Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Flexible Rotations
Review Committee for Surgery

When should the program apply the flexible rotation option?
The flexible rotation allows PGY-5 residents to rotate on non-chief experiences. For example, a flexible elective option could provide a resident with more time in a given clinical focus, outside the essential content areas, before going into specialized training.

This option is only possible by first identifying PGY-4 rotations that are equivalent to chief experiences so that a resident may graduate with the full 12 months of chief rotations. The flexible rotation allows this by having chief experiences in both the fourth and fifth years of clinical training, so that a resident may rotate on a non-chief rotation as a PGY-5.

A program must apply for the flexible rotation and chief year experience, and have approval from both the Review Committee for Surgery and the American Board of Surgery before the proposed chief experiences in the fourth clinical year occurs.

Does a program need to apply for a flexible rotation if a PGY-3 resident wants to rotate in cardiac surgery as a PGY-4, and this will not change the PGY-5 rotation schedule, so the resident will not need chief experience as a PGY-4?
The flexible rotation is only for residents in the fifth year of training who wish to complete rotations not considered chief experiences. Elective rotations in the fourth year of training do not require review or approval by the Review Committee.

Does a program need to apply for a flexible elective rotation for a PGY-5 resident who wants to do a rotation that differs from the program’s block diagram, but that will still provide chief experience?
Block diagrams represent the overarching structure of the program at each level of training. The Committee expects some variance in rotations for each resident. The program has the ability to modify rotations as appropriate. If the rotation still falls within the requirements for chief rotations, the program will not need to apply for a flexible rotation.

Does a program need to apply for a flexible rotation for a chief resident who wants to go into a transplant fellowship after completing general surgery residency in order for the chief resident to do a transplant rotation as a PGY-5?
The Committee has determined that transplant rotations may be acceptable chief rotations. To be considered a chief experience, the transplant rotation must meet the conditions laid out in Program Requirement IV.A.6.a).(2).(g).(v).

A program does not need to use the flexible rotation option if the rotation provides chief experience.
Please review the document entitled “Flexible Rotations During General Surgery Residency,” which outlines the information required to submit the request to the Committee. All requests should be submitted to Executive Director Dr. Donna Lamb: dlamb@acgme.org.

Address any questions regarding the flexible elective option to Review Committee for Surgery staff members. (Contact information is listed on the Surgery page of the ACGME website.)