

POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT VERIFICATION PERIOD (AVP) POLICY

BACKGROUND

The Assessment Verification Period (AVP) is a period of assessment that all international medical graduates must successfully complete prior to entering residency training in Ontario.

To obtain an unrestricted postgraduate medical education certificate of registration (educational license) from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO), international medical graduates entering from CaRMS or the Advanced Level Postgraduate Training Program, are required to undergo this Assessment Verification Period. Successful completion of the AVP is required before candidates can obtain an educational license from the CPSO prior to full acceptance into an Ontario residency.

PROCESS

The assessment process is conducted in accordance with Guidelines issued by the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine and CPSO policy. The purpose of the AVP is to determine if the candidates can function at their reported level of training.

Candidates will be evaluated in terms of their clinical skills in the program to which they are seeking entry, as well as their basic skills in internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry and general surgery, appropriate for practice in the chosen discipline. They will also be assessed to ensure that they are mentally competent to practice medicine; have the ability to practice with decency, integrity and honesty and in accordance with the law; have sufficient knowledge, skills and judgment to engage in the kind of medical practice authorized by the certificate; and can communicate effectively and display an appropriately professional attitude.

Licensure:

The candidate must hold a valid certificate of registration (Pre-Entry Assessment Program Certificate of Registration) from the CPSO to participate in the AVP. The AVP candidate:

- Is to function at the assigned training level during the assessment
- May be assigned to several rotations during the assessment period
- Is assigned for 12 weeks in duration.

At the end of the AVP, the AVP certificate is no longer valid and the candidate cannot continue training until the CPSO has issued the Postgraduate Certificate.

Application for extension of the AVP can be made to CPSO in exceptional circumstances and for remediation. An extension for up to 4 weeks is permitted in exceptional circumstances to allow for adequate assessment of the candidate. In addition, extensions for remediation are permitted as outlined below.

Supervision:

The AVP assesses candidates within appropriate, supervised clinical activity in a multidisciplinary environment where there is patient input on an ongoing basis.

AVP candidates may sign their own orders; however, the clinical supervisor may choose to have orders co-signed initially, or for the duration of the assessment period. The certificate granted for the AVP states that the candidate may practice medicine “under a level of supervision that is determined to be appropriate for the holder and the program of medical education and assessment, by a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario designated by the director of the program.” It is up to the supervising physician to determine whether or not the candidate may write orders. In addition, there may be hospital policies which require AVP candidates to have their orders co-signed throughout the AVP.

Assessment/Evaluation:

Program Directors must ensure that candidates are evaluated and given written feedback on a regular basis during the AVP. Evaluations and meetings should be well documented, and should include an initial evaluation at the end of the 2nd week, a mid-rotation evaluation by the end of the 8th week, and a final evaluation at week 12.

If the candidate has been assigned to one or more rotations, the evaluation form completed by the supervisor is forwarded to the Program Director for compilation in the final AVP evaluation form. The final evaluation at the 12-week mark is completed by the Program Director on the AVP form and forwarded to the Postgraduate Office for the Associate Dean PGME’s signature.

If the candidate successfully completes the AVP the CPSO will convert the AVP registration to an unrestricted postgraduate certificate. If the candidate is unsuccessful, either after the initial 12-week period or, where remediation is granted, after a Remediation Period, his/her appointment with the University will be terminated. The PGE Office informs the CPSO and CEHPEA by forwarding a copy of the completed AVP form. An unsuccessful AVP result will be communicated to all Ontario medical schools.

Remediation Period: If a Program determines at the end of week 12 that a candidate has not successfully completed the AVP, it may recommend to the CPSO that the candidate be granted a remediation period. If approved, the candidate will undergo a 6-week remediation period.

Second Remediation Period: If the first remediation period is unsuccessful, a Program, with the approval of the Associate Dean PGME, may submit a request to the CPSO that a candidate be granted a second remediation period of up to six weeks in length. The request requires the approval of the CPSO Registration Committee.

Periods of remediation require written remediation plans which must be prepared and approved in accordance with PGE policy.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN PENDING COMMENCEMENT OF REMEDIATION

A leave of absence may be required after an unsuccessful AVP or an unsuccessful first remediation period while a remediation plan is being prepared and approved. The preparation and approval of a remediation plan should proceed promptly to limit such interruptions in training.

Withdrawal:

An AVP candidate may choose to withdraw from the AVP at any time. Withdrawal may have an impact on the terms of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's Return of Service Agreement. Candidates should consult the MOHLTC regarding their ROS obligations.

Reapplication of Failed/Withdrawn Candidates:

1. A candidate in the PGY2 Advanced stream may request the Program Director for consideration at the PGY1 level. Re-Entry at this level is at the discretion of the Program Director and will require CPSO approval.
2. As a failed AVP is not creditable residency training, a candidate who failed an AVP (PGY1 or PGY2 level) may apply to the first iteration of CaRMS.
3. Restriction on the re-application of failed candidates are:
 - a) cannot apply to the same specialty at the same level of entry. They may apply to a lower level of entry in the same specialty, if applicable (see section 1. above).
 - b) may apply to a different specialty.

Vacation Requests during the AVP:

The AVP is a high stakes assessment over a short timeframe. As such, candidates are discouraged from taking vacation during the AVP, as it may put their assessment in jeopardy.

The following policies also apply to AVP candidates:

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

AVP candidates are expected to adhere to the standards of ethical behaviour for the medical profession and their professional activities are expected to be characterized by honesty, integrity, conscientiousness and reliability. Behaviour which violates these principles and which

affects the performance of professional activities is viewed as a demonstration of lack of suitability to be a physician.

Assessment of behavioural and ethical performance will be related to the following educational objectives:

- The AVP candidate must display adequate skill at communicating and interacting appropriately with patients, families, colleagues, and allied health care professionals.

- AVP candidates should demonstrate:
 - respect, empathy and compassion for patients and their families;
 - concern for the needs of the patients and their families to understand the nature of the illness and the goals and possible complications of investigations and treatment;
 - awareness of the effects that differences in cultural and social background have on the maintenance of health and the development of, and reaction to, illness;
 - respect for the patient as an informed participant in decisions regarding his/her care, wherever possible;
 - an understanding of the appropriate requirements for involvement of patients and their families in research;
 - respect for, and ability to work harmoniously with other allied health care personnel and medical colleagues;
 - a willingness to teach others in their own specialty, as well as other allied health care professionals;
 - recognition of the importance of self-assessment and of lifelong learning for the maintenance of competent performance.

Behaviour unacceptable to the professional practice of medicine includes but is not limited to:

- breach of any of the above principles of behaviour;
- referring to oneself as, or holding oneself to be, more qualified than one is;
- behaviour or inappropriate judgement which adversely affects the medical education of others;
- commission of a criminal act;
- failure to be available while on call;
- failure to respect patients' rights;
- breach of confidentiality;
- failure to provide transfer of responsibility for patient care;
- failure to keep proper medical records;
- falsification of medical records;
- sexual impropriety with a patient;
- being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while participating in patient care or on call;
- sexual or other harassment of colleagues or other members of the health care team;

- conduct prohibited by professional governing bodies including the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
- any conduct unbecoming of a practising physician.

AVP candidates are also required to comply with the professional standards mandated by the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry (e.g. Charter on Medical/Dental Professionalism; Four Pillars of Professionalism; Policy and Guidelines for Interactions between Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and Industry), as well as those issued by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and the Canadian Medical Association.

An AVP candidate's professional conduct is evaluated during the assessment verification period. In addition, any serious breaches of professional conduct will be reported immediately to the Program Director and Associate Dean PGME and may result in suspension and/or termination of a candidate's appointment with the University prior to the end of the assessment verification period.

BREACHES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OR PATIENT CARE/SAFETY CONCERNS

1. Serious allegations of unprofessional conduct against an AVP candidate and/or conduct that give rise to concerns about patient care or safety should be brought to the attention of the Associate Dean PGME. The candidate may be suspended from clinical duties during the investigation of the allegations (see "Suspension").

2. The Associate Dean PGME shall ensure that the candidate is informed of the allegations and is given an opportunity to meet with the Associate Dean PGME and file written submissions. The candidate may be accompanied by a colleague or other support person at any meetings with the Associate Dean PGME, however ordinarily any oral submissions or presentations must be made by the candidate him/herself. The Associate Dean PGME shall review the relevant documentation relating to the allegations, meet with such other individuals as he or she deems necessary, and issue a written decision with reasons.

If the Associate Dean PGME decides that the allegations are not substantiated, he or she will allow the candidate to continue in the AVP and may recommend an extension of the verification period if the candidate had been suspended pending the results of the investigation.

If the Associate Dean PGME decides that there was unprofessional conduct and/or that patient care or safety was jeopardized, he or she may either terminate the candidate's appointment prior to the end of the assessment verification period, or may permit the candidate to continue in the AVP with a recommendation to the Program Director and RTC that there be a period of remediation under such terms as the RTC may require and subject to CPSO approval.

3. The PGME Office must advise hospital administration and the College of Physician and Surgeons of Ontario and CEHPEA of any termination.

Suspension:

4. The Associate Dean PGME, or in his or her absence or unavailability the Program Director, may suspend a candidate at any time if there are concerns about patient care or safety or there are allegations of unprofessional conduct. A suspension by the Program Director in these circumstances must subsequently be confirmed by the Associate Dean PGME.

5. The Associate Dean PGME or Program Director will notify the candidate in writing that he or she is suspended or removed from specific clinical duties pending an investigation. At the request of the candidate, the Associate Dean PGME or Program Director shall meet with the candidate within 7 days of issuance of the notice to review the reasons for the decision and allow the candidate to respond. The candidate may be accompanied by a colleague or other support person. The Associate Dean PGME or Program Director shall then decide if the suspension or removal from specific clinical duties should continue pending completion of the investigation and shall inform the candidate in writing of his or her decision.

6. The PGME Office will advise hospital administration and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and CEHPEA of any suspension.

APPEALS

1. A candidate may appeal the following decisions to the Schulich Postgraduate Appeal Committee (“the Committee”):

- a) an unsatisfactory assessment at the end of the assessment verification period
- b) an unsatisfactory assessment at the end of a remediation period
- c) a decision by the Associate Dean PGME to terminate a candidate’s appointment with the University because he or she has engaged in unprofessional conduct and/or has jeopardized patient care or safety.

2. A candidate may appeal on the following grounds:

- a) for an appeal under section 1(a) or (b), that there was a significant error in the assessment verification process that could reasonably be seen to cast doubt on the correctness of the final assessment;
- b) for an appeal under section 1(c), that the Associate Dean PGME did not take into consideration relevant information or that the decision cannot be supported on the information that was before the Associate Dean PGME.

3. An appeal must be submitted to the PGME Office within two weeks of the issuance of the decision and include the following:

- a) a copy of relevant evaluations (if applicable)
- b) a copy of the decision
- c) the grounds of appeal and remedy sought, and
- d) a full statement supporting the grounds of appeal and any relevant documentation.

4. The PGME Office shall forward copies of the appeal documentation to the respondent (Program Director or Associate Dean PGME) who shall file a concise written reply with relevant documentation within two weeks of the filing of the appeal. A copy of the reply shall be provided to the candidate.

5. Where circumstances warrant, the deadlines for filing an appeal or response may be extended at the discretion of the Chair of the Committee.

6. The PGME Office shall forward the documentation provided by the candidate and respondent to the Committee.

7. The Committee shall determine its own procedures for hearing an appeal and the Chair of the Committee may make such rules and orders as he or she deems necessary and proper to ensure a fair and expeditious proceeding. The candidate shall be informed of the procedures that will be followed. The Committee shall proceed fairly in its disposition of the appeal, ensuring that both the candidate and the respondent are aware of the evidence to be considered.

8. The Committee shall provide the parties to the appeal with an opportunity to meet with the Committee and bring witnesses. Both parties and their witnesses may be cross-examined by the other party and both parties may be represented by legal counsel.

9. The Committee shall issue a written decision with reasons and may:

- a) deny the appeal;
- b) grant the appeal of the assessment (section 1(a) or (b)) if it is persuaded that there was a significant error in the assessment verification process that could reasonably be seen to cast doubt on the correctness of the final assessment and allow the candidate to repeat the relevant period or part thereof, (subject to any required CPSO approval) and may provide recommendations to the program on the conduct of the process;
- c) grant the appeal of the Associate Dean PGME's decision (section 1(c)) if it is persuaded that the Associate Dean PGME did not take into consideration relevant information when making the decision and remit the matter to the Associate Dean for reconsideration; or
- d) grant the appeal if it is persuaded that the Associate Dean PGME's decision (section 1(c)) cannot be supported on the information that was before the Associate Dean PGME and reinstate the candidate (subject to any required CPSO approval).

10. A decision to deny the appeal may be appealed to the Dean, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, on the grounds that there was a significant procedural error by the Schulich Postgraduate Appeal Committee that was prejudicial to the candidate and casts doubt on the fairness of those proceedings. The Dean may delegate his or her authority to hear and decide the appeal to another individual or individuals or to a committee. References to “Dean” in this part mean “Dean or delegate”.

11. An appeal must be submitted to the Dean’s Office, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, within two weeks of the issuance of the Committee’s decision and include a copy of the Committee’s decision and a full statement supporting the grounds of appeal with supporting documentation (if applicable).

12. The Dean’s Office shall forward copies of the candidate’s appeal documentation to the respondent (Program Director or Associate Dean PGME) and may request a written reply within two weeks. A copy of any reply shall be provided to the candidate.

13. Where circumstances warrant, the deadlines for filing an appeal or reply may be extended at the discretion of the Dean.

14. The Dean shall issue a written decision with reasons and may:

- a) Deny the appeal; or
- b) Grant the appeal and send the matter back to the Committee with specific directions for rehearing all or part of the appeal, or make such other order as he or she deems appropriate.

15. The Dean’s decision is final and there is no further right of appeal at the University.