

## Personal and Professional Interactions

*In interactions with colleagues (including academic staff, health care and administrative staff) you should:*

- Behave in a courteous and professional way.
- Recognise and respect the contribution of all staff.
- Work together with colleagues in a way that best serves patients' interests.

## Dress and Presentation

*As a medical student you should:*

- Be aware of and respect cultural differences in dress and presentation.
- Ensure that your attire (clothes, accessories and any jewellery) is suitably professional and is appropriate to the environment.
- Adhere to the highest standards of personal hygiene.
- Wear a name/identity badge at all times during your clinical practice.
- Comply with all medical schools or clinical sites requirements, regarding suitable clothing for the appropriate setting.
- Expose your face fully to patients and their families, teachers and colleagues in the (non-surgical) hospital, primary and community environment. This is in the interests of good communication and interaction.

## Competence

*As a medical student you should:*

- Understand and respect the limits of your competence and responsibility.
- Seek advice or assistance when your level of experience is inadequate to deal with a situation on your own.
- Never recommend medical treatment, or any particular action, that might be interpreted by patients or others as medical advice.
- Be willing to undertake appropriate examination – which may include physical contact – of any patient.
- Reflect and learn from your experiences in the academic and clinical settings.

## Health, Medication, Drug and Alcohol Misuse

*As a medical student you should:*

- Safeguard your own health; this includes ensuring that you have appropriate vaccination/immunisation.
- Disclose to an appropriate academic or clinical adviser if you have a relevant long term medical condition / disability e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, severe allergies.
- Never consume alcohol or recreational drugs - legal or illegal - at a time when it could impair your reason or judgement or otherwise impact upon your professional responsibilities.
- Seek advice from a pharmacist and/or registered medical practitioner regarding the potential impact of any substance or treatment that might impair your reason or judgement or otherwise impact upon your professional responsibilities.
- Inform an appropriate academic or clinical adviser and where necessary refrain from contact with patients during the duration of a treatment that might impair your reason or judgement or otherwise impact upon your professional responsibilities.
- Inform an appropriate academic or clinical adviser and where necessary refrain from contact with patients if you are being adversely affected by a major life event e.g. bereavement.
- Never advise on the use of any medication, or attempt to prescribe or distribute medication.
- Understand and adhere to the law on illegal drugs, which makes the use or distribution of illegal drugs unacceptable under any circumstances and at any time.

## Contact

### Education and Training Section Medical Council

Kingram House, Kingram Place, Dublin 2.

Telephone: 00353 1 4983133

Fax: 00353 1 4983155

Email: [educationandtraining@mcirl.ie](mailto:educationandtraining@mcirl.ie)



Comhairle na nDochtúirí Leighis  
Medical Council

# Guidelines for Medical Schools on Ethical Standards and Behaviour appropriate for Medical Students



The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to medical schools and medical students on ethical standards and behaviour appropriate for medical students pursuing a course of study leading to a basic medical qualification.

## Introduction

The function of the Medical Council is to protect the interests of the public by promoting and better ensuring high standards of professional conduct and professional education, training and competence among registered medical practitioners.

Under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, Section 88 (2)(i), the Medical Council has responsibility to prepare and publish guidelines on ethical standards and behaviour appropriate for medical students pursuing a course of study at an approved body, leading to the award of a basic medical qualification.

Medical studies enable students to obtain a degree which will eventually qualify them to work as a doctor. Being a medical student will involve contact with patients in hospital and primary and community-based settings, and this demands a particularly high standard of behaviour.

This leaflet is intended to provide guidance to medical schools and medical students. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, but it seeks to set out elements of good practice, conduct and behaviour and encourage those in medical education to aim for and achieve high standards. It is the Medical Schools that are held accountable for implementation of the Guidelines on Students' Ethical Standards and Behaviour.

Students should also be aware of the contents of the Medical Council's **"Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners"**, which is available on the Council's website at [www.medicalcouncil.ie](http://www.medicalcouncil.ie).

**Note:** Students are not subject to Medical Council Fitness to Practise processes.

## General Behaviour

*As a medical student you should:*

- Behave in an honest and trustworthy way in your professional and personal life.
- Conduct yourself in a way which is appropriate for a future medical practitioner, in accordance with these guidelines.
- Adhere to the rules and regulations, policies and procedures governing the institutions where you study and where you are in contact with patients.
- Adhere to the rules and regulations, policies and procedures governing plagiarism and falsification of data in any academic and clinical activities.
- Adhere to ethical standards, rules, regulations, policies and procedures governing research.
- Respect the physical infrastructure of academic and clinical settings.

## Confidentiality

*As a medical student you should:*

- Understand and be bound by the principle of confidentiality of patient information.
- Take all reasonable precautions to ensure that any personal information concerning other students and colleagues is kept confidential.
- Ensure that references to patients are anonymised if the information is to be available to those outside the clinical team, unless the patient has given permission otherwise.
- Never discuss patients with other students or professionals outside the academic and/or clinical context.
- Never discuss individual patients – or partners, relatives, and friends of patients – even anonymously, within earshot of the general public.
- Understand that discussion in this context includes, but is not limited to, the following - the use of social networking sites e.g. Facebook, Twitter, My Space, Bebo, chat rooms, texts, emails etc.

## Personal and Professional Interactions

*In your interactions with patients, you should:*

- Remember that your paramount responsibility at all times is to act in the best interests of patients.
- Treat all patients with courtesy and respect for their dignity.
- Respect the right of a patient to decline to be seen by a medical student.
- Understand that patients should be offered the presence of a chaperone where an intimate examination is proposed.
- Identify yourself by name, and as a medical student to patients and to patients' relatives, friends and others. You must also get permission from patients before you interview or examine them.
- Address adult patients formally, using their title and surname, unless invited by the patient to do otherwise.
- When you are seeking verbal consent from patients for a minor procedure (e.g. obtaining a blood sample, taking an Electrocardiogram), ensure that it is a procedure with which you are very familiar and can explain fully to the patient. If in doubt about your understanding of the procedure, you should seek advice from your supervisor.
- Listen to patients and respect their views.
- Treat all patients equally, irrespective of the patient's lifestyle, personal circumstances, culture, age, beliefs, ethnicity, country of origin, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, social status, or economic worth.
- Not attempt to impose your personal views on patients, their relatives and friends.
- Never abuse a patient's trust, e.g. by establishing an improper personal, financial or sexual relationship with a patient or with their close relatives.
- Treat a patient's partner, relatives, friends and others sensitively and respectfully.
- Inform an appropriate senior member of the staff of the academic or clinical setting if you believe that patient safety is being threatened or compromised by an incident or practice taking place in an academic or clinical setting; or if you believe that patient safety is being threatened or compromised by a colleague's performance or behaviour.
- If an adverse event occurs, you must inform your supervisor without delay.