

Policy on Medical Student Parental Transition Time

I. PURPOSE

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine affirms its commitment to supporting medical students during significant life events such as pregnancy, childbirth, adoption, or foster placement. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidance on parental transition time and available resources while ensuring that students continue to progress toward graduation.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Medical students

III. POLICY

Eligibility:

All medical students are eligible to take up to six weeks (42 calendar days) of parental transition time during the curriculum whenever they become the parent of a new child or children (e.g. twins). This time may be used following the student becoming the parent of a new child or children—by birth, adoption, foster placement, or any other mechanism by which the student assumes parental responsibilities. Students who experience adverse pregnancy outcomes

Parental transition time can be taken consecutively or intermittently up to the six-week maximum but must be taken within the six months following assumption of parental responsibilities. Students may choose to use available vacation time to lengthen their parental transition time. These days must be requested for at least one week at a time, unless there are special circumstances (which would require approval from the Associate Dean for Medical Education).

The six-week maximum will not be extended in the event of a multiple birth or multiple adoption. However, if a student becomes the parent of a new child or children in one academic year, and then again in another academic year, they can request another six weeks (42 days) of parental transition time.

Students who require more parental transition time because of unusual circumstances can request additional time; approval of additional time would require a recommendation by a treating physician, as well as approval from the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. Additional parental transition time could be granted as a personal or medical leave of absence.

In the event of an adverse pregnancy outcome (e.g. pregnancy loss or neonatal loss), the birthing parent—and, as applicable, the partner—may elect to convert some or all planned parental transition time to medical and/or bereavement leave (Please refer to the Policy on Leaves of Absence), with confidential access to counseling resources and flexible academic/work accommodations, without academic penalty.

Enrollment and Academic Expectations: FOUNDATIONS PHASE

Parental transition time away from the Foundations curriculum is treated in alignment/concordance with other lengthy absences (Please refer to the Policy on Absence and Attendance). During the period of parental transition time, the student will remain enrolled as a full-time student. Parental transition time is not considered a formal leave of absence; rather, it is a temporary modification of deadlines and academic expectations to support the student's transition to new parental responsibilities.

Students will not be expected to participate in-person or remote curricular activities during this period, consistent with the Policy on Absence and Attendance regarding lengthy absences. The Assistant Dean for Foundations will provide revised due dates for assignments, examinations, academic milestones, and other requirements.

Academic standards are not altered under this policy. Any coursework or requirements missed during the parental transition period must be completed to the satisfaction of the relevant faculty by the deadlines established by the Assistant Dean for Foundations.

Enrollment and Academic Expectations: CLERKSHIPS/BRIDGES PHASES

Parental transition time away from the Clerkships/Bridges phases can be achieved through two approaches: students can use their curricular vacation time (each student has two months of vacation), and/or they can enroll in a two- or four-week "New Parenthood" elective experience specifically designed for students assuming new parental responsibilities. Intersession (e.g., Discovery Weeks) and recess weeks can supplement this time. Students who enroll in the "New Parenthood" elective, and successfully complete its requirements, will earn credit towards their elective week requirement; the remote and mostly asynchronous elective allows students additional flexibility. As above, during parental transition time, students remain fully enrolled as full-time students. The Associate Dean for Clinical Education may modify other deadlines related to academic expectations in these phases (see procedures). Students must complete all academic requirements by graduation.

Additional Time and Special Circumstances:

Students who require additional time away due to unusual or medically indicated circumstances may request a leave of absence. Such requests will be considered through the school's established leave of absence policy/process and may be categorized as a personal or medical leave of absence.

If both parents are eligible medical students, each student may take their own six-week period of parental transition time.

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

- Office of Student Affairs
- Office of Medical Education

V. RELATED POLICIES

Policy on Absence and Attendance

Policy on Leaves of Absence

Policy on Lactation

VI. REFERENCES

LCME Element 12.3: Personal Counseling/Mental Health/Well-Being Programs

LCME Element 12.4: Student Access to Health Care Services

VII. APPROVALS

Curriculum Committee, last revision approved October 20, 2025.

Initially approved by Curriculum Committee on March 6, 2023.

VIII. PROCEDURES

1. Notification

Students are encouraged to notify their Coach, Advisory Dean, and the Offices of Student Affairs and Medical Education as early as possible once they anticipate a parental transition. Students should also notify the Offices of Student Affairs and Medical Education at least one week prior to the expected date of return from a Parental Transition Time period.

2. Documentation

Students will be asked to provide documentation confirming the anticipated timing of the transition (e.g., a medical provider's letter with an expected delivery date, or a letter from an adoption/foster agency). Students who require additional time away due to unusual or medically indicated circumstances may request a leave of absence. Such requests will be considered through the school's established leave of absence policy/process and may be categorized as a personal or medical leave of absence.

3. Planning

The phase dean, in consultation with curricular leadership (course and clerkship directors), will work with the student to develop an academic plan that includes:

- a. Adjustments to coursework, clerkship schedules, and/or academic milestones. In the Clerkships/Bridges phases, for instance, deadlines that might be modified include completion of longitudinal course expectations (e.g., Longitudinal Alliance Program, Longitudinal Research Project, Diagnostics course, Advanced Longitudinal Clinical Experience).
- b. Use of Parental Transition Time (consecutive or intermittent).
- c. Any make-up activities, which must be proportionate and appropriate to the time missed.
- d. *Advance planning is highly encouraged*

4. Approval

Standard requests (up to six weeks within six months) are approved by the Office of Medical Education. Requests for additional time or shorter increments require review by the Associate Dean for Medical Education. The Office of Student Affairs should be notified at the time of the request by the student in order to offer support.

5. Formal Leave of Absence

Students who require additional time away due to unusual or medically indicated circumstances may request a leave of absence. Such requests will be considered through the school's established leave of absence policy/process and may be categorized as a personal or medical leave of absence.

6. During the Transition Period

Students remain enrolled as full-time students during Parental Transition Time. As above, the curricular phase dean will establish revised deadlines for assignments, examinations, and academic requirements. Academic standards remain unchanged; all missed work must be completed to the satisfaction of faculty by the deadlines set.

7. Funding and Visa Considerations

- a. Eligible students who are supported by University of Pittsburgh fellowships or financial aid will experience no change in their funding arrangements during Parental Transition Time; they will continue to receive their support and benefits.
- b. Students supported by external fellowships must comply with the rules of the granting agency regarding absences from academic or research work.
- c. Medical students holding an F-1 student visa or J-1 Exchange Visitor visa are strongly encouraged to consult with the University's Office of International Services in advance regarding their plans during Parental Transition Time.

8. Dual-Parent Students

If both parents are medical students, each student is independently eligible for their own Parental Transition Time period. Requests will be reviewed and approved individually, with each student's academic plan tailored to their circumstances.

9. Return to Curriculum

Students are expected to resume the curriculum at the conclusion of their Parental Transition Time and return to progress toward completing their degrees. This policy reinforces the importance of communication and collaboration between students and the school to support academic progress while honoring new parental roles.

A student who would like to appeal a decision made in regard to this policy may do so to the Associate Dean for Medical Education. If a resolution is not reached, an appeal may be made to the Vice Dean for Education, whose decision is final.