



ACGME Leave of Absence Frequently Asked Questions

Effective July 1, 2022, the Accreditation Council Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) implemented new leave of absence (LOA) requirements for residents and fellows. The following will highlight the leave absence policy and what it means to UH/UT Health house staff, including an FAQ.

What does the leave of absence (LOA) provide to the house staff:

- Six weeks of medical, parental, or caregiver paid LOA availability on day one (1) of residency/fellowship training:
 - The LOA is made available at least once during a resident/fellow's program
 - Non-paid LOA under existing policy and law is available annually.
- 100% of the resident/fellow salary provided for the first six (6) weeks of LOA
- Provide at least one (1) additional week of paid time off outside of the allotted six (6) weeks, once during a resident/fellow's ACGME accredited program
- No disruption of health/disability insurance during the LOA in accordance with the University Health leave policy.
- Provide a process to request the LOA which is outlined in University Health House Staff Manual.

FAQ's

- **Question: Where can I learn more about the six (6) weeks of leave?**
 - **Answer:** The University Health House Staff Manual and UT Health policy. Your program, the UT Health Office for GME, and UH Professional Staff Services are available to address questions.
- **Question: I am a PGY I or I just started and may need to take six (6) weeks off. Will I qualify?**
 - **Answer:** Eligibility of the leave of absence is effective day one (1) of training. Discuss the specifics with your program to determine eligibility and any impact the extended leave will have on program completion and eligibility to participate in relevant certifying board exams.
- **Question: How do I use the leave of absence benefit?**
 - **Answer:** Start with your Program Coordinator/Director. House Staff are required to notify the University Health Human Resources department via email at:

UHS.Benefits@uhs-sa.com as well as to submit requests to the Program Director and Professional Staff Services.

- **Question: The GME agreement provides 15 days of vacation and 10 days of sick. Do I have to use these days as a part of the approved six (6) weeks of leave?**
 - Answer: Yes, any available vacation/sick days will be used concurrently with the approved six (6) weeks of leave. [ACGME FAQs - Institutional Requirement: IV.H.1.b)-c)]

- **Question: I have exhausted my vacation/sick days. Am I still eligible for the six (6) weeks leave of absence?**
 - Answer: Yes. ACGME requires 100% of pay under the leave of absence requirement for a qualifying event.

- **Question: How does the one (1) additional week of leave work?**
 - Answer: The one (1) additional week is provided independently of the paid six (6) weeks of approved leave. This one (1) additional week does not have to attach to the six (6) weeks; however, it must be used in the same academic year the six (6) weeks of leave are exhausted. [ACGME FAQs) Institutional Requirement: IV.H.1.c)]

- **Question: My specialty board provides guidance around leave of absence and time away from training. Does the board language take precedence over the ACGME, institutional, or program leave of absence language?**
 - Answer: No. By policy, each specialty board must clearly set a standard for the minimum time in training and any extensions as a result of a leave of absence and time away from training. About the impact of time away from training, other than setting a standard for the minimum time in training, Board eligibility requirements do not supersede Institutional or program policies and applicable law. The institution and programs must comply with ACGME requirements. [see ABMS link in resources]

- **Question: Can I be extended in training even if I meet the minimum time to become board eligible according to my specialty board?**
 - Answer: Yes. A trainee must also meet ACGME and program requirements for successful completion of training. With guidance from the Clinical Competency Committee, the Program Director is ultimately responsible for determining when you are ready to graduate. ACGME requirements require timely notice of the effect of the LOA on the ability to satisfy requirements for program completion, which includes board eligibility. Therefore, this conversation with your Program Director should occur before the LOA is exercised.

- **Question: I'm in a 1-year internship or fellowship program; how will this impact my program completion time?**
 - Answer: The American Board of Medical Specialties policy on LOA was applied only to programs of 2 or more year's duration. However, the ACGME required the availability of paid LOA at least once, even for programs less than 2 years. Therefore, while allowed,

an extension in training is likely. That is why you must discuss with your PD the impact before the LOA.

- **Question: Must I take the ACGME paid 6 weeks one time in training LOA all at once?**
 - Answer: ACGME Leave of Absences may be granted on an intermittent basis subject to Program Director approval and meeting qualifying UH HR requirements. Your program must speak with Professional Staff Services for further requirements for approval. If granted intermittent LOA, the “plus 1 week” paid time off may only be used in the first AY the intermittent LOA began. [ACGME FAQs] Institutional Requirement: IV.H.1]

- **Question: What if my consecutive LOA crosses from one academic year (AY) to the next?**
 - Answer: Consecutive LOA that crosses AYs is subject to concurrent use of new AY vacation/sick days first. The additional week of paid time off must be used in the AY in which the consecutive LOA ends.

- **Question: I have additional questions about the ACGME leave of absence, or not sure if my event will qualify. Who do I contact for additional information?**
 - Answer: Start with your Program Director and seek additional guidance.

Resources:

[House Staff Manual \(pg 30-33\)](#)

[ACGME 2022 Institutional Requirements](#)

[ACGME 2022 Institutional Requirement FAQs](#)

[American Board of Medical Specialties Policy on Parental, Caregiver and Medical Leave During Training](#)