

FOURTH YEAR SCHEDULE & GUIDELINES 2026-2027

PROMOTION TO 4TH YEAR

Promotion to the fourth year is contingent upon passing all third-year clerkships and the clerkship exams.

Students who [delayed one or more M3 clerkships](#) must complete those before transitioning to the fourth year.

COMPLETING THE 4TH YEAR

Fourth year students must complete a minimum of 36 weeks/36 credits of rotations. That includes:

- Geriatrics (4 weeks)
- Sub-Internship (4 weeks)
- 28 weeks of elective rotations

Elective Guidelines:

- At least 8 weeks must be fulfilled with rotations from the [BU Elective Catalog](#)
- No more than 20 weeks outside the Catalog
- No more than 12 weeks of non-clinical rotations (research, quality improvement, teaching, etc.)
- No more than 16 weeks within a given sub-specialty, including Sub-I

Additional 4th Year requirements include:

- Transition to 4th Year
- Complete Longitudinal Requirement
- Sit for Step 2 CK by November 1
- Personal and Professional Development (PPD)
- Back-to-the-Classroom
- Submit Signed Schedule by July 13

STRUCTURE OF THE 4TH YEAR

The M4 schedule includes 13, 4-week blocks numbered 9 through 21. Rotation dates cannot be shifted, and rotations cannot overlap. Students can earn a maximum of 24 credits per semester.

- The Fall semester includes Blocks 9-15, and includes a required Step 2 Study/Vacation block
- The Spring semester includes Blocks 16-21

Weeks vs. Contact Hours vs. Credits

Full-time rotations meet an average of 40 hours per week and earn 1 credit per week. Students must complete a minimum of 36 weeks of rotations - 36 credits - 1440 contact hours - from M4 rotations in order to graduate.

Required Weeks vs. Allotted Weeks

- There are 52 schedulable weeks during the M4 year. Students may have unscheduled blocks, during which they are responsible for documenting work toward their longitudinal requirement.
- Students must complete at least 36 weeks, and can complete up to 48 weeks of rotations in their fourth year.

Important Dates:

Dec 1-7, 2025 - Enter choices for required fourth year rotations in E*Value

Jan 31, 2026 - Fourth year schedules with required courses appear on Registrar's website

April 6, 2026 - M4 Fall semester begins

April 6-12, 2026 - Transition to 4th Year

July 13, 2026 - Fourth Year Schedules, signed by FSA or SAO Dean, must be submitted to the Registrar

Oct 25, 2026 - M4 Fall semester ends

Oct 26, 2026 - M4 Spring semester begins

Nov 1, 2026 - Deadline to sit for Step 1

March 1-14, 2027 - Back-to-the-Classroom

May 13, 2027 - MD Commencement

May 16, 2027 - University Commencement; last day of M4 Spring semester

SCHEDULE BUILDING

Rotations are added to schedules through several mechanisms:

M4 Lottery

Students will receive information about the lottery in class meetings and via the listserv, and will input lottery preferences from 12/1-12/7/2025. Lottery results include a Sub-Internship, Geriatrics, a Step 2 Study block, and an optional 'guaranteed off-block'.

[Add/Drop System](#)

The add/drop system opens shortly after the release of lottery data. Requests go through two levels of approval – first the clinical department, then the Registrar's Office. The system allows for ongoing add/drop, and locks one week prior to a given block start-date. The add/drop system will be open until January, 2027 for the class of 2027.

Elective Lotteries

Several departments utilize elective lotteries to manage enrollment in pre-ERAS blocks to ensure equal access to rotations for students applying to those fields, particularly those seeking letters of recommendation. Departments will ask students to self-identify for lotteries in December and January.

Certain categories of rotations involve additional processes:

Research Elective

Students must submit an application along with all supporting documentation by the deadline set by the [Office of Medical Student Research](#). Additional time spent on the project will not be eligible for credit. Research done outside Boston University will count toward the allowed twenty weeks of outside elective time.

Outside Electives

Students in good standing can earn credit for up to 20 weeks of rotations outside the Elective Catalog, for rotations that meet standards set by MEC.

- [VSLO \(Visiting Student Learning Opportunities\)](#)

Students can arrange electives at LCME-accredited U.S. medical schools through the VSLO program. Accepted electives must be added to the student's BU schedule through the add/drop system.

- **Non-VSLO Outside Electives**

Students can also arrange electives outside of the VSLO program. Approval from BU faculty and the Elective Curriculum Subcommittee is required before arranging these electives, and the [Outside Elective Approval Form](#) must be submitted prior to starting the elective.

Global Health Electives

All global health electives must be approved by the Medical Education Office. See the [Global Health Program website](#) for more info, or contact Ana Gregory (anagreg@bu.edu).

By July 13, 2026 your schedule should have a minimum of 36 weeks of rotations, including Geriatrics and a Sub-internship. You are responsible for submitting a copy of your schedule, with the signature of your FSA, or your SAO Dean to the Registrar (camegreg@bu.edu). Schedule changes can continue to be made after this point, but students who fail to submit a schedule by this date will be brought to the attention of the Associate Dean of Student Affairs.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES AND DEFINITIONS

Alternate Paths: Students pursuing dual degrees can adjust their fourth-year schedule to accommodate coursework for degrees like [MBA](#), [MPH](#), [MS](#), [JD](#), [PhD](#), or [OMFS](#)

Modified Curriculum: Students can petition the SEPC to [split their M4 year](#) over 2 years.

Compliance: M4 students are responsible for maintaining compliance throughout the year to participate in the curriculum. Compliance holds must be resolved in order to add and drop rotations.

Course Duration: Full-time rotations are calculated at 40 contact hours per week, which equates to one unit or credit. All rotations are scheduled Monday to Sunday. Most fourth-year rotations last 4 weeks. Some last 2 weeks, and some can be taken for 2 or 4. Transcripts list courses in terms of their contact hours.

Course Repeatability: Rotations within the BU system are not repeatable for credit except where specifically stated. A rotation cannot be taken, if already completed with a passing grade.

Non-Clinical Elective Limit: A student can take no more than (12) weeks of nonclinical electives. This includes research, quality improvement, teaching/scholarly electives, and intern prep courses.

Subspecialty Limit: Credit will be granted for no more than 16 weeks of fourth year rotations and/or electives in any one subspecialty. Examples of a subspecialty would include orthopedic surgery, pediatric cardiology, or neuroradiology but not *fields* of medicine that host these rotations like surgery, pediatrics, or radiology.

Longitudinal Requirement: Students must complete 20 or more hours during unscheduled blocks on one or more [approved activities](#), such as Teaching and Quality Improvement electives, research, and self-directed learning on Blackboard.

Min/Max Rotations: Students must complete a minimum of 36 weeks and may complete up to a maximum of 48 weeks of rotations in the fourth year. Grades will be recorded on the transcript for up to 48 weeks of electives. This does not override the categorical limits on outside electives, subspecialty rotations, or non-clinical rotations.

Scheduling Responsibility: Failure to appear for a rotation that has not been properly dropped or rescheduled may result in a Fail grade and referral to the MEO for a professionalism concern.

Outside Electives (VSLO): Students may search for and arrange electives at LCME-accredited United States medical schools through the [AAMC Visiting Student Learning Opportunities program](#). Upon notification that a student has been accepted for any outside elective, the student must add the elective through the electronic add/drop system.

- Students must rotate in a specialty prior to participating in outside electives in that specialty or a subspecialty. 3rd year clerkships fulfill that requirement.
- Students must be in good standing and in compliance to participate in outside electives.
- Outside electives must be finalized on the schedule at least 30 days prior to the scheduled start date.
- Outside electives can be taken without earning credit, with written approval from the Registrar of the outside institution and an affiliation agreement between that institution and Boston University. These will not appear on the transcript, and an evaluation will not become part of the student's academic record.

Non-Catalog and Non-VSLO Outside Electives: Students can make arrangements to rotate at institutions that are not a part of the VSLO program (including private practices), and for electives that are not offered as part of the 4th year elective catalog of LCME-accredited institutions. The [Outside Elective Approval Form](#) with supporting documents must be submitted to BU faculty and the chair of ECS for approval prior to arranging this elective. This approval must be obtained before BU can send out any paperwork on the student's behalf and before the student starts the elective.

Research Elective: A student in good academic standing may request up to 12 weeks of fourth year credit for a research project. Students must submit an application along with all supporting documentation by the deadline set by the [Office of Medical Student Research](#). Additional time spent on the project will not be eligible for credit. Research done outside Boston University will count toward the allowed twenty weeks of outside elective time.

Research Year: Students may choose to take an additional year outside of the MD curriculum to conduct full-time research under the guidance of a mentor.

- Students undertaking full-time research with a BU faculty member may apply to the optional curricular pathway: [Research Year at BU](#). Students accepted into this program remain registered and enrolled in MED MD 900 for the fall and spring semesters and receive a scholarship to cover tuition costs. Research conducted during this time does not earn credit toward other degree requirements. To participate in the Research Year at BU, students must apply through the [Medical Student Research Opportunities portal](#), and [submit a petition to the SEPC](#) for a program change.
- Students participating in a research year outside of BU are encouraged to submit their projects through the MSRO portal to enable improved support during that time, and must [petition the SEPC](#) for a Leave of Absence.