



## **Conflict of Interest in Student Assessment Policy**

Office of Accountability:	Associate Dean, MD Program, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry
Office of Administrative Responsibility:	MD Program, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry
Approver:	MD Curriculum & Program Committee (MDCPC)
Scope:	These procedures apply to instances where undergraduate students registered in the Doctor of Medicine (MD) program at the University of Alberta, irrespective of the geographically distributed site to which they are currently assigned, as well as faculty and staff identify instances of perceived or real conflict of interest in assessment.

### **OVERVIEW**

This policy addresses element 11.1 (Academic Advising) of the Committee on Accreditation of Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS), which states:

A medical school has an effective system of academic advising in place for medical students that integrates the efforts of faculty members, directors of required learning experiences, and student affairs staff with its counseling and tutorial services and ensures that medical students can obtain academic counseling from individuals who have no role in making assessment or advancement decisions about them.

### **OVERSIGHT**

The Associate Dean, MD Program is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the *Conflict of Interest in Student Assessment* policy.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that medical students can obtain academic counseling from individuals who have no role in making assessment or advancement decisions about them.



## **POLICY**

Faculty members and health professionals who provide academic counselling to a University of Alberta medical student must have no involvement in assessing their academic performance or participate in decisions regarding their promotion and/or graduation.

In the event that a health professional has provided academic counselling to a medical student and is now in a position to assess the student, the following process should be followed if the conflict of interest is identified before an assessment has begun, during an assessment, or after the grade for the assessment is released:

### **Proactive Disclosure**

The MD Program will inform preceptors of the *Procedure for Conflict of Interest During Student Assessment* on an annual basis.

Preceptors are expected to review the student lists provided to them by the MD Program Office well in advance of assessing medical students in courses, modules, or rotations. Preceptors should proactively disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest (e.g. personal, monetary, etc.) pertaining to medical student assessments to the course administrator.

In advance of being assessed by an instructor or preceptor in a course or clerkship, medical students should proactively disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest pertaining to academic assessment to the course/clerkship administrator.

For forms of assessment in which there may be potential for subjectivity in the assessment (e.g. marking a short answer question, scoring an observation of clinical skills), the course administrator will arrange for an alternative assessor to the best of their ability. For objective forms of assessment (example: multiple choice questions) the assessment shall proceed as planned.

### **Reactive Disclosure**

Preceptors who identify a perceived or actual conflict of interest (e.g. personal, monetary, etc.) while assessing a medical student must cease the assessment immediately and inform the course or clerkship coordinator.

Medical students who identify a perceived or actual conflict of interest while being assessed must discretely inform the preceptor, who in turn shall cease the assessment. Both parties must inform the course or clerkship administrator of the occurrence.



## Post Assessment Disclosure

Medical students who identify a perceived or actual conflict of interest after an assessment is complete (e.g. post assessment) will be assigned the grade submitted by the preceptor. In this case, students who are dissatisfied with their assigned grade can follow the process described in the regulations described in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry's [Academic Appeals](#) policy.

## DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.	
CACMS Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools	The Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS), ensures that Canadian medical faculties' MD programs meet the quality expected when producing tomorrow's doctors. Medical schools demonstrating compliance are afforded accreditation, a necessary condition for a program's graduates to be licensed as physicians.
Conflict of Interest	<p>A conflict of interest is a situation in which financial or other personal considerations have the potential to compromise or bias professional judgement and objectivity. An apparent conflict of interest is one in which it is reasonable to think that the professional's judgement is likely to be compromised. A potential conflict of interest may develop into an actual conflict of interest. A conflict of interest exists whether or not decisions are affected by personal interest. A conflict of interest implies only the potential for bias and not a likelihood.</p> <p>Examples of conflict of interest include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting gifts, benefits or favours from students, instructors, faculty or preceptors.</li> <li>• Supervising or evaluating a student who is a member of the immediate family or with whom there exists or has recently existed an intimate or personal relationship.</li> <li>• Participating in decisions, interviews or assessment of candidates for admission to the MD Program where one or more candidates is a member of his or her immediate family, or a person with whom there exists or has recently</li> </ul>



	<p>existed a friendship, intimate, personal or financial relationship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directing a course, year or term where one or more students is a member of the immediate family.</li> <li>• Supervision or evaluation of a student by a member of the Learner Advocacy &amp; Wellness (LAW) Office where there exists or has recently existed a counselling/advising relationship.</li> </ul> <p>Adapted from Queen’s University Undergraduate Medical Education <i>Standard Operating Procedures Concerning Conflicts of Interest for Undergraduate Medical Education Faculty and Students</i> (August 12, 2016)</p>
OAW Office of Advocacy & Wellbeing	The Office of Advocacy & Wellness (OAW) in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta looks after issues pertaining to the health and well-being of faculty and learners. The office also advocates on their behalf.
MD Program	The MD Program in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry at the University of Alberta oversees the four-year program leading to the degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD).

## **RELATED LINKS**

[Boundary Violations: Personal](#) (Standard of Practice)

## **APPROVAL HISTORY**

APPROVER	STATUS	DATE
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved	19 April 2018
Dr. Tracey Hillier, Associate Dean	Edits approved to ensure consistent formatting for other policies and change the name of LAW to OAW	2 June 2020



# UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved	24 June 2021
MD Curriculum & Program Committee	Approved Reviewed as part of an ongoing quality improvement process.	16 November 2023