

Academic Standing in Medical School and Graduate School

Welcome to the Pitt/CMU MSTP family! We are excited that you have decided to study at Pitt/CMU and hope you enjoy the Pittsburgh experience. The Directors, Co-Directors, and Administrative staff are committed to the success of our students.

Here at the University of Pittsburgh, we have a range of study support available to students including:

- An expert Senior Advisor, Laura Lee Jeannerette who can be reached at laj38@pitt.edu,
- A career advisor that meets with students on a semiannual basis to review the student's advancement in the MSTP program,
- An administrative team that is always here to help.

During your time in graduate school, you will have access to additional support mechanisms from your graduate program and its university. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with your graduate program director, your program's administrative team, and university-level resources available to students at your graduate university.

We want every student to remain in Good Academic Standing and hope that if issues arise, the student reaches out immediately. The following is the timeline and what to do if something unexpected comes up during your studies.

Medical School – Years 1 & 2

In the unlikely case of a student failing a block of the MS1 or MS2 curriculum, please reach out to Kathy Hansell-Prigg, KathyPrigg@pitt.edu, at the earliest sign of academic difficulty.

- If an MSTP student fails a block of MS1 or MS2 curriculum, the student's academic records will be reviewed by the medical school's Promotions Committee.
- Before the SOM Promotions committee meets, a student who has failed a block must communicate through the office and/or Dr. Steinman. Dr. Steinman attends the SOM Promotions Committee meetings and is able to advocate or share context when we are kept in the loop. The MSTP Promotions Committee will then discuss how SOM remediation requirements fit with the MSTP required curriculum.
- If the MSTP Promotions committee decides the student can remediate the medical school's curriculum during the summer while completing a full lab rotation, they can remain in the MSTP and receive the summer stipend.
- If the MSTP Promotions committee decides the remediation will not allow the student to complete a full lab rotation, then the student will be put on a leave of absence (LOA) without stipend during the remediation period. If the student can remediate the medical school's curriculum successfully, they may request termination of their LOA and continuation in the MSTP.
- If the student fails the remediation and/or has to repeat a year of medical school, they will be dismissed from the MSTP but may reapply as an internal candidate during the second year of medical school.

USMLE Step 1 Exam

MSTP students are required to take the USMLE Step 1 exam by April 30 of the MS2 year. The MSTP office has to be notified when the exam date is scheduled, when the results are received and of the student's score.

The student **must request** in writing any extension in the exam date beyond the April 30 deadline. The request should specify the requested extension dates and reasons for the request. Requests will not be granted solely to increase the score if all indications are that the student will pass without the extension. If an extension is needed, two options are available to the student:

- 1.) Option 1: Enroll in a Board Study Elective month (MSELCT 5300). With this option, you will remain a registered student, thus maintain your stipend. This course requires on-site work with Laura Lee Jeannerette that includes study plan assessments. We will need the following in advance:
 - a) One or two sentences request for rationale emailed to KathyPrigg@pitt.edu.
 - b) Approval of class registration by **both** Dean Harvey and Kim Kirk. Confirmation by Laura Lee Jeannerette (laj38@pitt.edu) that the additional time is needed to be sure of passing the exam.
 - c) This option can be used for at most 1 month (May) and is not available for a second study month.

- 2.) Option 2: One month UNPAID leave of absence in order to prepare for the exam (without participating in MSELCT 5300).

The Committee will waive *one* of the required 2-month summer rotations for Board study. The waived clinical rotation credit will be made up after the return to medical school following graduate training.

It is expected that no more than one month of extended study will be granted by the MSTP Promotions Committee barring exceptional circumstances. Any additional month of study requires a written request to the MSTP Director in advance and requires a leave of absence to be approved by the MSTP Promotions Committee. Any such leave of absence is without stipend.

In case a student fails the exam, they will follow Student Affairs decision regarding completion of any ongoing clinical rotation and then will be put on a leave of absence from the MSTP without stipend. At that junction, the student has three options:

- 1.) Continue in the MSTP, complete their third lab rotation or start graduate school during July and August, and pass the USMLE Step 1 by August 30. Stipend will be paid retroactively to July 1.
 - a. Failure to pass the makeup USMLE Step I exam by August 30 will lead to dismissal from the MSTP.
- 2.) Petition for leave of absence for one year. If approved, pass the USMLE and return to the MSTP the following year in July.
- 3.) Leave the MSTP and start graduate school.
- 4.) Leave the MSTP and return to medical school.

USMLE Step 2 Exam

MSTP students must take the USMLE Step 2 (CK and CS) exams by December 31st of MS4. The MSTP office has to be notified of the exam dates. Any changes in the exam dates have to be justified and approved by the Director of the MSTP.

If a student is applying for MSTP Postdoctoral Fellowship (see below for more details), then USMLE Step 2 (CK and CS) must be taken by late September of MS4 year. Students who do not successfully graduate in December are ineligible for the MSTP Postdoctoral Fellowship.

Graduate School

PhD training starts after the student's 2nd year of medical school. During graduate school training, students must remain registered and in good standing with their graduate program and MSTP. The student must continue their semiannual career advisor meetings and provide the MSTP administrative office any evaluations determining progress towards PhD completion.

Return to Medical School

MSTP students can return to medical school either in May, September or January upon completion of their graduate degree, depending on the timing of their progress and completion of their thesis defense. Graduate support of students is expected to be active until their return to medical school.

MSTP Postdoctoral Fellowships

Students that complete all MD requirements and pass both Step 2 CK and CS by December are eligible for the MSTP Fellowship. To be considered for this fellowship, the MSTP student and proposed University of Pittsburgh mentor together to create an one-page postdoctoral training plan. This plan, including deliverables, is submitted to the MSTP office for approval. Students with approved training plans are eligible for a 50% stipend subsidy from the Dean and the other 50% covered by the mentor for 5 months. The mentor and Dean Stipend and fringe financial commitment is at the appropriate level for the departmental postdoctoral appointment status. The fellowship application is due in May of the MS4 year. More information on the MSTP Postdoctoral fellowship as well as information on how to apply can be found under the “Resources” tab of the IDP site (<https://www.mdphd.pitt.edu/pittidp/>).

Leave of Absence

Students needing to take a LOA must petition the MSTP Promotions Committee by submitting an email to Kathy Hansell-Prigg describing the need for the leave. In deciding whether or not to grant a LOA, the Promotions committee will review the students’ performance and rationale for LOA.