

Medical Students' Code of Conduct

Faculty of Medicine

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

The medical students of the Faculty of Medicine, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka are guided by the general 'code of conduct', rules, and regulations applicable to all students of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

The 'Medical Students' Code of Conduct' is designed to provide the additional guidance needed to meet the special requirements associated with the MBBS degree programme in which medical students are being trained to be responsible healthcare professionals who need to command the respect and trust of the patients, hospital staff and the society as medical students as well as health care professionals while conducting themselves according to the accepted norms, standards, and ethics of the society in general and the university community in particular.

As a medical student, you are now considered a 'doctor in-training' by the FOM/SUSL and the Sri Lankan Society.

As such you will have privileged access to people and their health information. With these privileges comes responsibilities and expectations which could be turned into a set of standards (or best practices or a code of conduct) that would guide the conduct of all medical students.

Although your initial involvement with patients will be small, this will increase substantially as you progress through the course, so it is important that you start implementing these professional behaviour expectations from the beginning and be aware that you represent your medical school and the medical profession. As such your behaviour both inside and outside the clinical environment, including your personal life, may have an impact on your fitness to practice as a doctor. Your behaviour should justify the trust the public places in the medical profession.

This code operates in conjunction with currently operational Acts, Regulations, and Codes of Practice for medical professionals that you will need to become familiar with during your learning. These include the SLMC Publications on doctors' conduct and medical ethics.

Following are the best practices or the code of conduct that the Faculty of Medicine, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka expects its students would comply with.

1. General

1.1. Behave as an adult learner and take responsibility for your actions and inactions.

1.1.1. Keep the registration updated as a student of the FOM/SUSL and have the student identity card in your possession all the time in accordance with the By-laws and Regulations of the Faculty of Medicine/SUSL.

- Ensure the ability to be reliably contacted by the University and FOM, and reply promptly to emails and other communications.
- Be punctual and notify where this is not possible.
- Meet deadlines, and be accountable for completing the given tasks on time.
- Abide by the academic integrity policies of the university and do not plagiarize another's work or research.
- Complete documents accurately and truthfully.
- Do not abuse fellow students or colleagues on social media platforms.
- Academic Honesty: Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. Keeping unauthorized material at examinations, copying at examinations, or plagiarizing the work of others in reports, assignments, or theses are strictly prohibited and disciplinary action would be taken against the violators.
- Be aware of the By-laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to the examinations conducted by the FOM/SUSL and strictly abide by those.
- Bring to the notice of the authorities any incapacity of yours, if it affects the health of the patients and colleagues.
- If any circumstance (e.g., illness) prevents you from attending course work notify the relevant authorities. (e.g., the University Medical Officer in the case of illness and the Deputy or Assistant registrar in the case of other circumstances)
- Be aware of the Acts of Parliament, By-laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to ragging, and refrain from either indulging in or abetting (explicitly or implicitly) any form of ragging (physical, verbal, or psychological) both in and out of the university.
- Look after the facilities and amenities provided by the university and try to hand them over to future students in good condition.
- Help the authorities to keep the university (including hostels) and hospital environment clean.
- Safeguarding the properties and the Environment of the Faculty- It is the duty and the responsibility of the students to protect the properties of the faculty and its environment and keep it clean and tidy. Students are not permitted to paste posters and notices on the walls of the faculty. They are expected to display posters and notices on notice boards or in other places designated for that purpose with the permission of the Dean.
- Be aware that a minimum of 80% attendance is required at practical, tutorials, small group discussions, and other defined activities, to be eligible to sit for continuous assessments or end-of-course assessments.
- Be aware that students are required to have 100% attendance for the clinical appointments. Those absenting themselves due to sickness, or any other valid reason should obtain the

approval of the supervising consultant. If a medical certificate is submitted, it should be approved by the University Medical Officer.

- Follow the laid down procedure to obtain a leave of absence from academic activities.

1.1.17.1 Medical Leave - Any student who is unable to attend classes or clinical appointments or sit an examination due to ill health should meet the UMO. If the student is too ill to travel, he/she should inform the UMO within 2 days via telephone or letter and submit a medical certificate to the UMO within 3 days of the last date of absence. If the student has been hospitalized this period could be extended up to 3 weeks from the last date on leave. If necessary, the UMO will arrange a medical board to consider students' requests for medical leave.

1.1.17.2 Special Leave- Students who intend to request a special leave of absence from academic activities should fill out the 'Special Leave Application Form' available at the Dean's office (? Download from the Faculty website) and submit it to the Dean with the other supporting documents and recommendations as per the requirements indicated in the application form.

Be aware of the law of the land and always abide by it.

2. Maintain a professional appearance and demeanor and comply with the recommended Dress Code.

Students are expected to be well-groomed and dressed in a manner appropriate for the medical profession: in the faculty, at the Hospital, and at any other institution they visit for academic purposes. The following dress code is approved by the faculty for medical students.

1) Recommended dress code for males

- Trousers and collared shirts in sober colours
- Shoes and socks
- Hair-beard cut neatly/clean-shaven

2) Recommended dress code for females

- Blouse/shirt and skirt/dress pants
- Saree
- Formal footwear
- Hair - short or plaited/ponytail/'bun'

3) The following are strictly prohibited.

- T-shirts, shorts, trousers with extra outside pockets
- Caps, sports shoes, rubber slippers
- Extreme hairstyles and hair colours
- Revealing cloths.
- Full face cover, when participating in any teaching/learning activity and examinations.

3. Maintain personal wellbeing

- Attend to your health and well-being.
- Acknowledge that your physical and psychological health impacts your ability to function in your role with patients and staff promptly seek appropriate assistance and notify the student counsellor or Dean.
- Lead a healthy life by example, by refraining from unhealthy lifestyle practices, e.g. smoking, alcohol, sedentary lifestyle, promiscuity, drug abuse
- Be aware that abuse of substances (including alcohol) impacts health and fitness to practice, and may cross the boundaries of legality, which becomes a professional conduct issue.
- Consumption of alcohol and smoking at Faculty premises and in hostels is strictly prohibited.
- Comply with appropriate health-testing requirements as advised by the University and the Ministry of Health.

4. Hold a positive attitude to learning

- Commit to continued learning and the development of skills.
- Be prepared to seek and respond to constructive feedback on your performance.
- Identify barriers that impede your learning and notify your academic supervisor/mentor.
- Show respect and observe social norms in working with human cadavers, human tissue, and animal tissue.
- Engage in self-reflection to enable you to identify your learning needs.
- Actively engage to make the most of educational and clinical opportunities to extend your knowledge and further your skills with appropriate support and supervision.
- Care for your peers, provide support in learning opportunities and work collaboratively and respectfully in all situations.
- Contribute to improving teaching by completing feedback as requested by course organizers and reporting any difficulties as they arise through the appropriate channels
- Always seek feedback from tutors, superiors, peers, and even juniors/subordinates, and be prepared to receive criticism with an open mind.
- Be positive towards lifelong learning and continuing professional development and assimilate the necessary skills required for the same

5. Interactions with patients and their families

- Treat patients and their families respectfully and considerately
- Respect the worldviews, values, and cultural beliefs of patients and their family members.
- Do not impose your cultural values, beliefs, and practices on patients or discriminate against any person based on age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, creed, political affiliation, or economic, social, or health status.
- Respect the dignity, privacy, and the right of patients to exercise control over their bodies.
- Respect the autonomy of patients.

- Ensure your presentation and attire are appropriate to enable effective and respectful interaction with patients and family
- Obtaining informed consent for your interaction with patients: While your clinical supervisor is responsible for obtaining consent for your interaction with patients, in many circumstances you may still need to ask patients for their permission for their one-on-one interaction with you.
- Ensure that patients and their substitute decision-makers (where applicable) are aware of your role and the purpose and nature of any proposed interaction with them as a medical student.
- Acknowledge the level of your skills, experience, and knowledge, and not represent yourself as more competent or qualified than you are, and correct any such misunderstandings that arise.
- Acknowledge and accept that patients may refuse or withdraw consent to interact with you at any stage, without any compromise to their health care.
- Recognize the role of family in supporting the patient's decision-making processes.
- Be aware that the patient's needs and well-being should come first when learning clinical skills.
- And take the seriousness of the illness of the patient into consideration, before deciding to practice clinical skills ensuring minimal discomfort to the patient.
- Whenever possible Practice clinical skills on patients after practicing under simulated conditions
- Do not exploit any patient, whether physically, sexually, emotionally, or financially
- Do not give advice or provide information to patients, family, or the general public, that is beyond your level of knowledge and expertise. When asked for such a comment, you will direct that person to an appropriate professional.
- Do not initiate any form of treatment, except under supervision or in an emergency where no one more able or qualified is available to provide timely intervention and recognize the limits of your knowledge and skills.
- Maintaining patient confidentiality: Patient information is confidential. Disclosure without patients' permission or other legally acceptable justification is inconsistent with the trust required in medical practice and has the potential to cause harm and/or distress. Patient information may be discussed with peers and professional staff who are directly involved in the care of that patient, and, on occasion with colleagues, in a setting where confidentiality is protected.
- Hold all patient information in confidence, including after patients have ended treatment or died.
- Respect patients' right to determine who should be provided with their personal information.
- Do not remove or copy patient-related material without specific permission, and handle such material in accordance with
- Ensure that all your documents and images containing patient information are de-identified, kept in a secure place in a way that prevents unauthorized access, and securely destroyed when no longer required.

- Be aware of the limited circumstances in which breaches of confidentiality may be justified or required.
- Do not access patient information unless you are involved in their care, or have a legitimate reason and permission from those authorized to give such permission.
- Demonstrate respect for patients when using social media or sharing communications. Do not use mobile electronic devices to record and store patient images or any other identifiable patient information; never use E-mail, electronic messaging, or social media to share information about patients.
- Always take the patient's special consent before intimate examinations
- Always have a chaperone when practicing physical examination and performing procedures on a patient of the opposite gender
- Perform only the procedures that you are confident in a patient
- Always seek appropriate supervision if you think necessary, especially when performing invasive procedures
- Take all precautions necessary to minimize both discomfort and complications/side effects to the patient when performing procedures

6. Develop language skills to speak the language of the patient

- If you cannot speak the language of the patient, always find an alternative when speaking with a patient who speaks a language that you are not conversant with
- Practice and develop non-verbal communication, as much as verbal communication
- Be aware that written communication (documentation) is as important as oral communication. And develop the habit of making detailed notes and documenting details
- Seek every opportunity to provide health-related advice to patients
- Reckon that if you are granted special privileges, they should not be at the expense of the law and order of the country
- Abide by the rules of the profession as spelled out by the SLMC and other authorities
- Be aware that attending to a patient enters you (and your supervising authority) into a legal contract with the patient
- All types of records could be legal documents; hence know how to use them
- Follow the legal requirements when dealing with minors and mentally ill
- Never use abusive language either to patients or to members of the healthcare

The clinical work with sick persons and attending to procedures, the medical students are at risk of acquiring infections as well as getting injured. It is considered the student's responsibility to observe hygienic practices during clinical training, practicing universal precautions when appropriate, and acquiring required skills in handling instruments and working with sick persons which would help to minimize the risk of getting infected or injured.

Do not refrain from engaging in activities the medical students are expected to do as part of the training, quoting the risks inherent to the profession, which is considered unethical and unprofessional.

7. Always respect other members of the healthcare team

- Appreciate the role of the medical student in a healthcare team and abide by it
- Be prepared to take different roles in a healthcare team as appropriate
- When visiting patients' homes take every precaution to minimize any inconvenience to the patient and the family

8. Accepting responsibilities to the profession

- Report matters of serious concern in a timely and professional manner, including those which may impact on immediate patient safety, to those with the authority to act.
- Be respectful and careful when using social networking sites or public forums.
- Do not exploit your role as a medical student for personal gain.
- Uphold the dignity of the medical profession at all times by not entering into illegal or unethical activities
- Never criticize another professional in an inappropriate forum
- Never enter into intimate relationships with patients
- Never enter into intimate relationships with other members of the healthcare team during working hours

9. Relationship with staff and colleagues

- Show respect to all members of the health care team and ancillary staff.
- Show respect to teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Show respect to simulated patients, volunteers, and peers.
- Do not exploit your peers, or others, particularly those in a vulnerable or more junior position to benefit yourself.

10. Planning, critical thinking, and analysis including research

- Always view problems broadly and as entities that have more than one solution
- Appreciate that each issue or event may have several explanations and implications
- Do not jump to conclusions without adequate consideration of all possibilities
- View evidence critically and try to find out its applicability to the local context
- Adhere to all the ethical principles in the appropriate national and international guidelines when involved in research

References;

- Student Code of Conduct - Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo
- Medical Student Code of Conduct – School of Clinical Medicine, University of Cambridge
- Code of Professional Conduct for Medical Students at the Universities of Auckland and Otago
- Code of Student Conduct- Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

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