

COOPER UNIVERSITY HEALTH CARE

Graduate Medical Education Committee Policies and Procedures

Supersedes: 08/29/2022
Reviewed: 1/16/2025

Section: Policies and Procedures
Subject: Time away from Training GME

Notice: The official version of this Policy is contained in Cooper Policy Network and may have been revised since the document was printed.

PURPOSE:

- To establish a clear time away from training and leave of absence policy for the house staff.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- The Program Director (PD) and the Office of GME will monitor any changes in house Staff time away from training and or leave of absence. The Graduate Medical Education Committee (GMEC) and Human Resources will establish leave guidelines for the house staff in accordance with federal and state law, and ACGME Policies.
- The trainee must inform their Program Director as soon as possible and provide any information that will allow the PD to determine the impact of the length of training or board eligibility.
- The PD is responsible for determining how the Leave of Absence (LOA) might affect their length of training. Each individual ABMS/ABOMS Board determines length of training for eligibility for board certification.
- The Designated Institutional Official (DIO) for GME is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- Policy authority for this document resides with the GMEC. The DIO and GMEC are responsible for the oversight.

POLICY:

CATEGORIES OF TIME AWAY FROM TRAINING

In support of well-being, CUHC house staff may make use of allowed time away from training each year. Four categories are used by the Office of GME to track trainees' time at Cooper:

- Vacation
 - Discretionary Paid Time Off
 - Military Leave of Absence
 - Leave of Absence
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- Vacation
All GME House staff are eligible for 4 weeks of paid vacation during each training year, consisting of 20 weekdays (Monday through Friday) and 2 contiguous weekend days (Saturday and Sunday). The process for vacation requests will be determined by each individual program at the discretion of the Program Director, and approval may be contingent on a trainee's clinical or educational assignment, program accreditation requirements, or specialty Board certification requirements. For the purposes of calculating vacation, the six national holidays are categorized as weekend days.

 - Discretionary Paid Time Off is additional PTO aside from vacation that takes a trainee away from the Cooper clinical learning environment. The process for granting discretionary PTO and approval thereof will be determined by each individual program at the discretion of the Program Director, and approval may be contingent on a trainee's clinical or educational assignment, program accreditation requirements, or specialty Board certification requirements. Discretionary PTO includes:
 - specialty and national licensing board exams
 - required certifications
 - fellowship interviews
 - professional development
 - scholarly activity
 - routine health maintenance
 - bereavement
 - jury duty
 - short medical illness / sick leave

 - Military Leave of Absence (requires coordination with HR)
Military leaves of absence comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) and the laws of the State of New Jersey, which expand job and benefit protection for workers who serve in the military.

- Leave of Absence (requires coordination with HR)
Leave requests must be received by the Office of GME at least 45 days prior to leave. Exceptions can be made in emergency situations. When applicable, coverage by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)/NJ Family Leave Act (NJFLA) [CUHC FMLA Policy](#) will run concurrently with parental, caregiver, or medical leave. Leaves of Absence are categorized into:
 - administrative
 - medical
 - maternity
 - bonding
 - caregiver

AGGREGATE TIME AWAY FROM TRAINING

Taking into account requirements imposed by specialty certifying boards and accreditors, each program will develop a policy regarding limits of aggregate time away from training. The policy will delineate:

- The limits imposed by accreditors and specialty certifying organizations
- The process by which requests should be submitted, including any requirements for notice and/or documentation.
- How overall time away from training is tracked (hours vs. 5-day week vs. 7-day week)
- Any specific limitations on when vacation and/or discretionary PTO can be taken
- Whether discretionary PTO is limited within one training year or across all training years.
- That no payment will be made for unused PTO at the completion of training.

VISA IMPLICATIONS

Beyond the standard advance notice and pre-approval expectations for paid or unpaid leave of absence, house staff with sponsored visas must coordinate with the office of GME to ensure appropriate documentation and notification requirements are fulfilled.

TRAINING EXTENSION RESULTING FROM TIME AWAY IMPLICATIONS

When the total time away from training extends beyond the maximum allowed by the accrediting body and/or specialty Board, the Program Director is responsible for creating a plan for the trainee to complete that training year and the entire training program. If an extension of training is required, the Program Director must confirm that funding is approved for in coordination with the office of GME and the relevant institute. If an extension in training time is required, it will delay the trainee's reappointment dates by the amount equal to the make-up time (i.e. delay of promotion to the next PGY level). In effect, all future training years will become off-cycle by the amount equal to the make-up time. Any required time will be paid, and all benefits provided. Potential problems involving make-up time do not grant the Program Director the authority to deny a Parental, Caregiver, or Medical Leave to a trainee who is lawfully entitled to this benefit.

Vacation Related Extension of Training

House staff that extend training circumstances will be granted one week (5 weekdays and 2 contiguous weekend days) of vacation for every 3 months of required training extension.

EXTENDED LEAVES BEYOND SIX MONTHS

Because training appointments are issued in one-year terms and the complications that can result from significant extensions of a training year, leave time greater than 6 months may result in termination of the House staff's employment at Cooper. However, this does not necessarily preclude the trainee from re-applying to the program again once able to return to work.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Hospital or Regional Emergency
In the event of a declared hospital or regional emergency, urgent professional responsibilities may result in deferral of previously arranged vacation and/or discretionary PTO. The deferral must be approved by both the Program Director and the DIO no later than May 1 of the relevant academic year. When deferred vacation and/or discretionary PTO is used, all specialty Board requirements must still be met.
- Additional Leave Categories in response to Emergent Situations
If unprecedented circumstances arise such that large numbers of house staff are unable to work due to illness and/or quarantine, the DIO may designate additional leave provisions or restrictions.

PROCESS FOR LEAVE:

- All House staff must Log into the iCooper Team Member Space > click My Time Off > Select Leaves Tab > Click on the ellipsis (3 dots on the right next to Sort) > Select Request Leave > Complete the required fields > Click Submit.
- In addition, the house staff member must initiate an Office of GME Request for Leave of Absence Form (Attachment 4)
- The Program Director will complete that form with confirmation of anticipated dates of leave, schedule changes, and any information regarding extension of training time (if applicable) prior to the leave. Once the completed form is submitted to Human Resources, the Office of GME will record and submit the form to the DIO for review and signature for approval.
- The Human Resources benefits department will notify the Office of GME, which will then notify the PD of the approved trainee's leave, return to work dates, and leave extensions (if applicable).
- Return to Work: The house staff member must receive a medical clearance from their physician releasing them to back to work status prior to being able to return to work from a medical leave. Medical clearance and return to work must be provided to and coordinated with Human Resources and the PD.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Leave and Time off Definitions and Eligibility

Attachment 2: Template for Program Grid Regarding PTO and Leave

Attachment 3: Template for Program Grid Regarding Time in Training

Attachment 4: Office of GME Request for Leave of Absence Form

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Attachment 1: Definitions of Categories of Time Away from Training

Paid Time off

- Any time away from training duties which is paid.

Vacation

- Scheduled PTO typically taken as a week at a time.

Discretionary PTO

- Any time away from training taken at the discretion of the PD for reasons including: short medical illness / sick time, educational seminar/conference attendance, bereavement, interviews, examinations, and routine health maintenance. Note that

Military Leave

- Leave taken by a house staff member to fulfill obligations to the US military.

Caregiver Leave

- Leave taken to care for the house staff's family member who has a serious health condition.
- If eligible for FMLA/NJFLA, the house staff member can take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave, which is compensated through NJFLI and can elect to use available vacation to supplement.
- If ineligible for FMLA/NJFLA, the house staff member can take up to 6 weeks of leave offered from the 1st day of employment for qualified reasons. Cooper can use up to 3 weeks of vacation time, and the house staff member should also apply for NJFLI.

Medical Leave

- Leave taken to care for a serious health condition that makes a resident unable to perform essential job functions.
- If eligible for FMLA, the house staff member can take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave in a rolling 12-month period with full pay, and must apply for NJTDI.
- If ineligible for FMLA, leave would be provided as an accommodation of leave under the ADA, but full salary is not provided. The house staff member can apply for NJTDI and can elect to use vacation time to supplement.

Parental Leave

- Leave taken to bond with a newborn, newly adopted, a newly fostered child, or a minor for whom legal guardianship has been newly appointed.
- If eligible for FMLA/NJFLA, the house staff member can take up to 12 weeks of job-protected leave, which is compensated through NJFLI and can elect to use available vacation to supplement.
- If ineligible for FMLA/NJFLA, the house staff member can take up to 6 weeks of leave offered from 1st day of employment for qualified reasons. Cooper can use up to 3 weeks of vacation time, should also apply for NJFLI.

Administrative Leave

- This type of unpaid leave typically results from a lapse in licensure, work authorization, or credentials, disciplinary actions such as suspension, and/or unapproved time away from work.

Attachment 2: Template for Program Grid Regarding Time Away from Training

Category		Paid / Unpaid	Tracking: (Hours or Days)	Maximum allowed	Does this count as time away from training?	When does this leave limit reset?	How will this leave be recorded in trainee's log
Vacation		Paid	Days	20 weekdays	Yes	July/Aug 1	Vacation
Discretionary PTO	Routine Health Maintenance	Paid	Per PD	At least 2 days (specify)	No	Per PD	Discretionary PTO
	Scholarly Activity		Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	
	Interviews		Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	
	Licensing Exams		Days	Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	
	ABMS/ABOMS Certifying Exams		Days	Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	
	Jury Duty		Days	Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	
	Short Medical Illness / Sick Time		Days	Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	
	Bereavement		Days	Per PD	Per PD	Per PD	
Military Leave of Absence	Short (up to 15d)	Paid	Days	15 days	Yes	July 1	Short Military Leave
	Extended (beyond 15d)	See Policy 8.403	Weeks	5 years			Extended Military Leave
Leave of Absence	Administrative	Unpaid	Days		Yes		Leave of Absence
	Medical	Per HR		Per HR		Per HR	
	Maternity	Per HR					
	Bonding	Per HR					
	Caregiver	Per HR					

Attachment 3: Template for Program Grid Regarding Time in Training

Start Date	End Date	Training Level	Category	Aggregate Training with Credit (weeks / days)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Training w/ credit▪ Training w/o credit▪ Time Away from Training	
July 1, 2024	June 30, 2024	1	Training with credit	48 weeks
July 1, 2025	June 30, 2025	2	Training with credit	48 weeks
July 1, 2026	June 30, 2027	3	Training with credit	48 weeks

Attachment 4: Office of GME Request for Leave of Absence

Office of GME Request for Leave of Absence

Trainee Name: _____

Program: _____

PGY level: _____

Type of leave requested:

☐ Medical/Maternity

☐ Caregiver/Bonding

☐ Military

Has this trainee previously been granted leave:

☐ No

☐ Yes (Please attach prior documentation)

Leave Requested		
_____ weeks Paid leave	Dates _____ to _____	Total time = _____ weeks
_____ weeks Unpaid (FMLA) leave	_____ to _____	

Maximum allowed leave by Accrediting/Certifying Organizations	
ABMS/ABOMS Board:	
ACGME:	

Will this leave impact the resident/fellow's ability to satisfactorily complete the requirements of the training program? ☐ No ☐ Yes (attach appropriate plan of resolution)

Will additional training time be required beyond the trainee's expected completion date?

☐ No ☐ Yes, please attach Grid of Time-in-Training

The program has communicated to the Office of GME the mitigation strategy for the impact of this leave on the rest of the training program. ☐ Yes ☐ No

The above request is approved.

_____	_____
Program Director Signature / Date	DIO Signature / Date

I have been informed of the terms and conditions of this leave of absence and am aware of any effect on my training. I understand that I should contact my relevant board for further information on whether this leave will affect my Board eligibility status. Further modification to this leave may not necessarily require my signature.

[Leave of Absence with Access | Cooper IT Services](#)

Resident/Fellow Signature / Date