

Questions and Answers about the Surgical Training Program of the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS)

This question and answer format is designed to give answers to the questions that potential applicants have before starting the program. If you require further information, we certainly encourage you to ask them prior to applying or at any time during the application process.

1. Where are the current PAACS hospitals?

Currently PAACS has programs in the following mission hospitals:

1. Tenwek Hospital, Kenya
2. Kijabe Hospital, Kenya
3. Soddo Christian Hospital, Ethiopia
4. Bongolo Hospital, Gabon
5. Mbingo Baptist Hospital, Cameroon

There are presently auxiliary training sites in Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa also.

2. What certificate will I receive for completing the program?

Upon successful completion of the PAACS program, you will receive a “Certificate of Competency in General Surgery” jointly issued by PAACS, Loma Linda University School of Medicine and the Christian Medical and Dental Associations. Residents who fail to complete the full program will be issued a certificate of attendance from PAACS for their time in the program.

3. Are the PAACS programs approved by COSECSA and WACS?

PAACS programs in all hospitals are approved by the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) and residents are entitled to sit for their exam at some point after their second year of training. If you pass that exam, you may become a member of COSECSA. To be accepted as Fellows of COSECSA, you will need to pass the second exam, which is given after the completion of your training. Our programs in Kenya have received approval for the full five-year program. Currently PAACS is seeking approval from the West African College of Surgeons (WACS).

4. Do I have to pay my own travel expenses?

Once you are accepted into the PAACS program, you must either pay the expenses yourself or find a sponsor who is willing to pay to move you and your family to the training site. At the end of his training, PAACS expects the hospital that hires the graduate to move them to the new location.

5. Will I receive a stipend while I'm a part of the PAACS Program?

Yes, a stipend will be paid to all residents. The stipend is not considered a full-time salary, but will cover *reasonable* living costs (food, clothing, education, etc.). The amount of stipend may vary by hospital based on costs of living in that country and may be increased for the increased costs faced by married couples and married couples with children.

6. How long does it take to complete the program?

The full training program will be for a minimum of 5 years. Rotations in different specialty areas may also be available.

7. Will housing be furnished?

Each hospital will provide a fully furnished place for residents and their families to live. In addition, textbooks and surgical gowns/lab coats, internet access, and expenses for travel to approved conferences and outside rotations are also provided. Food, clothing and school fees for children are the responsibility of the resident.

8. What about healthcare?

The hospital provides free healthcare for the resident. Most programs extend that to your spouse and immediately family, but there may be some limitations which vary hospital by hospital.

9. My church/diocese is unable to pay anything toward my support. Are scholarships available?

For highly qualified applicants, PAACS does have some funds available to pay resident stipends. In return for such scholarships, the resident will agree to work (for pay) at a mutually agreeable mission hospital serving one year for each year of sponsorship.

10. What are the requirements upon graduation?

Residents who are sponsored by an organization or church for their stipends will be bonded to work for that organization for each year that the organization sponsors them (maximum of 5 years). Please discuss this with the PAACS administration before you sign any binding agreement – we may be able to give you some good advice.

11. Will a computer be furnished?

Once a resident completes a 3-month probationary period, PAACS will provide a subsidized new or used laptop once during his/her residency. The participant will pay for ½ the cost (including shipping) and PAACS will pay the other part. Software is the responsibility of the resident. Any repairs or replacement are the responsibility of the resident.

12. I want to specialize in a particular specialty upon graduation. Should I apply?

The PAACS program is designed to train residents in general surgery and the graduation of general surgeons remains our highest priority. Upon occasion, PAACS may accept those who intend to go into training for other surgical specialties but your plans should be made clear in your application and in your interviews since failure to do so, may result in a demand to pay back your bonded time before you are permitted go on to other training.

13. My spouse is unable to accompany me to the PAACS hospital because of a job situation. Is that a problem?

Because we consider the institution of marriage critical and have seen so many marriages fail when partners are separated, PAACS will only allow you to be separated from your spouse for a period not to exceed one year during the five years.

14. My spouse and I have a traditional marriage, but have not undergone a civil ceremony. Is that a problem?

Yes. PAACS recognizes only marriages documented by the appropriate governmental paperwork (e.g. civil marriages). We encourage residents to additionally have church weddings and traditional weddings as their culture and custom permit

15. May I bring other children from my family to live with me during my training?

Yes, but only if you are married and your spouse agrees to this. PAACS is not obliged to support children that you have not legally adopted.

16. How do I know what all of the rules are once I'm accepted?

Once you are accepted, you will be given a resident handbook, which you are expected to read, understand and follow. Also, if you have any questions along the way, your Program Director will be able to assist you.