



# UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

University of Toronto  
Governing Council

**Standards of Professional Practice Behaviour  
for all Health Professional Students**

[June 16, 2008] (*effective September 2008*)

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# **Standards of Professional Practice Behaviour for all Health Professional Students**

## **Preamble**

Health professional students engage in a variety of activities with patients/clients under supervision and as part of their academic programs. During this training, the University, training sites, and society more generally expect our health professional students to adhere to appropriate standards of behaviour and ethical values. All health profession students accept that their profession demands integrity, exemplary behaviour, dedication to the search for truth, and service to humanity in the pursuit of their education and the exercise of their profession.

These Standards express professional practice and ethical performance expected of students registered in undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programs, courses, or training (for the purposes of this policy, students includes undergraduate/graduate students, trainees including post doctoral fellows, interns, residents, clinical and research fellows or the equivalents) in the:

- (a) Faculty of Dentistry;
- (b) Faculty of Medicine;
- (c) Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing;
- (d) Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy;
- (e) Faculty of Physical Education and Health;
- (f) Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work;
- (g) Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE Programs in School and Clinical Child Psychology; Counselling Psychology for Psychology Specialists; Counselling Psychology for Community and Educational Settings).

By registering at the University of Toronto in one of these Faculties or in courses they offer, a student accepts that he/she shall adhere to these Standards. These Standards apply to students in practice- related settings such as fieldwork, practicum, rotations, and other such activities arranged through the Faculty, program of study, or teaching staff. Other Faculties that have students engaged in such activities in health settings may also adopt these standards.

These Standards do not replace legal or ethical standards defined by professional or regulatory bodies or by a practice or field setting, nor by other academic standards or expectations existing at the University of Toronto. Action respecting these Standards by the Faculty responsible for the program or course does not preclude any other action under other applicable University policies or procedures, action by program regulatory bodies, professional bodies, or practice/field settings, or action under applicable law including the Criminal Code of Canada.

Breach of any of these Standards may, after appropriate evaluation of a student, and in accordance with applicable procedures, be cause for dismissal from a course or program or for failure to promote.

## **Standards of Professional Behaviour and Ethical Performance**

All students will strive to pursue excellence in their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in their profession and will uphold the relevant behavioural and ethical standards of his or her health profession or Faculty, including:

1. Keeping proper patient/client records
2. Where patient/client informed consent to an action is required, the student will act only after valid informed consent has been obtained from the patient/client (or from an appropriate substitute decision-maker)
3. Providing appropriate transfer of responsibility for patient/client care
4. Being skilful at communicating and interacting appropriately with patients/clients, families, faculty/instructors, peers, colleagues, and other health care personnel
5. Not exploiting the patient/client relationship for personal benefit, gain, or gratification
6. Attending all mandatory educational sessions and clinical placements or provide appropriate notification of absence
7. Demonstrating the following qualities in the provision of care:
  - (a) empathy and compassion for patients/clients and their families and caregivers;
  - (b) concern for the needs of the patient/client and their families to understand the nature of the illness/problem and the goals and possible complications of investigations and treatment;
  - (c) concern for the psycho-social aspects of the patient's/client's illness/problem;
  - (d) assessment and consideration of a patient's/client's motivation and physical and mental capacity when arranging for appropriate services;
  - (e) respect for, and ability to work harmoniously with, instructors, peers, and other health professionals;
  - (f) respect for, and ability to work harmoniously with, the patient/client and all those involved in the promotion of his/her wellbeing;
  - (g) recognition of the importance of self-assessment and of continuing education;
  - (h) willingness to teach others in the same speciality and in other health professionals;
  - (i) understanding of the appropriate requirements for involvement of patients/clients and their families in research;
  - (j) awareness of the effects that differences in gender, sexual orientation, cultural and social background may have on the maintenance of health and the development and treatment of illness/problems;
  - (k) awareness of the effects that differences in gender, sexual orientation, and cultural and social background may have on the care we provide;
  - (l) respect for confidentiality of all patient/client information; and,

- (m)ability to establish appropriate boundaries in relationships with patients/clients and with health professionals being supervised;

These Standards articulate the *minimum* expected behaviour and ethical performance; however, a student should always strive for exemplary ethical and professional behaviour.

(b) A student will refrain from taking any action which is inconsistent with the appropriate standards of professional behaviour and ethical performance, including refraining from the following conduct:

8. Misrepresenting or misleading anyone as to his or her qualifications or role
9. Providing treatment without supervision or authorization
10. Misusing or misrepresenting his/her institutional or professional affiliation
11. Stealing or misappropriating or misusing drugs, equipment, or other property
12. Contravention of the Ontario Human Rights Code
13. Unlawfully breaching confidentiality, including but not limited to accessing electronic records of patients/clients for whom s/he is not on the care team
14. Being under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs while participating in patient/client care or on call or otherwise where professional behaviour is expected
15. Being unavailable while on call or on duty
16. Failing to respect patients'/clients' rights and dignity
17. Falsifying patient/client records
18. Committing sexual impropriety with a patient/client<sup>1</sup>
19. Committing any act that could reasonably be construed as mental or physical abuse
20. Behaving in a way that is unbecoming of a practising professional in his or her respective health profession or that is in violation of relevant and applicable Canadian law, including violation of the Canadian Criminal Code.

## **Assessment of Professional Behaviour and Ethical Performance**

The Faculties value the professional behaviour and ethical performance of their students and assessment of that behaviour and performance will form part of the academic assessment of health professions students in accordance with the Grading Practices Policy of the University of Toronto. Professional behaviour and ethical performance will be assessed in all rotations/fieldwork/practicum placements. These assessments will be timely in relation to the end of rotation/fieldwork placement/practicum and will be communicated to the student.

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<sup>1</sup> Students who have (or have had) a close personal relationship with a colleague, junior colleague, member of administrative staff or other hospital staff should be aware that obligations outlined in the Provost's Memorandum on Conflict of Interest and Close Personal Relations pertain to these Standards.  
<http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/policy/relations.htm>

Each Health Science Faculty will have specific guidelines related to these Standards that provide further elaboration with respect to their Faculty-specific behavioural standards and ethical performance, assessment of such standards and relevant procedures.

Breaches of these Standards or of Faculty-specific guidelines related to these Standards are serious academic matters and represent failure to meet the academic standards of the relevant health profession program. Poor performance with respect to professional or ethical behaviour may result in a performance assessment which includes a formal written reprimand, remedial work, denial of promotion, suspension, or dismissal from a program or a combination of these. In the case of suspension or dismissal from a program, the suspension or dismissal may be recorded on the student's academic record and transcript with a statement that these Standards have been breached.

With respect to undergraduate students, appeals against decisions under this policy may be made according to the guidelines for such appeals within the relevant Faculty.

In the case of graduate students, the procedures for academic appeals established in the School of Graduate Studies shall apply. Recommendation to terminate registration in a graduate program must be approved by the School of Graduate Studies. Decisions to terminate registration in a graduate program may be appealed directly to the School of Graduate Studies Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) in accordance with its practises and procedures.

In cases where the allegations of behaviour are serious, and if proven, could constitute a significant disruption to the program or the training site or a health and safety risk to other students, members of the University community, or patient/clients, the Dean of the Faculty responsible for the program or course is authorized to impose such interim conditions upon the student, including removal from the training site, as the Dean may consider appropriate.

In urgent situations, such as those involving serious threats or violent behaviour, a student may be removed from the University in accordance with the procedures set out in the Student Code of Conduct.

Approved by the Executive Committee June 16, 2008, effective September 2008

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