

Guide to *Organising a Sports & Exercise Medicine Elective*

Whether you're interested in elite sport, musculoskeletal medicine, exercise prescription, or community rehabilitation, an SEM elective is an excellent opportunity to explore the specialty and gain valuable clinical experience.

This guide has been created by USEMS to provide a starting point for students planning an SEM elective. It brings together practical advice, useful resources, and inspiration from students who have completed electives in a wide range of settings across the UK and internationally.



Why choose an SEM elective?

An SEM elective offers far more than exposure to elite sport. Depending on your placement, you may experience:

- Musculoskeletal assessment and diagnosis
- Sports injury management and rehabilitation
- Exercise prescription and lifestyle medicine
- Pitch-side and event medicine
- Multidisciplinary working
- Imaging and injection clinics
- Strength and conditioning
- Community rehabilitation
- Professional and amateur sport

It is also a fantastic opportunity to explore a growing medical specialty and build valuable clinical skills.

Writing your application

A good email should include:

- A short introduction
- Your university and year of study
- Why you're interested in that placement
- Your elective dates
- What you hope to learn
- An attached CV

Keep your email concise, professional and personalised.

Planning your elective

Most placements require plenty of advance planning.

We recommend:

- Start contacting placements 6–12 months in advance.
- Research different clinics, hospitals and sports organisations.
- Ask your university and other students for contacts. LinkedIn is also a great place to find contacts.
- Contact multiple placements and don't be discouraged if some don't reply.
- Follow up politely if you haven't received a reply after a couple of weeks.
- Attach a CV and write a short personalised email explaining your interest.
- Be flexible with dates where possible.
- Apply for awards and bursaries early, such as the biannual £1000 BASEM elective award. They often have specific requirements and early deadlines.

Remember that many placements are organised through direct communication rather than formal application processes.

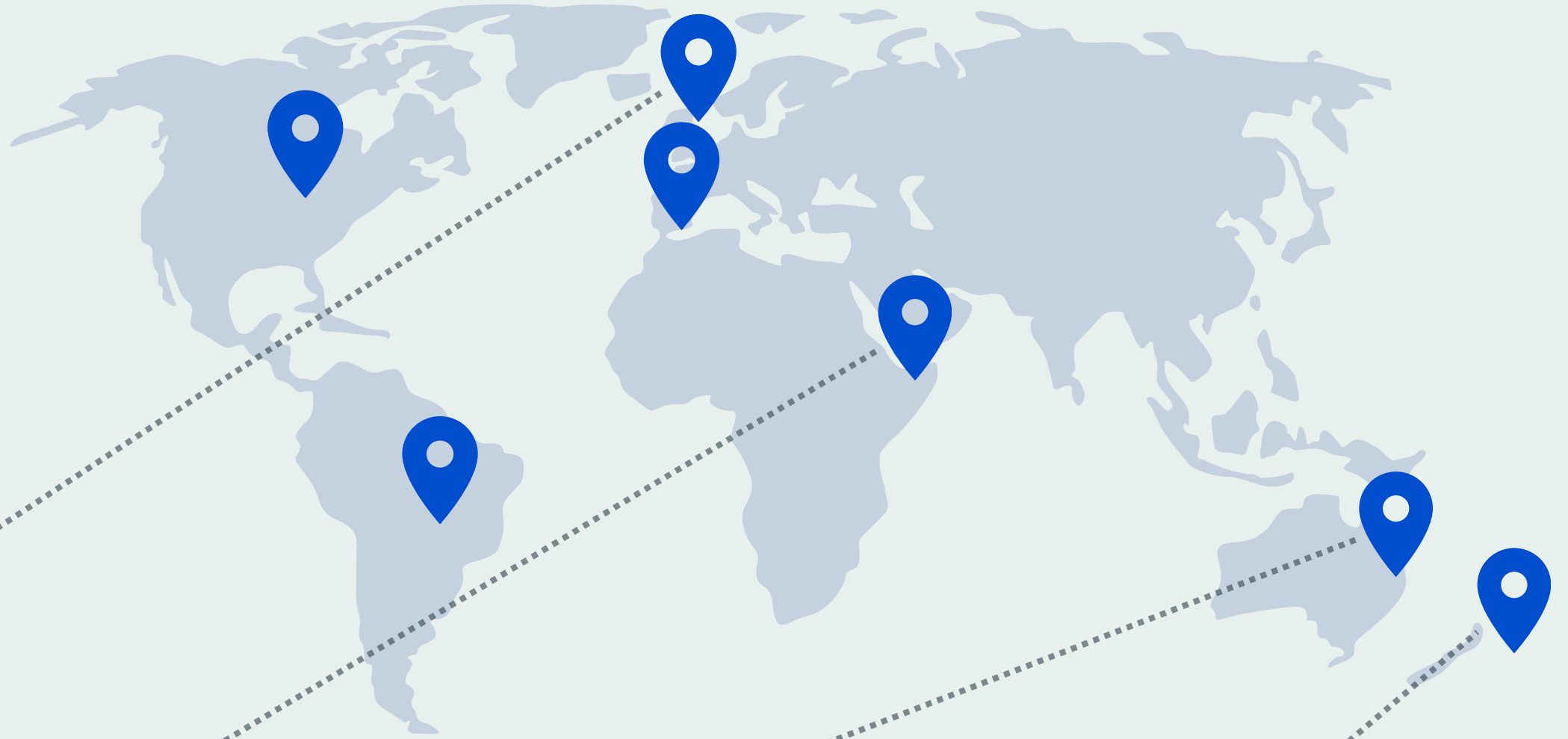
Practical considerations

Every placement is different, so check requirements early, such as:

- Medical indemnity
- Occupational health clearance
- Immunisations
- Visa requirements
- University approval
- Proof of enrolment
- Travel insurance
- Accommodation

Popular destinations

- United Kingdom
- New Zealand
- Australia
- Canada
- USA
- South Africa
- UAE



Kudzi, Great Ormond Street



Billy, Doha & Lisbon



Allegra, Australia



Rose, New Zealand

See where our committee have been!

How to get the most out of your elective

- Prepare for topics that you will likely encounter beforehand
- The FIFA Diploma in Football Medicine is an excellent free resource if you have time alongside studies
- Ask questions. SEM clinicians are keen to teach and share their passion for the specialty
- Network with professionals whilst on placement
- Ensure you have time to unwind and explore!
- Document your learning with a reflective log and share your experience on LinkedIn

How USEMS can help

Although USEMS is unable to organise elective placements on behalf of students, we can support you by:

- Sharing useful resources
- Signposting previous elective locations
- Providing advice through our BJSM blog series
- Sharing opportunities via our mailing list
- Sharing information about the BASEM Undergraduate Elective Award in association with USEMS

USEMS cannot guarantee or arrange elective placements. All placements must be organised independently by the student and approved by their university where required.

USEMS & BJSM Elective Blog Series

Explore firsthand experiences, practical advice, and top tips from students and clinicians who have completed Sports & Exercise Medicine electives around the world. This two-part BJSM blog series provides inspiration and practical guidance to help you plan your own placement.

Part 1: A Guide to Sports Medicine Electives:

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bjasm/2025/09/05/a-guide-to-sports-medicine-electives-a-bjasm-blog-series/>

Part 2: Sideline Stories:

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bjasm/2025/09/29/sideline-stories-a-guide-to-sports-medicine-electives-a-bjasm-blog-series-part-2/>