

Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine

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Policy on Eligibility of Outside Electives for Degree Credit

Policy Statement

This policy outlines the criteria that must be met for an outside elective to be eligible for academic credit toward the MD degree. The purpose is to ensure that all credited rotations meet institutional standards for educational quality, student engagement, and accreditation compliance.

Covered Parties

This policy applies to:

- All MD students seeking credit for outside electives
- Faculty and administrative staff responsible for rotation approvals
- Preceptors involved in away rotation oversight

Defined Terms

- **Outside Elective:** An elective not offered through the Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine course catalog.
- **LCME:** Liaison Committee on Medical Education, the accrediting body for medical education programs leading to the MD degree in the U.S. and Canada.
- **CME/CEU:** Continuing Medical Education/Continuing Education Units, typically awarded to practicing professionals and not equivalent to academic credit.
- **Institutional Learning Objectives (ILOs):** Educational goals defined by the offering institution that align with LCME standards.

Responsible Parties

- **Students:** Responsible for submitting documentation and ensuring the rotation meets eligibility criteria.
- **MEC:** Reviews and approves rotations for credit after initial review and recommendations by ECS.
- **Registrar:** supports scheduling of outside electives and ensures students are in line with M4 scheduling guidelines.
- **Rotation Director:** Provide performance-based final evaluation for student.

Eligibility

Outside electives that meet the following criteria and are arranged through VSLO may be scheduled without further approval, as long as they are within M4 scheduling guidelines.

- **Accreditation:** Must be offered by an LCME-accredited medical school or teaching hospital.
- **Level:** Must be a fourth-year elective designed specifically for fourth-year medical students.
- **Duration and Contact Hours:**
 - Minimum of 2 weeks in length
 - Average of 40 contact hours per week
- **Educational Requirements:**
 - Must include active student involvement (not purely observational).
 - Must have direct faculty interactions with feedback on performance
 - Must include a final summative faculty evaluation based on observed performance.
 - Must meet LCME guidelines and the ILOs of the offering institution.
- **Credit Exclusivity:**
 - Rotation dates must not overlap with another rotation
 - Rotation must not concurrently earn other types of credit (e.g., CME, CEU).

Additional Requirements for Virtual Rotations:

- Must be explicitly designed as virtual (e.g., teaching, language immersion, telehealth).
- There should not be an equivalent course offered in the medical school catalog
- Must be completed in one curricular block
- Must be the only course the student is participating in when completing (ie, cannot be completing another rotation at the same time as the virtual rotation)
- Must have synchronous activities and cannot be completely asynchronous

Outside electives arranged independently of the VSLO platform or do not meet eligibility above

- Must be approved in advance of the rotation start date.
- Students submit an Outside Elective Approval Form, with supporting documents, to both the chair of the corresponding department at Boston University (if applicable) and to ECS for review through the ECS committee coordinator.
- After gaining approval from both, the completed and signed form must be submitted to the registrar at least 8 weeks prior to the scheduled start-date.
- Rotations that take place outside of the United States must be approved by the Global Health Director ([Global Health Program](#)).

Approval

- Outside electives must be finalized on the schedule at least 30 days prior to the scheduled start-date.
- Electives that are submitted with incorrect dates or mischaracterized details may be denied.

- Rotations completed that do not meet the process described above will not be eligible for credit and will require students to complete additional rotations to attain the credits required, if needed for graduation.
- Once approved, an outside elective can be taken by multiple students without rereview for up to two calendar years since the last ECS approval.

Related Policies and References:

- [Policies and Procedures for Evaluation, Grading and Promotion of MD Students](#)
- [Registrar: Fourth Year Student Information](#)

Additional related information

- Graduation Requirements:
 - Not more than 20 weeks outside the BU catalog (as of last accreditation this was 16 weeks)
 - Students can complete up to 4 weeks at an individual outside institution
- Away Elective Prerequisites:
 - Students must rotate in an internal rotation in the specialty prior to participating in outside electives in that specialty. 3rd year clerkships fulfill that requirement.
 - Students must be in good academic standing
- Grading: Non-clinical electives are eligible for pass/fail grades. Clinical electives are eligible for full grade scales. If graded on a different scale than is used at Boston University, grades will be adjusted and marked with a transcript notation.
- Affiliation agreements: BU does not required agreements for M4 rotations, except when taken 'not-for-credit'. Other institutions may require agreements.