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School of Medicine: Act of Professionalism

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Introduction

Medical students have certain privileges and responsibilities different from those of non-healthcare students. Because of this, different standards of professional behaviour are expected.

Students must be aware that their behaviour outside the medical school, including in their personal lives, may have an impact on their fitness to practise. Their behaviour at all times must justify the trust the public places in the medical profession.

Medical students' behaviour is measured against the principles set out in guidance issued by the General Medical Council in [Medical Students: Professionalism and Fitness to Practise](#), in [Outcomes for Graduates](#) and in [Achieving Good Medical Practice](#).

If a student's behaviour falls below expectations, the School of Medicine may consider a fitness to practise investigation through formal procedures or referral to the Professionalism and Academic Competency Committee (PACC). PACC is co-chaired by a lay representative and also has student representation on the committee (although student reps will not be involved with discussion of individual student cases).

Further details about professionalism can be found on the School's website on the [Fitness to Study web page](#).

Attitude and behaviour

Medical students will demonstrate a compassionate attitude in their day to day activities. Medical students will respect patients without prejudice and will not allow views about a person's lifestyle, culture, beliefs, race, gender, sexuality, age or social status to affect their interaction with patients, staff or colleagues. For further details about the University of Nottingham's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies, see the University page: [University of Nottingham Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies](#)

Medical students must be honest and must not abuse the trust of a patient or other vulnerable person. It must be made clear to the patient you are a student and not a qualified doctor.

As future doctors, medical students have a duty to follow the guidance of [Achieving Good Medical Practice](#) and must understand the consequences if they fail to do so.

Confidentiality is fundamental to the relationship between healthcare professional and patient. Appropriate information sharing within the medical team, is, however, an important part of medical care, which should take place within appropriate boundaries. The GMC's publication [Achieving Good Medical Practice](#) has some useful guidance regarding confidentiality on student placements:

It's normal to want to talk about things you have seen on clinical placements with colleagues or friends. You'll see unusual medical conditions and may be put in situations where patients experience adverse outcomes. But you must never disclose patient identifiable information without a patient's consent. If you're not sure what to share if you're asked to provide information for an inquiry or logbook, you should ask for advice before you disclose any information. You should also make sure you never discuss patients in a public place or on social media. Even if you don't mention a patient by name, there's a chance that someone



nearby (or online, if you're on social media) might know whom you are talking about. If you do want to talk to a colleague, friend or supervisor about what you have seen on a placement, you should only do that in a private place. And you shouldn't mention the patient by name, except to a clinician directly involved in their care. For more information, [see the GMC's guidance for registered doctors, Good medical practice, Confidentiality and Doctors' use of social media](#).

Health

Medical students should adopt a positive attitude towards their own personal wellbeing and understand the impact this can have on all aspects of their lives. There are many successfully practising doctors who have active physical or mental health conditions. It is important that all healthcare professionals (including medical students) are aware how their own poor health could put patients and colleagues at risk.

Students need to seek and follow advice from suitably qualified professionals about their health in a timely manner. This is particularly important if they have, or suspect they have, a serious condition that could be passed on to patients, or if they are receiving treatment, or experiencing symptoms that could affect their judgement or performance. Experience from both doctors and students, has shown that if you seek help and guidance early, there are less likely to be adverse consequences from both a personal and professional perspective. Full engagement with appropriate occupational health procedure is expected.

Health concerns can of course, be short-lived rather than long-term. If you are unfortunate enough to be taken ill and are unable to attend your timetabled activities, you should inform the relevant undergraduate co-ordinator and the Student Service Centre at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid detrimental impact on co-workers and patients. This is especially important for any clinical placement and other compulsory components of the course.

Full details of this can be found in the School's [student absence policy](#).

Attendance

Full attendance in all aspects of the course is expected. All requests for absence must be authorised. Please see the [School's Guidance](#) on this for more details on how to request leave or exceptional leave, and also how to inform placement and School colleagues regarding absence for illness or related issues. Poor or unexplained attendance may result in a student failing an individual component of the course. Falsification of any attendance in logbooks or registers is taken very seriously and may result in a fitness to practise investigation.

Working with colleagues

Medical students must develop skills to work in multidisciplinary teams. Medical students must respect the skills and contributions of colleagues and other professionals including administrative staff. Communication with colleagues (including electronic communication) must adhere to appropriate professional standards. Responding promptly to emails about your course/placement is essential and you should adopt strategies to reviewing your inbox regularly. In clinical environments, students will act under the supervision of qualified healthcare professionals at all times. If you have any concerns about colleagues who are



supervising you, this should be directed to the local lead for undergraduate teaching. In extreme circumstances, whistleblowing (or 'speaking up') procedures are in place at each Trust.

Dress code

During clinical visits medical students will dress smartly and not wear clothing that is likely to cause offence by being inappropriate or revealing. Clothing must be visibly clean and laundered regularly, adhering to local infection-control guidance. Hair should be visibly clean, tidy and tied back if long. Medical students will comply with the dress codes of the NHS trust or community setting where they are based and should also be mindful of the [School's Dress Code guidance](#)

Medical students must not wear clothing obscuring their face in clinical and academic areas (unless required to wear face coverings as PPE). Medical students will adopt the 'bare below elbow' approach in clinical areas used for clinical skills training, including the avoidance of certain types of jewellery.

Mobile phones

The potential effect of mobile phone use on patients should be considered. There have been instances where patients have misinterpreted students' phone use in an educational capacity, for the use of phones to access social media. Please be mindful of this when you use phones in a clinical setting and seek advice from supervising clinicians who may prefer phone use to be restricted in certain areas.

Smart phones can of course be an excellent learning resource, but students should be aware that in certain situations, the use of mobile phones in teaching sessions may cause disruption. In small-group settings, please seek clarification from your supervising tutor regarding mobile phone use. In any setting, should an emergency arise where you need to attend to a phone, please explain this clearly to the person leading the session.

Social networking

If a medical student inappropriately uses social media, it can raise concerns about their suitability to become a doctor. It could then become a reason for a fitness-to-practise investigation and in serious cases might lead to termination of a course.

Medical students have a responsibility to maintain the public's trust in the medical profession.

1. Do not use social networks to build or pursue relationships with patients and their families, even if they are no longer in your immediate contact.
2. Never post pictures of patients or service users.
3. Do not discuss issues related to any experiences in a healthcare setting. Even if anonymised, these are likely to be inappropriate.
4. It is not usually appropriate to make personal video posts in healthcare settings. Before doing so, you would need to seek the permission of the setting, and adhere to any local social media guidance



5. **Remember!** Everything posted online is public (or has the potential to be so), and once posted, individuals have limited control over what happens to material. Please assume that anything you post has the potential to be viewed by current and future patients, employers and regulators. Please be aware of the potential for posts to be misinterpreted when there is limited scope for context to be applied.

The University has published guidance on the use of social media which applies to all students in its [University of Nottingham Social Media Policy](#).

[The School of Medicine has also produced guidance on the use of social media specifically for medical students.](#)

Alcohol use

Please be aware of your level of alcohol consumption and how this may affect your appearance and performance on subsequent days. Most NHS organisations have a rule that nobody should ever smell of alcohol when in any NHS premises. Students may be declined entry to teaching sessions and clinical attachments if there are concerns related to alcohol use, which could also result in referral to the fitness to practise process.

Remember: you represent The University of Nottingham Medical School and the profession you wish to enter.

Reporting concerns about students

As the course progresses, you will be working increasingly closely with your fellow students and may be the first person to suspect that a colleague could be in need of support. If you have concerns about the wellbeing of a fellow student, you may want to discuss this with a senior member of staff. You can also complete a 'request for support' form. This will be reviewed by the Welfare Team, who can arrange to meet with your colleague to provide further support.

Medical students, like doctors, must also act quickly to protect patients from risk if they have good reason to believe that they or a colleague may not be fit to practise. In this case, students can complete a 'request for intervention form' which will be reviewed by professionalism, fitness to practise and welfare teams. Any urgent concerns can be directly communicated with the Dean of Education or appropriate senior member of staff.

Medical students must familiarise themselves with the Support Request Form and Intervention Request Form procedure and be ready to use this in support of colleagues and patients.

Further information on the Support/Intervention process and Forms can be found on the [School of Medicine Policies and Regulations webpage](#)

Excellence in Professionalism

While there is an expectation for all of our students to uphold a good professional manner throughout the course, there are some students who go above and beyond what is expected and demonstrate outstanding achievement in professionalism.



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Any member of the clinical or academic staff may now recommend a student who has really impressed them by their approach to professionalism – this may include contributions made to life in the community which exceed expectations. Using this process, a recommendation can be made by the member of staff, which will then be reviewed by the PACC and the student will be contacted regarding the decision made.

Commendation forms can be downloaded from the [School of Medicine Policies and Regulations](#) website.

Further information

We are proud of the professional attitudes demonstrated by students and graduates from the University of Nottingham School of Medicine. The School is committed to supporting your on-going professional development as a medical student.

Contact us

Professionalism Team

QMC Student Service Centre

B Floor, Medical School

Nottingham

NG7 2UH

Email: MS-professionalism@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Website: www.nottingham.ac.uk/medicine