UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY

MITIGATING POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST OR BIAS IN THE ASSESSMENT OF MEDICAL STUDENTS WHERE A THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH FACULTY EXISTS

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PURPOSE

The Doctor of Medicine Program (the MD Program), Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University recognizes that a situation may arise in which an enrolled medical student may have a current, prior or future therapeutic relationship with a faculty member, including those in leadership roles. Personal health information is to remain confidential and separate from the academic record. This statement aims to mitigate the potential for bias in assessment of and/or advancement decisions for medical students based on their health.

Learners have the right to be supervised and assessed by faculty who will not be biased based on a current or prior therapeutic relationship.

RELEVANT POLICIES

Statement on Faculty-Student Conflict of Interest in Student Assessment

College of Physician and Surgeons of Ontario Professional Responsibilities in Medical Education - Supervision of Medical Students

RELEVANT ACCREDITATION ELEMENTS

12.5 Providers of Student Health Services/Location of Student Health Records
The health professionals who provide health services, including psychiatric/psychological counselling, to a medical student have no involvement in the academic assessment or advancement of the medical student receiving those services, excluding exceptional circumstances. A medical school ensures that medical student health records are maintained in accordance with legal requirements for security, privacy, confidentiality, and accessibility.

STATEMENT

1. Learners and/or faculty will be given the opportunity to identify a potential bias or conflict of interest at any stage of the MD Program during the preclinical and clinical years, including visiting electives. This should occur at the earliest opportunity.

2. The nature of the therapeutic relationship does not need to be disclosed.
    a. Learners:
        i. Reach out to the Learner Experience Office (LEO) for support.
        ii. LEO may inform the UME Office at the relevant home campus, if the student prefers.
    b. Faculty:
        i. Declare that there is a potential for conflict to any member of the administrative team at the UME Office at the relevant home campus.
3. Alternative arrangements will be facilitated by the UME Office Manager (or delegate) with as little disruption to the learner as possible such as (but not limited to) assigning the learner to another group, preceptor, or rotation or recusal of a faculty member and replacement with an appropriate delegate.
4. Members of the MD Program Competence Committee should recuse themselves from any committee meeting where bias or conflict of interest is possible based on a current or prior therapeutic relationship.
5. Faculty members with roles in the Learner Experience Office where possible should have no role in the summative assessment of any learners in the MD Program.
6. Where the potential for bias presents during a formal assessment activity (e.g., OSCE, end of rotation examination), faculty/teachers and learners should adopt a course of action that is least disruptive to the learner being assessed. Options include:
    a. Inform in advance of the potential for bias and schedule the stations accordingly
    b. Continue with the assessment activity and inform the individual responsible for the assessment (e.g. Clinical Skills chair; CSLP Manager, etc.) after the assessment is complete for alternate arrangements;
    c. Stop the assessment activity at that time, report the potential for bias to the local assessment administrator, and continue the assessment with the next element (e.g., OSCE station); or
    d. Any other approach which limits biased assessment as defined by this policy.
    e. Occasionally, it may be necessary to substitute another form of assessment to adequately assess the learner's performance.
7. Challenging the identification of potential bias: In general, the identification of a potential bias will be accepted at face value. On rare occasions, one party may wish to challenge the assertion.
    a. Either individual may bring the challenge to the relevant MD Program decanal leader in London or Windsor (or their delegate).
    b. An assessment will be made of the identification of a potential for bias and inform the individuals involved and the UME Manager of the decision.
    c. Any confidential information consideration by faculty and staff is to remain confidential; however, challenges brought forward under this policy may be discussed by the decanal leader and other appropriate MD Program leaders to ensure fairness and consistency across training sites.
    d. The decision of the decanal leader will be considered final. Any appeals will proceed through the Western University process.

DISSEMINATION:

This statement is to be included in the Orientation Handbook and reviewed annually at the start of the year.