SETTING UP AN INTERNATIONAL ELECTIVE

In order to fulfill the U of A requirements for elective time, students may choose to go overseas. Overseas electives can be done in either a less developed country or in a developed country outside of North America. Both types of foreign electives have certain basic requirements that must be met:

GENERAL ADVICE

1. Overseas electives should last a minimum of four weeks. Longer electives are strongly advised.
2. Electives taken in third or fourth year allow for a clinical experience. Electives taken in the pre-clinical years are limited in scope and may be more difficult to arrange because students require more supervision and guidance by the host institution.
3. Students are responsible for all correspondence and arrangements. Faculty advisors will assist with contacts, applications, procedure, and general guidance. Students are responsible for ensuring all requirements for preparation are met. The faculty advisor will only sign off and approve the elective if these requirements have been met. The requirements for preparation are listed on the GH website [http://cesr.med.ualberta.ca/Home/Education/Programs/GlobalHealth/](http://cesr.med.ualberta.ca/Home/Education/Programs/GlobalHealth/)
4. Although some holiday time is usually allowed at the end of the elective, the trip is not a holiday. Students must be prepared to work during their time abroad. The overseas preceptor is required to fill out an evaluation on the student after the elective has been completed; a less than satisfactory rating results in loss of credit for the elective.
5. Students must be aware of the limitations of their clinical abilities in relation to the risk of being asked to undertake more independence in patient care while abroad than would normally be the case at home.
6. Students will meet with a faculty advisor who will help ensure they have made an appropriate selection and completed the necessary preparation.
7. While preparing for the elective, students should keep the faculty coordinator apprised should any changes take place. Keep copies of all correspondence sent and received.
8. The approval process requires a letter of acceptance from the receiving institution, completion of the ‘Setting up an elective’ form & UGME elective form, both signed by the faculty advisor, a ‘Waiver of liability’ form signed and witnessed, and a “Goals and Objectives” draft acceptable to the faculty advisor.
9. Once the elective has been completed the student must submit an on-line evaluation of their elective for approval.
The types of electives that can be done are variable. Most are in general primary care, infectious disease/tropical medicine or general medicine, but an elective can be arranged in any area that interests the student. Community medicine and public health play an important role in all types of electives.

Students may currently choose the location of their choice for an elective, subject to the approval of the faculty. Note that electives to countries with Canadian government Travel Warnings recommending “Avoid all travel” or “Avoid non-essential travel” http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp will not be approved.

HOW TO BEGIN: General and Initial Inquiries about Overseas Electives

Step 1. On the Global Health webpage http://cesr.med.ualberta.ca/Home/Education/Programs/GlobalHealth/
You will be able to visit the IH database to view sites that have previously hosted U of A Medical Students or Residents, along with a description of the country and institution, followed by an evaluation of the experience. We are beginning a fresh to ensure that the information available is current so there may be limited information here for 2010.

When you have decided you plan to apply for an International Health elective you will choose ‘Application for an IH Elective’ from the table of contents on the left side of the page. Complete the on-line application. You will see that if you do not yet have a contact organization or destination then your submission will go to:

Wendy Brown, Acting Coordinator, Overseas Electives
Phone- 780-492-8928
Email: wendy.brown@ualberta.ca
who will be able to offer advice or direct you to an advisor.

Students who already have a designated international health elective in place will be able to complete that on-line, submit the information, and Wendy Brown will send you an email package of information and forms to complete prior to meeting with a U of A faculty advisor.

Step 2: The forms to complete include:

1. This Setting up an elective form: This checklist is for use when a student is preparing for their international elective to ensure important considerations are not missed.
2. The Waiver of Liability form: This ensures the student or resident understands that illness of injury suffered during your time abroad is a personal risk and not the responsibility of the university.

2/22/13 2
3. The UGME/PGME **Elective Application** form: This is the form that needs to be completed and then submitted to the respective UGME/PGME offices after being signed off by a faculty advisor.

4. A **Goals and Objectives** form: This word template can be customized to meet the needs of multilevel learners, in disparate disciplines, going to vastly different settings and will serve as a catalyst for expectation setting with your preceptor and a toll for individual evaluation.

5. A **Letter of approval** from the receiving institution or receiving preceptor; or from the organization arranging your elective.

**Step 3:** The completed and signed forms (student/resident plus faculty advisor) are submitted to the UGME or PGME offices where you will be given a **U of A Evaluation** form that you take along with your **Goals and Objectives** form for your receiving/supervising preceptor to complete and sign for you.

**Mandatory:** Pre-departure training. Dates available on GH website.

**Important:** Pre-clinical students who think they might be interested in doing an overseas elective are **encouraged** to take the 12-hour Elective Course offered each year.

**Step 4:** Upon your return:

1. Complete the **IH Evaluation:** This is on the Global Health webpage where you first applied for the elective. If you are the first U of A student to have an international elective at a given site, then you will need to complete **Part 1** of the evaluation first. If Part 1 is already completed, then we request you add anything that needs changing or is missing in the comments section and we will make the edits. All students need to then complete **Part 2** before they will receive credit for their IH elective. This is an evaluation of your elective experience and will be reviewed and then made available to future U of A students within the updated **IH database**.

2. Submit your “preceptor-signed” personal evaluation forms to the UGME / PGME office.

Only when the on-line IH Evaluation and the elective “personal evaluation forms” are completed and submitted will the student receive credit for the elective.

**Summary of requirements for an overseas elective:**

1. Completed on-line application for international elective.
2. First setting up an elective form completed and signed.
3. UGME general electives approval form completed and signed.
4. U of A waiver of liability for completed, signed, and witnessed.
5. International health elective goals and objectives form.
6. Letter of approval from receiving site or organization.
7. Pre-departure training.
10. Submission of student assessment forms to the UGME/PGME office.
11. Letter of acknowledgement to overseas preceptor (recommended).

Students and faculty advisors should consider each of the following items

**STEP ONE: Deciding whether to do an elective**

Time Frame:
- How long an elective
- When in medical school is best
- What about CaRMS/Match day?
- How much time needed to adjust to the new setting?
- Do you need time before/after to visit or travel as well?

Other Considerations:
- Funding?
- Allergies or other health issues that hinder travel to particular sites?
- Is a ‘significant’ other involved?
- Identifying country specific resources in Edmonton.
- Planning for unforeseen family emergencies

Assessing the location:
- Remoteness
- Type of facility
- Type/level of supervision
- Possible hazards

**STEP TWO: Setting up the elective**

Once the student has decided where and when they would like to do an overseas elective, the following items need to be considered with their faculty advisor.

**Arranging a specific experience**

Planning Decisions
- Supervising faculty in host country
- Location/site
- Demographics of population that you wish to work with
- Types of diseases/problems you wish to see
- Medical specialty area

Letter of Agreement between host site and student
- Dates of elective
- Plan to meet student on arrival
- Accommodations
- Food issues
- Work site and facilities
- Local health care for student
- How can the student be contacted

Orientation for the elective
- Population, culture, history, politics, economics, etc. of the destination
- Objectives of the elective (prepare a learning contract with faculty advisor)
- Communication strategy while abroad
- Medical and health services abroad
- Water and food safety
- Mental health issues
- Common health concerns (injuries)
- Travel and transportation
- Housing
- Cultural adjustment
- Behaviour responsibility and student conduct
- Crime and violence

**STEP THREE: Confirming details of the elective experience with the faculty advisor**

Logistical Details
- Passport
- Entry Visa
- Vaccinations
- Travel insurance
- Insurance
  - Major medical
  - Evacuation
  - Repatriation
- Licensure/Malpractice insurance
  - Discuss “Guidelines for the Management of Blood or Body Fluid Exposure During International Academic Experiences by University of Alberta Health Sciences Students and Faculty, April 2001
- Keeping a diary
  - Make a health information card (If you get into an accident or are incapacitated for some reason, ambulances and hospitals will be able to get the info)
    - Name
    - Address
    - Emergency contact numbers in the host country and in Canada
    - any pre-existing medical conditions
    - allergies
    - vaccinations
    - blood type
    - current medications
    - eye glass prescriptions
other pertinent information on it.

- Fallback/Contingency Plans
- Accommodations
- Food issues
- If the elective is not going well
- If your health is at risk
  - Crisis and risk management
- Developing an emergency action plan
- Analyzing risks and capabilities
- Eliminating or limiting high risk activities
- Checklists for emergency action plan

Completing the elective:

Things to take with you

- Passport (plus a photocopy)
- Photo ID
- Student ID
- Itinerary
- Reservation/confirmation numbers
- Insurance Cards
- Credit Cards (Depending on the destination)
  - Cash (Local Currency and US dollars or Canadian dollars depending on the destination)
- Travellers' Cheques
- Toiletries (Soap, Shampoo, Menstrual Products, sunscreen, Toothbrush, floss, etc)
- Extra Pair of glasses (in case you lose your original ones)
  - Clothes (remember to check the weather/season in the destination…a raincoat in some places can make a huge difference)
  - Proper shoes (You want to be safe and comfortable. For example, flip-flop sandals are comfortable but can be dangerous in places with scorpions.)

STEP FOUR: Things to do when you return home

- Complete the on-line evaluation of your IH elective (including an evaluation of the host site)
- Submit your “preceptor-signed” personal evaluation forms to the UGME / PGME office
Signing off on the details: Once the student and faculty advisor have successfully completed preparations for the elective, the following items must be completed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All of the above checklists have been discussed. I understand the risks associated with each and have made the necessary preparations with respect to each item.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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<td>Signature: ________________________</td>
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I have discussed all of the above considerations with the student and have provided advise as to how to prepare for each eventuality.

| Name: | Date: |
|---|
| Signature: ________________________ | Faculty Advisor |

Complete and sign the electives application form available from the UGME office

Complete and sign the University of Alberta waiver form.