

Alpert Medical School: International Electives Guide



BROWN
Alpert Medical School

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Scholarly Concentration in Global Health

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Objective:

To compile up-to-date information on international electives and exchanges at Alpert Medical School into one guide so that students can compare all of their options in a single convenient place. Additionally, this guide will provide other practical information for planning your experience.

Introduction:

AMS has a substantial number of international exchanges and electives. A few experiences are limited to undergraduate and rising first-year PLME students. However, the majority of the international elective rotations are geared at fourth year students and are generally taken in the spring semester of fourth year after residency interview season. This document will not cover unaffiliated summer experiences, options for full-year experiences abroad (such as scholarship or fellowship programs, or the Academic Scholars Program), or non-AMS affiliated programs.

In the past, information on these programs has been widely dispersed, with detailed information only available from the department running the program. This document seeks to compile such information (or links to it) in one place, and provide other practical information for planning and enjoying your time abroad. Over time, some programs will come and go, and the people running them will change. Hopefully, future AMS students will take the initiative to update the information provided.

Terminology:

From a student's perspective, there is very little difference between an exchange and an elective program. For example, both earn the same amount of course credit. Throughout this guide, therefore, the terms exchange, elective and rotation are used interchangeably. Technically, there are differences, which are quoted from Dean Ip's presentation to MD'21 in February 2020:

An exchange...is a clinical experience outside the US in which the AMS student is hosted by a foreign medical school and treated like a student of that school. Each exchange program has an MOU [memorandum of understanding] which delineates how many students can participate and any specific timeframe for them to rotate. There is an application process and a Brown faculty member who is identified as the liaison for the exchange. That faculty member completes the evaluations for the AMS students who participate. Once approved, AMS students would be registered under the course number for that particular exchange program.

Electives taken internationally - such as the Kenya or Dominican Republic electives - are initially approved as electives by the Medical Curriculum Committee. Each of these electives has a Brown faculty member as course leader and a separate course number. These are clinical experiences that usually take place at one or

two times a year at the course leader decision. Students register by emailing the course leader. (note- Brown/Kenya exchange does have bi-lateral MOU, just managed by Dept of Medicine).

International experiences can also be done as [independent studies](#), which also earn standard course credit, but do count against the [twelve](#) independent study weeks a student can take for credit across the MS3 and MS4 years of study.

An International Independent Study (IS) is when an AMS student is working with a Brown faculty member who sponsors them on a rotation or research project that takes place internationally. It may or may not be at an international medical school. International experiences can also be done as independent studies, which also earn standard course credit, but do count against the twelve independent study weeks a student can take for credit across the MS3 and MS4 years of study. Please see the AMS Records and Registration site for more details about the applying for international independent study.

Why do an international rotation?

There are as many answers to this question as people who will answer it. Generally, students' answers fall into one of the following broad categories:

1. Student's research focus aligns with program's curriculum
2. Explore and understand firsthand a new/different medical system
3. Cultural exchange
4. Career goal in global health
5. Improve medical language skills
6. Fun!

When to go:

Generally international electives are taken by fourth years in the spring semester, after interview season. Usually, first, second, and third year students are not eligible for the rotations described in this guide because they have not completed their core rotations yet. While every student's situation is unique, most fourth years will spend the spring and summer following third year studying for and taking USMLE Step 2 (CS & CK; plus Step 1 if they did not already take it), and completing Brown and away rotations in their desired specialty field. Doing an international rotation during this time period is generally not advisable, especially for students seeking to match into more competitive fields. An exception might be warranted if the international rotation is directly relatable to a student's match goal, however that student could easily list an upcoming international rotation on his or her CV.

In the late fall into winter of fourth year, most students will be interviewing for residency programs. Interview season for the ERAS match concludes roughly at the end of January, depending on specialty and program. Therefore, February, March, and April are the prime months for AMS students to take their international elective(s). Be aware that there is a deadline

Application Timeline for International Exchange Opportunities (MOU sites):

Month (Approximate)	Action Item
August MS4	Application open. Contact Eileen_Caffrey@Brown.edu for information about application process, deadlines, etc. Q&A. Contact faculty liaisons w/ questions about sites/electives.
September-October MS4	Research programs. Decide which to apply to. Submit application (End of September)
October MS4	Acceptances released (~1-3 weeks following application due date)
October -November MS4	Communicate with program(s) to finalize dates, ask questions, etc.
October -November MS4	Deadline to accept or decline placements (typically end Oct-early Nov). Commitment is binding except in extraordinary circumstances, once placement is accepted by the student.
November -December MS4 Program Start	Add elective to Oasis. Submit paperwork such as CV, picture, immunization forms, etc. to host institution. Obtain/renew passport. Apply for visa (if needed). Research host country/institution. Communicate with local contact and Brown liaison as needed.

International Exchange Opportunities 2023-24 (Part of Exchange MOU process)

Country	University	Brown Faculty Liaison	Total Number of AMS slots 1 month electives)	Travel Funding	Housing	Board
Brazil	University of Sao Paulo Faculty of Medicine	Hugo Yamada, MD, Hugo.Yamada@chartercare.org	2	\$500	Yes	No
China	Zhejiang University School of Medicine, Hangzhou	Jie Tang, jie_tang@brown.edu	2	\$1,250/mo	Yes	Yes
Germany	University of Rostock	Timothy Empkie, Timothy_Empkie@brown.edu Karen Tashima, KTashima@lifespan.org	1	No	Help finding	No
Germany	University of Tuebingen	Gerardo Carino, GCarino@lifespan.org for winter Critical Care course and electives	5 (Critical Care 2 weeks Feb) 4 elective	\$500 (CC course only)	Yes	Yes
Italy	University of Bologna	Gerardo Carino, GCarino@lifespan.org	4	No	Help finding	No
Japan	Kyoto University Faculty of Medicine	Taro Minami, Taro_Minami@brown.edu	3 (preference for April)	\$550 upon arrival (approx from Yen)	No	No
Japan	Kurume University School of Medicine	Taro Minami, Taro_Minami@brown.edu	6	\$1,000	Yes	No
Japan	Tokyo Women's Medical University	Taro Minami, Taro_Minami@brown.edu	1		Yes	No
S. Korea	EWHA Women's University	Susan Cu-Uvin, SCu-Uvin@lifespan.org	2	No	Yes	No
Taiwan	National Cheng Kung University School of Medicine	James Sung, MD, C_Sung@brown.edu	4	\$1,250/mo	Yes	No
Ghana	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	Kwame Dapaah-Afriyie, MD, KDapaahAfriyie@lifespan.org	2	No	Help finding	No
Israel	Rappaport Faculty of Medicine, Technion	Rami Kantor, RKantor@brown.edu	2	*Up to \$3000 from Nathan-Giddon gift	*	*
Other International Elective Opportunities- (Not part of exchange application process)						
Kenya	Moi University, School of Medicine	E. Jane Carter, e_jane_carter@brown.edu Deb Banerjee, banerjed19@gmail.com	varies	no	housing available	
Dominican Republic	Jose Maria Cabral y Baez Hospital	Martha C. Sanchez, MD (martha_sanchez@brown.edu)	varies	no	housing provided	

Other International Elective Opportunities (Not part of exchange application process)

Kenya (Internal Medicine):

Moi University School of Medicine and Brown University MOU in place- bilateral exchange
Liaisons: Deb Banerjee (banerjed19@gmail.com) E. Jane Carter, MD (e_jane_carter@brown.edu)
AMS Slots: Variable, but usually no capacity issues
Travel Funding: No
Housing: Provided (\$40/week as of February 2020)
Board: Breakfast included. Lunch & dinner available for \$5/day (for both meals)
How to apply: Contact Deb Banerjee (banerjed19@gmail.com)
E. Jane Carter, MD (e_jane_carter@brown.edu)

Dominican Republic (Internal Medicine, non-exchange):

Hospital Regional Universitario Jose Maria Cabral y Baez
Liaison: Martha C. Sanchez, MD (martha_sanchez@brown.edu, Martha.Sanchez@lifespan.org)
AMS Slots: 4-8 (depending on number of residents concurrently attending)
Travel Funding: None
Housing: Provided
Board: Not included
Language Requirement: "Intermediate level Spanish"
How to apply: Special application sent out in mid-March to early April of third year

Detailed Program Descriptions:

Brazil (University of Sao Paulo)

A program description had not been provided at time of publication. Please reach out to the listed contacts directly for more information.

China (Zhejiang University)

This site includes two options. The AMS website includes a [comprehensive guide](#) to this program written by students who have attended in the past.

The first option, available only to undergraduate PLME students, including following their senior year, is a four-week course on traditional Chinese medicine. The first three weeks or so of the program are focused on learning Traditional Chinese Medicine, while the final week is an opportunity to learn about how western-style medicine is practiced in China. Fluency in Mandarin is not required (though preferred) if you are attending with other students who speak some Chinese. I had no problems when I went in 2015 as a non-Chinese speaker. Housing is included, in dorms near the hospital, and lunch at the hospital cafeteria is usually less than \$5. I purchased a local SIM card, which was a significant cost savings. Be aware of Chinese restrictions on internet access prior to travel, and you may want to consider purchasing a VPN prior to departure. Your weekends should be free to travel, and Shanghai is about an hour away by train.

Fourth-year AMS students can apply to do a clinical elective rotation. According to Dean Ip, AMS students so far have done radiology, anesthesia, surgery, and pediatrics. An MD'20 student had their maternal and infant health rotation cancelled due to COVID-19. You should reach out to Dr. Jie Tang to see if there is availability in the field of your interest.

Please feel free to reach out to evanstern42@gmail.com if you would like more information from a student perspective on Hangzhou or the program.

Dominican Republic (Hospital Regional Universitario de Jose Maria Cabral y Baez)

Meghna Nandi MD'21, the student program coordinator, writes (lightly edited for clarity and length): “The Brown-Dominican Republic Exchange Program is the result of a partnership between Brown University's Department of Medicine and the Hospital Regional Universitario de Jose Maria Cabral y Baez (Santiago, Dominican Republic). It is one of the premier international health educational exchanges at Brown Med, and has been in existence since 2004. A central facet of this exchange is the month-long clinical rotation (IM-3410) that includes medical students and residents from Brown as participants.

“This year, the exchange will take place from 01/25/2021 - 02/19/2021. Led by Brown clinical faculty, the academic experience will allow integration with teams at Cabral y Baez in internal medicine, consults, emergency care, and primary care health posts. This elective is a great opportunity for students to learn about healthcare in the Dominican Republic, improve their cultural competency skills, and enhance their medical Spanish. The elective also allows valuable opportunities for students to discuss ethical issues around global health, think critically about how the availability of resources impacts the practice of medicine, and reflect on what we can learn from our peers at Cabral y Baez.

“There is no travel funding to support students, but housing is provided. There is an apartment in Santiago, about a 10 minute walk from Cabral y Baez, for medical students and residents visiting from Brown. Meals are not provided, and medical students and residents are responsible for their meals. There is, however, a kitchen available in the apartment so students often choose to cook meals in the house and do many communal dinners in order to save money.

“Since both internal medicine residents and Brown medical students participate in the elective, the application process can be fairly competitive for Brown medical students. Attributes and skills valued in the application process include Spanish competency, flexibility, adaptability, and past experiences in global health. Every year around mid-March/early April, we send out applications to rising 4th year medical students. Sometime in April we have an initial information session. Applications are typically due in early May. Interviews are conducted from May - early June, and final decisions are sent to students by the end of June.”

A 2019 paper describing the program was published in the Rhode Island Medical Journal and can be accessed [here](#).

Germany ([Rostock University](#))

This site has two options. The first is a two-week, [seminar-style course](#) on aging open only to undergraduate PLME students, including following their senior year, run in June each year. Students from other US and international universities attend as well, and the local students in the course are usually very willing to show you around Rostock and help you settle in. The course is taught in English, so while learning some German phrases can be helpful, there is no

language requirement to attend. Students live in a hostel (included) with shared rooms among the Brown students, and a small meal stipend is provided in cash in the first couple of days after arriving. There is plenty of free time to explore the area (such as the beach at nearby Warnemünde), and usually a trip to Berlin is organized for the weekend in the middle of your time there.

Fourth-year AMS students can arrange a clinical or research rotation. Michael Berke, MD20, has written about [his radiology elective](#) there in June 2019. Email the liaisons to see what options might be available for the timeframe you would like to go. Some of the more general observations about the area and hospital are applicable for students who do the two-week seminar as well. Housing is included with this option.

Responding to a student survey, Michael reported that he worked about 30 hours per week in the radiology department, splitting his time mostly between the ultrasound room and reading rooms, with additional opportunities to do ultrasounds on patients on the floors or ICU, or go see some IR procedures. He wasn't assigned other patient care duties, and had weekends and holidays free to travel. He got a local SIM card from Vodafone, and was happy with the price and service. Michael says his airfare cost just under \$1000, but notes that he thinks it could have been cheaper if he wasn't booking at the last minute. He paid under \$50 for health insurance and around \$1200 for housing in an AirBnB, which was not the cheapest option. As noted above, housing should have been provided for him, so you may not need to budget for this expense. Michael says lunches were around \$5 at the hospital cafeteria, which is consistent with my experience in 2013.

If you have any further questions you'd like to ask previous students, you can email evanstern42@gmail.com (for the two week seminar) or michaeljberke@gmail.com (for the clinical elective).

Germany ([Tübingen University](#))

Like Rostock, Tübingen has multiple opportunities for AMS students. Grace Sun, PLME'16/MD'21, wrote this [guide](#) to area. That said, please [don't end up on CNN](#) like one previous PLME.

The first option is open only to undergraduate PLME students, including following their senior year. It is a two-week seminar on biomedical ethics and comparative health systems run each June, timed to be the two weeks following the aging seminar in Rostock so that students can attend both (if accepted). Dean Ip is the faculty liaison for this option.

The first week we covered several biomedical ethics topics, such as end of life care, in a discussion-based format. The second week we compared and contrasted the healthcare systems

of the US, UK, and Germany. Over the course of the two weeks, each student gave one brief presentation on an assigned topic. While there were no clinical duties, we did have the opportunity to go see various parts of the hospital or clinics some afternoons. The mid-course weekend was free for students to travel, and we were usually done with class in the mid-afternoon. A cash stipend was provided to cover some food expenses, and the hospital cafeteria served very good lunches for less than €10. We shared rooms in a hostel (included), which also provided breakfast.

The second option in Tübingen is to attend the two-week critical care course offered in February or March annually, available to fourth-year medical students. Details are [online](#), but included lectures, ICU rounds, and more. Sometimes students add a clinical elective of up to six weeks following the course, although with more and more students applying, most students are only approved for two additional weeks (total of four including the critical care course). Housing is provided. Dr. Carino is the faculty liaison for this option.

Finally, students can apply to do a clinical elective in Tübingen. Due to increasing student demand, these are now generally limited to four weeks. Please reach out to the course liaison in order to express interest and discuss available options during your preferred timeframe. Housing is provided. Dr. Carino is the faculty liaison for this option.

Feel free to reach out to evanstern42@gmail.com if you would like more information from a student perspective on Tübingen in general or the two-week seminar.

Ghana ([Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology](#))

The elective program at the KNUST School of Medical Sciences is available third- and fourth-year students at Alpert Medical School. This is a clinical elective program with emphasis on infectious diseases. Students will either have a 4 week or 8-week rotation based on availability. Students will be assigned to clinical teams and work with other medical students under the supervision of Attending Physicians. Any interest clinical research should be indicated prior to acceptance into this program. Accommodation for students will be at one of the medical students' hostels, which are within the vicinity of the teaching hospital.

Haiti ([Université Notre Dame d'Haïti](#))

(on hold, 2023-2024)

Israel ([Technion Israel Institute of Technology](#))

This program is a highly flexible exchange to the Technion Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, along the Mediterranean coast. You will work with the Brown faculty liaison, Dr. Rami Kantor, to arrange an elective based on your interests. There is an opportunity to apply for up to

\$3000 in funding to cover travel, room, and board through the Nathan-Giddon Families Endowed Clerkship.

Dr. Kantor writes: “Israel is a beautiful, interesting, Hebrew-speaking, English proficient, western country, with a high level of medicine similar to the US. The Technion is one of six medical schools in Israel, and has an Israeli as well as an American medical student program. The Brown-Technion exchange program sends two Brown medical students to Israel and two Israeli medical students to Brown every year. Brown medical students do a one-month rotation in one of five hospitals in the northern Israeli city Haifa. The rotations are diverse and flexible, and Brown students can rank and choose literally any rotation they would like. Timing is flexible and there is no language requirement. The Brown faculty liaison is very committed and involved, and helps as in every step of the way, in the US and in Israel. Pre travel and post travel meetings with the faculty liaison are required, as is a post travel summary letter. Some funding is provided for travel, accommodations and food. Housing in Israel is not provided, but the faculty liaison connects Brown medical students to the Israeli medical students that come to Brown, as well as to previous Brown medical students, which helps with the logistics. Every single Brown medical student who did this rotation loved it and loved the country!”

Italy ([University of Bologna](#))

This program is open to AMS fourth-year students for a one month elective arranged individually based on your interests, noting that our relationship with the Department of Surgery in Bologna is particularly strong. Dr. Carino, the faculty liaison, can assist you in this process.

One MD20 student arranged for her elective to be on the wards, and notes that since housing isn't included, to start looking early because it can be expensive (\$1500 for the month in her case). She had her weekends free to travel, and got a local SIM card rather than sticking with her US-based plan. Her other expenses included \$500 for flights, plus food, travel, and souvenirs.

Japan ([Kyoto University Faculty of Medicine](#))

Three medical students are able to attend for one month, with tuition waived, housing provided, and an \$550 travel allowance (depending on Yen conversion). This program is a group elective held in April. One MD20 student who was supposed to attend, prior to the COVID-19 induced cancellation, stated that she wanted to attend the program partly out of “wanderlust and part[ly] out of professional curiosity about how medicine would differ on the other side of the world, especially in an Asian country.”

Dean Ip notes that a former Japanese Minister of Health is the Japanese faculty liaison. He was classmates with Dr. Minami, who coordinates all three of AMS' exchanges in Japan.

Japan ([Tokyo Women's Medical University](#))

One medical student per year can attend a one-month rotation with waived tuition, housing provided, and a \$1000 travel allowance.

Japan ([Kurume University School of Medicine](#))

I was supposed to attend this elective in March 2020, prior to the COVID-19 induced cancellation. Once you are accepted to this program, you will be provided a list of available services to rotate on for the timeframe when you will be there. I was permitted to select three different services in the Medicine Department, rotating for either one or two weeks. They were flexible enough to allow me to miss two workdays to fly back for Match Day.

Japanese sites video presentation

For more details about all three Japanese sites please see Dr. Minami's video presentation from Fall, 2023. (Access note: Please use email account other than .edu)

<https://classroom.google.com/c/NTQ0NjI4NDg4ODM5?cjc=7xpauc6>

Kenya ([Moi University School of Medicine](#))

I attended this program in Eldoret, Kenya, in February 2020. Dr. Carter does one or more info-sessions for interested students, which are required prior to attending, to orient you to the program. Brown is one of several partners in a consortium called [AMPATH](#) (Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare), led by Indiana University. [This book](#) talks about how the partnership began. Our students typically attend for one month, but note that the IU medical students who form the majority of attendees are required to go for two months (usually doing one month on medicine and one on pediatrics). Since Brown's participation is through the Department of Medicine, most of our students work on the medicine wards while in Kenya. However, opportunities to work in pediatrics, OBGYN, and surgery exist.

In Eldoret, you will stay at [IU House](#), a compound less than a mile from Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital where you will mainly be working. Most students stay in the small, clean rooms (known as servants' quarters, because that was the rooms' original function) with a bunk bed, desk, wardrobe, and bathroom for most of their time, as well as about two weeks in the Moi University dorms across the street from the hospital. The IU House compound serves breakfast daily, plus lunch and dinner Sunday night through Friday afternoon. Weekend lunch and dinner isn't served since most students and other program participants (faculty, residents, researchers, etc) use their weekends to travel. The student price is \$40/week for accommodations (invoiced to you after your return) and \$5/day (500KSH) for any day you eat lunch or dinner (one meal or

both is the same price). Wednesday night dinner are special catered meals from local restaurants, and everyone gets together to talk about their experiences over the last week.

On medicine, each student is assigned to a team (“firm”) consisting of an attending (“consultant”), one or more residents (“registrars”), interns (“medical officer interns” or MOIs), doctors who have not yet specialized (“medical officers”), PA-equivalents known as “clinical officers”, pharmacists, local medical students, nursing students, and others. Your daily schedule will depend on your firm’s leadership, but usually involves morning rounds from about 9am until lunch, and afternoons spent doing anything identified during rounds for your patients. You are expected to pre-round on your patients, which can either be directly before rounds or before the Tuesday and Thursday 8am morning report. On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, you will have a one hour global health lecture. Wednesday nights after dinner, everyone gets together for a “fireside chat” on a topic selected by the faculty. On Friday afternoons, there is a medical student debriefing to discuss anything that happened during the week. Students on other services may have different responsibilities within their team (eg, operations), but should expect to attend the same lectures and discussions as the students on medicine.

In your off hours, you are free to relax around the IU House compound or explore Eldoret. On weekends, including generally one permitted three-day weekend per month, we did various day and overnight trips including a safari in the Masai Mara (which was by far the best weekend trip of the month).

If you have more questions about this program from a student perspective, please feel free to email evanstern42@gmail.com.

South Korea ([Ewha Women's University](#))

This [guide](#) was prepared by an AMS student who previously attended the rotation. Please note that this elective is not limited to female applicants; the male housing is located in a different area from the female housing described in the guide.

Taiwan ([National Cheng Kung University School of Medicine](#))

This site has two options. This first option at NCKU is a two-week course taught over the summer that is open only to undergraduate PLME students, including following their senior year. A [brochure](#) from 2015 describes the summer course well. I attended in the summer of 2014. Our mornings and afternoons were spent in class, with frequent breaks to go tour one part of the hospital or another. We lived in a student dormitory (two to a room), which was included. Using the air-conditioning, however, incurs a nominal additional charge for electricity. It was well worth it.

We spent our evenings trying different restaurants and exploring town, and spent the weekend between classes at the resort area of Kenting. I took some time both before and after the course to explore the country, including Taipei, Green Island, and a baseball game.

The second option is to take a 1-month clinical elective of your choice (two months in exceptional, unique circumstances). Fluency in Chinese is preferred, but not required. One MD20 student who had planned to attend (but couldn't due to COVID-19) wrote that he chose to attend NCKU because it is a "strong academic institution with multiple different clinical

opportunities as well as good funding.” He also noted that Dr. Sung was very happy to talk to students about the program.

Practicalities Applicable to All Programs:

This is intended to be general advice that should be applicable to most students attending most programs. If you believe that some of this information does not apply to your individual situation, please seek further clarification. The following advice will extensively link to outside resources that is updated more frequently than this document. Be sure to double check all requirements to travel, and be careful to use official resources rather than possibly inaccurate third party information sources.

Passport

As with any international travel, you will need a valid passport. Please be aware that countries have different policies regarding how long your passport needs to be valid for (e.g. six months following entry). You can look up these policies on the US Department of State’s [website](#). Don’t forget to look up information for any country you may transit or visit on your way to or from the program. Non-US passport holders should consult their issuing government’s equivalent department and be aware of different entry requirements for non-US passport holders. Dual citizens may also need to research any special circumstances.

If you don’t have a passport yet, you should [apply](#) right away, and you will need to do so in person. If you need to [renew](#) your passport, either because it is nearing expiration or you won’t have enough pages, you should also do so as soon as possible (though you may be eligible to [renew by mail](#)). You may also need to consider getting a [second passport](#) if you will be travelling abroad at the same time you need to be applying for visas.

Visas

Programs in some countries may [require a visa](#). Visa requirements change frequently, as do the required supporting documents. Your program liaisons should be able to provide up to date information.

Although we are students, in most cases you will not need to apply for a student visa. Most programs that require visas to attend will only require a tourist visa. If you have any questions, please ask your program liaison, but never lie to an immigration or consular official.

The State Department’s [website](#) is a good resource to figure out if you will need a visa or not. Please note that if you need a visa, you will need to allow up to several weeks to apply, especially if you must make an in-person appointment to apply, and that costs can vary from trivial to several hundred dollars.

Consider your possible need to [renew](#) your passport prior to applying for a visa, either because of expiration or lack of blank pages. Although visas for many countries in an expired passport are valid when combined with your new passport, this is not universally true and can create immigration hassles.

Also consider whether or not your circumstances suggest that you should apply for a [second passport](#). Passport processing times have increased in recent years for new and renewal passports. Please check wait times which change sporadically.

Dual citizens should research entry requirements for each of their passports, as it may be more advantageous to enter on one passport versus the other.

Medical Licenses & Student Permits

Generally, foreign medical licenses are only required for residents, fellows, and attendings (if necessary at all). If your host program will require to apply for a student permit of some kind (for example, in the Kenya program), your program will brief you on any special requirements, like bringing passport photos, and costs.

Immunizations & Prophylactic Medications

Prior to traveling, peruse the CDC's useful [travel health website](#). Your destination may recommend or require immunizations or prophylactic medications (e.g. malaria chemoprophylaxis). It also has additional useful tips to maintain your health and safety while abroad. If traveling to a country with a high TB burden, discuss risk and post-travel testing with health care provider.

If you need to obtain immunizations or medications, you can schedule an appointment with your PCP or [Brown Health Services](#). Please review their [Plan Ahead for Travel Guide](#). They may not have certain travel immunizations (such as yellow fever) available, and may not be willing to prescribe more specialized travel medications. In such cases, they can refer you to a travel health specialist. Brown Medicine has a [travel clinic](#), and there are numerous such clinics nationwide. Be aware that many health insurance plans do not cover travel-related immunizations, medications, and appointments—call your insurance provider ahead of your appointment. Ask clinics about their fees when scheduling your appointment so you're not surprised, and shop around for better prices.

Personal and OTC Meds

The CDC [has a useful website](#) with information about traveling with prescription medications. Briefly, if you take any prescription medications, make sure you bring an adequate supply with you to cover your anticipated travel time. You should also consider bringing a contingency supply as well, in case your travel is delayed, some medications become lost, etc. Medications should be packed in a carry-on bag, in their original packaging, and you should have all of your prescriptions with you. Be especially careful about controlled substances, and confirm with the embassies of the countries you are traveling to and through that you can bring your medication with you. Leave plenty of lead time in case you need to work out alternative medications with your physician.

You may want to bring some commonly used over the counter medications as well. In addition to anything you might use on a regular basis, consider bringing things like anti-diarrheal medications, analgesics, allergy medications, etc. These too should be left in their original packaging, and you should confirm that they will be allowed into the countries you are visiting.

Travel Insurance

Distinct from travel health insurance (below), travel insurance covers things like cancelled or delayed flights, lost luggage, etc. You may already have some [protections](#) through the credit card used to book your flight. Otherwise, check out this [article](#) from The Points Guy, a travel blog, as a starting point. This other [article](#) talks about the differences between credit card travel protection and true travel insurance.

Brown Travel Resources-Health and Safety

Please review and follow all protocols detailed on the [International Travel Risk Management](#) site. All students are required to register your travel with [TravelSafe](#). Information you provide regarding itinerary and emergency contacts will help the University account for your well-being and provide assistance in the event of an emergency. Registering your University-related travel enables you to enter itinerary and emergency contact details in a secure electronic platform via your Brown login. It also serves as a conduit to apprise international travelers of important information including travel advisories from the U.S. DOS and provides a direct upload of travel details to activate the benefits of Brown's emergency assistance provider, International SOS. Through TravelSafe, you are automatically enrolled in a blanket study/travel abroad accident and sickness insurance policy at no additional cost.

Travel Planning

As soon as you have your confirmed dates, you can begin planning. Depending on your schedule, you may elect to include time before or after your program to travel independently. Some students buy one way tickets to their destinations, and plan their return travel later (though check countries' entry requirements, as some require proof of return or onward travel).

One way to cut costs is to [use airline miles and hotel points](#) for some of your needs. Perhaps your family has a stash they can gift you, or you can look into [opening a new credit card](#) for the sign up bonus, and use it [responsibly](#). You'll probably already be thinking about coordinating with friends who are going to the same program at the same time as you, and splitting cabs and hotel rooms is a great way to save.

Local Housing

Whatever your living situation is at your program, make sure familiar with emergency procedures (like fire egress), that fire safety equipment is present and functioning, and that security features like locks on doors and windows function properly. You should also make mental notes of places in the area you could go for help, like local police stations.

Cell Service/Wi-Fi

Your domestic carrier may charge exorbitant amounts for international calls, texts, and data, have a daily or monthly plan you can pay for, or include some services (perhaps at reduced speeds) for no extra charge. However, if you're staying in one country for several weeks, it is often advantageous to sign up for a local cell phone plan. You can simply swap out your domestic SIM card for a foreign one in most modern, unlocked smartphones. Some companies allow you to suspend your domestic service for a period of time, so that you're not paying for your domestic plan while abroad. Your program may offer suggestions for a preferred local cell provider (eg Safaricom in Kenya), but you can usually get started with a simple Google search.

One of the biggest advantages of having a local SIM card is the ability to make local calls to your new friends and colleagues, as well as local businesses, with oftentimes significantly less hassle and expense.

Changing Currency & Credit Cards

With few exceptions, I generally recommend against buying foreign currency in advance of travel or using bureaux de change, as it is often significantly more expensive to do so. The best method is to withdraw foreign currency at a local ATM on arrival using a no fee debit card. [This one](#), from Charles Schwab, charges no foreign exchange or ATM fees. In addition to giving you access to excellent exchange rates, it reimburses you for all incurred ATM fees charged by an ATM at the end of the month. While you have to open a Charles Schwab brokerage account in order to open the checking account the debit card is linked to, you don't have to keep any money in it. The checking account has no minimums either.

You should also bring at least one [credit card without foreign transaction fees](#) (often 3%). Visa and Mastercard are often more widely accepted than American Express or Discover, but that is country dependent.

One last tip: be on the lookout for [dynamic currency conversion](#), and avoid it by always paying in the local currency rather than US dollars. While not quite a scam, the bottom line is that this "service" charges significant commissions and exchange rate markups.

Packing

It is beyond the scope of this guide to provide packing lists for each destination, but some universal tips apply. It's helpful to make a list and check it off as you pack things to avoid forgetting items, taking into account the weather at both your destination and any other places you will be transiting or visiting. Make a special list of critical items that cannot be replaced abroad (think passport, glasses, medications, etc. rather than clothes). Don't forget to bring any special items your program recommends or medicine-specific items (e.g. scrubs, white coat, stethoscope).

FAQ:

1. Can I apply to more than one program?

Yes. You can both informally speak to the course liaisons to gather more information for as many programs as you are interested in. You may formally apply to three programs, and will be asked to indicate an order of preference on your application.

2. Can I attend more than one program?

Yes. Generally, all students will be assigned to one program before remaining spots are assigned to students who wish to attend more than one. Additional program spots may open up if students decline to attend a program for which they have been selected.

Flexibility is key—if you are willing to attend more programs, there is a greater likelihood of being able to attend more than one.

3. What funding is available?

Program specific funding, such as a travel scholarship, cash per diem, included housing, and/or included meals are indicated on Dean Ip's spreadsheet found earlier in this document. Some additional application materials, such as an essay, may be required. Some students have had success finding outside travel scholarships through professional or philanthropic organizations.

4. Is it safe to attend these programs?

Yes. All of the programs mentioned in this document are officially supported, approved, and monitored by Brown, and its partner institutions at specific locations. Of course, travel to some locations may involve some risk beyond what you would experience attending local electives and nothing can be guaranteed. As always, common sense precautions should be taken at all locations, appropriate vaccinations and prophylactic medications should be obtained prior to travel.

Some programs will have stricter local safety and security rules (e.g. only use authorized taxi companies). All students attending any rotations must be registered with [Brown Travel Safe](#). Doing so allows Brown to assist students out of unsafe situations that may develop, such as following the cancellation of all international programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. TravelSafe also automatically enrolls students in evacuation insurance and travel health insurance.

5. Can I drop these electives more than 30 days out, like other electives?

No, these electives have a stricter six-month add-drop deadline. You must clear dropping any accepted international programs with Dean Ip **before** you do so. Six months and closer to your elective, drops are not permitted since it would be unfair to our partners to have students dropping out at the last minute after they have spent significant time and effort making preparations for their arrival. However, exceptions may be made on a case by case basis under extraordinary circumstances. Please contact your program liaison and/or Dean Ip with any questions, and **do not** tell your local program contact of your intent to drop prior to speaking with your program liaison and Dean Ip.

6. Is there anything I can read to prepare for my program?

Yes. Your program may send you specific reading materials, but I also recommend reading about your destination's history and culture. A guidebook is useful to plan weekend trips. I am also linking to a few articles I read prior to my electives that I found useful to the general mindset we should be in as guests to our programs.

- [Beyond Medical “Missions” to Impact-Driven Short-Term Experiences in Global Health](#)
- [How NOT to save the world: Why U.S. students who go to poor countries to ‘do good’ often do the opposite](#)
- [International electives: maximizing the opportunity to learn and contribute](#)

7. Can I attend a program I found through another institution?

Maybe. One student in MD’20 attended a program in Rwanda doing oncology research that she found through her network. Your best bet would be to reach out to Dean George since it would probably be considered an [independent study](#). In my experience, AMS is very flexible in accommodating students when they can make a reasonable case as to why going on their proposed program would be beneficial to their medical education.

8. What ethical considerations are there for international electives?

Depending on the setting of your specific program, you may have the opportunity for more autonomy in patient care than you would at Brown. However, you are still a medical student and not a licensed medical doctor. In short, you should not do anything in a foreign setting that you would not do in the US. If you are asked to do something you are not comfortable doing, speak up. Let someone know if you don’t feel adequately supervised. You may face other ethical dilemmas while abroad, such as how to allocate limited resources. Please share any concerns you have with your program’s faculty.

The following articles are discussed in the Global Health Scholarly Concentration and are a good place to start when thinking about the ethics of international rotations:

- [Health Care Volunteers and Disaster Response — First, Be Prepared](#)
- [Electives: isn’t it time for a change?](#) (You may need to login through the library to get access to the text of this article)