

Policy on Site Assignment and Transportation

I. PURPOSE

To ensure that medical students are assigned to required clinical learning sites in a fair and educationally sound fashion. This policy also defines students' responsibilities for commuting to these sites.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all required clinical clerkships and required clinical experiences within the UPSOM MD curriculum, including those conducted at affiliated hospitals, clinics, and community sites.

III. POLICY

This policy applies to all phases of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (UPSOM) curriculum.

Vocabulary:

- “Coordinators” refer to curriculum coordinators (e.g., clerkship coordinators, program coordinator)--staff who facilitate administrative tasks related to the curriculum.
- “Directors” refer to faculty curricular leaders (e.g., clerkship directors, course/program leads) who have overall responsibility for that unit of curriculum.
- Curricular “units” refer to required courses, programs, and clerkships
- “Sites” refer to clinical education settings or off-site educational activity settings, such as a hospital service, clinic, community agency, or other placement.

Notification: All curricular units must maintain an updated central repository with site/service descriptions, easily accessible for students to review as part of the site selection and assignment process. Site assignment procedures shall be published annually on the Learning Management System (LMS).

Timeline: Students must receive their confirmed site assignments no later than 4 weeks] before the start of the experience.

Assignment mechanism: Site assignments are determined through a standardized lottery process administered by the curricular unit. Decisions regarding site assignment shall be made without regard for vehicle ownership, transportation access, or other factors.

Special Considerations: Students may request specific site assignments for compelling personal circumstances (e.g. disability). Requests must be submitted in writing to course/clerkship directors and coordinators by the published deadline (or as soon as the need becomes known)

and will be reviewed confidentially. Site selection requests to avoid conflict of interest must be granted; others (e.g., travel preferences) may be granted if feasible.

Changes and Alternate Site Assignments: After assignments are finalized, changes are made only under exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the course/clerkship director. Students with an appropriate rationale for seeking an alternative assignment must contact the faculty director or phase dean at least one week prior to the start of the curricular unit. If possible, the director will provide the student with an alternative assignment. Alternate site assignments must be finalized at least 72 hours before the start of the curricular unit. Students are not permitted to swap sites.

Communication of assignments: Site assignments must be communicated in writing at least 4 weeks prior to the start of the curricular unit.

Transportation: Medical students are responsible for arranging their own transportation to and from all sites. Students are also responsible for any expenses incurred through travel/commuting, including gas, parking, cab fare, bus fare, car maintenance, or any other expenses.

IV. POLICY AUTHOR

Office of Medical Education

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

VI. REFERENCES

LCME Element 10.9 Student Assignment

VII. APPROVALS

Curriculum Committee approved on December 15, 2025

VIII. PROCEDURES

Step	Invested	Action	When	Documentation / Output
1	Coordinator	Review and update all site and service information (geographic	Prior to each rotation cycle	Post/update on LMS

		location, facilities, key faculty, expectations, schedules, parking, transportation, etc.) in the LMS (or approved repository).		
2	Coordinator	Communicate site options and the assignment procedure to students, including ranking method (top 3, top 5, etc.), optional rationales, and relevant timelines.	At least 4X weeks prior to start of curricular unit	Notify students via email/LMS
3	Students	Review site information and submit preferences	Within 1 week of coordinator's message about site assignment	Preference form completion
4	Coordinator	Compile and review preferences; verify all submissions and prepare for assignment process.	2 weeks before start of curricular unit	
5	Coordinator	Assign sites	2 weeks before start of curricular unit	Publish roster with sites, email students
6	Coordinator	Notify students of their site assignments	At least 1 week prior to start of curricular unit	written notification
7	Student	Submit site reassignment	At least 1 weeks prior to start of curricular unit or	email request

		request as needed	within 24 hours of identifying the need	
8	Coordinator + Director	Review reassignment request; reassign if able Approve reassignment if appropriate	As needed	
9	Coordinator	Communicate decision to student and update roster if approved.	At least 72 hours prior to start of curricular unit	email message to student; Update roster
10	Coordinator	Provide students with logistics	At least 1 week prior to start of curricular unit or at least 72 hours before the start of the unit in the case of a reassignment	Orientation materials via LMS, email notification

VIII. PROCEDURES

Site and service information should include all information necessary for students to understand what they will need to know if they are assigned there, including geographical location, facility information, faculty, student expectations, schedule, parking, transportation, and more. This information will typically be housed on our learning management system (LMS), but could be in alternate locations depending on the unit of curriculum. Information about sites must be communicated clearly to students.

When students are asked to rank their preferred sites, the specifics of that ranking submission will vary by curricular unit. It might be a student's top three, or top five, or just their top preferred site. Some curricular units may request a rationale or explanation for preferences.

Although students will not be asked about vehicle status or transportation access, or other issues that might affect site assignment, students are also welcome to provide such information to coordinators or directors. Site selection will not be made based on such information.

After initial student preferences are submitted, coordinators will notify students of their site assignment. This notification will typically occur one week or so after site preference submission, but it may be shorter or longer depending on the unit of curriculum.

When students request a new site assignment, certain factors require students to be placed elsewhere. Examples include:

- Faculty preceptor who served as a health care provider for that student
- Student accommodation plans certified by Disability Resources and Services (DRS)
- Acute health concerns (e.g., mental health) when supported by a health provider
- Major conflicts between students at that site

Decision-making about site reassignment occurs at the level of the faculty director, in conjunction with site preceptors, coordinators, and senior UPSOM administrators (e.g., Associate Deans for Clinical Education and Student Affairs).

Although faculty directors will consider all site reassignment requests and try to accommodate, this policy in no way guarantees that an alternative site will be granted. Such decisions are based on faculty availability, student volume, and other factors. Students will typically be notified of alternate site assignment decisions a few days after the request, although it may take longer.

Students who do not attend required curricular activities will be subject to any and all appropriate academic consequences for failing to complete expected work, consequences which must be delineated in documents provided to students.

Coordinators will provide students with information on transportation to and parking at sites, aiming for low-cost and simple options. Where feasible, carpool coordination may be offered.

If students encounter difficulties during the curricular unit, they should talk to the director for support and intervention, which could include site reassignment.

Students with unanticipated financial situations should contact the Office of Student Affairs to discuss possible options. Students experiencing difficulties unrelated to transportation or associated costs should contact the appropriate dean responsible for that phase of curriculum:

- Assistant Dean for Foundations (Foundations Phase)
- Associate Dean for Clinical Education (Clerkship Phase)
- Assistant Dean for Medical Education (Bridges Phase)

The most common site assignment processes will take place for clerkships, as well as the Community Alliance Program (CAP).

Certain curricular units have different site assignment procedures. The Primary Care Accelerated Track (PCAT) places students into clinics related to their chosen specialties and residencies, assignment which is determined prior to matriculation. For PCAT, Family Medicine is the only specialty with multiple sites: students rank their program preference and are placed at the

appropriate clinical site associated with the residency they expect to match at. Students are able to request alternative site assignment if they have a specific interest; the PCAT director will seek to accommodate such requests. Another exception is acting internships, where students request site preference through the rotation and lottery itself. For these and any other exceptions to this policy, students will be notified clearly in advance as to the parameters that differ from what is laid out above, and the rationale for that.

Students who have concerns or questions about the process of site assignment can contact the Associate Deans for Clinical and/or Medical Education; the Office of Medical Education has administrative oversight over this process, in collaboration with other offices.

Students will be expected to review this policy annually to confirm understanding.