



## Policy: UGME Electives and Observerships Policy

**Approved By:** MDCM Program Committee

**Approved On:** January 17, 2022

**Updated On:** October 2, 2023

**Next Planned Update:** Fall 2026

**Purpose:** General policy on electives and observerships for the MDCM Program.

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### Preamble

Electives and observerships enable students to explore a wide variety of medical disciplines to broaden their knowledge, develop specific interests and expertise, and inform career choices.

### Guiding Principles

1. The MDCM Program recognizes its dual responsibility to ensure students undertake a full educational experience that prepares them for any potential career choice, while also optimizing their ability to engage in a competitive residency match process through the completion of electives.
2. Electives are mandatory courses that are part of the MDCM Program of which students can freely choose amongst available disciplines each year.
3. Observerships are shadowing experiences where a student observes a physician or another healthcare professional during clinical duties. Students are not permitted to perform clinical duties, including but not limited to history taking skills, physical examination skills or other procedural skills during an observership.
4. Observerships can contribute to the career planning of students, especially early in their training.
5. Medical students cannot participate in clinical activities outside of formal MDCM Program courses in order to protect both medical students and patients. Therefore, all electives must be registered with the MDCM Program.
6. All [MDCM Program policies](#), Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences policies, and University policies are in effect during electives and observerships. This includes the [Short-Term Absences Policy](#), the [Medium & Long-Term Leaves Policy](#), [UGME Policy on Student Professional Behaviors](#), [FMHS Code Of Conduct](#), [UGME Dress Code Policy](#), [Collège des Médecins du Québec \(CMQ\) Code of Ethics](#), and the University [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#). Students must be registered with the CMQ according to the [Assessment and Promotion Policy](#) in order to participate in electives and/or observerships. Students who undertake Away Electives must also



adhere to the policies of the host institution including policies regarding professionalism, workload, absences, and statutory holidays.

7. Immunization requirements, as outlined in the [UGME Immunization Policy](#), must be met in order for students to be eligible for any electives and observerships. Students completing an Away Elective are also expected to meet any additional requirements of a host institution. For Canadian schools, students should use the AFMC common immunization form.
8. Students who are on probation, who require remedial or supplemental activities, or who have taken a leave of absence may have their elective options modified or withdrawn.
9. Students are responsible for all costs incurred in association with electives. This includes, but is not limited to, any costs related to immunization, registration, travel, lodging, criminal background checks, application costs and other requirements of the host institution.
10. The MDCM Program includes sessions on career planning and advice on elective selection strategy and scheduling. [The Office of Medical Learner Affairs](#) can provide personalized elective advice.
11. Students must abide by this policy and must follow the correct procedure for scheduling to book and register their electives and observerships. Failure to abide by this policy, scheduling procedure, and/or established deadlines:
  - 11.1. may prevent a student from undertaking an elective and/or lead to an alternative elective experience being imposed by the McGill Electives Office
  - 11.2. will result in the student being referred to the UGME Professionalism Advisor for a [possible lapse in professional behavior](#).

### **Pre-Clerkship Observerships**

**The MDCM Program recognizes 2 types of observerships:**

1. Required Observerships
  - 1.1. Certain MDCM Program Courses include required observerships as part of the course's learning activities. These observerships normally contribute towards the course requirements & assessment of the course. Details about these observerships are found in [myCourses](#).
2. Optional Observerships
  - 2.1. Year 1 and Year 2 medical students can participate in optional observerships outside their scheduled curricular teaching time, either as part of an interest group or a self-organized group. These observerships do not count towards a student's assessment, nor is it part of a course.
  - 2.2. Year 3 and Year 4 medical students cannot participate in self-organized or interest group observerships. Clerkship is a full-time component that provides clinical exposure in all disciplines through compulsory courses and elective courses.
  - 2.3. Prior to scheduling a self-organized observership or one part of an interest group, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that priority is given to a clerkship student



- assigned to that service, senior resident, or attending physician to participate in the clinical care and service prior to scheduling an observership.
- 2.4. The student is responsible for finding their own observership opportunity in compliance with the [clinical site's procedures for observership](#), coordinated by the Direction of Education or the Direction of Professional Services.
  - 2.5. All observerships must be registered and approved by the clinical site's Direction of Education or Direction of Professional Services. The clinical site's Direction of Education or Direction of Professional Services reserves the right to accept or refuse any observership request.
  - 2.6. A student can only complete an observership under the supervision of a fellow (*moniteur clinique*) or an attending physician.
  - 2.7. The supervisor must inform and get consent from the patients of the presence of a student observer. They must also ensure the student's safety and only permit observation (i.e., no clinical duties, no participation in patient care).
  - 2.8. An observership is not an accepted reason for a flex or personal day request.
  - 2.9. An observership can only be done at the clinical sites associated with the student's university.

## **Electives**

### **1. Optional Pre-Clerkship Elective**

- 1.1. To support pre-clerkship student engagement in public health and global health activities and in approved research activities with interactions with patients, Year 1 and Year 2 students may undertake an optional pre-clerkship elective, in accordance with this policy.
- 1.2. Optional pre-clerkship electives do not count towards mandatory elective weeks, elective disciplines, or any other graduation requirement.
- 1.3. Optional pre-clerkship electives must be approved by the [UGME Electives Director](#).
- 1.4. Only students in [good standing](#) in the MDCM Program are eligible to apply for an optional pre-clerkship elective.
- 1.5. Optional pre-clerkship elective can be undertaken as ELEC 200:

#### **ELEC 200 (Global and Public Health Pre-Clerkship Elective, not for credit)**

- 1.5.1. Eligible students must have completed the Fall semester of Promotion Period 1 (Year 1) and may have completed Promotion Period 2 (Year 2 FMD) or Promotion Period 3 (Year 2 TCP)
- 1.5.2. This elective may include research
- 1.5.3. No extra tuition fees are charged as this is a 0-credit course
- 1.5.4. Students are assessed using the pre-clerkship elective assessment form
- 1.5.5. This elective will appear on the student's transcript but not on the Medical Student Performance Record (MSPR or Dean's Letter)
- 1.5.6. For Global Health electives, including IFMSA or CFMS exchanges, students are required to



complete mandatory pre-departure training.

### 2. **Mandatory Clerkship Electives**

- 2.1. All MDCM Program students must meet mandatory clerkship elective requirements and vacation requirements in order to graduate. Elective and vacation requirements are tracked using the electronic [McGill Electives Management Platform](#). Only electives registered using the platform count towards mandatory elective weeks, elective disciplines, or any other graduation requirement.
- 2.2. Electives must be taken in medical or medically-related fields.
- 2.3. Virtual clinical electives are not permitted. However, virtual research electives can be presented for approval to the [UGME Electives Director](#).
- 2.4. The Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) Office reserves the right to approve or refuse an elective.
- 2.5. Every student is required to complete mandatory clerkship electives and mandatory vacation weeks during Clerkship, independent of their base campus.

Class	Elective weeks	Vacation weeks
2024 & beyond	19-21	3-5

- 2.6. Electives start on Monday (Tuesday in the case of statutory holidays) and end on Friday. Elective students are not expected to be present on the final weekend of the rotation to allow for travel.
- 2.7. Mandatory electives and vacation must be completed during clerkship (i.e., Years 3 and 4 of the MDCM Program), according to the MDCM Program schedule. Students may switch their vacation block with an elective block. Students requesting such a change to their schedule must inform the [Clerkship Component Administrator](#) and the [McGill Electives Coordinator](#) no less than 4 weeks before the start of either the elective or vacation (whichever is first) and must register this change using the [Electives Management Platform](#).
- 2.8. Electives must be supervised by a certified physician who is affiliated with a medical school or university and who are not family members or close friends as outlined by the [UGME Conflict of Interest Policy](#). Exceptionally, research electives may be supervised by a medical school or university faculty member who is not a physician (e.g., PhD researcher, other healthcare professional).
- 2.9. Students must undertake electives in at least [three-different parent disciplines](#) during their clerkship. Research is considered as a separate parent discipline. Research electives must not include any clinical activities (i.e., participation in patient care). Electives that include both research and clinical activities will be counted as part of the clinical parent discipline. <sup>1</sup>
- 2.10. In accordance with the [AFMC National Electives Policy](#), students may undertake<sup>2</sup>:
  - 2.10.1. a maximum of eight weeks of electives in any PGY-1 (R1) [entry route](#). Electives in

<sup>1</sup> Students in the joint program (MD/OMFS) are exempted from 2.9 and 2.10. Their elective choices are determined by the OMFS program.

<sup>2</sup> Id.



subspecialties that are part of a PGY-3 (R3) match (such as the subspecialties in [Internal Medicine](#) and [Pediatrics](#)) are counted separately; weeks in these subspecialties do not count as weeks in the entry route.

- 2.10.2. A maximum of 12 weeks of visiting electives.
- 2.11. An elective can be 2, 3, or 4 weeks in duration. Exceptionally, a research elective may be up to 8 weeks in duration.
- 2.12. Research elective requests are subject to the approval of the UGME [Electives Director](#). A research elective [approval form](#) must be submitted to the UGME Electives Director for review:
  - Research topic and project description
  - Description of student role and scope of work
  - Confirmation from the research supervisor that they will supervise the student and is a university-affiliated researcher or clinician-scientist
- 2.13. No credit will be given for an elective unless the elective is registered with the UGME Office, meets the requirements for a mandatory clerkship elective and a clinical assessment form (CAF) is received by the UGME Office indicating that the student has successfully completed the elective.
  - 2.13.1. Students are expected to provide the [McGill Electives Coordinator](#) with the name and email address of their supervisor
  - 2.13.2. Assessments should be submitted within four weeks of elective completion. Students are responsible for following up with elective supervisors who have outstanding CAFs to complete, and for notifying the [McGill Electives Coordinator](#) if they are unable to reach their supervisor about an incomplete CAF
  - 2.13.3. Only one final CAF is accepted per rotation
  - 2.13.4. In cases of an incomplete elective rotation or an assessment grade of “fail”, the student will be required to meet with the [UGME Electives Director](#) and may be referred to the Associate Dean UGME and discussed at the Student Promotions Committee (SPC).
- 2.14. All assessments from mandatory clerkship electives will appear on the MSPR . To ensure that assessments are included in the MSPR in advance of ERAS (September) and CaRMS (October) deadlines, fourth-year students should request that elective supervisors submit the assessment as soon as possible after completing rotations in July, August, September and October.
- 2.15. Students are responsible for arranging their electives. Electives may be:
  - McGill Electives, at McGill affiliated sites
  - Away Electives, at sites affiliated with other accredited or approved universities or programs.
  - 2.15.2. Both McGill and Away Electives must be registered and approved in the McGill Electives Management Platform at least 4 weeks<sup>3</sup> (one academic period) in advance of the start date of the elective rotation (see period dates on the [UGME Electives webpage](#)). Electives cannot be booked, changed or cancelled less than 4 weeks prior to the start date. Students are only allowed to book, change or cancel an elective with less than four weeks’ notice with approval from the faculty in exceptional circumstances described below.

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that the AFMC has a deadline of 6 weeks to cancel an elective prior to the start of the elective.



- Should a student applying for a U.S. elective receive confirmation of this U.S. elective less than 4-weeks before the start date, they must inform the [McGill Electives Coordinator](#) within 72 hours of receiving this confirmation. The student will then be exceptionally permitted to register for this elective in the [Electives Management Platform](#) and cancel a McGill Elective booked for the same time period without penalty.
- Should a student face an exceptional and personal situation, they should contact the Assistant Dean Student Affairs to request a modification to their elective.

2.15.3. In both circumstances, if approved, the host school will be notified that the student's request to book, change or cancel an elective after the deadline is supported by the UGME Office.

### 3. McGill Electives specific information

- 3.1. Electives cannot be scheduled directly with an individual preceptor or site. Students may contact the discipline elective coordinator for information on the elective and to confirm availability. This does not constitute official booking of an elective but assists with planning. An elective is only considered booked when it is registered using the [Electives Management Platform](#).
- 3.2. When completing a McGill elective during academic Period 7 (winter holidays), students doing electives will be given time off for statutory holidays, as determined by the clinical teaching site. Students doing electives at McGill are permitted to take vacation weeks or Flex Days during Period 7, as long as they meet the minimum 10-day requirement for a valid elective. Please consult the [Short-Term Absences Policy](#) for more information.
- 3.3. At the start of any McGill elective, students must provide their Collège des médecins du Québec (CMQ) registration number (E-number) to the supervisor or the electives coordinator for the rotation.

### 4. Away Electives specific information

- 4.1. Away Electives may be taken only at sites affiliated with other accredited universities or programs or at approved sites. Specifically:
  - [CACMS-accredited medical program](#) in Canada, through the [AFMC Student Portal](#)
  - [LCME accredited medical program](#) in the United States (U.S.)
  - Approved international or [global health](#) sites
  - Other sites as approved by the [UGME Electives Director](#)
- 4.2. When the host school accepts the student for the Away Elective, this does not constitute official booking of an elective but assists with planning. An elective is only considered booked when it is registered and approved using the McGill [Electives Management Platform](#).
- 4.3. When applying for, undertaking, or cancelling an Away Elective, students must abide by the host school requirements, policies and guidelines. Failure to abide by the host school requirements may result in inability to secure an elective and/or a letter of professionalism from the host school.



- Canadian schools: [AFMC Student Portal](#)
  - U.S. schools: refer to the specific school or institution
  - International schools outside of the U.S.: refer to the specific school or institution
- 4.4. Prior to an Away Elective outside of Canada (including an elective in the United States), students must complete mandatory online [pre-departure training](#), complete [the travel registry](#), and ensure that their contact information is up to date on Minerva.
- 4.5. An Away Elective cannot be completed in any region for which the Canadian Government has posted one of the following [travel advisories](#): “Avoid all travel” or “Avoid non-essential travel”.
- 4.6. McGill University provides malpractice/liability insurance for its medical students undertaking an Away Elective. Students leaving Quebec for electives must ensure they have appropriate personal health insurance. Information on the McGill student plan is available [here](#).
- 4.7. Some elective opportunities at U.S. or international institutions require a formal agreement be signed with McGill University in order for the student to be considered or accepted for the elective. Students are advised to develop a “backup” plan for any elective period during which an application for elective at an institution requiring a formal agreement is being considered. The process of the UGME Office and legal review of the agreement may take up to 6 weeks and, in some cases, it may not be possible for the agreement to be signed by UGME.
- 4.8. It is compulsory for the supervisor at the host institution to complete the UGME Clinical Assessment Form (CAF). In case of refusal and use of their own local assessment form, the UGME Office will transcribe this assessment into the CAF to the applicable sections only. Summative comments on the local assessment form will be transcribed into Section D - Final Summative Assessment while all other comments or information will be put under Section A - Formative Feedback. Some sections of the CAF might remain blank.
- 4.9. If an illness or emergency should occur during an elective at another institution, students are required to contact their local elective supervisor and the [McGill Electives Coordinator](#).
5. **Optional Clerkship Electives**
- 5.1. Additional optional elective weeks beyond the mandatory elective requirements in Clerkship are not permitted.
- 5.2. Exceptionally, students who are unmatched after the first iteration of the CaRMS residency match may be considered for additional elective time prior to that year’s graduation date. The student must have met all other MDCM Program requirements, including the electives and vacation requirements.
- 5.2.1. For the request to be considered, the elective must:
- Not overlap with MDCM Program mandatory activities
  - Be completed at least 7 days before the last date for grades to be submitted in time for graduation
  - Be in family medicine or a base specialty as defined by the [Quebec Ministry of Health \(MSSS\)](#) or otherwise meet the social accountability mandate of the MDCM Program by preparing the student for a residency position currently in high demand in Quebec.



- Be part of an appropriate career plan that has the approval of the [Office of Medical Learner Affairs](#)
- If an elective meets the above criteria and is approved by the UGME Electives Director or Associate Dean, UGME, the below principles apply:
- The student must register for the elective through the [Electives Management Platform](#).
- Extra tuition fees will be charged
- An assessment (CAF) is required. The student is responsible for following up with the elective supervisor to ensure that the assessment (CAF) is submitted on time to meet graduation approval deadlines, and for notifying the [McGill Electives Coordinator](#) if they are unable to reach their supervisor about an incomplete CAF
- This elective will appear on the student's transcript and MSPR. Should the student receive an unsatisfactory (failing) grade for the elective, the failure will appear on the student's transcript and MSPR; a supplementary activity will not be required as MDCM Program requirements are already fulfilled
- The optional elective credits do not count towards the credit count for the MDCM program.