

## **International Elective Policy for Undergraduate Medical Education Students**

Approved by Curriculum Committee: August 22, 2013

Approved by Faculty Council: June 24, 2014

### **1. Preamble & Purpose**

The Global Health Office at Dalhousie University aims to improve global health and equity through scholarship, shared leadership and sustainable partnerships in Canada and abroad. International electives occur in settings outside those accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education and are an increasingly common component of undergraduate medical education. As of 2010, two out of every three North American medical graduates completed a global health elective during their studies (Huish, 2012). A priority area of the Global Health Office's work is to coordinate and facilitate international electives for Dalhousie medical students.

As of the 2013/2014 academic year, accreditation standards explicitly require formal processes for international electives, as outlined here:

*MS-20. If a medical student at a medical education program is permitted to take an elective under the auspices of another medical education program, institution, or organization, there should be a centralized system in the dean's office at the home program 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 issues such as the following should be available, as appropriate, to inform the program's review of the learning experience prior to its approval:*

- *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 need for additional preparation prior to, support during, and follow-up after the elective;*
- *the level and quality of supervision; and*
- *any potential challenges to the code of medical ethics adopted by the home institution.*

International electives must be approved by the Global Health Office and Undergraduate Medical Education to be recognized on a student's academic record.

The purpose of this Policy is to set a framework to ensure safety and educational quality across international elective experiences and to ensure electives meet accreditation standards.

## 2. Location of International Electives

There are two types of locations for an international elective: high-income country and low-middle income country.

- i) A **high-income country** is classified by the World Bank as countries having a GNP per capita of \$12,476 or more in 2011.

<http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications>

- ii) A **low-middle income country** is classified by the World Bank as having an income of \$1,025 or less (low income country) or \$1,026 - \$4,035 (lower-middle income country) in 2011.

*“Low- and middle-income economies are sometimes referred to as developing economies. The term is used for convenience; it is not intended to imply that all economies in the group are experiencing similar development or that other economies have reached a preferred or final stage of development.”*

<http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications>

## 3. Student Programs

There are two types of student programs for international electives which can either be a group program or an independent elective.

- i) *Group Program Electives*: These are interprofessional, non-credit, group programs coordinated, facilitated and evaluated by the Global Health Office and are primarily focused on first and second year medical students. These programs are delivered by approved partner institutions with established education programs for medical students. As of the date of this Policy, these programs take place with partner institutions in Thailand, Tanzania, and The Gambia.
- ii) *Independent Electives*: Students may request an independent elective through the approved partner list. Academic criteria and risk management criteria must be met for elective approval.

Upon mutual agreement, an elective may be allowed outside the approved list of partner institutions, based on the criteria in section 4, with joint approval from the Global Health Office and UGME. An example of this type of elective is students returning to their home country.

#### 4. Institutional Partnership Criteria

Strengthening partnerships between institutions can contribute to the advancement of global health, when these relationships are carried out in the spirit of equity and fairness (Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research, 2009). Strong institutional partnerships also contribute to effective monitoring and evaluation of international student electives.

Institutional partnerships are approved based on the following criteria:

- i. The partner has a shared vision or principles with Dalhousie University
- ii. An education and/or research relationship between Dalhousie and the partner institution is emerging, established, or ongoing
- iii. The partner institution meets Dalhousie's recommended legal requirements and this is confirmed in an appropriate written agreement between the parties
- iv. Infrastructure for visiting students and faculty at the partner institution can accommodate the student's learning objectives without straining institutional resources
- v. There is mutual benefit for both institutions and the relationship is sustainable
- vi. The following information will be assessed and available, as appropriate, to inform the program's review of the learning experience prior to approval:
  - potential risks to the health and safety of patients, students, and the community
  - availability of emergency care
  - possibility of natural disasters, political instability, and exposure to disease
  - need for additional preparation prior to, support during, and follow-up after the elective
  - level and quality of supervision
  - any potential challenges to the code of medical ethics adopted by the home institution
- vii. Any other criteria which may be relevant to the specific elective being proposed

The Global Health Office will post the list of partner institutions on their website and in the Undergraduate Medical Education electives manual. The list of partner institutions will be reviewed annually by the Global Health Office.

## 5. Academic Criteria

Additional criteria must be met for each student's elective to be approved. These criteria address language, elective length, security, pre-departure training and academic standing.

### *i. Language*

The working language of the student matches the partner institution. The partner institution may provide interpretation only when it does not strain institutional resources

### *ii. Elective Length*

Given the cultural adjustment period, the preparation time required for the student, partner institution and Dalhousie to arrange the elective, and the added challenges in many international settings, students may need a longer period of time in an International Elective to ensure they achieve a comparable learning experience and spend an appropriate amount of time in the clinical setting. For these reasons:

- a. International electives for Med I and II students must be a minimum of 4 weeks
- b. International electives for Med III and IV students must be a minimum of 3 weeks

### *iii. Pre-Departure Requirements*

The Global Health Education Committee, comprised of staff, faculty and students, will conduct an annual review of pre-departure training and resources to ensure relevance, and that best practices are applied in this training.

Students planning an international elective in a High Income Country must attend an abridged pre-departure training provided by the Global Health Office that focuses on safety and logistics.

Students planning an international elective in a Low Middle Income Country must attend a full pre-departure training with the Global Health Office that includes safety, logistics, ethics, cultural competency, travel health and working in low resource settings as per Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) guidelines.

An online option is available to students who are unable to attend in person or via video conference.

### *iv. Academic*

All students participating in Global Health Electives must be in good academic standing as per policies within Undergraduate Medical Education

## 6. Application Process for UGME Student

Students who wish to complete an international elective must follow the process outlined below:

1. The student must register their intended international elective in Dalhousie's international database (*MoveOn*) with the Global Health Office at least twelve weeks before the proposed start date
2. The student must submit a completed International Clerkship Rotation Form and Clerkship Elective Proposal (in *One45*) for approval to the Undergraduate Medical Education Office at least eight weeks prior to the proposed start date.
3. When the Global Health Office approves the international elective, Med 1 and Med 2 students must also register their international electives in *Banner* to ensure continued medical mal-practice insurance coverage.

## 7. Risk Management

All electives must meet the university-wide risk management policy. Additionally, the following conditions must be met.

### i. **Security Status**

The Global Health Office monitors the travel advisory reports from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). Therefore, international electives will not be approved in locations where DFAIT has issued an elevated travel warning, as per Dalhousie's International Travel Policy.

### ii. **Travel Health Requirements**

Before departure, students must:

- Provide proof (to the Global Health Office) of their visit to a travel clinic or family physician who advises on vaccines, medications and appropriate health measures for travel abroad
- Follow the Global Health Office's travel health guidelines, concerning HIV-PEP (written and approved by Dalhousie University's Division of Infectious Diseases); Mantoux testing; and sterile syringes and needles.

## 8. Evaluation and Assessment

### A. **Student Feedback**

Students must complete and submit an elective feedback report to the Global Health Office within one month of their return to Canada. These reports contribute to the Global Health Office's assessment of that particular elective and inform the Global Health Office, faculty and students about international electives through Dalhousie.

### ***B. Student Assessment***

International Electives must adhere to the same evaluation procedures as in-country electives, as determined by the academic program. The In-Training Evaluation Reports (ITER) for international electives will be distributed by the student and be completed electronically by preceptors at the partner institution. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their preceptor submits a completed ITER within four weeks of completing the elective.

### **9. Reporting**

Program data is presented in the Annual Report to the President's Office through the International Centre and Faculty of Medicine's Education Council and Curriculum Committee.

### **10. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Director of the Global Health Office and the Program Manager. Any suggested changes will be referred to the Undergraduate Medical Education Curriculum Committee for approval.