



International Electives Policy

Office of Accountability:	Dean, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry
Office of Administrative Responsibility:	MD Program
Approver:	MDCPC
Scope:	Compliance with this policy extends to all members of MD Program.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to ensure the quality of the educational experience as well as the safety of University of Alberta medical students when they undertake international electives. This policy applies to any elective undertaken by University of Alberta students:

1. outside of CACMS-accredited Canadian medical schools;
2. LCME-accredited sites in the United States;
3. at a site that has a formal exchange agreement with the University of Alberta;

Electives that do not have a known agreement require review from the Global Health Program.

BACKGROUND

CACMS accreditation element 11.3 reads:

11.3 OVERSIGHT OF EXTRAMURAL ELECTIVES

If a medical student at a medical school is permitted to take an elective under the auspices of another medical school, institution, or organization, a centralized system exists in the dean's office at the home school to review the proposed extramural elective prior to approval and to ensure the return of a performance assessment of the student and an evaluation of the elective by the student. Information about such issues as the following are available, as appropriate, to the student and the medical school in order to inform the student's and the school's review of the experience prior to its approval:

- a) *potential risks to the health and safety of patients, students, and the community;*
- b) *the availability of emergency care;*
- c) *the possibility of natural disasters, political instability, and exposure to disease;*
- d) *the need for additional preparation prior to, support during, and follow-up after the elective;*
- e) *the level and quality of supervision;*

f) *potential challenges to the code of medical ethics adopted by the home school.*

OVERVIEW

The Global Health Program of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry (FoMD) monitors all countries where students have requested electives, both Field Station and non-Field Station locations, on a regular basis for natural disasters, political instability, and potential exposure to disease. Students are assisted in finding new locations for electives if conditions in the country of their requested elective change prior to the scheduled date of the elective.

The Global Health Program is responsible for verifying that the following have been considered and are acceptable:

- potential risks to the health and safety of patients, students and the community
- the availability of emergency care
- the possibility of natural disasters, political instability and exposure to disease
- the objectives of the elective
- the number and type of patients seen
- the level and quality of supervisions and methods of teaching
- the working conditions
- any potential challenges to the code of medical ethics adopted by the home institution

It is assumed that the quality of electives at sites with which the University of Alberta has a formal agreement (e.g. Karolinska Institute, Graz, etc.), as well as electives at LCME-accredited medical schools in the United States, is high and student safety is not an issue.

All students undertaking international electives, including those in LCME-accredited medical schools in the United States, are required to complete the following steps.

Prior to an international elective:

- Undertake the prerequisite 12 hour Global Health Education and Advocacy Elective (GHEA) organized by the MSA's Jr. and Sr. officers of Global Health. They can be contacted at lo.globalhealth@gmail.com. The GHEA must be completed before an international elective or exchange. Students are only required to complete the elective once during their medical education.
- Participate in the Global Health Program's pre-departure training day. This is a required activity each time a student registers for an international elective.
- Students must submit their application form (available on the Global Health Program's Go Abroad website) at least 6 weeks prior to departure to allow the UofA's Risk Management and Insurance office to determine whether the UofA's insurance and WCB will cover students in that country. The University will purchase additional insurance coverage if required.
- Sign the Release of Liability Form
- Complete the Goals and Objectives Form
- Register their elective with the MD Program office (electives@ualberta.ca) so that it can be entered into Cally.
- If undertaking an elective in a low or middle income country (LMIC), attend a travel clinic for up-to-date information about vaccines and medications needed for the country in which they will be undertaking the elective. For the purposes of this document, low income countries are classified as having incomes of \$1,005 or less and middle income countries as \$1,006 - \$3,955 (World Bank classification, 2018).

- Take the University of Alberta International (UAI) [Pre-Departure Orientation](#). Students who have completed the Pre-Departure Orientation previously do not need to repeat it for each international elective they are registered for. However, students must complete a new Risk Plan every year if they are registered for an international elective. For more information and to request that a Risk Plan be reset for an upcoming elective, contact uairm@ualberta.ca.
- Register with [UGo Off-Campus Travel Registry](#)
- Register with the [Government of Canada's Registration of Canadians Abroad](#)
- Listen to a vodcast about health risks and safety in international electives

Upon Arrival at the Elective:

- Upon arrival at your destination, email the FoMD's Global Health Program (ghfomd@ualberta.ca) to inform them that you arrived at your elective safely.

After the Elective:

- If receiving bursary support from the Global Health program, students must complete a poster outlining their elective experience for the Global Health Fair which is hosted annually in the first week of February in collaboration with [International Week](#).
- Attend a post-elective debrief session organized by the Global Health program
- Complete the Global Health Program's post-elective survey/evaluation form

FIELD STATIONS

The Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry Global Health Program has developed the Field Stations Program through which there are ongoing, bilateral, mutually beneficial relationships with institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in low and middle income countries. These partnerships contribute to the advancement of global health because the relationships are based on equity and fairness (Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research, 2009).

Some of our partner institutions provide elective opportunities for medical students. We work with these partners to ensure that electives meet the requirements set out in CACMS' accreditation element 11.3. These relationships are stewarded both virtually, as well as through bidirectional site visits. The Field Stations Program offers unique international educational experiences for our students as well as educational opportunities for learners (mainly residents) and faculty members from the Field Station Sites, and enhances our Global Health Program's ability to monitor and evaluate our student electives in Field Stations institutions internationally.

Procedure for Field Station Electives

Field Station Electives must be a minimum of 4 weeks (20 working days). There is a list of field stations on the [Global Health Program website](#) from which to choose. The Global Health Program will connect the student with the faculty member organizing the field station, as well as with the Director of the GH Program, who oversees all Field Station electives. The faculty member/Director may call pre-trip meetings to offer additional information on safety, expectations and requirements to ensure a successful experience. Students must complete all the requirements as outlined in the Overview.

INDEPENDENT/NON-FIELD STATION ELECTIVES

An independent/non-field station elective refers to electives organized through Non-CACMS (Committee on the Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools), non-LCME (Liaison Committee on Medical Education), and non - U of A European elective sites.

In some years, there is a small group of medical students who request to undertake international electives in institutions that are not part of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry's Field Stations Program, IFMSA or from the FoMD electives catalogue. Often this is in a location where the student has family or other close connections. Some students request to do an elective with a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with which they worked as undergraduate university students. In debrief sessions with the students who have returned to work with an organization with which they have in the past, it is clear that there are benefits both for the students as well as the institutions/organizations.

Procedure for Independent/Non-Field Station Electives

Students wishing to undertake an independent international elective are required to submit a formal Project Proposal to the Director, Global Health Program for approval. The proposal is to include information about:

- A. the location of the elective and why this location was chosen
- B. the hosting institution/organization
- C. the name of the preceptor and their understanding of the level of supervision
- D. the plan for the elective and the desired objectives
- E. address issues of potential risks to the health and safety to patients, students and the community
- F. the availability of local emergency care

As all of this information may not be available to a student inquiring about a program, further inquiries are made by the Global Health Program where applicable to ensure appropriate supervision of students while on the elective and to clarify, where necessary, the availability of local emergency care and other issues to ensure the safety of the student (e.g. housing availability & proximity to clinical site, etc.).

Upon approval, students must complete the requirements as outlined in the Overview.

IFMSA EXCHANGES

The International Federation of Medical Students' Association (IFMSA) organizes professional and research exchanges that can be unilateral or bilateral. Students are eligible to participate in these exchanges during the summer between their first and second year or second and third year. These exchanges are not organized by the Global Health Program, however, **students must complete the required steps as outlined in the Overview**. Interested students should contact the University of Alberta Local Exchange Officers (leosr.alberta@gmail.com, leojr.alberta@gmail.com) and visit <https://ifmsa.org/> for the most up to date information about additional pre-departure requirements and destinations.

EUROPEAN EXCHANGES

University of Alberta students may undertake international electives through European exchanges at sites with which the University of Alberta has a formal agreement (e.g. Graz,

Karolinska Institute, and Munich, as outlined in the [Year 3 & 4 Electives Catalogue](#)). Students must complete the required steps as outlined in the Overview but are exempt from creating a poster for the Global Health Fair as they do not qualify for the Global Health Program’s bursary.

ELECTIVES AT LCME-ACCREDITED AMERICAN MEDICAL SCHOOLS

Students must complete the required steps as outlined in the Overview but are exempt from creating a poster for the Global Health Fair as they do not qualify for the Global Health Program’s bursary.

STUDENT SAFETY

Emergency assistance is available to all students on international placements through University of Alberta International (UAI). As mentioned in the Overview, all students must register with UGo and Global Affairs Canada. As well, they are given the email address of the Global Health Program. The Global Health Program regularly checks the country risk rating on the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) website for all international electives in low or middle income countries whether or not they are in Field Stations as these do change from time to time. Electives in countries that have “avoid all travel” advisories for the entire country are not allowed. As for exposure to disease, CDC and other international groups that monitor disease prevalence and emerging issues are monitored by the Global Health Program to identify emerging issues in countries for all proposed electives.

DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.	
Cally	MD Program’s program delivery system used by staff, faculty and students.
Field Stations Program	Pre-approved partnerships maintained by the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry’s Global Health Program.
Independent Electives/Non-Field Station	Electives organized through Non-CACMS, non-LCME, non-U of A European elective sites, and NGOs

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Electives Policy
Electives Diversification Policy
Booking and Confirming Electives Procedure
Quality Review of Electives Procedure

RELATED LINKS

Code of Student Behaviour
College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta Code of Conduct
Electives Catalogue (Years 1 & 2)
Electives Catalogue (Years 3 & 4)
Professionalism Standards
Global Health Going Abroad website

APPROVAL HISTORY

APPROVER	STATUS	DATE
MDCPC	Approved	15 February 2018
MDCPC	Approved	18 November 2021
MDCPC	Minor wording/editing changes; clarification of processes, including related to ensure insurance coverage, to align with current practice	19 October 2023
Associate Dean, MD Program	Minor editorial change to replace the word MedSIS with Cally in the policy to reflect the new program delivery system.	8 July 2024