Global Health Electives in Low & Middle Income Countries Policy

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<th>Office of Accountability:</th>
<th>Dean, Faculty of Medicine &amp; Dentistry</th>
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<td>Office of Administrative Responsibility:</td>
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<td>Approver:</td>
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<td>Scope:</td>
<td>Compliance with this policy extends to all members of the university community.</td>
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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) any potential challenges to the code of medical ethics adopted by the home school.

The Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry has developed the Field Stations Program through which there are ongoing, bilateral, mutually beneficial relationships with institutions and NGOs. These partnerships can contribute to the advancement of global health when relationships are based on equity and fairness (Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research, 2009). The Field Stations Program Strong contributes to effective monitoring and evaluation of international student electives.

Some of our partner institutions provide opportunities for electives for medical students. We work with these partners to ensure that electives meet the requirements set out in CACMS 11.3. This is accomplished both virtually as well as through site visits.

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. Often this is 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
done this, it is clear that there are benefits both for the students as well as the institutions/organizations.

For the purposes of this document, the World Bank designation is used. Low & middle income countries are classified as having incomes of $1,005 or less (low income country) or $1,006 - $3955 (lower-middle income country) in 2018.

The Global Health Program of FoMD monitors all countries where students have requested electives, both Field Station and non-Field Station locations, on a monthly basis for natural disasters, political instability and 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.

All students going on International electives are required to undertake a 12 hour Global Health elective, a pre-departure session held by University of Alberta International (UAI), listen to a podcast on health risks and safety in international electives, and attend a travel clinic for up-to-date information about vaccines and medications needed for the country in which they will be undertaking an elective. An International Elective Checklist must be completed by each student before the FoMD Electives Coordinator will approve their elective.

Emergency assistance is provided to all students on international placements by the University of Alberta. Students must register with UGo. They are also required to register with Global Affairs Canada. As well, they are given the cell number and email address of the Director, Global Health. All students on International Electives in Low and Middle Income Countries are connected to the Global Health Program and each other through a wiki.

**PROCEDURES for Field Station Electives:**

**PROCEDURES for electives in non-Field Stations locations:**

1. **Student Proposal for Elective:** Students wishing to undertake an international elective in a low or middle resource country at an institution or with an organization that is not part of the FoMD’s Field Station Program are required to submit a formal proposal for approval to the Global Health Program. The proposal is to include information about the location of the elective, the hosting institution/organization, the name of the supervisor, and a plan for the elective. Students to include information about why they have chosen this institution or location for their elective. Students are also asked address issues of potential risks to the health and safety to patients, students and the community; the availability of emergency care locally; identification of the preceptor and comment on their understanding of the level of supervision. Applications are reviewed and approved by the Director, Global Health or, in the absence of a Director, the Associate Dean & Division Director, Community Engagement. Further inquiries are made where applicable to ensure appropriate supervision of students while on the elective and to clarify, where necessary, the availability of local emergency care. Once the proposal is accepted, the student is required to complete the International Elective Checklist – Undergraduate.

2. **Mitigation for the possibility of natural disasters, political instability and exposure to disease:** The Global Health Program checks the country risk rating monthly 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.


**RELATED LINKS**

Should a link fail, please contact FoMD MedIT.

**APPROVER** | **STATUS** | **DATE**
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| Drafted | 20 January 2018
| MD Curriculum & Program Committee | Approved | Feb 15th 2018

**RELATED LINKS**

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