

# OSA S.T.E.P.S. to Success



## March: Getting Ready for Clerkships

As you prepare for your clerkship year, OSA is here to support your transition with confidence. We know this next step can bring excitement, anticipation, and uncertainty. In this issue, we highlight key aspects of the clinical learning environment—team structure, roles, and strategies to build strong situational awareness to keep you and your patients safe.

You'll also find practical guidance to help you adjust to new routines and responsibilities, protect your energy, and navigate the demands of the clinical day. In addition, we offer tips for planning your MS3 electives, including how to choose options that align with your goals, what factors to consider, and how to approach scheduling thoughtfully.

We're excited to support you as you take this next step into clinical learning.  
– Team OSA

### Good Luck on your Final Pre-Clerkship Exam and the CBSE!

We look forward to celebrating this exciting transition/milestone with you at the 2028 **Student Clinician Ceremony** on **Tuesday March 3, 2026**, from 12-1pm in Leadership Hall, followed by lunch in the SMC ballroom sponsored by the Medical Alumni Association.

## Wellbeing During Clerkships

- **Protect Your Needs:** Know how much sleep, nutrition and movement you need
- **Anticipate challenges:** Solidify your support system, pick your non-negotiable activities
- **Support Emotional Wellbeing:** see #1-2, reach out if overwhelmed, ask for expectations, debrief/talk about difficult situations with trusted colleagues, OSA or family/friends
- **Study Smarter:** let the patient care guide your studying, focus on high yield topics, use PLP service or Academic Success, don't wait until last minute
- **Stay Connected/Ask for Help:** Do not wait until a crisis to ask for help or reconnect.
- **Take care of your health:** Stay on top of your own health appointments

**Office of Student Affairs**  
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### OSA STEPS to Success

- S. Self-Assessment
- T. Target Specialty
- E. Experience
- P. Preparation & Planning
- S. Strategy Execution

### OSA House Liaisons

[House Advisory System](#)

- Dr. Allen: Julius Friedenwald
- Dr. Flaherty: Mario Garcia-Palmieri
- Dr. Lamos: Eva Dodge
- Dr. Thom: Lois Young-Thomas

### OSA Student Handbook

[Career Advising](#)  
[Commitment to Wellbeing](#)

### AAMC Resources

[Four-phase career planning process](#)  
[FIRST \(Financial Information, Resources, Services and Tools\)](#)

# MS3 Elective Scheduling

Clinical Electives are 4-week rotations allowing students to add personalization as well as breadth and depth to their curriculum. Students are required to do a total of 6 electives to meet graduation requirements (up to two can be Pre-Clerkship electives). Which electives you take may depend on the timing of your elective block, personal interests, and career goals. When selecting electives, first confirm the pre-requisite requirements in the course catalog.

## Consider Electives that will:

1. Help you explore or confirm a specialty of interest
2. Fulfill a personal interest
3. Be useful in preparation for internship
4. Be useful in preparation for specialty-based courses (e.g. pre-reqs)
5. Achieve other professional goals, e.g., Research

**Note:** If your specialty of interest has only one Advanced Clinical Phase (M4) rotation (e.g. Ophthalmology or Urology) – please speak with a specialty or OSA advisor about the ideal time for you to take this rotation.

## Upcoming Dates:

Date / Time	Information
3/9 at 12pm (via Zoom)	MS3 Elective Information Session – <a href="#">Zoom Link</a>
3/13–3/19	Elective Survey Open for MS3 Electives
3/30	Add/Drop (for changes or additions) begins

## Additional Resources:

- [Course Catalog \(2026-2027\)](#)
- [Academic Handbook - Clinical Scheduling Information](#)
- [OSA Guidance for Choosing an Elective](#)
- [Residency Application Manual](#)
- [AAMC Careers in Medicine](#)

## How Can OSA Help You?

### Administrative Support

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### Onboarding

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[OSA Deans](#)  
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Marissa Flaherty, MD  
Elizabeth Lamos, MD

Tonya Webb, PhD – Assist. Dean for  
Student Engagement and Student

## Onboarding

There are several Clerkship Onboarding requirements that aim to give you the tools you need to be successful on day one of your clerkship. For your convenience, we have included onboarding requirements and a checklist in the **Medical Student Essentials Course** on VidaNova. Onboarding tasks must be completed by at your earliest convenience and prior to the start of your first clerkship.

All students must attend **ONE in-person Skills Refresher Day** (based on clerkship start date) + end of course quiz: March 27, April 24, May 22.

Other onboarding tasks include: UMMS U Account set up and required trainings, EPIC access and Practice/Playground, BLS/CPR certification, UMB Blackboard trainings, scrub size form, VA onboarding.

Questions: Dr. Dittmar (Skills Refresher) or Chandler Stafford (Onboarding)

## Action Items/A Look Ahead

- Create a Clerkship Wellbeing Plan
- Consider Elective Options and Attend Information Session on **3/9 at 12pm Zoom**
- Enjoy the Student Clinician Ceremony Milestone
- Complete Onboarding and Attend an in-person Skills Refresher Day

# Transition to Clerkships

**Team Structure and Roles:** Each team is different, but understanding structure/roles allows you to contribute meaningfully.

- Attendings: Oversee all patient care and teaching; complete your evaluations
- Residents: Manage daily workflow may complete evaluations; students work closely
- Interns: First-year residents; same as residents, but less patients to follow
- Sub-internship Students: MS4 students who are working at the level of an intern
- Advanced Practice Providers- NPs and PAs: some work independent of the team and others work with the team; do not formally evaluate you, but may contribute information to the attending/resident

**Expectations:** Seek clear expectations from attendings/residents at the start of the rotation.

- What would you like me to focus on during this rotation?
- What are your expectations for my involvement in patient care each day? How many patients would be ideal to follow at a time?
- Is there a preferred presentation format for the team?
- What is the best form of communication for the team? How should I communicate updates or concerns through the day?
- How can I best support the team during busy part of the day?

**Situational Awareness:** Important skill to observe what is going on, anticipate what will come next and react accordingly.

- It is easy to lose situational awareness when stressed, in unfamiliar or unexpected situations
- Lean on your senior residents, interns, sub-Is, APPs, nurses for help.
- When in doubt, ask!
- Examples of having situational awareness→
  - Appropriate clinical time to ask educational questions; noticing if a patient is decompensating and communicating it efficiently and effectively;
  - Understanding the clinical care flow; Recognizing critical information and communicating to the team; Communicating effectively in your notes and sign out.

**Safety- Patient:** Follow protocols and report when something goes wrong

- Confirm patient name and DOB
- Communicate plans/orders back to ensure accuracy; Closed-Loop Communication
- Talk to team early- you spend a lot of time with patients, your voice matters!
- Speak up if something is unclear/concerning

**Safety- Student/Team/Physician:** This is where situational awareness comes in!

- Wear a breakaway lanyard
- If something feels off, excuse yourself
- Ask questions and seek supervision
- Always wash your hands, put on the gloves/gown, follow the health protocols

**Inpatient Rotation Flow:** Each rotation differs a little, but basic inpatient flow is as follows:

- Morning Pre-rounds: students and residents check on patients before team arrives; use this time to go over your plan to present to the team/attending
- Team Rounds: In team room or at bedside; review all aspects of patients' care/plan
- Task Completion: Input orders, call consults, update family, review labs/imaging, write notes, prepare sign-out
- Clinical Duties: Update patients on plans, reassess patients, discharge education and planning, admissions of new patients
- Sign-out: provide succinct and clear instructions for what night float resident may need

## OSA Insider Podcasts

### [Apple Podcasts](#)

- E122 Transition to Clerkships
- E107 Just Culture
- E116 Student Safety
- E117 Situational Awareness
- E118 Debriefing
- E124 Improvising Adulthood
- E127 Deciding on Specialty in MS3