



Policy: Student Professional Behaviors Policy

Approved By: MDCM Program Committee

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Next Planned Update: 2027

Purpose: Outline student professional behaviors policy.

Preamble

Professionalism is a set of values, behaviors, and relationships that underpin the trust that the public has in physicians (see: [MDCM Program Learning Objectives](#) page 6 and [Professional Identity and Practice \(Physicianship theme\)](#)). As students develop professional identities as physicians, they will become increasingly familiar with the professional expectations of physicians and physicians-in-training. Upon admission to the MDCM Program, students are considered to be trustworthy, and significant lapses in professional behaviours may erode this trust. Professionalism expectations apply to students, teachers, as well as learning and clinical partners. Professionalism exists on a spectrum from exemplary to inexcusable and is not static in time. The concepts associated with professionalism evolve with time, and this evolution is vital to a proper understanding of professionalism. While students and faculty have a role in contributing to the evolution of our understanding of professionalism, the MDCM Program remains responsible for defining the current standards of professionalism that are expected of all medical students in the program. This document outlines policies and regulations applicable to students registered in the MDCM program and is focused on procedures to be followed when professionalism concerns are raised.

Guiding Principles

Students

1. Students represent the medical profession, McGill University's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, and the MDCM Program.
2. As students in a professional program, medical students are expected to behave professionally in their interactions and communication with patients and their loved-ones, faculty, residents, other healthcare professionals, peers, and administrative staff. This includes face-to-face, telephone, email and online exchanges, whether this be within McGill



University or at clinical training sites, with external organizations (e.g. other medical schools, Medical Council of Canada, Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada, Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools) or in the public forum (e.g. social media, news media).

3. It is understood that during their time in the MDCM Program, students are developing their identities as future physicians. During this time of professional identity formation, students are encouraged to reflect on the professional behaviors expected of them and to raise questions and concerns related to those expectations through open and respectful dialogue.

MDCM Program

4. The MDCM Program will foster professionalism by recognizing, encouraging, and rewarding exemplary behaviors, and identifying opportunities for learning and reflection when professionalism concerns arise. The MDCM Program will also identify and address unacceptable behaviors (e.g., behaviors that threaten the safety and trust of patients, teachers, other healthcare professionals, or fellow students).
5. The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences aims to promote high standards of professionalism to everyone within its sphere of influence. As such, in addition to identifying and addressing unacceptable behaviors, the MDCM Program has an obligation to teach and assess professionalism and foster professional identity formation.

Policy

1. Students are expected to meet the professional standards of the [Collège des médecins du Québec](#), the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences [Code of Conduct](#), our affiliated clinical institutions and to adhere to all [McGill University](#) and [UGME policies](#).
2. Students completing visiting electives or courses at other medical schools are expected to abide by the host institution's policies during the application process and during the elective course(s).
3. The MDCM Program considers student behavior during curricular and non-curricular activities – both within and external to McGill University – as relevant to the assessment of professionalism. This includes conduct on [social media platforms](#).



4. When addressing possible professionalism concerns, MDCM Program considers the following concepts:
 - risk of or actual consequences or harm to others (donor bodies, patients and their families, faculty, residents, other students, administrative staff, the public, institutions, and communities)
 - clear intention to cause harm
 - insight into behaviour
 - accepting responsibility/expressing remorse
 - potential for redress
 - repetition of the events or concerns
 - failure to redress
5. Depending on the nature of the professionalism concern, subsequent inquiries can range from an educational conversation to a disciplinary hearing. For more information on the spectrum of professionalism concerns, please consult the [Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Code of Conduct](#).
6. Meetings and decisions related to a professionalism concern are documented in the student's academic file.
7. Exemplary professional behaviors can be reported on narrative assessment forms, with prize nominations as well as by other informal means (e.g. e-mails).

Procedures following Notification of a Student Professionalism Concern

Should a student experience an alleged professionalism concern, the following steps are taken:

- A notification of the concern is sent to the Professionalism Advisor.
- The professionalism advisor reviews the available information, and generally addresses the concern directly with the student. Occasionally, the Professionalism Advisor may refer the matter directly to the Associate Dean UGME; for example, this may be done if the concern relates to an alleged violation of the University Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures, if the alleged behaviour is particularly egregious or repetitive, or if there is a perceived conflict of interest between the Professionalism Advisor and the student. The professionalism advisor



is guided by the abovementioned criteria (see #4) in determining whether the concern raised is or is not a matter of professionalism, and in the case of a confirmed professionalism concern whether the issue is minor or major.

- The Professionalism Advisor will inform the student when a professionalism concern is being referred to the Associate Dean UGME. The Associate Dean will inform the student when a professionalism concern is being referred to the Student Promotions Committee for determination of a major professionalism lapse.

Minor Concern

- Following a discussion with the Professionalism Advisor or the Associate Dean UGME, a minor professionalism concern will be documented in the student's academic file. A plan of redress may be required.

Major Concern

- Following a discussion with the Associate Dean UGME, a possible major professionalism concern will be documented in the student's academic file. The student will be required to meet with Student Promotions Committee (SPC) as outlined in the Assessment and Promotion Policy point 5.7. The Student Promotions Committee makes the final determination if indeed it is a major professionalism lapse. The Student Promotions Committee will inform the student if a professionalism concern is to be noted on the MSPR (Dean's Letter).
- A student whose behaviour breaches the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#) will be required to meet the Disciplinary Officer who will establish outcomes in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.