

**Professional Standards
For Faculty Members And Learners¹
in the Faculty of Medicine
at the University of Calgary²**

The Faculty of Medicine is committed to creating a welcoming environment that is conducive to optimal education and research.³ This is sustained by a renewed commitment to the highest level of professionalism in all interactions with patients, peers, supervisors, staff and other disciplines. Respect for every person is the value central to all encounters with learners, staff, teachers and patients.

For programs that teach and evaluate professionalism in the Offices of the Faculty of Medicine, professionalism is an academic matter. We are committed to teaching and evaluating professionalism for learners and faculty members at all levels. We will celebrate expressions of positive professional attitudes and behaviour as well as achievement of academic excellence.

Everyone in the Faculty should be familiar with and abide by academic policies of the University relating to professional behaviour. In health care institutions, faculty members, staff and learners are expected to abide by relevant policies and procedures governing codes of conduct.⁴ These professional standards are complementary to such academic and institutional policies. In nurturing the intellectual and personal development of learners, it is important to recognize the inherent power imbalance in the teacher-learner relationship and to create a respectful, interactive environment suitable for learning.

The professional standards articulated here demonstrate our recognition of the special professional privileges granted by society, which in turn expects us to reflect in work and deed our commitment to their welfare. Consistent with this, the conduct of professionals should be characterized by the highest sense of ethical integrity and humanistic values. In keeping with sustaining the highest standard of professional behaviour, fostering these values is a moral obligation for all.

¹ Learners include students who are undergraduates, postgraduates, graduates, and fellows though they may assume an ever-increasing role as teachers and, as such, some components of the faculty-specific standards may be applicable.

² Includes programs in Medicine, Graduate Medical Sciences, Post-Doctoral Programs, and Bachelor of Health Sciences.

³ Calgary Health Region is responsible for providing the environment for patient care.

⁴ At the University of Calgary, these include policies and guidelines listed in Appendix A.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR LEARNERS AND FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE

All clinical and academic faculty members, undergraduate, postgraduate, and graduate students, and fellows are expected to abide by these standards while in any setting where the activities are under the auspices of the University of Calgary.

**SECTION I
AFFIRMATION OF THE COMMITMENTS OF PROFESSIONALS**

Honesty

I have a commitment to:

- Maintain the highest standards of personal and academic honesty and integrity;
- Conduct research in an ethical and unbiased manner, report results truthfully, and credit ideas developed and work done by others;
- Record accurately history and physical findings, test results, and other information pertinent to the care of the patient;
- Communicate truthfully and compassionately with patients, learners, faculty members and staff both verbally and in writing;
- Neither give nor receive aid in examinations unless such cooperation is expressly permitted by the instructor.

Respect for Others

I have a commitment to:

- Treat everyone with respect and without discrimination in my interactions with others, on protected grounds such as (but not restricted to) age, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation or unrelated criminal convictions;
- Contribute to a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning;
- Respect the personal boundaries of others including, but not limited to, refraining from making unwanted romantic or sexual overtures, protecting personal information, and respecting individual workspace;
- Treat patients and their families with respect and dignity both in their presence and in discussions with other members of the health care team;
- Assure that interactions with learners, teachers, patients, families, health care and research colleagues, both academic and non-academic, are always respectful and considerate;
- Respect patient autonomy at all times by discussing treatment options with the patient or surrogate;
- Ensure appropriate consultation with the identified personal agent or guardian when a patient lacks the capacity to make treatment decisions;
- Respect the privacy of patients and research participants.

Confidentiality

I have a commitment to:

- Regard the confidentiality of patients and research and educational participants as a central obligation;
- Assure confidentiality by limiting discussion of patient health issues to appropriate settings for clinical or educational purposes and to care givers identified by patient consent.

Responsibility

I have a commitment to:

- Assure the primacy of patient wellbeing in the clinical setting;
- Create environments that are conducive to learning and the performance of professional academic work;
- Recognize my own limitations and seek help when my level of experience is inadequate;
- Be accountable for personal decisions in the workplace;
- Consult with appropriate individuals when my level of expertise is exceeded;
- Provide supervision and assistance to others appropriate to their need and level of expertise;
- Adopt strategies to deal with errors, adverse events, and “near misses”, and promote a culture of safety;
- Not engage in exploitative relationships with colleagues, learners, patients, or their families for emotional, financial, research, educational or sexual purposes;
- Conduct myself professionally regarding my demeanor, use of language, and appearance in health care settings;
- Encourage and model language, appearance, and demeanor appropriate to the professional healthcare setting;
- Not use alcohol or drugs in any way that could interfere with my academic, professional and clinical responsibilities;
- Attend to my personal well-being, so that I am able to attend to my professional responsibilities to the best of my abilities;
- Appropriately acknowledge contributions made to research publications by others;
- Display ethical interactions with industry, declaring conflict of interest situations when they occur;
- Reveal to sponsors, universities, journals or funding agencies, any material conflict of interest, financial or other, that might influence their decisions on whether I should be asked to review manuscripts or applications, test products or be permitted to undertake work sponsored from outside sources;
- Participate in the processes of self-regulation of the professions;
- Report professional misconduct and unskilled practice to the appropriate authorities, respecting the need to avoid unjustly discrediting the reputation of other members of the health care team.

SECTION II RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEARNERS¹ IN THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Rights:

Learners have the right to:

- Be challenged to learn, but not abused, harassed, or humiliated;
- Be free of romantic or sexual overtures from those who are supervising their work;
- Ask questions or respectfully express disagreement with faculty members or supervisors without fear of negative consequences;
- Clear guidelines regarding assignments and examinations, as well as to testing environments that are conducive to academic honesty;
- Fair, respectful, objective, timely, frequent, and constructive evaluations from faculty members and supervisors;
- Meaningful and purposeful educational experiences in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical setting;
- Have research contributions appropriately represented and acknowledged;
- A clear outline of responsibilities, and not to be asked to accept a level of responsibility that is inappropriate for the level of education;
- Supervision and assistance appropriate to the learner’s need and level of expertise;
- Refuse to perform procedures or examinations/assessments which are felt to be unethical or inappropriate;
- A clear process to address any evaluations or requested activities the learner deems to be inaccurate or inappropriate;
- A safe learning environment.

Responsibilities:

Learners have a responsibility to:

- Not** misrepresent their qualifications and always be truthful in relationships with patients;
- Provide** fair, respectful, objective, timely, and constructive evaluations regarding the academic program and its instructors. Complaints and requests regarding faculty should be made in a measured, constructive, nonconfrontational, manner; should be directed at the appropriate person or body; should be considerate of other perspectives; and should seek compromise;
- Not** display unwanted or inappropriate sexual or romantic overtures toward others being taught and supervised, or toward teachers and supervisors;
- Not** unjustly discredit the reputations of peers, teachers, or members of the health care team;
- Address** any violations of the standards that are observed in the course of their professional development;
- Participate** actively and constructively in prescribed educational activities.

SECTION III RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Rights:

Faculty members have the right to:

- Be** free of abuse, harassment or humiliation;
- Be** free of romantic or sexual overtures from learners;
- Ask** relevant, responsible questions or respectfully express disagreement with learners;
- Fair, constructive, respectful, timely and objective** evaluations from learners and peers;
- Challenge** learners to address complex issues through a high level of critical thinking and clinical reasoning;
- Discuss** in the classroom any material which has a significant relationship to the subject matter as defined in the approved course description;
- Discuss** controversial matters in the learning context:
- Freedom** in the exposition of a subject which he or she teaches, either in the classroom or elsewhere, providing appropriate discretion and good judgment is exercised;
- Engage** in public service activities;
- Full freedom** in research and the publication of results in accordance with University policy;
- Seek** changes in institutional policy through established University procedures.

Responsibilities:

The Faculty of Medicine is committed to creating a welcoming environment that is conducive to optimal education, research, and clinical care. To achieve this,

Faculty members have a responsibility to:

- Model** professional behavior for learners;
- Teach** the concepts of professional behavior, ethical research and practice;
- Provide** learners with challenges to learn, without abuse, harassment, or humiliation;
- Not** display unwanted or inappropriate sexual or romantic overtures toward those being taught or supervised. In order to foster objective and professional relationships between faculty and learners, a member of faculty should not enter into a romantic or sexual relationship with his/her student.
Further, any faculty-learner personal relationships must not hinder the learner's academic progress or create a situation in which a student is favoured on grounds other than academic performance. However, where a faculty member is involved in a relationship with a learner, the faculty member should inform his or her immediate supervisor of the relationship in order to

- obtain an independent evaluation of the potential for conflict of interest and personal consequences of the power differential. If indicated, alternative arrangements must be made for supervision and/or evaluation of the learner. If the relationship is deemed to exert no influence on the learner's academic progress, no abuse of the power differential, and no preferential or inferior treatment, then the relationship could be deemed acceptable;
- Provide** teaching, supervision and training while respecting personal boundaries;
 - Allow** the expression of disagreement without the fear of punishment, reprisals or retribution;
 - Provide** clear guidelines to learners and others regarding assignments, examinations, and test environments;
 - Provide** objective, timely, fair and constructive evaluations of learners, faculty, and support staff;
 - Ensure** that the research and clinical teaching environment and experiences are appropriate for the needs of the learner;
 - Clearly** outline for learners and trainees the appropriate levels of clinical responsibility;
 - Allow** learners to decline to perform procedures for which they feel are outside their area of competence or inconsistent with their personal beliefs;
 - Allow** learners graduated responsibility consistent with their competence and with principles of safety for patients, research subjects, staff, and other learners;
 - Provide** supervision and assistance to learners appropriate to their need and level of expertise;
 - Maintain** and enhance personal competence through commitment to lifelong professional development and practice evaluation;
 - Accept** external scrutiny of professional performance;
 - Maintain** fiscal responsibility in relation to clinical and research programs and contacts.

Note:

Modified with permission from: *Professional Standards for Students and Faculty Members in the Faculty Of Medicine and Dentistry*, University of Alberta and University of British Columbia

Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary Reviews & Approvals,:

Department Heads, Reviewed January 21, 2008

Council of Associate Deans (Education), Reviewed January 21, 2008; Approved February 4, 2008

Leadership Forum, Approved February 4, 2008

Faculty Council, Approved March 5, 2008

APPENDIX A

RELATED POLICIES

University of Calgary

- Statement on the Principles of Conduct
- Code of Professional Ethics for Academic Staff
- Policy and Procedures on Sexual Harassment

Faculty of Medicine

- Medical School Student Code of Conduct

Calgary Health Region

- Workplace Harassment Policy

Canadian Medical Association

- Code of Ethics
- Policy on Medical Professionalism

RELATED GUIDELINES

- University of Calgary, Human Resources:
Guidelines for Administrators When Acting on Concerns About Conduct
- The Principles of Natural Justice