training level and program structure, residents will be assigned a 4-12 week period of assessment, similar to the Assessment Verification Program (AVP), structured and organized by the General Surgery Program Director in consultation with the General Surgery Postgraduate Education Committee.
17. The General Surgery Program Director, in consultation with the General Surgery Postgraduate Education Committee, will review the results of the assessment program and submit a recommendation to the Postgraduate Dean regarding the resident's re-entry to training. If approved,

the General Surgery Program Director will discuss with the resident the modified program structure, training level, the evaluation process, and expected outcomes.

18. In exceptional circumstances, it may not be appropriate for a resident to return to the program. The Postgraduate Dean will communicate with the resident when the General Surgery Program Director and General Surgery Postgraduate Education Committee decide against a resident's reentry to the training program. Appeals of this decision will follow the normal Faculty and University Appeals process.

**Waivers of Training:**

19. The RCPSC states that residents must complete all of a program's training requirements including duration and competence. However, universities are free to set policies regarding granting leaves of absence and the criteria by which waivers of training time (if any) may be granted.
20. Where a General Surgery resident will have achieved the required level of competence by the end of the final year of training, a waiver of 4-12 weeks may be granted at the General Surgery Program Director's discretion, referring to the maximum allowable time for waivers outlined in section 4.3.2 in the RCPSC Policies and Procedures for Certification and Fellowship.
21. Completion of training includes not only meeting all specialty training requirements of the RCPSC, but also all of the program's required rotations and items such as in-training examinations, research and/or quality improvement projects, case logs, portfolios and other assessments.
22. General Surgery residents requiring a waiver of training are required to discuss their goals and objectives with the General Surgery Program Director who has the discretion to approve or decline the request.

**Reporting:**

23. The Postgraduate Medical Education Office will notify the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) of all interruptions in training greater than one week, as reported by the General Surgery Program Director.
24. General Surgery residents must be aware of their professional obligations to report leaves to the CPSO when applying for or renewing licenses. Failure to disclose leaves from the training program may result in delays in license renewal as a result of investigation and/or disciplinary action.