

AGES Accredited Training Program (AATP) Extended Leave of Absence Policy Statement

Preamble

The purpose of this statement is to clarify the position of AGES concerning the taking of extended leave (*greater than 6 weeks in a calendar year*) during the AATP.

Circumstances for extended leave during the AATP

Whilst the AATP is a two-year training program designed to be completed by fellows without taking leave in excess of 6 weeks per annum during the training period, AGES recognises that there are circumstances in which an extended leave of absence may be necessary and/or appropriate. Those circumstances include (but are not limited to):

- Pregnancy and/or family responsibilities following the birth or adoption of a dependent.
 - AGES supports parental leave for AGES fellows and is committed to ensuring AGES fellows are not subject to discrimination on any grounds including pregnancy, breast-feeding and newborn family responsibilities.
- Personal ill-health or special medical circumstances.
- Family responsibilities associated with caring for a dependent child, adult or person with a disability.
- Extended non-health / non-carer related leave, e.g., a long research project.

AGES is therefore generally supportive of all AGES fellows accessing leave **for up to 12 months** from the AATP.

Process to request leave during the AATP

AGES fellows should consider (when making leave applications) that AGES is *not* an employing body and that whilst AGES offers places in the AATP training program, AGES is not able to guarantee any employing hospital or Training Unit will approve any leave request made.

Therefore, ***any leave requested from the AATP must first be approved by the AGES Training Unit and the affiliated hospital(s)***. When that approval is obtained, the AGES fellow should make written application to AGES nominating the period of leave requested, and the intended date of commencement of the AATP.

Applications for leave from the AATP should be made at the earliest opportunity, and **no later than 3 months (except in exceptional circumstances)** from the intended commencement of extended leave.

Written applications for leave must be submitted using the Extended Leave form available on the AGES website through this link: www.ages.com.au/training/trainee-information/trainee-documentation-2/aatp-extended-leave-of-absence/

AGES will acknowledge receipt of an extended leave request within **10 business days**.

AGES will notify the fellow of approved extended leave within **4-6 weeks** of an extended leave application. AGES will also confirm any requirements that must be met (e.g., refresher training, additional professional development training) prior to recommence the AATP at the conclusion of extended leave.

AGES will approve up to 12 months of extended leave at any one time. If leave of more than 12 months is requested (including any request to extend the initial period of leave past the initial 12 months), the fellow is required to address why AGES should not defer their individual candidacy on the AATP at that time.

Consequences of Leave Approval

Time on extended leave from the AATP does not count as AATP training time. The extended period of leave will require an extension of AATP training equal to the length of extended leave taken.

AGES also acknowledges that an extended leave of absence from surgical training has been associated with attrition of surgical skill. AATP trainees are encouraged to consider techniques to minimise this (e.g., lap trainer use).

Whilst on Leave

AGES will communicate three monthly with AGES fellows on extended leave. AGES fellows should provide AGES with their best contact details during the leave period and ensure they monitor their preferred communication channel regularly.

AGES can provide AGES fellows with a 'return to work' support mentor as required upon completion of the period of leave.