



UNSW Medicine

Professionalism in Medicine

Student Code of Conduct

Professionalism in medicine

Professionalism: A set of values, behaviors, and relationships that underpins the trust that the public and society has in doctors.

Profession: An occupation whose core element is work based upon the mastery of a complex body of knowledge and skills. It is a vocation in which knowledge of some department of science or learning or the practice of an art founded upon it is used in the service of others. Its members are governed by codes of ethics and profess a commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their domain. These commitments form the basis of a social contract between a profession and society, which in return grants the profession a monopoly over the use of its knowledge base, the right to considerable autonomy in practice and the privilege of self-regulation. Professions and their members are accountable to those served, to the profession and to society.

Definitions taken from:

Cruess SR & Cruess RL. (2012). Teaching professionalism – Why, What and How, [Facts Views Vis, Obygn.](#), 4(4): 259–265.

Beginning your professional career in medicine

During your medical education, you will have privileged access to people and their families, and to their health information. The trust that people place in doctors and medical students carries considerable responsibility and expectation regarding your behaviour. It is important that you are aware of these responsibilities and expectations from the beginning of your medical training.

You also have a responsibility to your fellow students and your teachers to always act professionally, honestly and with integrity. Your behaviour outside the clinical environment, including your personal life, may have a lasting impact on your fitness to practice and professional standing. Your behaviour as a medical student should justify the trust that individuals and society place in the medical profession.

These principles operate in conjunction with current State and Federal Acts, Regulations and Codes of Practice that you will need to become familiar with during your training. These include [Good Medical Practice Code of Conduct](#) (Medical Board of Australia 2014), [Sexual Boundaries in the Doctor-Patient Relationship](#) (Medical Board of Australia, 2018) and the Health Information Privacy Act (2002).

In addition to the UNSW Student Code of Conduct and the Policies of UNSW Medicine you are registered with the Medical Board of Australia as a student and are governed by NSW Health policies with respect to clinical placements. You must be familiar with, and comply with these organisations' documents and policies.

There are five primary student responsibilities under the UNSW Student Code:

- 1.1. A condition of enrolment is that students inform themselves of the University's rules and policies affecting them, and conduct themselves accordingly.
- 1.2. An obligation to act with integrity in academic work, to ensure that all academic work is conducted ethically and safely.
- 1.3. An obligation to observe standards of equity and respect in dealing with every member of the University community.
- 1.4. An obligation to use and care for University resources in a lawful and appropriate manner
- 1.5. An obligation to not diminish the University's reputation in the carrying out of academic and other associated University activities.

In addition to the UNSW code, medical students:

Should:

- 2.1. Care for peers, provide support in learning opportunities, and work collaboratively and respectfully in all situations.
- 2.2. Give judicious, constructive feedback as appropriate on teachers, courses and resources.

And WILL:

- 2.3. Report matters of serious concern in a professional manner, including matters both on campus and in the healthcare setting, to those with the authority to act.
- 2.4. Use social networking sites or public forums responsibly and not raise concerns about an individual, bully them or mock them, nor post unprofessional images or comments.
- 2.5. Respect your role as a student doctor and not use this position for personal gain.
- 2.6. Be aware that alcohol and other substances may impact on your health and fitness to practice. Such misuse may cross the boundaries of legality, which becomes a professional conduct issue.

When interacting with patients, staff, and the public in clinical settings, as a medical student you will:

- 3.1. Be aware and respectful that healthcare settings, including teaching hospitals, are workplaces whose principle function is to treat the sick or injured. Dress and act appropriately. Prioritise the running of healthcare for patients over your own learning or personal benefit.
- 3.2. At all times, treat patients, their families and all healthcare/hospital staff politely and considerately.
- 3.3. Respect the dignity and privacy of patients. Maintain confidentiality of patient information, whether spoken, written or electronic.
- 3.4. Understand that your own values and beliefs may differ from those of patients and healthcare staff. Manage these possible influences on your interactions and respect the autonomy of patients and their families.
- 3.5. Introduce yourself to patients, ensuring that they understand that you are a medical student. Clearly inform patients (or where applicable, family members and legal guardians) of your role and the purpose and nature of any proposed interaction with them.
- 3.6. Prior to undertaking any clinical activity, check that the patient understands your request and obtain their consent. Ensure that the patient understands that refusing or withdrawing consent will not impact in any way on their own healthcare.

- 3.7. If you are asked to carry out clinical duties, be aware of the limits of your knowledge and skills. Ensure that you have appropriate supervision and support when undertaking unfamiliar clinical activities.
- 3.8. Ensure that your written communications into patient's medical records, such as admissions or ward rounds, follow best practice. If you are documenting into an electronic medical record, ensure that the entry is finalised with sign-off by a clinician so that it can be viewed.
- 3.9. Your clinical teachers may be junior or senior doctors, nurses, or allied health professionals. Understand that most clinicians who teach medical students are not directly employed to do so. Respect their generosity with your timely attendance and engagement during any scheduled clinical teaching activities.

When in the Anatomy dissecting room, Anatomy Museum and Museum of Human Disease be aware that:

You are learning from human material prepared from people who have generously donated their bodies for the benefit of science. Skilled staff members have dissected the specimens to allow you, the student, to see anatomical structures in fine detail. Apart from caring for the specimens, it is important for all students learning Anatomy and Pathology to have and show utmost respect for the specimens at all times.

Some specific points:

- 4.1. Great care should always be exercised when handling specimens, in order to preserve their delicate structure. Always use only blunt forceps to handle prosected specimens and probes to point to structures, i.e. never pull at any parts of the specimen.
- 4.2. It is illegal for any anatomical material to be removed from the premises of the Department of Anatomy for any purpose whatsoever (except of course, for the funeral). All anatomy specimens are micro-chipped for identification and record keeping.
- 4.3. Photography and video recording are *not* permitted in the Dissecting Room, the Anatomy Museum or the Museum of Human Disease without prior permission.

Consequences of unprofessional behaviour

Incidents of unprofessional behaviour (i.e. breaches of the student code of conduct) may result in serious consequences, ranging from:

- a reprimand;
- a permanent record in your portfolio;
- failure in an assessment or course;
- notification to the Medical Board of Australia (N.B. [Fitness to Practice policy](#))
- Suspension or expulsion from the UNSW Medicine program (N.B. [Student misconduct policy and procedure](#))