

Policy on Site Assignment and Transportation

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This policy is not active but will take effect 2/1/26.

Active policies can be found here:

- **Alternate Site Assignment:** [policy on alternative site assignment 2024 0.pdf](#)
- **Transportation to Sites:** [policy on transportation to clinical sites 2024.pdf](#)

I. PURPOSE

Students will be assigned to clinical and educational experiences at a range of sites. Students should have the opportunity to request an alternative clerkship, clinical, or educational activities site when circumstances allow for it. This policy also defines students' responsibilities for commuting to these sites.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Clerkship, clinical and educational activities directors/coordinators
- Medical students

III. POLICY

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

- “**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 courses, programs, and clerkships that students are required to participate in.
- “**Sites**” refer to clinical education settings or off-site educational activity settings, such as a hospital service, clinic, community agency, or other placement.

Site Information/Selection

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. Coordinators will begin the process by inviting students to review this repository at least four weeks before the start of the curricular unit. Students will have at least one week to review the site options; then they will be asked to request or rank their preferred sites/services by communicating with the coordinator at least three weeks before the start of the unit.

Coordinators will provide one reminder, between 24 and 48 hours before the site preference submission deadline. Students will not be asked about vehicle ownership, transportation access, or other factors; instead, students will simply rank their choices. Students who have specific needs for certain sites (e.g., disability status) must discuss their needs with the faculty director at or before site preference submission (or as soon as such a need becomes known).

Site Assignment

Initially, coordinators will attempt to match students to open sites based on student preference. If a site has more students interested than available space, the coordinator will randomly assign students to that site. Students who submit site preferences early will not receive any advantage; students who do not submit any site preferences will be randomly assigned by the coordinator. Site selection requests to avoid conflict of interest must be granted; others (e.g., travel preferences) may be granted if feasible. Coordinators will notify students of their final site assignment at least two weeks before the start of the curricular unit.

Alternate Sites

Students with an appropriate rationale can seek alternate site assignment by contacting the faculty director at least one week before the start of the curricular unit. If it is possible for a student to be moved, the director will do so. If a student does not request an alternate site assignment by the one-week deadline, their request will not be considered by the director (unless a clear need for site switch emerges later—e.g., a conflict with faculty is discovered). Alternate

site assignments must be finalized at least 72 calendar hours before the start of the curricular unit.

Time Before Assignment (at least...)	Task (students...)
4 weeks before	invited to review sites
3 weeks before	submit ranked site preferences
2 weeks before	notified of site assignment
1 week before	may request alternate site
72 hours before	notified of alternate site if available

Task Outline

- Site selection (at least one week for students to review/submit preferences)
- Assignment notification (must be at least two weeks before the start of the unit)
- Alternate site request (students have at most one week to submit)
- Response to alternate site request (must be at least 72 hours before the start of the 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. Students who feel they are not able to easily travel to a site should not request that site when their preferences are solicited; if they are assigned to such a site, they should request an alternative site or participate in a site switch with another student. If no alternative site is available, students are expected to attend curricular activities at their assigned site. 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.

Education

Students will be notified of all of the elements of this process at the beginning of the curriculum, at the beginning of the Clerkships phase, and whenever site selection is solicited. Students will be expected to review this policy annually to confirm understanding.

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

- Office of Medical Education

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

none

VI. REFERENCES

LCME Element 10.9: Student Assignment. A medical school assumes ultimate responsibility for the selection and assignment of medical students to each location and/or parallel curriculum (i.e., track) and identifies the administrative office that fulfills this responsibility. A process exists whereby a medical student with an appropriate rationale can request an alternative assignment when circumstances allow for it.

VII. APPROVALS

Initially approved by:

Curriculum Committee, June 16, 2025 (to take effect for units of curriculum that begin on or after February 1, 2026).

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, Elentra, 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.

For some curricular units, student switches may be allowed. The faculty or coordinator will communicate the procedures around “swaps” clearly and well in advance to allow students to switch if they did not get their alternative site request approved. If allowed by the curricular unit, students would initiate such switch requests on their own. If all students affected then agree to a site switch, the initiating student must notify the coordinator of their proposed switch. The coordinator and director jointly determine if the switch is acceptable; for instance, if a site has housing only for female-identified students, a male-identified student could not switch there. Other factors that could preclude a student-initiated switch include accommodation plans, conflicts of interest, student-to-student conflicts, faculty availability, etc. If a switch is deemed appropriate, the switch is made and both students and sites are notified by the coordinator. Switches must be finalized no later than 72 calendar hours before the start of the curricular unit.

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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 in the Office of Medical Education, or the Associate Dean for Clinical Education for Clerkship/Bridges phases).

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 Offices of Clinical/Medical Education have administrative oversight over this process, in collaboration with other offices.