

**West Virginia University**  
**Office of Graduate Medical Education**  
**Policy on Visiting International Medical Graduate (IMG) Observerships**

**STATEMENT OF SCOPE & POLICY**

This policy has been developed to provide guidance to clinical departments that choose to offer observerships to visiting international medical graduates (IMGS) who are not in an ACGME approved graduate medical educational training program or ECFMG approved nonstandard training program.

The primary objective of the West Virginia University School of Medicine is to provide instruction and educational opportunities to currently enrolled/employed residents and/or fellows. To that end, observerships are to be offered on a limited basis with prior approval by the Designated Institutional Official (DIO) from the Office of Graduate Medical Education.

**GENERAL PROCEDURE**

The availability of observerships at West Virginia University and its affiliated hospitals is at the discretion of individual clinical departments. The department's discretion whether to offer observership experiences is to be based on the program's availability of resources and preferences with the primary aim of not limiting educational experiences of the West Virginia University students and graduate trainees.

**DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions have been established:

- **VISITING IMG** – is defined as an international medical graduate (IMG) physician who received his/her basic medical degree or qualification from a medical school located outside the United States and Canada. The location of the medical school, not the citizenship of the physician, determines whether the graduate is an IMG. U.S. citizens who graduated from medical schools outside the United States and Canada are considered IMGs. Non-U.S. citizens who graduated from medical schools in the United States and Canada are not considered IMGs.
- **OBSERVERSHIP** – Defined as the position of observing patient care in a health care setting without patient contact, for the specific purpose of gaining medical knowledge. Observership does not result in credit of any kind or type.

**VISITING IMG OBSERVERSHIP ELIGIBILITY**

1. Graduation from a **non-LCME** medical school and/or **non-ACGME** residency program

2. Passage of USMLE step 1, step 2 CS and CK or its acceptable equivalent.
  3. Fluency in English
- Individuals who do not qualify for an IMG Observership are individuals who have not yet graduated from medical school. These medical students should apply for a visiting student medical elective through the University's Visiting Student Learning Opportunities (VSLO) portal.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

The Chair of the Department or designee must submit the following items to the DIO. Incomplete applications will not be considered:

1. Applicant cover letter describing desired program observership
2. Applicant CV
3. 2-3 Letters of reference
4. Departmental attestation
5. USMLE or its acceptable equivalent score report for Steps 1, 2 CK and CS, and if available, Step 3.

After approval by the DIO, the Global Engagement Office and Medical Staff Affairs will need to obtain and/or have the observer perform the following items:

1. Immunization records
  2. Background check
  3. Completed courtesy access packet
  4. WVU hospital photo ID
  5. HIPAA and OSHA training
- Applications must be received in the Global Engagement Office no later than 90 days prior to the requested observation start date.
  - Once an application is conditionally approved by the DIO, the application will be forwarded to the Global Engagement Office, which will conduct a review of the application and provide a final confirmation.
  - Upon receiving GME approval, applications will be forwarded to Medical Staff Affairs for final processing.
  - Documents not originally written in English must be officially translated to English by a certified translation agency.

## **OBSERVERSHIP RULES & RESTRICTIONS**

- Observation is limited to no more than **3 months**. Observerships may not be extended. Observership in more than 1-department during this period is prohibited.
- The observership is a voluntary experience that does not constitute medical education, graduate medical education, continuing medical education, or any training leading to licensure or board certification.
- All observers must wear the appropriate WVU and affiliated hospital photo ID at all times while on site. All badges will be deactivated at the end of the rotation.
- The School of Medicine will not provide housing, food, or other accommodations. The School of Medicine will additionally not pay observers, provide reimbursement for travel expenses, or provide an honorarium.
- It is the responsibility of the accepting WVU faculty member to notify his/her team that there will be an observer rotating with them, and to tell the observer where to meet the team on the first day of observation.
- It is the responsibility of the observer to be dressed professionally and to maintain proper decorum and hygiene.
- Observers must complete all institutional compliance requirements prior to starting their observership. This includes HIPAA and OSHA training.
- The supervising faculty attending, physician attending, physician in training, or other WVU faculty and staff representative must directly supervise at observers all times.
- Observers MAY NOT provide medical care, conduct patient interviews, conduct a medical history, examine a patient, provide medical advice to a patient, or assist in any procedure. Additionally, observers may not engage in collaborative research.
- Observers MAY not make entries into patient medical records, make copies of any patient medical records or other materials identified with patient names or other patient information.
- Any violation of the above will result in immediate termination of the observership.
- Observership permission may be withdrawn, once granted, should the situation warrant it.
- The Office of Graduate Medical Education reserves the right to modify any of the above guidelines at any time.

- Final decision for observership is at the discretion of the DIO. Reasons for not granting observership include (and not limited to) existing ACGME citations, ACGME areas for improvement, observership would limit the educational experiences of the West Virginia University students and graduate trainees.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

- Every observer must hold a courtesy appointment. Without courtesy appointment, observers will be unable to receive his/her ID upon arrival.
- Observers must provide a copy of their visa to the Global Engagement Office (GEO) as soon as the visa is received.

Approved by GME Taskforce: 02/07/2019

Approved by GMEC: 02/15/2019