Things to consider when planning your fourth year

Fourth year represents 25% of your medical education. Think of the fourth year as a chance to provide both breadth and depth to your education. It is the one part of medical school that is completely individualized. We want you to be fully prepared for your chosen internship but fourth year is also your last opportunity to learn about particular conditions that you may not see as a resident. There are a lot of competing priorities during fourth year so careful planning is crucial to get the most out of it.

Overall Goals of Fourth Year

- Select a residency and successfully apply, interview and match
- Strengthen skills needed for your chosen career
- Fill gaps in your education and assure that you are competent in all core areas for graduation
- Explore areas of medicine that interest you or that you may not have time to explore in residency

Course Work Requirements

- 32 total weeks of 8000 level course work
  - 4 weeks in one of the school approved sub-internships
  - 4 weeks of required Integrated Clinicians Courses
  - 24 weeks of additional rotations
- Additional requirements for graduation exist, see other parts of the Red Book – Complete MSA, Take Step 2, etc

Three Main parts of Fourth Year

May-September
Sub-I’s, confirming specialty choice, applications, away rotations

October - January
Interview time -- need for flexible rotations

February - May
Strengthening clinical skills, filling gaps, exploring

Different types of Rotations

- Sub-Internships – 4-week rotations devoted to care of hospitalized patients. The student assumes primary patient care responsibilities and must take call similar to interns on the team.
- Clinical Rotations – 2 or 4-week rotations in which the student works in a clinical setting but may not have the high degree of responsibility as in a sub-I. These rotations are a good way to confirm specialty choice or fill gaps in your clinical education.
  - 2 week clinical rotations are not available for all courses and are only offered at certain points in the year (See course book for specific information). These rotations must be scheduled by hand with the help of the Office of Student Life.
- Didactic courses – There are a few didactic courses that focus on strengthening particular skills – reading EKGs, drug choices, procedures, etc. These rotations usually do not involve patient care.
- Longitudinal courses – There are a few courses that are longitudinal in which the student completes the work for the course during an entire semester while completing other electives or while interviewing or doing research. Examples in this category are: Physician as Educator, Foundations Preceptor, etc.
- Away rotations (see below for more detail) – 4-week long rotations at other institutions. You must submit the Course Work Away Approval Form to the Office of Student Life one month prior to the start of the rotation. The maximum number of weeks outside of Colorado is 16.
• **Research** – There are several different options for getting credit for research. The maximum number of weeks of research is 12. For all research courses, you must submit the Research Course Approval Form to the Office of Student Life one month prior to the start of the rotation.
  o MSA – There are three different courses that can be taken to complete your MSA
    - IDPT 8090 is a required 1 credit course that all students enroll in and does not count toward the required number of weeks for graduation
    - IDPT 8091 and IDPT 8093 are 2 different 4 week electives that can be taken if additional time is needed to complete your project. You can take just 8091 or 8091 and 8093.
  o Research Track – There are similar courses to the MSA courses that are used only for research track students (IDPT 8061 and IDPT 8063)
  o Department specific courses – Most departments have specific research electives that you can use if you want to do research above and beyond what you need to do for your MSA. For students who complete 12 weeks of research they usually complete 8 weeks of their MSA and then 4 additional weeks in a department research course.
• **International rotations** – There are a limited number of courses that will allow for international experiences in the 4th year. Some are focused on language development (IDPT 8021) while others are more about research in an international setting. There is a stringent process for vetting all proposed international experiences that includes completing an application through Studio Abroad. Please contact the Office of Student Life as early as possible to assure that all necessary steps are taken.

**Thoughts on Away Rotations**

*These rotations can be thought of as a double-edged sword. They are very helpful in selecting residencies and promoting yourself as an applicant. HOWEVER, they are also very high risk.*

**Reasons to do audition electives**
- Allows you to meet faculty and residents, learn about the program first-hand, find out if a program is a good fit for you and your career goals
- For highly competitive residency programs, you make yourself known to these programs. If the program is a reach for you and may not get an interview based on your application alone, an away rotation may allow you to make a good impression and get an interview.
- If you need/want to be in a specific geographic area, making yourself known to the programs may help and may also allow you to better determine where you want to be for residency.

**Some potential negatives**
- You can’t do audition electives at all programs you are considering so you need to make judgments before you go
- You must perform at your best; you can make a negative impression as easily as making a positive impression
- There are costs associated with transportation and lodging while on electives away
- It is hard to plan away rotations when you are uncertain about your specialty choice

**Some advice**
- Ask your specialty advisor about their thoughts on away rotations as every specialty is different.
- Carefully consider if you want to do a sub-I or a clinical elective an another site. Sub-I’s are much more high stakes as you really have to be at your best but could have more potential benefit. Clinical electives still allow you to get a feel for the residency with slightly less risk.
- Apply early and stay organized with all of your application materials such as HIPPA certification, immunization records, background check, transcript, USMLE transcript, photograph
- Your rotation will have to fit into another school’s course schedule. Since their block schedule may not align with ours, you may need an extra week (or two) to make that happen.
Scheduling Fourth Year

Fourth year scheduling is done online through a local student scheduler application. The Office of Student Life will then reconcile your schedule in this application with the Registrar to assure that you have an accurate transcript. Scheduling will occur in three phases:

1. **Spring and Summer semester (Sections 1 through 16)** – This is the prime time for sub-internships and rotations to help in determining specialty choice or receiving letters of recommendation
   a. There will be an initial lottery in which students input their choices for rotations and then an automated system with create schedules for all students. The Office of Student Life will review each student’s schedule by hand to assure that they received a sub-internship.
   b. The lottery will open in early March
2. **Fall semester (Sections 17 through 32)** – This is when students complete many of their interviews, therefore their course work schedule must be more flexible. This is a good time to complete research or longitudinal courses.
   a. Scheduling for this semester will open on **in JUNE**
3. **Spring semester (Sections 33 through 50)** – Some students may have interviews in January but will then have several months to complete their medical education. Students are encouraged to take rotations that will strengthen their clinical skills, fill gaps in their education or explore areas of interest that they won’t experience in residency.
   a. There are several popular electives that are only offered in this semester (Wilderness Medicine and Critical Care and Procedures). To make the process fair for all students, enrollment will be done based on a lottery of interested students.
   b. Scheduling for this semester will open in **SEPTEMBER**

Students must enroll in at least one course in each semester in order to receive financial aid.

**Adding and Dropping Courses**

A student is considered enrolled **28 days prior to the start of a course.** Once a student is enrolled in a course, he or she must complete it. In extreme circumstances, a student may be allowed to “drop” the course with appropriate approval. It is at the discretion of the Electives or Sub-Internship Director whether the student can leave the course. Leaving a course after it has started may result in a permanent grade of “W” (e.g., withdraw) on the transcript.

In order to drop a course within the 28 day window, the student must contact the Electives or Sub-Internship Director with a specific rationale for why they are dropping the course late. In some circumstances, the Electives or Sub-Internship Director may contact the course director for input on the approval of the late drop as well.

Students may add courses within the 28 day window only if there is a spot available and with the course director’s approval. The Director of electives does not need to approve late adds if they are approved by the course director.

*Remember this policy when signing up for courses. Pay attention to your schedule in the student scheduling software and make sure it is always accurate.*
Absence Policy

***Summarized from the White Book – please refer to the white book for additional details***

- Attendance on clinical rotations is required. Absences are generally not permitted, but unique circumstance may be considered.
- Specific Attendance Expectations:
  - 4-wk courses: > 2 days, must make up work.
  - 2-wk electives: > 1 day, must make up work
- Absences exceeding these limits for any reason requires a student to make up any missed time beyond that allowed. The Course Director will work with the student regarding make-up time/work, issues for credit, etc.
- Interview days (including interview days for CU residency program) are considered “voluntary absences” and count towards the attendance limits.

Remember this absence policy when scheduling rotations during interview time as you will have to make up days that are missed for interviews!

Resources for determining your fourth year schedule

- Specialty advisors are a key resource as they know the particulars of what is suggested in your given field. Some specialties have created national lists of suggested experiences for 4th year – ask your specialty advisor if your field has one
- Advisory college mentor or 4th year advisors
- Careers in Medicine has several pages with helpful information on planning your fourth year
  - Scheduling Clinical Rotations –
  - Planning your fourth year –