

TITLE OF POLICY

New Child Adjustment Policy

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline parameters for taking time away from the Medical Degree curriculum for family adjustments at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Medicine (UNC SOM). This policy is inclusive to all students. New Child Adjustment (NCA) will be extended to students without regard to their age, sex, or gender and for any situation in which a new child is brought into a student's care, including but not limited to childbirth, adoption, foster care, or custody change.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE

The Education Committee will review this policy on an as-needed basis with input from UNC SOM Students Affairs and the University Compliance Office

LCME REFERENCE(S)

LCME 12.3: Personal Counseling/Wellbeing Programs

LCME 12.4: Student Access to Health Care Services

HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES

Approved June 2019 by the Education Committee

Approved September 2025 by the Education Committee

DEFINITION(S)

Course- a unit of study for which a final grade is administered. (e.g., The Patient, Community Based Primary Care).

Rotation- unit of study that takes place within a clinical block (e.g., Labor and Delivery rotation in the Obstetrics and Gynecology course).

POLICY

The New Child Adjustment (NCA) Policy establishes the parameters by which students can take a predetermined amount of time away from their studies to care for a new child while remaining enrolled at UNC SOM and maintaining their student benefits (e.g., student health insurance, financial aid). To maintain student status (with healthcare benefits, library benefits, financial aid), a student must have an enrollment of at least six credit hours per semester.

While the NCA option exists to accommodate students wishing to graduate and match with their original class, this policy does not guarantee that all students who want an NCA will graduate on time, and students are still responsible for completing their full graduation and course requirements, consistent with their year of graduation. Certain policies are outside the control of UNC SOM, which may affect the extent of flexibility offered. For instance, the NBME, USMLE, NRMP, ERAS and other organizations have policies regarding eligibility and timing. Additionally, healthcare entities require a student to be enrolled in order to engage in any clinical activities and thus be covered by malpractice.

Any NCA that is significant enough to shift timing of courses and/or enrollment status may be reflected on official transcripts. They will be noted in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE), and the student may choose to list the leave as parental, medical, or personal.

Initiation and Intent of an NCA

To pursue an NCA, students must contact UNC SOM Office of Student Affairs as early as possible to plan their time away and make preparations for any restructuring of their schedule if needed. While advance notice is ideal and provides the best options to students, UNC SOM acknowledges that there may be circumstances in which a new child is not always expected (e.g. emergency custody situations). In these situations, students should contact UNC SOM Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible to discuss options.

Any student who is planning on an NCA leave of more than six months must schedule a leave of absence meeting with representatives from the following offices: Financial Aid, Health and Safety Office, and Registrar. It is required that the student speak with a representative from Office of Student Affairs as well as their college or campus advisor for any NCA leave. College and campus advisors who learn of a student who needs an NCA must also contact the Office of Student Affairs office.

An NCA is designed with the student's success in mind. Staff and faculty will work alongside students to explore all possible options, including involving the student in personalizing the options available to them. An NCA is intended to be:

- **Flexible:** Each plan will be individualized to address the unique needs and goals of each student to allow for the greatest flexibility in formulating an NCA period. The student's wishes to graduate on time and meet specific academic goals will be honored whenever possible and consistent with university policy
- **Individualized:** If students desire to receive an NCA and want to graduate on time, there are a number of options available to them to make up time. Options to achieve on-time graduation include:
 - **Electives:** UNC SOM is open to students completing academic electives during their NCA period provided that the objectives, rigor, and criteria of evaluation are approved by the elective committee. In order to receive credit for an elective, a student must be actively enrolled.
 - **Banking Time:** Whenever possible, students completing a clinical course may be allowed to "bank" the time they completed within that course depending on capacity, timing, amount of course completed before leave and amount of course needed after leave. Depending on these same factors, students may re-enter that course at the conclusion of their leave. UNC SOM reserves the right to have the student re-start the block should circumstances require (e.g., the student needs to finish this course at another site, the student's performance on the block thus far was not satisfactory, there is significant lag between the beginning of the course and the time when the course will be finished). If the leave taken is greater than 6 months, credit for banked time will need to be specifically evaluated by the Office of Student Affairs.

- Moving flexible time from Individualization Phase: No matter when in the Medical Degree Program a student's NCA period takes place, "time off" that would otherwise be used during Individualization Phase, if not already used, will be allowed to be moved to accommodate the student. Examples include time off for interviews and time off for dedicated for Step 2 preparation.
- Finishing requirements during holidays will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

PROCEDURE(S)

Multiple resources are available to students who have questions about navigating the process of requesting and planning an NCA. Students are encouraged to approach any of the following departments/staff or faculty members to address their questions:

1. Associate and Assistant Deans for Student Affairs
2. Senior Director for Student Affairs
3. Office of Academic Excellence
4. College or Campus Advisor

Before finalizing plans for the NCA, students should request a standard LOA meeting which can include but is not limited to registrar, financial aid, college advisor, other chosen faculty advocate, and/or a Title IX representative, either in person or over the phone to synthesize an individualized plan. It may not be possible to guarantee the participation of all these individuals at the same time, but all of them should be involved in the decision making to optimize the number of options reviewed and to ease the coordination and logistics of the final plan. (Similar to the process done for academic delays).

Students with questions about this policy should contact Student Affairs Leadership including the Associate Dean, Assistant Deans, and Senior Director. Any concerns regarding the implementation of this policy or perceptions of mistreatment based on parental status, lactation, or use of the NCA policy should be directly reported to the University Compliance Office. Additionally, students can report concerns through UNC's mistreatment [link](#).

See addendum on next page

ADDENDUM

The following information provides considerations for each curricular phase when pursuing an NCA.

Foundation Phase

For any student taking an NCA period during Foundation Phase, makeup work can be completed during the summer between MS1 and MS2 year, spring break, the winter holiday of either year, or dedicated study period for Step 1. Since these periods of time are limited, there is also a limit to how much makeup work can be completed at these times. Course directors, curricular affairs staff, and curricular deans will work with those in the Office of Student Affairs to create a plan that optimizes student success as well as student personal goals.

Application Phase

For any student taking an NCA period during Application Phase, important considerations include:

- 1) A student cannot enter a course or rotation after it has started to ensure the student does not miss important information provided at orientation. An exception may be made, depending on individual circumstances, if a student is willing to attend the orientation and then continue their NCA, making up missed work later.
- 2) A student who takes an NCA in the middle of a course will receive an INC which is a temporary grade and will be replaced with a final grade once the coursework is completed.
- 3) It cannot be guaranteed that a student will receive the same placements (site or specific clinical service) for a course or rotation if completing makeup work. All course/rotation assignments are based on capacity at the time of a student's return.
- 4) Consideration should be given to optimize the student's learning curve, i.e. there may be a portion of the course or an assessment that is intentionally conducted towards the end of course because success requires previous elements of the course. Summative assessments (e.g., OSCE, NBME) should be scheduled after the student has completed the majority of the course.
- 5) NCA periods which fall in 2 separate courses will need to be negotiated with input from both course directors to ensure that coursework is completed in a way that meets the objectives of the course and in an efficient manner.
- 6) Regional campus students need to discuss the specifics of their schedule with leadership at those campuses because of the unique considerations of scheduling make up work at a specific campus or for a longitudinal curriculum.

Individualization Phase

For students who take an NCA period during Individualization Phase, many of the same considerations exist as for students who take an NCA period in Application Phase, with the following additional considerations:

- 1) Individualization Phase has more flexibility and the student has more input into the course scheduling.
- 2) Individualization Phase has flexible blocks built in for completing Step 2 CS and for interviewing. These can be shifted into Application Phase. However, these shifts may only be minimally beneficial depending on the student's residency application, interview and Match timeline, as well as timeline to complete Step 2 exam.



- 3) Some Individualization Phase courses are non-clinical, offering some flexibility to students and allowing them to complete them during an NCA period if also enrolled.
- 4) Many Individualization Phase courses have elements that require in-person attendance and other elements that do not allow sufficient flexibility for taking these during an NCA period.
- 5) Individualization Phase also allows for electives which are created by a student and a preceptor. These are created using the Special Elective Form and must have learning objectives as well as evaluation methods. These also offer flexibility.