Assessing Student Professional Behaviour 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 assessment of professional behaviours** 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 assessment of professional behaviours, but rather are addressed through the *MD Program's Academic Integrity Guidelines*

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.* **Since 2017** the MD program has been using a competency-based approach to support and assess the development of the students' professional identity. **In 2024**, revisions were made to the assessment tool to focus on key relationships within a physician's professional life. The current assessment tool builds on the behaviours previously used in the assessment of professionalism and integrates the approaches of the CPSO and the CMA towards professional values and actions. The procedures to determine satisfactory progress includes opportunities for formative assessments and implementation of added supports for students who are not satisfactorily progressing. Students are assessed on a five-point scale; the same form is used for all years and all courses.

Competency-based Assessment of Professional behaviours
Professional behaviours 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. Interactions with patients and essential care partners
2. Reliability and Responsibility
3. Growth and Adaptability
4. Relationships colleagues
5. Upholding Student and Professionals Codes of Conduct
6. Recognize and Respond to Ethical Issues

NEW: The domains and behaviour examples have been modified in 2024

How are the Assessment of Professional Behaviour forms completed?
The 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.

In addition to the end of rotation assessments, Faculty may complete an assessment of professional behaviour form at any time during a learner's training as needed.

Teachers are asked to give students a score from 1-5 for each of the six professional behaviour 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 assessment of professional behaviours 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 professional behaviour domains 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 professional behaviour domains will trigger the student in professionalism difficulty review. This involves meeting with the Foundations or Clerkship directors to explore the pattern of behaviour and underlying causes. Learners may go on to complete a professionalism focused learning plan or may be referred to the Board of Examiners (BOE) for consideration of professionalism remediation.
- A substantiated critical incident report.

Procedural details are included in the *Guidelines*.

For more information on the MD Program's Academic Integrity please refer to the *Guidelines*.

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