



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Medical Student Code of Professional Conduct



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Overview

As a medical student you are now considered a doctor in-training. As such you will have privileged access to people and their health information. With this access comes responsibilities and expectations. Understanding and accepting these from the very beginning will help you establish an ethical approach to medical practice. It will help lay the foundations for a trusting doctor-patient relationship in your later student years, and in your subsequent career.

This guide has been adapted from Monash University's Code of Professional Conduct for Medical Students at Monash University (June 2017) and maps to the [*Good Medical Practice: A Code of Conduct for Australian Doctors*](#) in Australia document published by Ahpra in October 2020. *Links to the specific sections referenced in the Ahpra document will be listed next to each statement.*

This guide has been contextualised for The University of Queensland and operates within the University's [Student Code of Conduct](#) and Fitness to Practise [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#), in conjunction with current Acts, Regulations and Codes of Practice that you will need to become familiar with during your training. These include the:

- [Good Medical Practice: A code of conduct for Australian Doctors \(Ahpra, Oct 2020\)](#),
- *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Queensland) Act 2009, Information Privacy Act 2009,*
- *AMA Code of Ethics 2004, and*
- *Information released by the Australian Medical Council Ltd.*

Please read through this guide carefully as you will be expected to be conversant with the expectations and obligations it outlines during all components of your medical training.

Notes:

1. The term 'will' indicates that the associated statement sets a minimum standard that is expected of all medical students.
2. These standards apply in all settings, including all electronic communications or 'virtual' patient interactions. Special care may be needed to ensure patient confidentiality is respected, especially on social networking sites.



Summary statement

“Doctors (in training) have a professional responsibility to be familiar with good medical practice and to apply the guidance it contains.

This code will be used:

- *to support individual doctors (in training) in the challenging task of providing good medical care and fulfilling their professional roles, and to provide a framework to guide professional judgement.*
- *to assist the Medical Board of Australia in its role of protecting the public, by setting and maintaining standards of medical practice against which a doctor’s professional conduct can be evaluated.*

- *as an additional resource for a range of uses that aim to improve the culture of medicine and support medical professionalism in the Australian health system.*

The code can also be used in medical education; in orientation, induction and supervision of junior doctors and international medical graduates; and by administrators and policy makers in hospitals, health services and other institutions. The code applies in all settings. It is valid for technology-based patient consultations (including online/remote prescribing), for traditional face-to-face consultations and applies to how doctors use social media.” - Good Medical Practice: A code of conduct for Australian Doctors (Ahpra, Oct 2020)

Below are the ten core professional value statements grouped into four domains of professional practice:

Domain	Responsibilities and expectations
1. Interactions with Patients and their families	<p><i>As a medical student I will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect patients and their families • Not exploit patients or their families • Obtain informed consent for my interactions with patients <p>Appreciate the limits of my role</p>
2. Personal and Professional values	<p><i>As a medical student I will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain patient confidentiality • Research ethically <p>Maintain my personal wellbeing</p>
3. Relationships with Staff and Colleagues	<p><i>As a medical student I will:</i></p> <p>Respect staff and colleagues</p>
4. Commitment to professional standards and continuing improvement in self and others	<p><i>As a medical student I will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a positive attitude to learning <p>Accept wider professional responsibilities</p>

1. Interactions with patients and their families

1.1 Respecting patients and their families and carers

As a medical student, I will:

- Respect the dignity, privacy, and bodily integrity of patients. 3.2.1
- Understand my own culture, values and beliefs and manage their possible influence on my interactions with patients. 2.1
- Be accountable for culturally safe and respectful practice by not imposing my own cultural values, beliefs and practices on patients or discriminate against any person on the basis (for example) of age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, creed, political affiliation, economic, social or health status. 2.1, 3.4.3, 4.7, 4.8
- Be accountable for culturally safe and respectful practice, free of racism, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and recognise they have inhabited and cared for this land as the first peoples of Australia for millennia. 4.7.1, 4.7.2
- Respect the autonomy of patients. 3.4, 4.2.2
- Treat patients and their families politely and considerately. 4.2.1, 4.10
- Ensure my appearance and dress are appropriate to enable effective and respectful interaction with patients and families.
- Maintain clear and accurate medical records where I have been asked to document clinical notes and ensure these have been reviewed and signed by my supervisor. 12.4, 10.5
- Respect the needs and values of patients and their family members and carers. 4.8, 4.10



1.2 Not exploiting patients or their families

Professional boundaries in medicine are the limits that define the relationship between a doctor and their patient. Professional boundaries are integral to a good doctor–patient relationship. They promote good care for patients and protect both parties. AHPRA 10.2

As a medical student, I will:

- Not exploit any patient, whether physically, sexually, emotionally, or financially. 4.2.6, 10.2.2
I understand that any sexual interaction with a patient is unacceptable.
- Avoid expressing my personal beliefs to patients in ways that exploit their vulnerability or are likely to cause them distress. 10.2.3
- Not abuse the generosity of patients in my pursuit of learning but place concerns for their wellbeing above all else.
- Not exploit my role as a student doctor for personal gain. 4.2.6
- Acknowledge the generosity of patients and be aware of the possible tensions between their wellbeing and my own learning.

1.3 Obtaining informed consent for your interaction with patients

Your clinical supervisor is responsible for obtaining consent for your interaction with patients. AHPRA 12.4

However, you should not assume this has been obtained so always seek patients' permission before an interaction. AHPRA 4.5

As a medical student, I will:

- Always request patients' consent to interact with them and ensure that consent is given freely and without coercion. 4.5.2
- Acknowledge and accept that patients may refuse, or withdraw consent, to interact with me at any stage.
- Always be guided in my actions by ethical and legal standards of behaviour.
- Seek the guidance of my clinical supervisor where patients are unable to consent, for example in the case of a child. 4.6
- Make a special effort to assist the patient to reach the necessary level of understanding, for example where the patient is a child, or when language, illness or other factors interfere. 4.6, 4.9
- Ensure the patient understands that my involvement in the interaction is for educational purposes.
- Ask patients if they have any questions in relation to giving consent and if I am unable to answer them refer the questions to my clinical supervisor/tutor.

1.4 Appreciating the limits of my role

As a medical student, I will:

- Acknowledge the level of my skills, experience, and knowledge, and not represent myself as more competent or qualified than I am and correct any such misunderstandings that arise. 3.2.1

- Not give advice or provide information to patients, family members or the public, which is beyond my level of knowledge and expertise. When asked for such comment, I will direct that person to an appropriate professional.
- Not initiate any form of treatment, except in an emergency where no-one more able or qualified is available to provide timely intervention and recognising the limits of my own knowledge and skills.
- When otherwise approached for assistance, recommend that people seek appropriate professional help.

3.2.1, 3.2.11

3.5





2. Personal and professional values

2.1 Maintaining patient confidentiality

Patient information is confidential. Disclosure in any form, without patient's permission or other legally acceptable justification is a breach of a core ethical principle of medical practice, betrays the trust patients need to have in the medical profession and has the potential to cause harm. ^{AHPRA 4.4}

Patient information may be discussed for educational purposes with health professional staff who are directly involved in the care of that patient and on occasion with colleagues in a setting where confidentiality is protected.

As a medical student, I will:

- Hold all patient information in confidence, including after patients have ended treatment or died. 4.3.3, 4.4.1
- Respect the right of all patients to determine who should be provided with their personal information.
- Not remove or copy patient-related material without explicit permission. 4.3.3
- Ensure that all my documents and images containing patient information are de-identified, kept in a secure place in a way that prevents unauthorised access, and securely destroyed when no longer required.
- Be aware of the limited circumstances in which breaches of confidentiality may be justified or required.
- Not access patient information unless I am involved in their care or have a legitimate reason and permission from those authorised to give such permission. 4.3.3
- Not access or share patient information on social networking sites or in public forums. 5.2.3
- Ensure that my use of digital communications (e.g. email and text messages) and social media is consistent with my ethical and legal obligations to protect patient confidentiality and privacy and the University and Medical Board's social media guidance. 4.4.6, 5.2.3

2.2 Research ethically

As a medical student undertaking or associated with research activities I will:

- Adhere to all the ethical principles in the appropriate national guidelines and seek ethical approval from the appropriate research ethics committee.

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2.3 Maintaining personal wellbeing

As a doctor (in training), it is important for you to maintain your own health and wellbeing. This includes seeking an appropriate work-life balance and maintaining your own physical and mental health. ^{AHPRA 11.1}

As a medical student, I will:

- Acknowledge that my physical and mental health impacts on my ability to function in my role with patients and staff. In the event of illness or impairment that interferes with this role, I will seek appropriate assistance. 11.2.2
- Register with a General practitioner so I have a trusted support system in place if or when it is needed. 11.2.1
- Seek help if I am suffering stress, burnout, anxiety, or depression. 11.2.3
- Maintain my own wellbeing to the level that ensures I can carry out my role. 11.2.1, 11.2.3, 11.2.4, 11.2.6
- Remain aware of the wellbeing of my colleagues and support them to the extent that I am able, to seek help when needed. 11.3.3
- Seek support and/or assistance from an appropriate staff member or student services, including but not limited to the Medical School Student Support Team (MSST), the learning communities, the academic guidance leads, the society heads or course coordinators if I experience feelings of exploitation, victimisation or generalised distress that prevents me studying effectively or fulfilling my clinical responsibilities. 11.2.2, 11.2.3, 11.2.8



3. Relationships with Staff and Colleagues

3.1 Respecting staff and colleagues

Respectful relationships with medical colleagues, other healthcare professionals, team members and patients are essential for safe patient care. ^{AHPRA 5.1}

As a medical student, I will:

- Acknowledge and respect the contribution of doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and all other members of the health care team. 5.2.1
- Communicate clearly, effectively, courteously, respectfully, and promptly with other doctors, students and healthcare professionals caring for the patient. 5.2.2, 5.3.3
- Acknowledge and respect the contribution of teaching and non-teaching staff to my learning.
- Show respect to simulated patients, volunteers, and peers.
- Not exploit my peers, or others, in a vulnerable or more junior position to myself. 5.4
- Hold in confidence information about my peers gathered in learning situations but recognise that there are limited circumstances in which breaches of confidentiality to appropriate persons may be justified.
- Ensure invasive procedures are not practiced on colleagues or my peers unless under exceptional circumstances (e.g., in an emergency). 4.15
- Behave professionally and courteously to colleagues and other practitioners including when using social media. 5.2.3
- Have zero tolerance for racism, discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment. 5.4.6



4. Commitment to professional standards and continuing improvement in self and others

4.1 Holding a positive attitude to learning

Maintaining and developing your knowledge, skills and professional behaviour are core aspects of good medical practice. Regular performance feedback, collaboration with peers and self-reflection are among the cornerstones of lifelong learning. AHPRA 9.1

As a medical student, I will:

- Commit to continued learning and the development of skills. 9.2.1
- Recognise that my learning needs are valid and important.
- Be prepared to seek and respond to constructive feedback on my own performance. 5.4.4, 9.1, 9.2.5

Consistently [participate and engage in](#) teaching activities and placements in line with expectations. 9.2.4

- Consistently notify staff in a proactive and timely manner of any absences.
- Identify any personal barriers for learning opportunities, and notify my Learning Community representative, course coordinator, academic guidance lead, society head or MSST.

Act with [integrity](#) in all learning and assessment situations including the unauthorised use of artificial intelligence, cheating, plagiarism and collusion. 2.1

- Show respect in working with human cadavers and human tissue in accordance with relevant legislation, policies, and procedures.

- [Transplantation and Anatomy Act, 1979 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Criminal Code Act, 1899 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Anatomy Facilities and Programs Governance Policy](#)
- [School of Biomedical Sciences \(SBMS\) Code of Conduct for Use of Donated Human Tissues](#)
- [UQ Body donor program](#)

- Care for my peers, provide support in learning opportunities, and work collaboratively and respectfully in all situations. 5.0
- Be prepared, when called upon, to provide constructive feedback to my peers on their performance.
- Make the most of educational and clinical opportunities to extend my knowledge and further my skills with appropriate support and supervision. 9.2

4.2 Accepting wider professional responsibilities

Doctors have a responsibility to the profession and to the public to maintain high standards of care; this wider responsibility is over and above individual responsibility for their own clinical competence. In professional life, doctors must display a standard of behaviour that warrants the trust and respect of the community. This includes observing and practising the principles of ethical conduct. AHPRA 10.0



As a medical student, I will:

- Report matters of serious concern in a professional manner, including those which may impact on immediate patient safety, to those with the authority to act. 10.3, 11.3.2, 11.3.3
 - *Fitness to Practise [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#)*
 - *Student Integrity and Misconduct [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#)*
 - *Complaints Management [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#)*
 - *Student Grievance Resolution [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#)*
 - *[Ahpra - How to submit a concern](#)*
 - *[Medical School Student Support Team](#)*
 - *[UQ Student Support](#)*
- Not use social networking sites or public forums to raise concerns about an individual. 4.4.6, 5.2.3
- Give judicious, respectful, constructive evaluation and feedback as appropriate on medical education programs, teaching, and non-teaching staff.
- Be aware that alcohol and substance misuse may impact on health and fitness to practise and may cross the boundaries of legality, which becomes a professional [conduct issue](#). 11.2.8, 11.3.2



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