I HAD TO “GO OFF” THE DONUT. NOW WHAT?

The traditional timeline for Tulane SOM students is to complete Step 1 in April, begin the donut path in May at the start of your T3 year, complete all required T3 clerkships back-to-back with no breaks, and finish the final required T3 clerkship in April at the end of your T3 year.

This traditional timeline is a time-tested approach to completing medical school curriculum and preparing for entry into the medical profession. While we encourage all students to follow this timeline, we recognize that life happens and that some students may need to follow an alternate path:

• Students in the MD/MPH program who have public health obligations in May cannot begin core clerkships in May.
• Some students require additional time to study for Step 1 and opt to begin the donut later than their peers.
• Some students face a personal, family, or medical event that requires them to delay the start of their T3 clerkships or that requires them to withdraw from a clerkship during their T3 year.

Students should consult with Dr. Kahn about the pros and cons of taking additional time off the donut to study for Step 1 or for other life events. Students can also seek assistance from Dr. Weissbecker to work through personal issues and weigh the pros and cons of time off the traditional T3 schedule. These are all legitimate reasons to seek an exception to the traditional timeline, and students can succeed if they must go “off the donut.”

Nevertheless, the request to go off the donut is not one to be made lightly, and students should be aware of the consequences of “going off” the donut so they can plan their T4 year appropriately.

T3 Orientation
Regardless of whether or not you plan to begin clerkships in May, all T3 students are required to complete all orientation requirements, including the mandatory in-person requirements the week before clerkships begin in May. Participation for in-person activities is non-negotiable, so plan wisely. If you need to make travel arrangements BEFORE an official orientation schedule is announced, please plan to be in New Orleans the entire week before rotations begin, beginning at 8am Monday morning. Students who do not attend orientation or do not complete all orientation requirements will be required to use additional vacation time or delay their graduation date.

Clerkship Completion
Students are required to complete all clerkships by October of their T4 year. Students who delay the start of the donut, or who take time off during the donut, will have to complete required clerkships during their T4 year. Delaying or going off the donut may limit your T4 flexibility: you will need to devote some of your T4 fall time to completing a core clerkship rather than a sub-internship, elective in your preferred specialty, or away rotation.

Clerkships must be completed according to the traditional block schedule—that is, you cannot begin an 8-week clerkship in the middle of an 8-week block, or a 4-week clerkship in the middle of a 4-week block. Nor can you begin part of a single clerkship in one block and complete it in another block. Eight-week blocks in the fall will include May/June, July/Aug, Sept/Oct. Consider these scheduling details as you schedule your T4 year.

Away Rotations
Students are required by Tulane to complete all core clerkships before they are eligible to complete an away rotation. In addition, most away sites prefer, if not require, that visiting students have all core
clerkships completed. Delaying or going off the donut will delay the earliest block you can begin an away rotation.

If you intend to pursue a competitive specialty or one that generally requires you to complete away rotations (such as DERM, EMER, OPTH, ORTH, UROL), schedule your final clerkship in your T4 May/Jun block so that you have July through September in which to complete away rotations before your ERAS application is due on October 1.

**Step 2 Preparation**

Step 2 tests the fund of knowledge you are expected to acquire in T3 clerkships. Delaying or going off the donut may affect your preparation for Step 2. You are advised to complete all clerkships before you sit for Step 2. Consider planning your T4 year so that you complete your remaining clerkship in May/Jun and then sit for Step 2 sometime after June but before December.

**Prerequisites and Specialty Exploration**

Some departments, such as Medicine, require that you complete all clerkships as a prerequisite for electives. All the clerkships expose you to possible career specialties. Delaying or going off the donut may delay the earliest date you can complete an elective or sub-internship, and it may disadvantage you in your career exploration.

**Vacation Time**

Students are allowed a total of 8 weeks of vacation for the T3 and T4 year combined. Most students use a maximum of 2 weeks of vacation during their T3 year (if they opt to use 2 weeks of vacation after the 6-week Family Medicine clerkship). However, most students who must delay or go off the donut will have to use some of their vacation time.

Students in the MD/MPH program may earn 4 weeks of elective credit in May of their T3 year for the public health elective month. All other students who opt to delay the donut for Step 1 study time or who require personal time off of the donut must use vacation time.

In some cases, you may be able to be placed into a required 4-week or 2-week rotation, space permitting: required rotations include Community Medicine, Internal Medicine Specialty Clinic, Radiology, Outpatient Surgery, Emergency Medicine. For example, if you need to sit out of an 8-week clerkship but only need 4 weeks to tend to your personal matter, you may be able to complete a required 4-week or 2-week rotation during that block. Space may not always be available, but we will do our best to schedule you in open required rotations. Students who must go off the donut will not be able to choose their preferred required rotation, nor will they be able to complete an elective instead of a clerkship.

Delaying the start of or going off the donut may reduce your total vacation time. In extreme cases (i.e., if you need more than 8 total weeks of time off of the donut in your T3 year), you will need to delay your graduation by a year.

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i PHEA 4000 is the “public health” elective and is open only to students in Tulane’s MD/MPH combined degree program. This elective is based on the 15 hours of public health core curriculum required of MD/MPH students and has been approved by the SOM Curriculum Committee for elective clinical credit.