



Memo

To: PGME program directors, program administrators and residents

Date: February 16, 2021

Re: Self-isolating prior to certification exams

Recognizing the COVID pandemic and guidance continues to evolve, we are writing to clarify leave allowances to support self-isolation prior to certification exams.

In August 2020, discussions between both universities, AHS and PARA resulted in a strategy to allow residents to self-isolate in the 14-day time window prior to an exam. This opportunity was intended to minimize the situation where a resident might miss an exam this year due to a COVID isolation or illness; particularly for candidates who selected the in-person examination format during rotations where there is a risk of COVID exposure.

To reduce the risk of interrupting an exam, programs may permit residents to combine up to 5 days of exam leave and 5 days of study leave to isolate in advance of exams. The original communication indicated that “no further allotment of either exam or study leave” would be available for the remainder of the academic year.

While this interpretation of Article 13 of the Resident Physician Agreement was developed to support residents where there is risk of Covid-19 exposure and subsequent requirement for isolation in the 14-day time window prior to the exam, the usual processes and procedures with regard to requesting leave continue to apply; the self-isolation period is not mandatory, nor is it a “PGME requirement”. The study leave component is subject to patient care considerations at the discretion of both the home and host program director. Similarly, scheduling of leave needs to take into consideration the requirement for 75% completion of a rotation. This attendance requirement may be reduced to a minimum of 50%, but only with approval of the home program director and Associate Dean, as outlined in COVID memo of March 16, 2020.

Preparation for certification examinations is stressful, and clearly exacerbated by the challenges posed by the current pandemic. Interpretation of the Resident Physician Agreement to allow a combination of consecutive exam and study leave is intended to support trainees during this difficult situation.

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