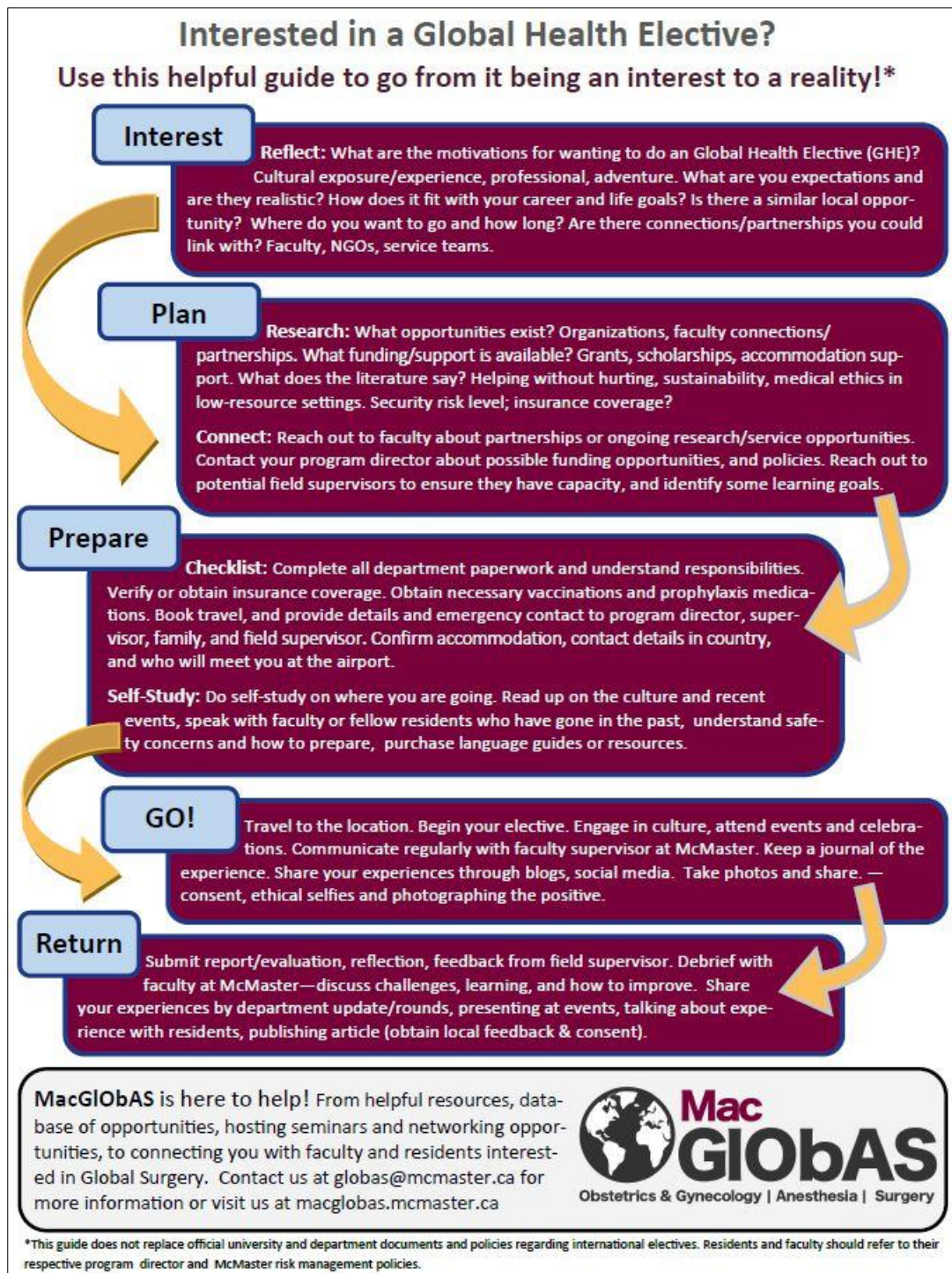


# International Elective Preparation Checklist



The following is an elaborated checklist of the guide above. This checklist it is not considered to be comprehensive, and does not supersede institutional policies/procedures; this check should act as a guide and anyone preparing for an international elective should take due diligence in identifying their specific needs or tasks before departing on an international elective.

## Interest

- **Reflect** on motivations for doing international/global health elective.

What are your ideas & expectations, are they realistic. Speak with faculty who have worked in low-resource settings or read articles on clinicians experiences in these settings. When/how does it fit into Residency program, is there salary or other support while away?

Consider reviewing the following resources to reflect on going on an international elective:

- Ethical Challenges in Short-term Global Health Training. Online modules created by John Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics and Stanford Center for Innovation in Global Health. Available from: <http://ethicsandglobalhealth.org/>
- Crump, J. A., Sugarman, J., & Working Group on Ethics Guidelines for Global Health Training (WEIGHT. (2010). Ethics and best practice guidelines for training experiences in global health. *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 83(6), 1178-1182.

○ **Investigate** opportunities with faculty or established organizational partnerships with the institution.

Consider if the opportunity/partnership has reciprocal benefit, sustainable, ethical. What are the local safety or cultural context that could limit experience. Personal limitations (health, family, financial).

○ **Discuss** with colleagues, family, and faculty; are they supportive, have concerns or suggestions?

## Plan

(12-16 months in advance of intended departure)

○ **Contact** MacGLOBAS for current opportunities and monitor the website ([macglobas.mcmaster.ca](http://macglobas.mcmaster.ca)) for upcoming events for networking to find opportunities.

○ **Identify** a couple opportunities that appear to match your interests, goals and get more information. Contact for further details and availability with clinical schedule/blocks. Are their expenses covered by the organization/site (i.e. accommodation, travel, food) and what are your expected costs, do they charge an organization fee for going?

○ **Research** funding opportunities.

Look into program scholarships/grants, professional organization grants, or research projects faculty may have funding for, to cover costs and if program provides salary support during international electives.

## Prepare

(8 - 12 months in advance of intended departure)

○ **Select** opportunity; speak with program director (at Canadian institution) to begin process for approval. Speak with organization/local supervisor to confirm availability for intended time frame. Select Canada-based faculty advisor and local supervisor who will be on site during elective.

○ **Begin** learning plan; why are you going, what are the local needs and how do they fit with your experience or learning goals? Learning plan should also identify specific learning gaps that you intend to address before departure (language, special clinical skills, self-study of cultural/beliefs/practices, disease profile). Submit learning plan to local supervisor and faculty advisor for recommendations. Investigate pre-departure learning opportunities (MacGlobal, online courses/training, global health conferences/events).

- **Research** local policies and procedures, including professional licensing, liability, visas or work permits required; can they organization/local supervisor help in preparing and submitting these, do you require sponsorship from approved entity for permit? If you are planning to do research - local ethics often take longer, possible fees/costs, and unclear/ambiguous process to obtain approvals. Identify security/risk level for the selected country and local advisories which may impact elective; visit Global Affairs Canada website for update advisories: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>

### (6 - 8 months in advance of intended departure)

- **Verify** local supervisor's availability for duration of elective, location of elective, expectations, and any special considerations regarding travel and stay at site.
- **Apply** for visas/work permits, local medical license, professional liability, ethics approval, etc. (expect delays or request for further information – its more reliable if documents can be send electronically and submitted by local supervisor/organization, as mail is not always reliable).
- **Visit** travel health clinic for appropriate vaccinations and prescriptions for prophylaxis medications (some vaccination series have to be taken over multiple months).
- **Address** learning gaps (language skills, self-study of local culture, beliefs, review reports from CDC, WHO for disease profile, novel diseases, disease burden)

### (3 - 6 months in advance of intended departure)

- **Meet** with faculty advisor; review learning plan and activities intended to addressing learning goals. Are the goals and activities realistic, do you have adequate preparation, skill in the area. Do your learning goals consider the needs of local context and how your learning could also benefit locally. Coordinate regular “check-ins” with faculty advisor to discuss elective.
- **Notify** MacGIobAS ([globas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:globas@mcmaster.ca)) of plans and arrange meeting prior to departure; discuss possibility of submitting articles/blogs for website, or meeting other residents who may be in the same area.
- **Complete** McMaster/PGME forms for risk management (Risk Management Manual Program RMM-801) from [McMaster EOHSS](#) and submit for approval – **Mandatory Form** for all McMaster faculty and students; notify program director and local supervisor of emergency contacts, expected date of departure and location(s) of elective
- **Obtain** health insurance (verify it includes intended destination and repatriation expenses); follow-up visit with travel health clinic and primary care provider for prophylactic medications (malaria, traveller's diarrhea), and enough prescription medication for duration of elective. If you wear prescription contacts, do you have glasses in case you have problems wearing them in the new environment and get extra contact lenses. <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/publications/insurance-factsheet>
- **Secure** housing/accommodation at/nearby site and transportation arrangements to and from site; it is highly discouraged to drive yourself in the country, due to licensing, obtaining safe vehicle options, different rules/procedures around accidents/liability, and increased risk of motor vehicle collisions in low-resource settings.
- **Verify** passport will be valid 6 months prior to expected return date. Review Government of Canada travel advisories (<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>) for recent security risk level and regional concerns.

- **Book** travel/airline tickets; send details to program director, faculty advisor, and local supervisor with emergency contact details. Ensure local transportation is arranged for arrival at airport.

### (3 – 0 months prior to departure)

- **Inquire** about local communication coverage and availability. Will you have internet access on site or accommodations. Will you be purchasing a local phone, SIM card, or using international plan (these can be very expensive or may not provide adequate coverage in some settings). Ask about how to access currency, will you be able to convert dollars, use debit card for withdrawing local currency, or pay with credit card (even major stores and banks in urban centers may have limitations on use of credit card and debit, some debit cards do not have international access). Consider taking at least \$200 US Dollars which are usually internationally accepted for conversion to local currency, but get someone from the organization to exchange to ensure you get a fair rate).
- **Scan** all documents (passport picture page, visas/work permits, licences, insurance) in case documents are damaged or lost.
- **Arrange** bills, mails, pets, checking on apartment/house, etc. are looked after while away.
- **Review** luggage weight restrictions and restrictions of what can be brought in country (certain books/movies, electronic items, alcohol, religious items may be banned or cause delay at border; all medications should be kept in original containers, narcotics will be confiscated and could risk heavy fines/jail). Pack early so you know what you can and can't take.
- **Purchase** items specific for location/setting (DEET repellent, mosquito nets, specific clinical equipment/reference materials, raincoat, unlocked phone with removable SIM card, solar charger/back-up battery, customary dress items in the clinical or casual setting). Speak with faculty or friends who have been to country, ask about certain items that would be useful or make you more comfortable.
- **Register** on Government of Canada website for Traveling Abroad (<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>); review update advisories for health or security risks and verify insurance coverage if risk has changed. Give family members or friend contact information and travel details in case of emergency.

### GO!

- **Meet** with local supervisor, visit practice site and local staff; discuss plans, timeframe, learning plan, expectations, concerns/limitations, ethical care – make sure the supervisor or alternate senior clinician will always be available when practicing.
- **Meet** regularly with Canada-based faculty advisor to debrief elective: learning plan progress/changes, and any concerns/issues, discuss ethical dilemmas or difficult experiences.
- **Enjoy!** Participate and become absorbed in the culture, share in festivities, and cultural events/traditions (as you feel comfortable); learn new non-clinical skills/knowledge (e.g. common meal, local crafts, music, art).
- **Keep** regular notes/diary and take pictures of experience. Write about feelings, lessons, unique experiences, challenges. Share experiences with friends, family, and colleagues (remember that they are not seeing/feeling everything you are, so you may want to review what you say and how you say it; also take ethical selfies and focus on photographing the positive).

- **Request** regular feedback from your local supervisor, including review of learning plan progress and midterm and end of elective. Identify ways you can help the local site (educational activities, skills sharing, researching common clinical issues)

## **Return**

- **Debrief** with faculty advisor within 10 days of returning, discuss overall experience, culture shock, unexpected learning, difficult experiences; submit completed learning plan and reflection to advisor and program director.
- **Share** experience with colleagues and faculty, look for opportunities to share at Rounds, conferences, program newsletters.
- **Submit** any paperwork or documentation required by the institution or program director upon return. If you received funding, review requirements for submitting receipts or providing written report/presenting.
- **Contact** MacGLOBAS ([globas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:globas@mcmaster.ca)) for opportunities to share experience (rounds, seminars, conferences, newsletter) or mentor other students interested in taking an international elective.