

Electives Policy MD Program

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

Overview

Electives are an important and mandatory component of the MD Program. They provide opportunities for medical students to explore medical domains in a more in-depth fashion than may be permitted in the core clerkship. Medical electives allow students to develop their own specific interests and expertise, as well as sample disciplines for possible career choices and postgraduate training programs.

Purpose

This policy exists to define where electives may be completed, length of electives, application procedure, placement and elective change/cancellation requests, assessment requirements, quality of electives, immunization requirements, and malpractice and personal health insurance.

POLICY

1. RESPONSIBILITY

- a. University of Alberta medical students request local electives through MedSIS and visiting electives through the AFMC Portal.
- b. Clinical electives may be done at:
 - i. any **Committee on the Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS)** accredited medical school and/or **Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME)** accredited North American medical school;
 - ii. international sites that are part of a formal exchange program;
 - iii. other approved global health sites;
 - iv. other sites as approved by the Electives and Selectives Coordinator .



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- c. Students must abide by the standard of ethical behaviours as laid down in the [Professionalism Standards](#), [Code of Student Behaviour](#), and [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta Code of Conduct](#).
- d. Students must identify their status by wearing their University of Alberta student ID badge at all times.
- e. Students must complete an evaluation of the elective within 21 days of the completion of the elective.

2. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- a. Each medical student must complete a minimum of 10 weeks of electives before the end of clinical terms of Year 4.
- b. All clinical electives (including international electives, formal exchanges, electives at LCME-accredited medical schools, etc.) will count towards the minimum of 10 weeks of clinical electives required to graduate. All of these experiences will also count towards visiting electives and electives diversification requirements.
- c. Each elective must be a minimum of two weeks duration, or 20 half-day contacts. A half-day contact is 4 to 6 hours.
- d. Clinical electives cannot be more than four weeks in duration.
- e. Electives begin on Monday (Tuesday in case of statutory holidays) and end on Fridays. Weekends are allotted for travel time.
- f. Students may carry forward four weeks credit from MED 528 (the optional Summer Electives between years 2 and 3) to MED 547 Electives (Year 3) or MED 557 Electives (Year 4).
- g. Students may carry clinical electives time forward from Year 3 to Year 4.
- h. University of Alberta medical students do not approach preceptors directly to arrange electives. Local electives must be requested through MedSIS. Visiting electives at CACMS-accredited medical schools are requested through the AFMC Visiting Electives Portal.
- i. Students will not be granted credit for an elective that is supervised by a member of their immediate family, extended family or in-laws, or by anyone with whom they are involved in a close personal relationship. They will not be granted credit for an elective with their own personal physician or at a clinic at which they have been a patient within the previous 2 years as this would be considered to be a conflict of interest.
- j. One clinical research elective of two weeks can also be approved by the Electives and Selectives Coordinator and count towards the electives requirement
- k. Students are strongly encouraged to use electives to pursue a broad range of interests in addition to their chosen specialty. As a result, beginning with the class of 2021, the University of Alberta MD Program will subscribe to the national initiative **to limit the maximum number of clerkship electives in one CARMS entry discipline to 8 weeks.**



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This elective diversification policy extends to any clinical elective, including international electives and exchanges.

- I. Based on the Association of Faculties of Medicine in Canada (AFMC) 2022 [guidelines](#), all visiting electives must be a minimum of 2 weeks long. Canadian medical students cannot exceed twelve weeks of visiting electives in total. Visiting electives includes those experiences in other Canadian medical schools, as well as those in LCME-accredited American schools, and international electives and exchanges.

3. ELECTIVE PRIORITY

- a. Visiting elective students will only be allowed if they will not interfere with the learning experience of University of Alberta medical students on rotations or electives. If visiting students are on an elective with University of Alberta students, they should be anticipated to demonstrate qualifications comparable to University of Alberta students.
- b. Electives by visiting pre-clerkship students are not permitted.

4. ELECTIVE PROCEDURE FOR UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA STUDENTS

The procedure for University of Alberta students to request and complete electives is outlined in the [Booking & Confirming Electives Procedure](#).

- a. The student must request electives through MedSIS or the AFMC portal.
- b. The student must submit the name of the preceptor with whom they worked with prior to the end of the elective. Refer to [Booking and Confirming Procedure](#) for complete outline of process.
- c. An elective may be canceled up to six weeks prior to the start date. Cancellation with less than six weeks notice will result in a letter regarding unprofessional conduct being placed in the student's file unless the student has a reason for cancellation that is acceptable to the Electives and Selectives Coordinator. If the MD Program at the University of Alberta requires a student to withdraw from an elective, the program will provide the students and the elective with documentation.
- d. Program contacts should provide initial information regarding the elective schedule and process two weeks prior to the elective start date.
- e. Credit may not be granted if these steps are not followed.

5. CANCELING AN ELECTIVE

- a. Electives must be canceled a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the start date. Students must cancel through MedSIS or the AFMC portal. The MD Program office must be notified when canceling any external electives.

For external electives, students who cancel must notify:

- the contact person through whom they booked the elective
- the preceptor, if they have been provided with their contact information
- University of Alberta MD Program office (within two working days of canceling)



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- b. The MD Program will notify the Electives and Selectives Coordinator of cancellations that occur less than a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the starting date. This will result in a Professionalism Assessment Form (PAF) being placed in the student's file, unless the Electives and Selectives Coordinator agrees that the cancellation was justifiable because of medical or personal problems. Changing career plans will not be considered a justifiable excuse.
- c. If a student is unable to find an elective for a specific time period or it is canceled by the program, the Electives and Selectives Coordinator will assist with filling this gap.

6. QUALITY OF ELECTIVES

- a. Local Electives
 - i. Electives that are in the electives catalogue are considered to be high quality with no extraordinary safety issues. All electives that are not in the electives catalogue must be specifically approved by the electives coordinator. The student must submit all available details about the content of the elective and accommodation arrangements to the electives coordinator at least 6 weeks prior to the start of the elective. Refer to [Quality Review of Electives Procedure](#).
- b. Electives at LCME accredited schools
 - i. It is assumed that the quality of such electives is high and that student safety is not an issue.
- c. International Electives & Exchanges
 - a. Information about International Electives & Exchanges, including IFMSA electives, can be found in the related policy: [International Electives Policy](#)

7. INSURANCE

- a. Students participating in clinical electives in Canada have medical liability insurance coverage through the University of Alberta's Risk Management Services.
- b. Students participating in international electives (including electives at sites with which the University has a formal agreement, as well as LCME-accredited sites in the United States) 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. Refer to the [International Electives Policy](#) for more information.
- c. Students are personally responsible for their health insurance, and any extended health insurance for electives that will be taken outside of Alberta. Additional travel insurance may be required for out of province/international electives.

8. IMMUNIZATION



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- a. Students are expected to be up-to-date with the MD Program immunization requirements, as noted in the University Infectious Diseases Regulation in the University Calendar.

9. N95 MASK FITTING

- a. All students are required to have current and valid N95 mask fitting.

10. POLICE INFORMATION CHECK

- a. All students must have a clear police information check that includes a vulnerable sector search on file in the MD Program office.

11. OVERSIGHT OF ELECTIVES

- a. The Electives and Selectives Coordinator makes day-to-day decisions on granting or withholding elective credit when the rules are breached and on issuing letters regarding unprofessional conduct when electives are canceled.
- b. Decisions as to which new electives should be added to the electives catalogue are made in consultation with the Electives and Selectives Coordinator.
- c. The Coordinator, Electives and Selectives presents an update to the curriculum committee once per year for their information and for advice on how to optimize the electives program.

DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.

Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS)	The Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS) ensures that Canadian medical faculties' MD programs meet the quality expected when producing tomorrow's doctors. Medical schools demonstrating compliance are afforded accreditation, a necessary condition for a program's graduates to be licensed as physicians.
PAF	A Professionalism Assessment Form (PAF) is completed for every student at the end of the course/clerkship period. An Institutional PAF can also be completed on a student at any time ad hoc by the central educational administration.

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

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](#)
APPROVAL HISTORY

APPROVER	STATUS	DATE
MD Program Committee	Approved	25 July 2013
Kent Stobart, associate dean, MD Program	Revisions made: added links to accompanying procedures; changed <i>Electives Outside of Canada</i> heading to <i>Global Health Electives (in resource poor countries)</i> ; under <i>Elective Procedure for University of Alberta Students</i> , added information about canceling electives; added <i>Other Electives</i> heading	11 February 2014
MD Curriculum and Program Committee	Revision made to address elective diversification: Added "k. Students are strongly encouraged to use electives to pursue a broad range of interests in addition to their chosen specialty."	7 December 2017
MD Curriculum and Program Committee	Approved Revision to include the new national electives diversification standard.	18 July 2018



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	Additional wording and procedural changes made to bring the policy in line with current practice	
Dr. Tracey Hillier, Associate Dean	Minor editing and formatting changes made including updating the procedures to reflect current practice.	28 May 2020
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved Wording and procedural changes made to bring the policy in line with current practice.	16 September 2021
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved Wording and procedural changes made as part of the regular review of policies. Updated to align with related electives policies.	19 October 2023