

The ISMMS Guide to Electives

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Overview

In order to graduate from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS) all students are required to complete twenty-eight (28) weeks of electives over years three and four of medical school. There are ten weeks of elective time available during year three and all but twelve weeks of year four are available for students to complete electives. This guide will give an overview of all electives offered to medical students at ISMMS, explain how registration and grading is completed and outline any elective policies.

Who's Who

Curricular Affairs Team	
Beverly Forsyth, MD Beverly.forsyth@mssm.edu Director of Medical Student Electives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees all electives and Nexus courses Reviews and approves clinical tailor-made electives Provides general and individualized elective guidance to students
Alex Posner Alexandra.posner@mssm.edu Electives and Site Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees administrative aspects of electives Liaison between faculty and students Advises students about the process of applying to electives
Juliette Wertz Juliette.wertz@mssm.edu Electives and Site Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracks elective evaluation and One45 progress Oversees visiting students and Nexus courses
Medical Student Research Office (MSRO)	
Mary Rojas, PhD Mary.rojas@mssm.edu Director, MSRO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews and approves tailor-made research and non-clinical electives Advises students on seeking mentorship for these electives
Registrar	
Nelson Pe Nelson.pe@mssm.edu Registrar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee all elective registration Ensure all of electives are added to transcripts in Empower Adds elective grades to empower Handle VSLO document submissions and invitations Assist with the backend of VSLO and Empower.
Kamila Bryson Electives@mssm.edu	

Assistant Registrar	
Student Affairs	
Connects students to faculty who can provide guidance about elective choices and timelines. (Faculty Advisors and Specialty Advisors) (student.affairs@mssm.edu)	
Jillian Palmer, MA Jillian.palmer@mssm.edu Associate Director for Student Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides alternative academic options (part-time, academic leave, etc)
Vannita Simma-Chiang, MD Vannita.simma-chiang@mountsinai.org Director of Specialty Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect students with specialty advisors

Types of Electives

ISMMS Electives

ISMMS Electives are primarily clinical (exception: longitudinal electives) and are found and registered for on the Empower Catalog.

Clinical Tailor-Made Electives

Clinical tailor made electives are electives in an area of interest not listed in the Empower system. Students must identify a mentor to oversee the elective.

Tailor Made Research / Non-Clinical Electives

These electives include: writing (case study, medical humanities paper, literature review, drafting/editing manuscript), online courses, research. Topics may include anything that is not considered clinical care or shadowing.

Global Health Electives (abroad)

Students can only take international electives that are offered in the elective catalog on Empower and must register at least 60 days before departure. Many electives require external applications and some require an internal application.

Away Electives

Electives taken at other institutions. Students may apply through the Visiting Student Learning Opportunities (VSLO) (formerly VSAS) system or may apply to electives at other institutions not listed in the VSLO system.

Registration for Elective Credit

Each type of elective has a different registration process. All registration steps must be completed prior to the start date of the elective in order to get elective credit. Retroactive credit will not be applied.

ISMMS Electives

- Browse the online electives catalog on [Empower](#). Electives should be requested at least two weeks before the start of the elective.

- Select the elective for which you wish to apply and click the “Register for Electives” button on the detailed view screen
 - You will receive three emails generated from the system during the registration process:
 - An email informing you that you have requested the elective and it is PENDING DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL
 - Next, an email informing you that the department has approved the elective and it is PENDING REGISTRAR APPROVAL
 - A final email informing you that your request to add the elective has been APPROVED BY THE REGISTRAR
- You must receive the final email to be fully registered for the elective and receive credit; no retroactive credit will be applied.
- If you have any issues with the approval process, contact the Assistant Registrar or the Director of Student Electives.

Clinical Tailor-Made Electives

- Students must complete the *Clinical Tailor-Made Elective Form* found on the [Registrar’s Website](#) at least two weeks prior to the start of the elective.
 - This includes tailor-made electives at other schools
- This form is approved by the Director of Medical Student Electives.
- Once approved the form is sent to the Assistant Registrar so it can be added to the students’ Empower Registration page and will show up in the Registration Summary list.

Tailor Made Research

- Students must complete the *Research and Non-Clinical Tailor-Made Elective Form* found on the [Registrar’s Website](#) at least two weeks prior to the start of the elective.
- This form is approved by the Director of MSRO.
- Once approved the form is sent to the Assistant Registrar so it can be added to the students’ Empower Registration page and will show up in the Registration Summary list.
- All requests must provide a description of the work to be done during the period, a timeline for the work, and a description of a deliverable product.

Global Health Electives

- The only Global Health Electives offered are those on Empower. Students must request the elective on Empower at least 60 days before the start of the elective. **You will not be approved on Empower until you finish all other requirements.**
- Once you request on Empower, you should go to the Global Health Blackboard Page (under ‘My Organizations’). You will find the full application process there.
- After completing the External Program Application, the Global Health Elective Application Form and all Travel and Health Forms you will be officially approved in Empower.
- Any questions regarding Global Health Electives should be sent to Darinka Gadikota-Klumpers (darinka.gadikota@mssm.edu)

Away Electives

- Students can apply for Away Electives on VSLO (Visiting Student Learning Opportunity Portal) or, for those electives not on VSLO, the electives' separate application, usually found on the host institution's website.
- Once students are approved by the host institution to complete the elective, they must complete the *Elective Registration: Application for Electives at Other Institutions* found on the [Registrar's Website](#) at least two weeks before the start of the elective in order to receive credit.
- For more information regarding Away Electives please look through [Away Electives FAQ](#)

Elective Guidelines and Information

Elective Weeks/Hours

One week of elective time is equal to a minimum of forty (40) hours of activity during five (5) consecutive days. The only exception to this is longitudinal electives found in Empower.

Changing Elective Dates

If a student is approved for a tailor-made elective and decides to change their dates this must be approved by the director of electives prior to the new dates and electives@mssm.edu must be informed. This is to ensure the students' Empower registration summary is up to date.

Elective Registration Deadline

All clinical, clinical tailor-made, non-clinical/research and away elective empower registration and/or forms need to be completed at least **two weeks prior** to the start date. All forms are found on the Registrar's Website. For Global Health electives, students must register on Empower **60 days in advance**. If students are registering on Empower, they must be **approved** in Empower in order to start their elective.

Elective Count by Commencement

All electives must be completed the week prior to May Commencement; failure to complete this requirement will result in a June 15 degree conferral date.

Retroactive Credit

No retroactive elective credit is given to students. If the correct registration steps are not completed and approved students will not be able to get credit retroactively.

One Week Elective Limit

Students will only receive elective credit for ONE one-week elective.

Electives Longer than Four Weeks

Any tailor-made elective longer than 4 weeks must be approved by the Director of Medical Student Electives.

Clinical vs. Non-Clinical Electives

Twelve (12) of the twenty-eight (28) weeks of required electives must be clinical electives, the other sixteen (16) can be used for tailor made nonclinical/research electives.

A clinical elective is defined as an elective in which the student participates in the direct care of patients or in specialties such as pathology or radiology, that directly connect to patient care. Electives in Empower are listed as clinical vs. non-clinical in the description.

Longitudinal Electives

- Longitudinal Electives which are 1-2 weeks in length depending on the elective and are found in the Empower catalog.
- These electives are taken over the span of a semester or academic year
- Longitudinal electives can be taken concurrently with another non-required rotation (e.g. another elective) **as long as the hours do not conflict.**
- Students cannot create a tailor-made longitudinal elective
- Longitudinal electives are **non-clinical** *except* the two EHHOP Electives (MED2216 and PSY0463)

Electives and Required Courses and Clerkships

Electives cannot be taken during a required clerkship or course, including InFocus. Elective duties are not an excused absence from a clerkship or course and should not be requested.

Electives During Vacation/Interviews

Students can take electives during their vacation or residency interview time

Electives and Absences

While students do not have to formally submit an absence during an elective, absences should be relayed to the specific elective director and any other team members.

Scholarly Year (SY) and Leave of Absence (LOA) Students

Students on a Scholarly Year or Leave of Absence are not eligible to participate in MD program course work and cannot accrue elective credit.

MD/PhD Students

MD/PhD students in their PhD phase may receive a maximum of 4 weeks of elective credit in an established Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai elective if:

- They are a matriculated student in the ISMMS Graduate School and eligible to participate in coursework
- They meet the prerequisite(s) for the elective and have the approval of the faculty elective director

Remediation Elective Credit

Students cannot receive elective credit for remediation work.

Step 1 Elective Credit

All students will receive 2 weeks of non-clinical elective credit for taking and passing Step 1. The Registrar will register students for this elective. Students do not have to register on their own. Right before graduation students will receive a grade for this elective and it will appear on students' transcripts. This credit is automatic, and students do not need to contact anyone to receive it.

Step 2 Elective Credit

Unlike Step 1 elective credit, students must register on Empower to receive credit for Step 2 Board Review Course. This is done during 4th year and students must be registered for the elective before the deadline to take Step 2 (December 31 of Graduation Year). There are multiple ways to do so:

1. *Student uses the course materials live (or close to it) and will complete the course by the end of July.*
 - a. Sign up for MED1428 Section 01 in Empower before the start of the academic year. Student must sign up for the course before it begins to receive credit; no retroactive credit can be given.
 - b. Use the course materials live or during the month of July. Finish any missed sessions by the end of July and attest that you completed the course in Blackboard. If the student does not attest by the end of July, they will not receive credit.
 - c. At the end of July, student will receive credit.
2. *Student takes the course asynchronously between August 1 and December 31 of their graduation year (Step 2 deadline).*
 - a. Sign up for MED1428 Section E2 in Empower before the student intends to utilize the course materials. Student will be prompted to choose a 2 week timeframe. Make sure these 2 weeks are within the study period. If the student does not register, they will not receive credit, even if the course is completed. Retroactive registration is not permitted.
 - b. Complete all course materials during the study period chosen. Student attests on Blackboard to completion of the materials at the end of the study period.
 - c. During the first week of January, all those who have completed the course will receive credit.
3. *Student uses the course materials and tests during their Scholarly Year, before returning to M4.*
 - a. Student uses the course materials at whatever pace they wish.
 - b. Upon return to M4 in July, sign up in Empower for MED1428 Section E2, choose two weeks with no other course/elective conflicts, then attest to completion in Blackboard. Student attests after registration.
 - c. During the first week of January, all those who have completed the course will receive credit.
4. *Student uses last year's course materials because student is testing **before** this year's course.*
 - a. Complete all of last year's course materials.
 - b. Sign up for MED1428 Section E2 in Empower by the first day of student's 4th year.
 - c. Student attest to completion of all course materials in Blackboard in this year's course.
 - d. During the first week of January, all those who have completed the course will receive credit.

Elective Performance Evaluations

An elective is considered complete, and students can receive credit once the student is evaluated and receives a grade.

On the last day of the elective the student should:

2022-2023 Grading Process

1. Go to the [registrar's website](#) and download the corresponding evaluation form (clinical vs non-clinical) depending on what elective was taken
2. Complete the Student Information and Elective Information portions of the form
3. Email the form to the faculty member you worked with.
 - a. The form must be completed by a faculty member but they can get feedback from residents or fellows who also supervised.
4. The completed evaluation form should be emailed to electives@mssm.edu within 6 weeks of the last day of the elective
 - a. Once the registrar team receives the evaluation the grade will be added to Empower and a copy of the completed evaluation will be sent to the student
 - b. Students should be checking empower regularly to see if they received a grade.
 - c. If a student does not have a grade for an elective at least 4 weeks after the last day, they should reach out to the Curricular Affairs electives team so they can follow up with the faculty member

2023-2024 Grading Process

We are planning to roll out an electronic evaluation system for the upcoming academic year. The final details of this process are still being finalized and we will update this document once final edits are completed.

One45 Evaluations

Students are highly encouraged to complete an evaluation of each elective they take. About a month after a student completes an elective, they will receive an email with a link to complete a One45 evaluation of the elective.

- Students should complete this evaluation for every elective they complete (clinical, global health, non-clinical/research, longitudinal, and away)
- These evaluations help the Curricular Affairs team ensure quality control of our electives.
- All evaluations students complete are anonymous.
- Elective directors only receive these anonymized evaluations if there are at least three completed. Otherwise they do not receive the evaluation.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

I completed an elective 2 months ago but I forgot to register. The faculty member agreed to fill out an evaluation form for me. Can I receive retroactive credit?

No, you cannot receive retroactive credit for an elective. You must register for an elective BEFORE the start date of the elective. You will not receive retroactive credit. Even if you have confirmation from an elective coordinator or faculty preceptor, you must be formally registered and the elective must be in your registration summary on Empower. If you have questions about your registration contact electives@mssm.edu.

What happens after I register electronically? And how do I know if I'm really registered?

Once submitted, an email is automatically generated and sent to the departmental elective coordinator, requesting your spot. You can find the contact information for the coordinator in the catalog description in Empower.

The elective coordinator is the administrator in the department responsible for the elective and works with the elective faculty to schedule students. You will also get an email from Empower saying your elective is "Pending Approval."

If the coordinator approves your request, it is forwarded to the Office of the Registrar for final approval. When approved by the Registrar you will receive an email confirming your registration.

If you are denied, you will receive an email stating that your request has been denied and thus you are not registered and will need to choose another elective or the same elective at a time there is space available. Remember that you must get a confirmation from the registrar that you are officially registered for your elective.

What happens if I don't get a confirmation from the elective coordinator within 2 weeks of my request?

Sometimes the elective coordinator does not respond to your request in a timely manner. First, you should contact the elective coordinator directly via email or phone. If you still do not receive a response, please reach out to electives@mssm.edu and/or the Curricular Affairs Electives Team.

Why did I get denied for an elective?

You may be denied registration for several reasons, most commonly it's because the spots are filled or the elective cannot offer the elective at the time requested (ex: faculty member on vacation). You can always reach out to the elective coordinator or faculty director for the elective if you have a question regarding availability during another time.

What if I don't see the elective I want offered in the Empower catalog?

If you don't see an elective you're interested in, you can design a tailor-made clinical elective or tailor-made research/non-clinical elective. These electives are designed by you with the support of a faculty mentor. If you need guidance creating these electives, you can reach out to the Director of Medical

Student Electives for tailor-made clinical electives or the Director of MSRO for tailor-made research/non-clinical electives. The corresponding application must be completed and approved to take these electives and can be found on the Registrar's [website](#).

How do I know that I have received credit for my elective?

You can log into Empower to check on the status of your elective credit. If you think you are missing an elective grade contact electives@mssm.edu.