

UTHSCSA Graduate Medical Education Policies

Section 4	Program Policies & Procedures	Effective:	January 2002
		Revised:	December 2009 August 2011 December 2011 June 2013 June 2015 July 2020
Policy 4.4.1.	Visiting Residents 1 - Observerships	Responsibility:	Designated Institutional Official

**Visiting Residents 1 - Observerships**

**Policy**

The UTHSCSA is ACGME-accredited as a sponsor of Graduate Medical Education (GME) programs. Under the accreditation standards, as well as the regulations of the Texas Medical Board (TMB), the Joint Commission (TJC), and other regulatory bodies, certain rules apply which govern the institution's process for accepting residents from training programs outside the UTHSCSA who wish to visit this institution and our teaching hospitals for the purpose of medical education. While the primary obligation of the institution is the education of our residents, this policy has been developed to establish some uniformity of experience and to provide guidance to clinical departments that choose to offer observerships to other residents, as well as to the individuals who wish to undertake them.

The availability of clinical experiences to residents from other programs is at the discretion of individual clinical departments, and is based on the departments' availability of resources and preferences. The existence of these guidelines creates no obligation on the part of any clinical department to provide such experiences.

For residents from other training programs desiring clinical experiences within the institution, there are two types of medical experience available. These include:

1. Observerships
2. Clinical Rotations

This policy will address Observerships. Observership is defined as the position of observing patient care in a health care setting, without patient contact, for the specific purpose of gaining medical knowledge. **No research involvement is allowed.** (Further description of the position may be found below in Rules for Observership.)

**Eligibility:**

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Observerships may be granted on a case-by-case basis to physicians who are graduates of a medical school and who are members in good standing of a GME program (hereinafter called "residency").

Individuals who may be eligible for observership include the following:

- Residents in good standing in residency programs which are neither ACGME nor AOA accredited

Individuals who are not eligible for observership include the following:

- Residents at ACGME or AOA-accredited programs. These residents should seek a clinical rotation (See Policy on Visiting Residents 2 - Clinical Rotations). There may be rare DIO-approved exceptions.
- Physicians who are not currently enrolled as residents in graduate medical education programs
- Individuals who have not yet graduated from medical school. These medical students may qualify for consideration for a Visiting Student Elective. (See <http://www.uthscsa.edu/som/srselect/vstudents.html>).

**Application Process:** Application packet must be received in the GME office no later than 30 business days (US citizen) and 120 business days (visa holders) prior to requested observation start date.

Note: Not all programs accept observers, and programs may require further application documentation, an interview, and/or an additional application fee.

The application packet consists of the following:

1. Completed Visiting Resident 1 – Observership Application and Checklist
2. All documents requested in the Observership Application and Checklist
3. Non-refundable application fee.

Note: Documents not originally written in English must be officially translated into English by a certified translation agency

The application materials should be sent to the following address:

Graduate Medical Education  
The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio  
7703 Floyd Curl Drive MC 7790  
San Antonio, TX 78229-3900

After a preliminary review of the application, the GME Office will insure the application is complete and determine the applicant's eligibility to apply for the clinical rotation. The GME Office will present the

application to the Designated Institutional Official, who will approve or disapprove the application. If the person is determined to be eligible, the application will be forwarded to the program of interest for further processing

### **Departmental Process**

After approval of the applicant by the GME Office, the department sponsoring the applicant for the observership will be responsible for assisting the applicant to obtain a J-1 Short Term Scholar visa if the applicant is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien. The Office of International Services (OIS) should be contacted regarding the process to obtain the visa. The department will be responsible for all aspects of the visa sponsorship to include the processing of necessary paperwork and all fees as applicable.

### **Rules for Observership**

1. The observer must obtain prior written authorization from the GME Office. Failure to obtain written authorization will be grounds for immediate escort from the premises of the UTHSCSA and/or the teaching hospital(s).
2. The observer must wear appropriate photo identification at all times when on campus or within the teaching hospitals, and must abide by all policies, rules, regulations, and bylaws of UTHSCSA, the residency department, and the teaching hospitals.
3. The observer must be supervised by a faculty physician or designee (other faculty from the same department or a senior-level resident) at all times when in the presence of patients. He/she is not allowed unrestricted access to UTHSCSA, or to the teaching hospitals.
4. The observer must introduce him/herself to the patient as an observer, and must request the patient's permission to be present at the time of clinical visit, procedure, or other patient services. If the patient declines to allow the observer's presence, he/she must leave the area.
5. The observer is not allowed any other direct patient contact. Contact is defined as physically touching, talking with, performing a medical history and/or examination, counseling (patient or patient's family/friends), assisting in surgery or any other procedure, or otherwise interacting with patients, either individually or in the presence of others.
6. The observer cannot make patient chart entries (electronic or hard copy). He/she may not make copies of patient charts (paper or electronic).
7. There is a maximum of two (2) one-month observerships per individual, which may not be extended.

8. No stipend support, compensation, insurance coverage, benefits, or housing will be provided by the UTHSCSA or the teaching hospitals.
9. UTHSCSA may, at its sole discretion, terminate this observership without recourse to due process or appeal process.
10. The observership is performed on a voluntary basis, and the resident is not employed by UTHSCSA or the teaching hospitals or any affiliated entities.
11. The observer will not receive any academic credit for the experience. The observership does not constitute medical education, graduate medical education, continuing medical education or training leading to licensure or board certification. The observer is not a student, resident, or medical staff member at UTHSCSA, and must not represent him/herself as such. The experience is properly characterized as an "observership."
12. The following activities are permissible for observers:
  - a. Participation in grand rounds, seminars, or other didactic activities
  - b. Participation in case conferences or chart rounds. Observers who are engaged in this activity may be asked to sign a document acknowledging the responsibilities of confidentiality.
  - c. May observe walking rounds with the supervising faculty physician or designee.
  - d. May view and discuss patient interactions with the supervising faculty physician or designee, if the patient has agreed to permit observation.
  - e. May view and discuss videotapes of patient evaluations, if the patient has agreed to permit observation and videotaping.
  - f. May utilize software and hard copy educational resources (teaching software, books, journals) of the Briscoe Medical Library. Access to the internet from computers in the Library, or departments will be in accordance with current standard Health Science Center policies.
13. Upon satisfactory completion of the observership, the sponsoring program will provide the observer with a certificate of completion of the observership.

Acceptance into an Observership position will not constitute a precedent or guarantee acceptance into further residency training in programs sponsored by UTHSCSA.

#### **Public Health Emergency Amendment**

During a declared Public Health Emergency by the Institution, City or County, the Visiting Residents' Observerships may be suspended by

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the DIO in coordination with the Dean and/or Major Participating sites to ensure a healthy workforce.

The GMEC will be notified with the invoking of the amendment and timing of return to normal practices.