

## **Policy Name: 3.05.2 Medical Student Professionalism Policy**

### **Background**

Professional behavior is a foundational element of medical education and practice. Students are expected to demonstrate full compliance with standards of professionalism and with all rules and regulations of student conduct at The University of Texas at Tyler ("University"), UT System rules and regulations, and any local, state, or federal laws and statutes applicable.

The University of Texas at Tyler School of Medicine (SOM) professionalism policy is guided by LCME Standards 3.5, 7.5–7.9, which emphasize the importance of professional conduct in all educational activities and are in alignment with the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) which identifies professionalism as a **core competency** requiring learners to demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities and adherence to ethical principles. Students are expected to uphold standards that reflect honesty, respect for patient autonomy, confidentiality, and a dedication to maintaining professional boundaries.

To ensure the SOM nurtures student development and demonstration of professionalism behaviors and responsibilities, the following must be upheld.

1. The expected behaviors are clearly articulated within the policy and those expectations are attested to annually and signed by all students on admission. Faculty are provided with professional development to ensure they are familiar with the policy.
2. The expected behaviors and responsibilities are taught both formally and informally in the curriculum. Professional behaviors and responsibilities are taught through discussions, role modeling and experience in group settings.
3. The expected behaviors and responsibilities are assessed and monitored throughout medical school; emphasis is placed on early assessment and feedback and guidance to avoid future unprofessional behavior. The policy outlines mechanisms for early identification and remediation of problematic behavior during all three Phases of the curriculum.
4. The expected behaviors and responsibilities must be demonstrated as achieved as a requirement for graduation.

### **Policy**

This policy provides a framework that codifies the expectation of professionalism and associated behavior within the SOM. Further, this policy prioritizes education, remediation, and ongoing support for students with minor, or demonstrable, lapses that may be the precursor for more imminent concerns that could jeopardize safety, student success, learning environment, or organizational culture.

This policy includes the following:

1. A description of the fundamental professionalism behaviors and responsibilities to which all students are upheld.
2. A description of the Physicianship Evaluation Form and links to accompanying documents.

This policy addresses concerns related to behavior that is unprofessional. In situations where student behavior is classified as a conduct concern (e.g., academic dishonesty, violation of the law, endangering



behavior, harassment/bullying), the student is subject to Regent's Rules, State or Federal Law, and/or other institutional policies (See [Manual of Policies and Procedures for Student Affairs Chapter 8](#)). *This policy does not preclude other actions/consequences, as appropriate.*

Because practicing medicine is an honor earned every day, we—the faculty and students of the UT Tyler School of Medicine - subscribe to the highest standard of conduct. We aim for professional behavior that is beyond reproach. In particular, we subscribe to the following points of professional behavior:

**Reliability and responsibility:** Medical students are expected to demonstrate reliability and responsibility through demonstrated professional behaviors that emphasize reliable fulfillment of assigned responsibilities, punctuality, and progressive development of the skills necessary to complete clinical and academic tasks independently.

**Self-improvement and adaptability:** Medical students are expected to demonstrate self-improvement and adaptability by respectfully engaging with colleagues and patients, accepting and incorporating constructive feedback, recognizing personal limitations and seeking assistance when needed, and situationally appropriate adapting of behavior in response to changing clinical and educational environments.

**Relationships with students, faculty, staff and patients:** Medical students are expected to foster effective professional relationships by establishing appropriate rapport with patients, peers, faculty, and staff, demonstrating sensitivity to patient needs, maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries in clinical and educational settings, and interacting respectfully and collaboratively within all others in the learning environment.

**Standards of professional conduct:** Medical students are expected to uphold the Medical Student Statement of Principles by demonstrating honesty and integrity, contributing to a respectful and inclusive learning environment, respecting differing personal and social identities, resolving conflict in ways that preserve dignity, using professional language and conduct appropriate to the setting, safeguarding patient confidentiality, and maintaining professional appearance.

### **Reporting Unprofessional Behaviors**

Physicianship Evaluation Forms are completed when a student needs support in developing and/or refining professionalism skills/behaviors. The general information regarding completion of these forms is outlined below. Specific information on the process can be found on the forms.

#### **Completing Party:**

The Physicianship evaluation form can be completed by a Course/Clerkship Director or Assistant Dean of Student Affairs in discussions with the observer of such behavior.

#### **Submission:**

**Phase 1:** The Physicianship evaluation form is designed as a mechanism for early identification, counseling, and remediation of problematic behavior in the Phase 1 curriculum and in relation to

behaviors outside the classroom that are otherwise related to a student's role as a UT Tyler medical student.

- Prior to submission of the Physicianship evaluation form, the student should be provided with feedback by the faculty or course director that includes specific, actionable suggestions for improvement. These discussions are logged internally with the Phase 1 Assistant Dean to allow for oversight across educational activities/settings.
- If a behavior is repeated or requires an intervention/monitoring plan, then a Physicianship evaluation form is completed by the Course Director and reviewed with the student. The form is then sent to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs who meets with the student for counseling and remediation.

**Phase 2/3:** The Physicianship evaluation form is designed as a mechanism to address and remediate problematic behavior in clinical clerkships and post-clerkship Phase.

- The Course/Clerkship Director should initiate *timely* meetings with students who have demonstrated concerning behavior to provide *prompt* feedback and/or intervention and allow for monitoring of remediation prior to the end of the clerkship/course.
- If a behavior is repeated or serious enough, then a Physicianship evaluation form is completed by the Course/Clerkship Director and reviewed with the student promptly. The form is then sent to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs who meets with the student for counseling and remediation.

**Resolution:**

- Students who receive one or more Physicianship Evaluation form(s) in Phase 1 and none subsequently, or who receive no more than one Physicianship Evaluation form in Phase 2 or 3, thus having successfully addressed and remediated the problematic behavior, typically will not have a notation made in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation nor be referred to the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC). Completed Physicianship Evaluation form(s) will be held in the Office of Student Affairs.
- If a student receives 2 or more Physicianship Evaluation Forms in Phase 2/3 OR receives 2 or more Physicianship Evaluation Forms in the Phase 1 and then 1 in Phase 2/3, OR receives a Physicianship Evaluation Form at any time for a sufficiently serious or egregious professionalism deficiency:
  - The course/clerkship director can provide a failing grade for the course/clerkship based on lack of achievement of a core competency.
  - A notation will be made in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation.
  - A referral will be made to the SPPC for review with potential outcomes to include dismissal.
    - The procedure for appealing an SPPC decision is outlined in the Non-grade Academic Grievance Policy.
- If the professionalism deficiency is sufficiently serious or egregious, a single Physicianship Evaluation Form may result in referral to the SPPC, which could lead to additional action, including but not limited to, a notation in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation, Academic Probation, or Dismissal.



- In all cases, the SPPC has complete discretion to determine what constitutes a sufficiently serious or egregious professionalism deficiency and to take appropriate action.

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