



Surgery

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

**Spring 2025**

# **BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES FOR FELLOWSHIP ADMINISTRATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

**Temerty  
Medicine**



**Fall 2024**



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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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# **BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES FOR FELLOWSHIP ADMINISTRATION**

## **DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

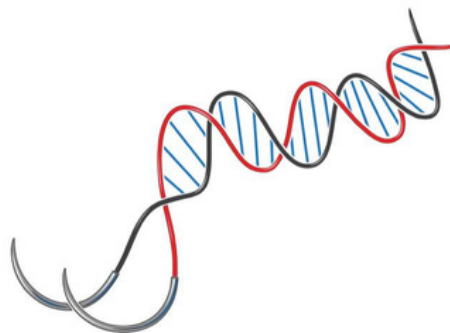
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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The Department of Surgery at the University of Toronto serves as a hub for fellowship training programs in each of our surgical disciplines. We draw fellows from national and international locations who contribute to the clinical and academic objectives of the Department. Fellows are learners and considered integral components of surgical teams, this distinguishes them from other care providers such as Clinical Associates. The Department of Surgery has a longstanding commitment to the educational and professional development of our fellows.

This guide offers a structured framework for establishing and operating a fellowship training program in alignment with best practices and Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) standards. Its primary objective is to streamline the processes related to the selection, onboarding, and overall consistency in training procedures for fellows within the Department. Additionally, this guide equips fellowship directors with information regarding potential challenges that may arise, and strategies for resolving these challenges.

## FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE



- Each division should establish a divisional Fellowship Committee chaired by the divisional fellowship director. The director will oversee the fellowship and is responsible for reviewing and implementing these best practices. This committee should have regularly set meetings, with a suggested frequency of at least three per academic year.
- Fellowship committee meetings should focus on evaluating the intake process, the fellowship curriculum, trainee performance, and the overall programmatic structure. It is advisable that fellowship committees keep minutes of these meetings.
- Fellowship program should adhere to the Departmental fellowship best practices. Non-compliance may jeopardize the program's standing and viability. The Department of Surgery and/or University may dissolve the fellowship program in the rare instances where non-compliance is persistent.

# 3

## POSTING OF FELLOWSHIP POSITIONS

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- Fellowship opportunities should be publicized extensively through a series of opportunities, including via the Department of Surgery (<https://surgery.utoronto.ca/fellowship-program>), divisional websites, academic journals and conference job boards.
- Announcements should be disseminated in advance to maximize exposure and attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates.
- To ensure a broad and heterogeneous applicant base, fellowship/selection committee directors may wish to contact program directors of base specialties on a national scale.
- For accurate representation and awareness, verify that the fellowship is duly listed with the necessary up to date information on the Department of Surgery website (<https://surgery.utoronto.ca/fellowship-program>).
- For any changes in the listing of the fellowship, submit the requisite details to the Postgraduate Coordinator, Department of Surgery for prompt inclusion.

# 4

## SELECTION OF FELLOWS

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- Each fellowship program should establish a selection committee consisting of division members with specific expertise in the said fellowship area, and/or experience in surgical education.
- To ensure a standardized and transparent selection process, review of applications and conduct of interviews should be collaboratively undertaken by the committee. Team-based reviews and interviews enhance the objectivity and transparency of the selection process. Process to ensure equity for historically disadvantaged groups and conduct of interviews should be collaboratively undertaken by the committee. Team-based reviews and interviews enhance the objectivity and transparency of the selection process.
- Candidates should be selected based on predefined criteria, which ideally should align with the qualifications and expectations delineated in the public advertisement for fellowship positions.
- To promote transparency and objectivity, the committee may consider implementing a scoring system for the quantitative evaluation of candidates. This scoring system can be used during the interview and final selection stage.



# 5 OFFER LETTER – INTRODUCTION



- The fellowship offer letter should be comprehensive, encapsulating pertinent details including sections on remuneration, expected work hours, benefits, vacation, leave allowances, and call requirements.
- Proof of English proficiency is mandatory for international fellows whose language of training is other than English. The Department of Surgery recognizes TOEFL iBT scores with a **minimum overall score of 93** and a speaking section score of **at least 24**, as well as IELTS scores with a **minimum overall band of 6.5** and **no individual band below 6.0**. These scores are strictly applied.
- All international fellows are required to complete a 12-week Pre-entry Assessment Program (PEAP). The PEAP period may be extended at the fellowship director's discretion. PEAP requirements process and evaluations should be stipulated in the contract.

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# 5 OFFER LETTER – INTRODUCTION



- You can contact the Postgraduate Coordinator, Department of Surgery if you need elements of a standardized contract document. Any specific requirements, or necessary amendments will be communicated to divisional fellowship directors as they arise.
- All fellows require WSIB coverage. Fellowship programs should ensure that this requirement is met. MOH funded fellows are provided WSIB coverage by MOH/Paro.

## 5 OFFER LETTER – SALARY



- As of Jul 1, 2025, the minimum fellow salary is at the PGY3 level (\$85,564.01). **It is left to the discretion of each division as to whether this salary is inclusive of benefits.** If inclusive of benefits, the contract should state final salary and not base salary level. Please refer to the PARO pay scale, as these amounts are subject to change. International fellows may need to be supplemented to this baseline salary level. Contact the Postgraduate Coordinator, Department of Surgery for more information on minimum salaries and benefits.
- The most current Professional Association of Residents of Ontario (PARO) salary grid can be accessed via the following link: <https://myparo.ca/during-residency/#salary-and-benefits>.
- For international fellowship applicants from specific countries in the Middle East: the University of Toronto currently has postgraduate training agreements with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Contracts for fellows from these countries are subject to specific requirements. Processing of these fellowship contracts must be coordinated through PGME Office of International Relationships.
- Sponsored applicants and program directors must contact [pgme.sponsorship@utoronto.ca](mailto:pgme.sponsorship@utoronto.ca) to verify sponsorship and confirm funding for the entire duration of fellowship.

## 5 OFFER LETTER – ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE



- The offer letter should explicitly outline the potential consequences for fellows who do not meet the prescribed training requirements. These requirements include CANMEDS criteria such as clinical performance, adherence to professional standards and compliance with standards of practice including credentialing.
- Meeting the standards of training is a requirement for completion of fellowship. This point should be reiterated during orientation sessions and subsequent individual feedback sessions. This is particularly important as some fellows may need additional support to meet the necessary demands of their fellowship.
- The offer letter should include the goals & objectives of the fellowship training program.
- Fellows must be informed of the process and types of evaluations, including learner, faculty, site evaluations as well as LACT forms (learner assessment of clinical training).

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## 5 OFFER LETTER – ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE



- For further guidance on constructing an offer letter, refer to the following document:  
<https://pgme.utoronto.ca/registration-document-templates>
- The offer letter should include the start and end date, roles and responsibilities, salary, vacation and leave allocation, and relevant contacts at PGME, including the Office of Learner Affairs (OLA).

# 6

## TRAINING GOALS & OBJECTIVES



- The goals and objectives should be comprehensive, including general performance, as well as details that are specific to the area of training.
- Clear milestones should be described for promotion and completion of the fellowship. These criteria should be reviewed with all fellows at the time of onboarding.
- Fellowship programs must include academic activities such as seminars, small group teaching sessions and journal clubs that are oriented to fellowship-level learning.
- You can use the following form for the goals and objectives: <https://pgme.utoronto.ca/appointment-registration-forms>. A copy of these goals and objectives should be made available to the fellows together with their fellowship offer.

# 7 ONBOARDING AND ORIENTATION



- The minimum documents needed for the Department of Surgery onboarding process include:
  - Applicant's up to date CV
  - Offer letter
  - Goals and objectives of fellowship
- The fellowship orientation session should include discussion of the following elements: review of training goals and objectives, evaluation criteria, introduction to faculty members, rotation schedules, elective opportunities, and provision of necessary contact information both the Department and the University.
- Each director should provide fellows with access to wellness resources including the Office of Learner Affairs (OLA):  
<https://meded.temertymedicine.utoronto.ca/office-learner-affairs>
- You may wish to compile orientation materials into a PDF document, which can accompany the fellow's offer letter for comprehensive reference.
- For an orientation checklist, refer to the following document:  
<https://pgme.utoronto.ca/learner-resources>



## ONGOING REGULAR FEEDBACK



- Continuous, regular and documented assessments, evaluation, feedback and coaching constitutes a critical component of the fellowship training experience and should be instituted early on. Evaluations should be completed every 3 months using tools beyond POWER. Fellows should receive structured coaching and evaluative feedback from their supervisor(s).
- It is advisable that the fellowship director collate this feedback and disseminate to the fellow during regularly scheduled meetings, which should occur at least twice per year. Fellows should be provided documented feedback of these meetings as best practice.
- The frequency of meetings and provision of feedback may require greater frequency for fellows undergoing the Pre-entry Assessment Program (PEAP) and those encountering performance difficulties.
- If a director perceives that a fellow is experiencing difficulty in their training, and risks not completing the necessary milestones, it is necessary to have more frequent meetings with the fellow, accompanied by meticulous documentation of all communication exchanges. Such documentation is imperative for maintaining a transparent evaluative process.
- Use every opportunity to remind fellows of the availability of wellness resources to support their overall wellbeing.



# 9 PRE-ENTRY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (PEAP)



- PEAP (Pre-Entry Assessment Program) consists of a mandatory 4-12 week assessment period for all fellows trained in programs outside of Canada.
- PEAP is an important training time that should ideally not be interrupted. Fellowship directors should communicate the importance of this assessment, provide regular feedback and support fellows' progress during this period.
- Supervisors should use PEAP forms at shorter intervals for learners in difficulty: <https://pgme.utoronto.ca/peap-forms-fellowship-residency>
- The PEAP period cannot be extended unless there are extenuating circumstances. Fellows should avoid vacation time during the PEAP period. If an extension is required because of extenuating circumstances, contact PGME.

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# 9 PEAP



- The PEAP evaluation is final and cannot be appealed. Fellows in difficulty should be provided access to resources and opportunities for improvement early in the PEAP process.
- OLA is available for support: <https://meded.temertymedicine.utoronto.ca/office-learner-affairs>. Dr. Najma Ahmed and Dr. Mojgan Hodaie are able to guide supervisors as they work with fellows in difficulty.
- For more details, visit: <https://pgme.utoronto.ca/peap-forms-fellowship-residency>

# 10

## SEAP AND PER

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### SEAP (Subspecialty Examination Affiliation Program)

- SEAP offers internationally trained physicians training in a subspecialty. Check with PGME and the Program Director as to whether someone is SEAP eligible.
- Appointments must be the minimum length of the residency program. The offer letter and the CPSO Goals and Objectives should include SEAP positions. SEAP appointments must be approved by the residency program and cannot be back dated. The learner is appointed, registered, and licensed as a clinical fellow.
- Fellowship Directors must work with the Program Directors to discuss capacity, program requirements, and entry requirements.
- Program Directors must confirm completion of training. Learners are eligible to write the RCPSC exam for 2 years. Royal College Subspecialist Affiliate status is granted upon successful completion of the RCPSC exam. Participation in the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Program is mandatory.

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# 10

## SEAP AND PER

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### SEAP (Subspecialty Examination Affiliation Program) cont'd

- CPSO has a licensing pathway for IMGs who have successfully achieved Subspecialist Affiliate status with SEAP through the Royal College. Check with CPSO to see if the individual is eligible to receive a restricted certificate of registration to practice independently in a subspecialty.

### PER (Practice Eligibility Route)

- PER offers internationally trained physicians to apply for an assessment for RCPSC exam eligibility and certification. 2 years of practice is required in their home jurisdiction. UofT is currently not enrolled in this program; it is not supported by PGME and any questions should be directed to RCPSC.

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## AVENUES OF SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE



- We ask that fellowship directors who become aware of any fellow experiencing difficulty in learning environment to contact Dr. Hodaie (Director, Postgraduate Education, Department of Surgery) and Dr. Ahmed (Vice-Chair, Education, Department of Surgery) promptly.
- The PGME office will be involved in assessment and providing advice on a case-by-case basis. Early identification and documentation of concerns facilitates prompt and effective intervention. Detailed guidelines and resources for managing such situations can be accessed at the following link: [https://pgme.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FOM\\_Guidelines-for-the-Assessment-of-PG-Residents-19Feb18\\_with-Mandated-Leave.pdf](https://pgme.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FOM_Guidelines-for-the-Assessment-of-PG-Residents-19Feb18_with-Mandated-Leave.pdf)
- PGME has specific processes to guide remediation and suspension: <https://pgme.utoronto.ca/policies-guidelines> (under policies & guidelines choose category assessment, evaluation, appeals)

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## AVENUES OF SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

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- Any fellows experiencing difficulties should be connected with the Office of Learner Affairs' wellness resources:  
[meded.temertymedicine.utoronto.ca/office-learner-affairs](https://meded.temertymedicine.utoronto.ca/office-learner-affairs)
- Fellowship directors may need to contact the hospital HR if there are concerns about fellows experiencing difficulties.
- Temerty Faculty of Medicine PGME will provide support to fellowship directors as they navigate the various processes of fellowship administration

## ADMINISTRATION OF VISA FELLOWSHIP TRAINEES



### Administration of Visa Fellowship Trainees

- Contact [pgme.sponsorship@utoronto.ca](mailto:pgme.sponsorship@utoronto.ca) in the event that you have interest from a potential visa fellowship trainee
- PGME International will liaise with funders, review applications, ensure eligibility and contact specific fellowship directors for next steps
- Offer letters are liaised through PGME International.
- PGME requires regular evaluations of fellows (every 6 months) to send to sponsors. Any leaves of absences should be reported to PGME International.

# 13

## ADDITIONAL POINTS

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- Completion of fellowship evaluations on the POWER system is mandatory for the issuance of a University completion certificate.
- The name of the fellow, the fellowship and dates are strictly based on the Fellowship Goals and Objectives document and the Fellowship Offer Letter provided to PGME. These cannot be altered at a later date. They will serve as PGME's documentation of the fellowship.
- Diplomas: Occasionally fellows request their diplomas prior to completion of their fellowship. The recommended timeline for handing out of the diplomas is at the end of the fellowship. This should be ideally clarified with fellows.
  - Exceptions to the process outlined above are possible but are rarely applied and cumbersome. Therefore, changing fellowship names, titles or dates once the fellowship has begun is strongly discouraged. Fellowship names cannot be changed once the offer is signed.



# 14

## PGME FAQ

### Changes to Fellowship Remuneration: Frequently Asked Questions



**1. Does this include fellows who will be starting their fellowship before January 1, 2025?**

We recommend, but do not require, that fellows' salary be increased before January 1, 2025.

**2. Does the recommended salary include benefits?**

We encourage the inclusion of benefits on top of the minimum salary for a comprehensive compensation package, though it is not mandatory.

**3. Does the recommended salary include WSIB deductions?**

WSIB contributions are the employer's responsibility and should be considered in addition to the required minimum salary.

**4. Is it a requirement to include the source of funding in the letter of appointment?**

Yes, including the source of funding is mandatory in the letter of appointment.

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# 14

## PGME FAQ



**5. What if my contract is set for two years and is already signed off for January 1, 2025?**

Existing contracts with a specified duration, ex. two years, signed for January 1, 2025, remain unaffected by these changes, and the existing terms will be upheld.

**6. What if the fellowship is part-time?**

For part-time fellowships, you must seek approval from your Vice Chair, Education or delegate, providing a rationale for the part-time arrangement as part of the appointment process. A templated letter of approval on behalf of the Vice Chair is available.

**7. Is there a mechanism in place to monitor and address potential challenges or unintended consequences that programs may face as a result of these changes?**

PGME and FEAC will monitor the impact of these changes on programs and collaborate with fellowship program directors to find appropriate solutions.

## CHECKLIST – FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

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- ☐ A divisional Fellowship Committee is established and chaired by the Fellowship Director.
- ☐ Regular fellowship committee meetings are planned, minuted.
- ☐ Fellowship positions are posted and duly advertised to reach the appropriate audience.
- ☐ Position listings are advertised on the Department of Surgery website.
- ☐ A selection committee with expertise in surgical education selects the fellows.
- ☐ Applications and interviews are reviewed by more than one member or a committee, to ensure transparency.
- ☐ Criteria for selection are clear, and predefined.

# 15

## CHECKLIST – OFFER LETTER

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- ☐ The offer letter includes remuneration, work hours, benefits, vacation, leave, and call requirements.
- ☐ WSIB coverage is confirmed for all fellows.
- ☐ Minimum salary is met (current minimum level = PARO PGY3).
- ☐ Offer letter states comprehensive goals and objectives, training requirements and evaluation processes.
- ☐ The process for performance assessments and evaluations is clearly detailed.
- ☐ Fellows receive a copy of the training goals and objectives with their offer letter.

# 15

## CHECKLIST – ONBOARDING

- ☐ Required onboarding documents included (Up-to-date CV, Offer letter, Goals and objectives of the fellowship)
- ☐ Orientation session is set up for fellows (covering: Training goals and objectives, Evaluation criteria, Faculty introductions, Key contact information)
- ☐ Access to wellness resources and Office of Learner Affairs.
- ☐ Process for ongoing feedback and evaluation (suggested: formal feedback every three months).
- ☐ Additional meetings and documentation are provided for fellows in difficulty
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- ☐ - Visa Fellowship Trainee Administration:
  - ☐ PGME International is contacted for visa fellows  
[pgme.international@utoronto.ca](mailto:pgme.international@utoronto.ca)
  - ☐ Fellowship directors ensure regular evaluations (every six months) for sponsored fellows.
  - ☐ Any leave of absence/concerns or changes in fellowship is reported to PGME International.

## CHECKLIST – INTERNATIONAL FELLOWS

- ☐ English proficiency is verified for international fellows (TOEFL iBT  $\geq$  93, IELTS  $\geq$  6.5 overall, no band below 6.0).
- ☐ PEAP (Pre-entry Assessment Program) requirements are clearly outlined for international fellows.
- ☐ Pre-Entry Assessment Program (PEAP) requirements are reviewed and acknowledged (duration (4-12 weeks, frequent evaluations for fellows with difficulties, vacation time is avoided during PEAP)).
- ☐ Steps taken to assist fellows who are at risk for failing their PEAP, prior to deadline (including communication with divisional fellowship director, Vice Chair of Education and PGME director for Department of Surgery)
- ☐ Reminder that final PEAP evaluations cannot be appealed.

## DEPARTMENTAL FELLOWSHIP DIRECTORS ROYAL COLLEGE RECOGNIZED PROGRAMS

Fellowship Directors for the Department of Surgery (as of March 2025):

Cardiac Surgery – Dr. John Coles [john.coles@sickkids.ca](mailto:john.coles@sickkids.ca)

General Surgery – Dr. Allan Okrainec [allan.okrainec@uhn.ca](mailto:allan.okrainec@uhn.ca)

Pediatric General Surgery – Dr. Georges Azzie [georges.azzie@sickkids.ca](mailto:georges.azzie@sickkids.ca)

Surgical Oncology – Dr. Anand Govindarajan [anand.govindarajan@sinaihealth.ca](mailto:anand.govindarajan@sinaihealth.ca)  
& Dr. Nicole Look Hong [nicole.lookhong@sunnybrook.ca](mailto:nicole.lookhong@sunnybrook.ca)

Colorectal Surgery – Dr. Mantaj Brar [mantaj.brar@sinaihealth.ca](mailto:mantaj.brar@sinaihealth.ca)

Trauma Surgery – Dr. Najma Ahmed [najma.ahmed@unityhealth.to](mailto:najma.ahmed@unityhealth.to)

Neurosurgery – Dr. Mojgan Hodaie [mojgan.hodaie@uhn.ca](mailto:mojgan.hodaie@uhn.ca)

Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery – Dr. Joel Fish [joel.fish@sickkids.ca](mailto:joel.fish@sickkids.ca)

Orthopaedic Surgery – Dr. Johnny Lau [johnny.lau@uhn.ca](mailto:johnny.lau@uhn.ca)

Urology – Dr. Ken Pace [kenneth.pace@unityhealth.to](mailto:kenneth.pace@unityhealth.to)

Thoracic Surgery – Dr. Laura Donahoe [laura.donahoe@uhn.ca](mailto:laura.donahoe@uhn.ca)

Vascular Surgery – Dr. Mark Wheatcroft [mark.wheatcroft@unityhealth.to](mailto:mark.wheatcroft@unityhealth.to)

For information on fellowships in specific surgical specialties visit:

<https://surgery.utoronto.ca/fellowship-program>

# 17

## CONTACT US

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### Leadership

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