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## Section A: Introduction

### A1: Purpose

The Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) office at McMaster facilitates Requests for Time Off (RTO) for postgraduate residents who are entitled to take time off (e.g., vacation, professional leave, etc.) as stipulated in the Professional Association of Residents of Ontario (PARO) and the Ontario Teaching Hospitals (OTH) PARO-OTH Collective Agreement.

This policy aims to provide guidelines related to time off requests and summarize the RTO process for McMaster residents. The PGME office will ensure access to an efficient RTO workflow that is timely, equitable and transparent for all. The PGME office is available to respond to questions regarding the RTO process, the PARO-OTH Collective Agreement and potential disputes. [Refer to the PARO-OTH Collective Agreement for exact wording and further details.](#)

### A2: Scope

This policy applies to all postgraduate residents registered with the PGME office as residents at McMaster University.

Although the policy refers to residents, the Request for Time Off (RTO) process is also applicable to registered clinical fellows following a Royal College training program stream. Externally funded residents and clinical fellows must also adhere to and follow sponsoring agency contracts.

## Section B: General Principles

1. Residents must have access to fair, equitable and timely consideration for time off.
2. Programs must adhere to the [PARO-OTH Collective Agreement](#) when considering requests for time off.
3. Programs and hospitals can not institute “blanket” policies that restrict a resident’s amount of time off during a given learning experience. The program/hospital has the right to delay the timing of a request to ensure that professional and patient care responsibilities are met.
4. Program directors/delegates shall discuss concerns with residents who have submitted extended time off requests (during a learning experience) that may affect the achievement of required competencies and/or effective assessments.
5. Time off requests outlined in this document are subject to the RTO approval process (based on the program’s workflow), except for religious observations.

## **B1: Vacation**

1. Vacation entitlement is four (4) weeks for all residents per appointment year.
2. Vacation time must be taken in the appointment year, normally July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>. Residents starting their training off-cycle will have a different appointment year noted in the Letter of Appointment.
3. Residents may request their vacation to be taken in one (1) continuous period, in one or more segments of at least one (1) week in duration, or in segments of less than one week.
4. Vacation cannot be carried forward from one appointment year to the next, except when a resident has been on pregnancy or parental leave.
  - a. Residents who take pregnancy and parental leave (birth mothers) accumulate vacation for the entire length of their leave, up to 52 weeks.
  - b. Residents who take parental leave (e.g., fathers, adoptive parents) accumulate vacation for up to 37 weeks.
  - c. If a resident has been on pregnancy or parental leave, any unused vacation accrued before going on leave and accrued while on leave can be carried over into the new appointment year and taken immediately after the leave expires, or later if agreed to by the resident and the program.
5. A resident does not lose their vacation entitlement as a result of being ill or injured.
6. Vacation requests must be submitted via the MedSIS RTO system at least four (4) weeks before the proposed start of the vacation. Requests received prior to March 1<sup>st</sup> will be prioritized over those submitted after this date.
7. Residents taking a certification examination in the Spring can request one week of their vacation entitlement one month before the examination date.
8. All vacation requests must be confirmed, or alternate times agreed to, within two weeks of the request. If the program cannot grant the vacation request, a written explanation will be provided to the resident.
9. If a resident's academic year is shortened (at the end of their training) due to an extension, then the amount of vacation available is prorated based on the length of time for the shortened year.
10. Residents in part-time training are entitled to 4 weeks of vacation (equivalent to their part-time schedule) at the same pay rate. That is, a part-time resident whose training requires three (3) days of work/week will equate to a three (3)-day vacation week or one week of vacation (Monday to

Sunday inclusive). The annual vacation allocation for part-time residents does not equate to 28 individual days, rather, vacation days are prorated based on a resident's part-time training schedule. Part-time residents who wish to take **days off** instead of **weeks off** are encouraged to discuss their vacation entitlement directly with PARO for clarification. Visit the [PGME Vacation Policy](#) and the [PARO contract](#) for details.

## **B2: Recognized Holidays**

1. Residents are entitled to the following recognized statutory holidays:
  - a. *New Year's Day, Family Day, Easter Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, August Civic Holiday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, one (1) floating holiday.*
2. Residents are entitled to at least five (5) consecutive days off during a twelve (12) day period that encompasses Christmas Day, New Year's Day and two (2) full weekends. These five (5) days off are to account for the three (3) statutory holidays (Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day), and two (2) weekend days. Please note no lieu day shall be given for a resident who works Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day.
3. If a resident is scheduled to work on a recognized holiday, they are entitled to a paid day off in lieu of the holiday (a lieu day will not be applied for Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day).
4. A lieu day must be taken at a time mutually agreed upon by the resident and the program within ninety (90) days of the holiday worked. The resident must arrange the lieu day with the Program directly.
5. Except in cases of religious accommodation, there is no entitlement to non-statutory holidays (e.g., Remembrance Day, Easter Monday) as they are not included in the PARO- OTH Collective Agreement. Hospitals recognize non-statutory holidays, and therefore many clinical activities are cancelled (e.g., outpatient clinics, etc.). As such, the decision of time off for non-statutory holidays is left to the discretion of the individual programs and depends on the assigned clinical duties of the resident.

## **B3: Professional Leaves**

1. Residents are entitled to seven (7) Professional Leave (PL) days each year (including part-time residents, see [Part-Time Policy](#)). The resident may take these days at any time provided patient and professional responsibilities have been met.

2. Each resident is entitled to paid leave to take any Canadian or American professional certification examination, for example, Royal College, LMCC, ECFMG, and CFPC examinations. This leave shall include the exam date(s) and reasonable travelling time to and from the examination site. This leave shall be in addition to other vacation days or leaves.
3. Subject to operational requirements and at the request of a resident, a resident will not be scheduled for call duties for a period up to fourteen days before a CFPC or RCPSC certification exam.
4. Subject to operational requirements and at the request of a resident, a resident will be granted up to seven consecutive days off during one of the four weeks preceding a CFPC or RCPSC certification exam. These can be taken before either the written or oral components of the certification exam. It is up to the discretion of the Program Director if these days can be divided over the two components of the exam at the request of the resident.

#### **B4: Religious Observances**

1. Programs must arrange and accommodate religious holidays for residents who observe religious holy days outside of those days already considered statutory holidays.
2. Leave requests for religious holidays are to be negotiated between the resident and the Program Director on a case-by-case basis. This approval process will occur outside of the automated RTO process. Contact program for details.

### **Section C: Request for Time Off (RTO) Process**

#### **C1: Request for Time Off (RTO)**

1. Residents must log into the MedSIS system and submit an RTO for each vacation day or vacation period (religious holidays will be approved outside the RTO system, contact program for details).
2. A request must be submitted four (4) weeks prior to the intended start date of the vacation at the latest.
3. The request will follow the approval workflow process of the relevant program for consideration and decision.
4. The resident will be notified through the RTO system if the request is approved or denied within two weeks of submission. If a request is denied, the program will provide the resident with an alternate date(s) within two weeks of submission.

5. If time off is requested for one continuous period (i.e., a one-month block), the request should be made well in advance (ideally before rotation schedules are created) for the program to consider the request.
6. Once time off is approved, if a program wants to change the time off request, it may only be changed through discussion between the program and resident and with approval from the resident. If the resident wants to change the time off request, they can submit their change request to the RTO system for consideration.

## C2: Request for Time Off (RTO) – WORKFLOW

