

Clinical and Academic Policy	
	<b>Policy Title</b> Medical Student Standards of Professionalism—Assessment and Remediation
	<b>Policy Number</b> OME-900.15
	<b>Department/Office</b> Office of Medical Education
	<b>Effective Date</b> May 11, 2017
	<b>Last Reviewed</b> October 19, 2023
	<b>Approved By</b> Executive Medical Education Committee
	<b>Approval Date</b> September 18, 2025
	<b>Endorsement</b> Endorsed by WCM-Executive Policy Review Group on September 23, 2025.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish the standards and expectations for Professionalism at the Weill Cornell Medical College (WCMC) and outline procedures for handling reported concerns of Lapses of Professionalism.

## Scope

This policy applies to Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) Workforce Members, as defined in this policy, who are members of the Medical College community (i.e., medical students, MD-PhD students, faculty, staff, residents, etc.).

## Policy

Professionalism in medicine is essential for medical students, physicians and all members of the health care team. *Professionalism* is broader than just “ethical behavior” or “personal comportment.” It includes a larger overarching “construct” that includes other elements. However, central to any construct of Professionalism are responsibility, integrity, and respect for others. WCM expects that its students, faculty, staff and administrators will foster an environment characterized by Professionalism at all times in all settings and locations.

### A. Medical Student Professionalism Competencies

The WCMC Program in Medical Education has two core competencies with constituent learning objectives that comprise the construct of Professionalism:

#### 1. Professionalism (P)

- P-1. Maintain a professional comportment, while demonstrating responsibility, integrity, empathy, reliability, and attention to personal wellness.
- P-2. Demonstrate the ethical principles that govern the doctor-patient relationship, medical decision-making, and healthcare delivery.
- P-3. Provide compassionate, unbiased care to patients from diverse backgrounds.

#### 2. Interpersonal and Communication Skills (ICS)

- ICS-1. Communicate with patients and their families, counsel them in an effective, caring, and culturally competent manner.
- ICS-2. Communicate, consult, collaborate, and work effectively as a member or leader of healthcare teams.

For purposes of assessing student Professionalism, WCMC defines professionalism as demonstrated competency in the following four domains that derive from the learning objectives:

1. Responsibility, Integrity and Ethics

*Responsibility* includes such attributes as attendance at required classes and clinical encounters; reliable and timely performance of educational and clinical responsibilities, including completion of required course evaluations and health screening surveys and requirements; accurate, honest reporting of information; adhering to all medical college policies and personal comportment that includes proper dress, grooming, hygiene and ethical, emotionally-modulated conduct.

2. Self-Improvement

*Self-Improvement* includes the ability to accept constructive criticism and modify behavior appropriately.

3. Relationships with Patients

*Relationships with patients* includes a sensitivity to patient needs and perspectives that is a cornerstone for building rapport, patient advocacy (including putting the patient's needs above one's own) and maintenance of confidentiality and decorum.

4. Relationships with Colleagues, the Healthcare Team, and Systems

*Relationships with colleagues, the health care team and systems* include respect for and cooperation with colleagues from different health care professions and the appropriate use of medical records and the internet.

These domains can be further parsed into the attributes that students are expected to demonstrate as part of each domain in all settings. Students are expected to adhere to the professionalism standards in the various settings (i.e., classroom and learning environments, patient care settings, research settings, social settings, web/internet, etc.) and non-WCM locations that they pass through during the medical education program.

Students are also expected to adhere to any new University and WCM policies that are designed to address new situations or circumstances (e.g., public health emergencies such as COVID or safety concerns such as political unrest or criminal activity).

## **B. Standards of Conduct – WCMC Community**

In addition to Cornell University's Policy 4.6 – *Standards of Ethical Conduct*, WCMC requires that Workforce Members of the Medical College community shall abide by the fundamental standards of conduct in their interactions with each other. Membership in the Medical College community for students is more than an academic commitment; it connotes a willingness by the student to act as a responsible medical professional. Participation in the Medical College community by faculty is more than instructing the next generation of medical professionals; it is a commitment to serve as a mentor and role model of the standards of the medical profession. Inherent in the concept of a medical professional is an underlying integrity and ethical foundation that defines the tone and culture of the teacher-learner environment at the Medical College.

Workforce Members of the Medical College community are responsible for upholding the integrity and ethical standards of the community to the fullest extent possible.

### C. The WCMC Standards of Conduct -- Students

The standards of conduct listed below set forth general responsibilities of WCMC students in the academic environment. Adherence to the standards of conducts serves as a benchmark for assessing student Professionalism. The full range of responsible conduct cannot be set forth in any policy document. Accordingly, students should view these enumerated responsibilities as an illustration and should strive to comply with both the letter and the spirit of these standards of conduct.

This section also describes the guidelines and policies that will apply when there has been a failure to comply with the standards.

For students to be permitted to continue their studies at the Medical College, students must demonstrate a range of skills and abilities, such as good judgment, the ability to synthesize and apply knowledge, and evidence that they are capable of becoming safe and effective physicians.

Students are bound by the standards of conduct, are responsible for understanding the expectations as it relates to the standards of conduct and shall demonstrate Professionalism at all times during the course of their medical education and academic coursework and in representation of WCM or Cornell University.

Additionally, reported misconduct that arises as a result of a student's personal behavior (i.e., misconduct occurring outside the scope of WCMC, off-WCM premises, on social media or on the internet) that is sufficiently egregious and/or potentially detrimental to the best interests of WCMC, WCM, or the university will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Medical Education Deans. As such, WCMC reserves the right to take appropriate corrective/remedial action, up to and including dismissal from the Medical College.

WCMC defines Professionalism as demonstrated competency in the following four domains below. Specific areas/examples of conduct that demonstrates competency in each of these four domains include, but are not limited to:

1. Responsibility, Integrity, and Ethics
  - Attendance at required classes and clinical encounters
  - Reliable and timely performance of educational and clinical responsibilities
  - Accurate and honest reporting of information
  - Personal comportment: dress, grooming, hygiene, conduct
2. Self-Improvement
  - Accepting constructive criticism
  - Modifying behaviors appropriately
3. Relationships with Patients
  - Establishing rapport
  - Sensitivity to patient needs and perspectives
  - Advocacy
  - Confidentiality and decorum
4. Relationships with colleagues, the healthcare team and systems
  - Respect for, and cooperation with, all colleagues
  - Appropriate use of medical records

Examples of student conduct that may potentially be considered a Lapse in Professionalism include, but are not limited to:

- knowingly or carelessly representing the work of others as one's own;
- using or giving unauthorized assistance in any academic work;

- restricting the use of material used to study in a manner prejudicial to the interest of other students;
- purposely misleading or giving false information;
- falsifying or fabricating information/data;
- cheating; committing a breach of academic and/or professional integrity;
- repetitively or egregiously failing to fulfill professional requirements and responsibilities during one's medical school tenure;
- committing an act of physical abuse or violence of any kind;
- sexual, or other prohibited forms of, harassment;
- sharing confidential or inappropriate information (including but not limited to, photos, images, text or video) on the internet or any form of electronic media;
- accessing, using, or disclosing confidential or protected health information without proper authorization;
- being repeatedly absent, unexcused, from a required course;
- failing to respond in a timely way to communications (phone calls, emails or other correspondence) from the administration, faculty, course leadership or their representatives; and
- other conduct, whether or not in representation of WCMC, WCM, or the university, that deviates from the standards of conduct outlined in this policy, or applicable WCM and university policies.

#### D. Duty to Report

Any WCM or WCMC Workforce Member (i.e., faculty, a student, or group of students, resident, etc.) knowing of any situation in which a student may have violated any of the standards of conduct set forth in this policy is responsible for reporting any such information in writing to the Senior Associate Dean for Education.

WCMC students may report instances of known or suspected Lapses in Professionalism by a non-student Workforce Member (i.e., faculty, staff, residents, etc.) to the Teacher Learner Committee (TLC). For additional guidance, please refer to WCM Policy OME-900.16 – *Teaching-Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment Policy*.

### Definitions

**Lapse in Professionalism:** A student's conduct that either: (i) deviates from the standards of conduct as outlined in this policy, or (ii) fails to demonstrate sufficient professional attributes.

**Professionalism:** The consistent demonstration of behaviors that exemplify dignity for others, commitment to ethical practice, and dedication to attitudes and actions that create a safe, positive and productive environment for learning, teaching, innovation, research, and clinical care.

**Sufficiently Egregious:** Actions or behaviors that are harmful enough to significantly impact the professional environment, patient care, or the integrity of the healthcare profession.

**Workforce Members:** Faculty; Staff; Students; Trainees; and other persons whose conduct, in the performance of work for WCM, is under the direction and control of WCM, whether or not they are compensated by WCM.

### Procedure

#### A. Significant Lapses in Professionalism

When a student's conduct, while matriculated at the Medical College, raises a question about his or her

suitability for the practice of medicine, upon the recommendation of the Promotion & Graduation (P&G) Committee, the Senior Associate Dean for Education shall appoint an *ad hoc* committee of faculty to review the matter. The *ad hoc* committee is composed of not less than two senior faculty members and is appointed by the Dean at the request of the Senior Associate Dean for Education. The *ad hoc* committee is charged and briefed on the circumstances of the case by the Senior Associate Dean for Education. The *ad hoc* committee determines the scope, manner and extent of its review, consistent with the information provided by the Senior Associate Dean (Education) and the P&G Committee. The *ad hoc* Committee conducts a thorough investigation of the facts of the case with the assistance of the relevant WCMC administrative offices and prepares a report with its findings and recommendations.

The student involved receives, in writing, a notice of the request for the appointment of the *ad hoc* committee, the membership of the *ad hoc* committee, and the details of the concerns under consideration by the *ad hoc* committee regarding the student's suitability for the practice of medicine.

The student has the right to appear before the *ad hoc* committee to present his or her position on the claims raised and his or her continued suitability. The student may be accompanied by an advisor (such as a family member, faculty member, and/or counsel) who may assist the student but will not be a participant in the proceeding before the *ad hoc* committee; the student will remain responsible for acting on his or her behalf in the process.

The *ad hoc* committee provides the Senior Associate Dean with a report of its findings and recommendations.

These recommendations are reviewed and acted on by the P&G Committee which may adopt, reject or modify the *ad hoc* committee's recommendations, or request that the *ad hoc* committee conduct further review. The Senior Associate Dean for Education informs the student of the decision of the P&G Committee. The student has the right to appeal the decision to the Appeals Committee.

## **B. Assessing Professionalism**

WCMC expects that all medical students will demonstrate professional behavior in all four domains at all times. The faculty will evaluate student professionalism in each of the four domains at every course assessment, as pertinent to the course goals and objectives. The faculty who are typically in the best position to evaluate professionalism are those who work closely with students in small group or preceptor sessions in the foundational years, in health care teams during the clerkships and as mentors on research projects during the Area of Concentration course. There are specific sections on many rating forms in each required course where faculty are asked to assess a student's Professionalism either by rating, narrative comments or both. In addition, faculty and residents are also asked four "screening" questions (See Appendix A) about a student's Professionalism based on the four domains described above.

## **C. Identifying Lapses in Professionalism**

A Lapse in Professionalism is defined as:

1. A deviation from the standards of conduct; OR
2. Insufficient demonstration of professional attributes.

*Lapses* typically refer to a student's failure to adhere to policies that govern professional standards as described above (e.g., academic policies in the Student Handbook, patient care policies, compliance policies, and other institutional policies, etc.).

*Insufficient demonstration of professional attributes* is typically noted on faculty or resident rating forms and indicates that a student has not met a competency standard for medical education program learning objectives ("Professionalism" and "Interpersonal and Communication Skills").

A Lapse in Professionalism might be observed or suspected by anyone in the WCM community. This could include a faculty member, resident, staff, administrator, other health professional, patient, or fellow student. Likewise, a lapse may occur in an academic, clinical, research, or social settings, including the use of the internet.

While any single incident may have greater or lesser importance, WCMC also identifies four levels of lapses in professionalism, with increasing degrees of significance:

- Level 1: Isolated incident
- Level 2: Pattern of incidents
- Level 3: Continued pattern of incidents despite specific intervention
- Level 4: Continued pattern of incidents; unable to correct behavior reliably

#### **D. Protocols for Student with an Observed or Suspected Lapse in Professionalism**

##### **a. If a lapse is observed or suspected within the WCMC curriculum:**

1. The course director assesses the incident.
2. If the initial assessment suggests that a lapse in professionalism may have occurred, the course director meets with the student.
3. If after meeting with a student the course director confirms a Lapse in Professionalism has occurred, the course director completes a Professionalism Evaluation Report (PR).\*\*
4. The course director creates a plan of action with the assistance of the Assistant Dean for Student Professional Development in the Office of Student Affairs. This could include:
  - a. Monitoring the student's future behavior more closely
  - b. Input into the student's course assessment and grade\*
  - c. Direct observation of the student
  - d. Standardized patient assessment
  - e. Requiring a written reflection essay or literature review
  - f. Referring the student to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs or the Senior Associate Dean for Education
  - g. Referring the student to medical or mental health services
5. The completed form is submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs.

\*Note that a single egregious instance of unprofessionalism or an unremediated pattern of unprofessionalism are grounds for a non-passing ("Marginal" or "Fail") grade, and, if severe may be grounds for dismissal from the Medical College. When remediating a grade of "Marginal" or "Fail" due to professionalism issues, additional professionalism issues are grounds for a non-passing ("Marginal" or "Fail") grade.

##### **b. If a lapse is observed or suspected outside the WCMC curriculum:**

1. The relevant Education Dean\* assesses the incident.
2. If initial assessment suggests that a lapse may have occurred, the Education Dean may meet with the student.
3. Not all lapses will result in student-Dean meetings. For example, failure to complete routine compliance requirements in a timely manner (e.g., course evaluations, Student Health Screens) may result in automatic Professionalism Reports (PRs).

4. If a lapse has occurred, the Education Dean completes a Professionalism Report (PR).\*\*
5. The Education Dean plans remedial action which could include, but is not limited to:
  - a. Monitoring the student's future behavior more closely;
  - b. Direct observation of the student;
  - c. Standardized patient assessment;
  - d. Requiring a written reflection essay or literature review;
  - e. Referring the student to the Senior Associate Dean for Education; and
  - f. Referring the student to medical or mental health services.
6. The completed form is submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs.

\*Education Deans include the Associate Deans of Academic Curricular, and Student Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Student Professional Development, the Assistant Dean for Student Well Being and Engagement, and the Assistant Dean for Academic Access and Student Success.

\*\*Professionalism Evaluation Reports are based on observations made by faculty or staff and confirmed by the relevant course director or education dean. As such, they are not subject to an appeal process. Once a course director or education dean decides to file a PR during his or her meeting with the student, the student is permitted to write comments about the incident or describe what he or she believe to be mitigating circumstances. PRs become part of a student's official academic record and are reviewed by the Student Evaluation Committee (SEC) and Promotions and Graduation (P&G) Committees. An accumulation of two or more PRs may affect a student's ability to receive academic awards. An accumulation of multiple PRs (three or more) for recurring lapses in professionalism or a PR for an egregious incident of unprofessional behavior may also result in a notation in the student's Medical School Performance Evaluation (MSPE, aka "Dean's Letter") after adjudication by the MSPE Committee or may be grounds for dismissal from the Medical College.

## Compliance with this Policy

All WCM Workforce Members, as defined in this policy, are responsible for adhering to this policy. Instances of, or potential, lapses in professionalism, whether minor or egregious, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and could lead to remedial action, up to and including dismissal from the Medical College.

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Offices of Academic and Student Affairs.

## Contact Information

Office of Academic Affairs  
1300 York Avenue, Room C-118

## References

- Cornell University Policy 4.6 – Standards of Ethical Conduct
- WCM Policy OME-900.16 – Teaching-Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment
- WCM Policy OOP-100.01 - Professionalism
- WCM Policy EA-120.00 – Social Media
- Weill Cornell Medicine Student Handbook, including Technical Standards
- The Teaching-Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment Policy
- The New York-Presbyterian Credo
- Policies governing the use of information technologies

## Policy Approval

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Executive Medical Education Committee (EMEC) on September 18, 2025.

This policy was endorsed by WCM-Executive Policy Review Group on September 23, 2025.

## Version History

Date	Author	Revisions
May 11, 2017	Medical Education	Original Date of Issue
May 13, 2021	Medical Education	Updates Approved by EMEC
October 19, 2023	Office of Academic Affairs	Updates Approved by EMEC
September 18, 2025	Office of Academic Affairs	Substantial updates. Transferred to the WCM standardized policy template and assigned new policy number, "OME-900.15." Updated to clarify policy scope and student professionalism expectations. Updated policy title to, "Medical Student Standards of Professionalism – Assessment and Remediation" (formerly titled, "Professionalism -- Assessment and Remediation").

## Appendix

Sample Professionalism Report Form: [PR Professionalism Report MD.pdf](#)