



Language Acquisition Policy for Residents and Fellows

1. Title

Language Acquisition Policy for Residents and Fellows

2. Purpose

To outline guidelines for residents and fellows in postgraduate medical training at McGill University to participate in a French acquisition course. The goal is to help them achieve a working level of French language proficiency to effectively communicate with healthcare users and comply with *An Act Respecting French, the Official and Common Language of Québec* (Bill 96).

3. Scope

This policy applies to all residents and fellows enrolled in Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) programs at McGill University.

4. Definitions

- **Trainees:** Residents and fellows enrolled in postgraduate medical training programs at McGill University.
- **Language Proficiency:** A learner's level of comfort with speaking and understanding a language in clinical settings.
- **Language Acquisition:** The process of learning and developing verbal language skills through structured instruction, immersion, or deliberate practice.

5. Policy Statement

PGME recognizes that proficiency in spoken French is essential for delivering high-quality healthcare, building patient trust, and ensuring equitable access to care in Quebec. To support these goals, all residents and fellows with no or limited spoken French proficiency (A0-A2 on the CEFR Scale) are required to participate in the French acquisition courses offered under this policy. Improving verbal French proficiency significantly enhances clinical learning and exposure, which are key to competence development.

6. Objectives

- To prepare residents and fellows to effectively communicate with patients verbally in French.
- To integrate French language acquisition into the broader postgraduate medical education curriculum.

7. Procedures

Language Assessment



- Program and Fellowship Directors are responsible for identifying trainees with no or limited verbal French proficiency (A0-A2 on the CEFR Scale; unable to hold a basic conversation in French relevant to their specialty). Programs should refer trainees to ELAM (or an equivalent service) for proficiency assessment when necessary.
- Identified trainees with no or limited verbal French proficiency will undergo a baseline language proficiency assessment.
- Trainees selected after the assessment due to their French proficiency level (A0-A2) will be required to participate in PGME's language-learning programs.
- Trainees may also request enrollment in these programs, subject to PGME approval and a baseline proficiency assessment. Approved trainees will adhere to the same protections and responsibilities as other participants under this policy.

Language Learning Opportunities

- PGME will provide French courses tailored to medical contexts, focusing on medical terminology and patient interactions.
- Trainees will have access to online platforms, language-learning apps, or in-person classes to enhance their French proficiency.

Clinical Integration

- Trainees are encouraged to practice their developing French skills within clinical environments.

Support Resources

- Peer language-learning groups may be offered by PGME to promote collaborative learning, either concurrently with or following the French classes.

Proficiency Progression

- Verbal French proficiency will be assessed at the end of each French training block using recognized standards such as the CEFR.
- PGME will monitor trainees' competency acquisition to evaluate the effectiveness of the language classes.
- Progression will depend on attendance and active engagement in language learning, as assessed by French tutors.
- Except in designated programs with specific French proficiency requirements at admission, proficiency or progression should not be evaluated by training programs or teachers.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Trainees



- Actively participate in language acquisition programs and integrate newly learned French skills into clinical practice.
- Attendance at French classes is mandatory.
 - Live online classes are recorded, allowing trainees to access recordings if they miss a session.
 - Trainees are strongly encouraged to review missed classes before the next session, as each class builds on the curriculum from previous sessions.
- A minimum attendance of 75% of classes is expected, including at least 50% of synchronous classes, with the remainder completed by reviewing recordings asynchronously.
- Attendance at these classes is mandatory and should not be considered by the program as an absence, personal time, study time, or exam time.

Program and Fellowship Directors

- Ensure mandatory attendance at French classes for selected residents and protect this time.
- Provide trainees with protected time to attend language courses, ensuring attendance does not lead to extended work hours or additional clinical tasks.
- Offer protected time to watch recordings of missed classes when absences are due to leave or circumstances outside trainees' control.
- Avoid enrolling trainees in French classes during elective periods or their final year of training to minimize scheduling conflicts.
- Do not enroll trainees in French classes during FLEX periods or remediation with probation unless language acquisition is part of the remediation objectives.
- If attendance issues persist, the program must identify barriers and implement accommodations to facilitate adherence. Persistent non-compliance despite accommodations may affect promotion or certification decisions, akin to clinical rotation attendance.

PGME

- Ensure the availability of high-quality, medical-context French language resources.
- Monitor and adapt language acquisition programs as needed to ensure their effectiveness.
- Share attendance data with Program and Fellowship Directors for analysis and follow-up on attendance barriers.

9. Evaluation and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually to assess its effectiveness and alignment with PGME goals.
- Feedback from trainees, program and fellowship leadership, and French course providers will inform revisions.
- A survey will be sent to trainees after each iteration of the language-learning program offered by PGME.



10. Effective Date

This policy is effective as of [date].

11. Approval

Approved by: [Name(s) or title(s)]

12. Appendices

- Appendix A: Description of language proficiency levels

History: Since onsite accreditation visit 2019

FPGEC:

- Revised: December 18th, 2024
- Approved: January 29th, 2025

Central PGME policies take precedence over all program-specific policies.