MD Program
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Assessing Student Professionalism in the MD Program:
A competency-based approach

This primer provides an overview of the two ways assessment of student professionalism takes place:

(1**) through competency-based professionalism assessment** using the same form across the four years of the MD Program curriculum; and

(2) through the use of **critical incident reports**

Suspected breaches of academic integrity (e.g. cheating, plagiarism, etc.) are not included within professionalism assessment, but rather are addressed through the *MD Program's Academic Integrity Guidelines*

Click here to watch the eModule - *Introduction to Assessing Professionalism in the MD Program*

Being a professional is one of the key attributes of being a physician. The MD program has developed new (revised) *Guidelines for the Assessment of Student Professionalism.* **Starting in September 2017** the MD program will be using a competency-based approach to support and evaluate the development of the students' professionalism. This approach builds on the domains and behaviours previously used in the assessment of professionalism. The procedures to determine satisfactory progress build on the previous approach and introduce opportunities for formative assessments and added supports for students who are not satisfactorily progressing.

Competency-based Professionalism Assessment
Professionalism as a competency is described by six domains which are individually assessed against predefined criteria that are listed in the *Guidelines* and included on the form. These domains are:
1. Altruism
2. Duty: Reliability and Responsibility
3. Excellence: Self-Improvement and Adaptability
4. Respect for Others: Relationships with Students, Faculty and Staff
5. Honour and Integrity: Upholding Student and Professionals Codes of Conduct
6. Recognize and Respond to Ethical Issues in Practice

NEW: Students are assessed on a five-point scale; the same form is used for all years and all courses. The domain of "Recognize and Respond to Ethical Issues in Practice" has been added.

How are the Professionalism Assessment forms completed?
The professionalism form is sent by email to tutors (at their utoronto email address) at the end of their course, or another pre-designated time. Teachers are asked to indicate both strengths and areas for improvement in professional behaviours. This approach allows the Faculty to both identify and celebrate excellence in professionalism, as well as monitor students who may exhibit individual instances or patterns of unprofessional behaviour.

NEW: Teachers are asked to identify exemplary professional behaviours.

Teachers are asked to give students a score from 1-5 for each of the six professionalism domains based on the extent to which they exhibit professional behaviours in the context of the specific teaching and learning situation. Teachers are required to provide comments for any score of 1 or 2, including those based on a critical incident. These comments will be read by the individual student and MD program leadership.

Critical Incident Reports

Critical incidents are situations where a student has put a patient or someone else at significant risk because of their behavior, or a situation in which a student has engaged in conduct unbecoming of a physician in training. A list of behaviours that are considered critical incidents are included in the *Guidelines* .

A critical incident can be reported as part of the competency-based professionalism assessment described above, or the *Critical Incident Reporting Form* can be completed when an event occurs by any faculty member or administrative staff who observes a critical incident.

Faculty may reference a critical incident on the student's professionalism form, if the critical incident occurred within that course.

What are the standards of achievement? What happens to a student who does not meet the standards?

A student must be assessed as being satisfactory in the professionalism competency to achieve credit in every course, to progress from one year to the next and to graduate from the MD Program. A student may be identified as not having progressed satisfactorily when the student receives:

- One or two scores of less than 3 on any combination of the six professionalism domains.
    Students who have one or two scores of less than 3 will trigger the check-in process with the relevant course director.
- Three or more scores of less than 3 on any combination of the six professionalism domains.
    Students who have three or more scores of less than 3 will trigger the student in professionalism difficulty review process with the Foundations or Clerkship Director.
- A substantiated critical incident report.

Procedural details are included in the *Guidelines*.

NEW: Procedures such as the check-in process early in the process; opportunity to complete a Focused Professionalism Learning Plan; reports by MD leadership to the Student Progress Committee.

NEW: Procedures on suspected breach of academic integrity see link on left side of page 1 to the *MD Program's Academic Integrity Guidelines*.

For additional information, please contact:
- Faculty Lead, Ethics & Professionalism: Dr. Erika Abner
- Director, Foundations: Dr. Marcus Law
- Director, Clerkship: Dr. Stacey Bernstein
- Clerkship Course Directors
- Foundations Course Directors

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Office of Faculty Development