

UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION SCHULICH

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY

FACULTY SUPERVISION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS

Date of last review: October 2022

Revised: October 2022

Approved by the Curriculum Committee: December 2022

Approved by ECSC: December 2022

Next revision: 2025

Preamble

- This policy establishes supervision guidelines for medical students and visiting medical students at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry at Western University. Where medical students are mentioned, this includes visiting medical students.
- This policy applies to all clinical settings where medical students are learning, including community settings and diagnostic settings (for example imaging or laboratory, outpatient and ambulatory clinics, operating rooms). Supervision is required to ensure safe and appropriate patient care and to promote medical student professional development including clinical competence and professionalism.
- In addition to this policy, medical students and supervising residents and physicians must comply with policies or guidelines on supervision issued by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO). Hospital and/or clinical placement setting policies may also dictate the availability and responsibilities of the faculty supervisor in patient care and diagnostic settings. This policy does not supersede established hospital or clinical placement setting policies.

Applicable Standard or Element

9.3 CLINICAL SUPERVISION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS

A medical school ensures that medical students in clinical learning situations involving patient care are appropriately supervised at all times in order to ensure patient and student safety, that the level of responsibility delegated to the student is appropriate to the student's level of training, and that the delegated activities supervised by the health professional are within the health professional's scope of practice.

Relevant Policies and Guidelines:

- [Professional Responsibilities in Medical Education CPSO](#)

- [CMPA Good Practices Guide - Clinical learning environment \(cmpa-acpm.ca\)](https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/good-practices-guide)
- [PGME Supervision Policy.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#)
- [Trainee as Supervisor Policy.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#)

Definitions

Medical Student: Individual enrolled in a degree program leading to the Doctor in Medicine at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry or other accredited medical school and are participating in required or optional clinical learning experiences. All medical students must be supervised.

Most Responsible Physician (MRP): Physicians who have overall responsibility for directing and coordinating the care and management of a patient at a specific point in time.

- **Postgraduate trainee:** Physicians who hold a degree in medicine and are continuing in postgraduate medical education. Trainees cannot practice independently within their training program. All postgraduate trainees must be supervised. Postgraduate trainees include residents and clinical fellows.
- **Supervisors:** Physicians, including residents, have taken on the responsibility to observe, teach, and assess medical students and visiting medical students.
- **Visiting Medical Student:** An individual enrolled in a degree program leading to the Doctor in Medicine or equivalent degree at another Canadian medical school or accredited US or international medical participating in an authorized elective clinical learning experience

Degrees of Supervision (as defined by the Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA)):

- **Direct Supervision:** observing while being in the same room with a trainee (can also be conducted by video or one-way mirror).
- **Immediately Available Supervision:** supervisor is immediately available to come to the aid of a trainee if problems arise.
- **Local Supervision:** supervisor is in the building/hospital and is available at short notice.
- **Distant Supervision:** supervisor is on call and available for advice or able to come into the hospital in an appropriate timeframe.

General Principles of Clinical Supervision

- Acting in the best interest of the patient is central to the role of the medical student and the supervisor.
- MRPs, supervising physicians and medical students must demonstrate a model of professional, ethical, and compassionate care and promote a safe, supportive, and

collaborative learning environment free of intimidation, harassment, or discrimination.

- MRPs, supervising physicians and medical students must not engage in disruptive behavior that interferes with, or is likely to interfere with, the learning environment, patient care or quality medical education.
- The educational environment must facilitate safe patient care and effective learning. The supervising physician's open and supportive communication and readiness to assist the medical student are necessary to enable the medical student to voice concerns about a delegated task.
- Medical students must always be appropriately supervised during their training; the degree of supervision will be dependent on the stage of training, clinical setting, achievement of required competencies, and relevant hospital policies.
- The call schedule must be structured to provide medical students with continuous supervision.
- The supervising physician must be aware that medical students may fail to recognize their limitations and take on more responsibility than is appropriate. Medical students may have difficulty identifying and/or reporting their own limitations. It is the responsibility of the supervising physician to recognize when a medical student should not be involved in care because of the number and/or complexity of patients assigned or because of stress or fatigue. In these circumstances the supervising physician must intervene to provide care for the patients and support the medical student.

Responsibilities of the Supervising Physician

The supervising physician must:

- Be aware of the learning objectives/expected competencies of the medical student for the duration of their supervisor-trainee relationship.
- Consider a medical student's skill and level of training when delegating a clinical task and assign graded responsibility accordingly.
- Create a learning environment where the medical student feels comfortable stating whether they are able to perform the task. Medical students must be provided with the environment and opportunity to disclose issues such as uncertainty, personal fatigue, etc that may impact performance without fear of retribution.
- Ensure that patients or substitute decision-makers are informed of a medical student's trainee status.
- The supervising physician must respond in an appropriate and timely manner to a medical student's request for assistance.
- As appropriate, supervising physicians may delegate certain supervisory tasks to senior postgraduate trainees.
- Be immediately available under circumstances where urgent judgment by highly experienced physicians is typically required. In these situations, Supervision may not be provided from an off-site location.
- Respond in a timely fashion when paged or called by medical student. When not

immediately available, the supervising physician must inform the medical student and identify a supervising physician who will be available in their absence.

- Ensure that a medical student is aware of all the patients they are to be involved in the care of. The supervising physician must also determine that the medical student is capable of the tasks assigned in caring for these patients.
- Communicate regularly with the medical student to discuss, review and provide feedback on patient assessments, plans and documentation
- Be familiar with Schulich policies, including duty hours and call, and ensure that medical students will not be scheduled to work beyond maximum duty hours. Ensure that medical students can be relieved of duties post-call if relevant.
- Assess, review and document medical student competencies and objectives on the assessment forms in Elentra. Assessments must be completed in a timely manner according to program requirements. The supervisor must provide constructive feedback to the medical student during supervision.
- No faculty member should supervise or assess a close relative or other person with whom they have a significant personal relationship in the performance of their academic or clinical roles; except during occasional supervision of on-call duties if this cannot be avoided. Faculty must remain sensitive to all potential conflicts of interest with regard to supervision and deal with them in a professional manner.

Responsibility of Medical Students

Medical students must:

- Strive to recognize and be aware of the limits of their knowledge and clinical skills.
- Notify their supervisors of their perceived knowledge, skill, and experiences with delegated tasks.
- Specifically state any concerns they have to their supervisor if they are asked to perform tasks beyond their abilities.
- Inform patients or the substitute decision makers of their status as trainees who are acting on behalf of a specific, named supervising physician.
- Communicate in a timely manner with the supervisor and/or MRP:
 - in accordance with the guidelines of the MD program and/or clinical placement setting;
 - about their clinical findings, investigations, and treatment plans; urgently, if necessary, when there is a significant change in a patient's condition;
 - about a patient's discharge;
 - when a patient or family expresses concerns; or
 - in an urgent or emergent situation when there is a risk to the patient's well-being;
- Document their clinical findings and treatment plans; identify the MRP/supervising physician who has reviewed their reports; and indicate the MRP/supervising physicians' approval of the report.
- In the interest of patient safety, inform their supervising physician if they are not able to complete the care tasks assigned to them. An inability by the medical student to complete

care tasks may arise from the number and complexity of the patients assigned or because of stress or fatigue.

- Inform the rotation/elective director, the Chairs of Clerkship & Electives, or any MD program leader when they believe that they have insufficient supervision and/or the supervising physician is not responsive to their requests for assistance.
- Inform their supervisor of any absences, expected or unexpected and complete the necessary documentation.
- Inform the supervising physician and/or the rotation/elective director if their duty hours are in breach of the policy, or in excess of duty hours expected by the program for medical students as outlined in the Clerkship syllabus or program policies.

Responsibility of the Curriculum Committee, the Clerkship & Electives Committee, and the Academy of Educators:

The members of the Clerkship & Electives Committee, the Academy of Educators and other relevant faculty involved in clinical learning experiences must:

- Review the UME Supervision of Medical Students Policy with respect to the specific requirements. Ensure that faculty and medical students are aware of and comply with policies regarding clinical supervision. Provide supervisors with the objectives or expected competencies of the program.
- Provide supervisors with the specific medical student assessment requirements as well as timelines for completion.
- Ensure a safe and confidential mechanism is in place for medical students to report concerns regarding adequacy of supervision, including learner mistreatment – including to a preceptor, course chair, rotation director, to LEO directly or via the Learner Mistreatment portal.
- Investigate and manage concerns with respect to supervision including completion of assessments in a timely manner. This may include notification to the MD Program UME Office if it is not resolved at the course level.
- Ensure faculty are aware of how to access their evaluations of their teaching and supervisory roles.

Responsibility of the Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) Office

The UME Office will:

- Ensure that the UME Supervision policy is reviewed and approved by the Curriculum Committee and reviewed and revised at consistent and appropriate intervals as required.
- Ensure that medical students, courses and faculty are aware of the policy.
- Provide support to course leaders to identify and remediate inadequate supervision, in collaboration with Medical and Faculty Affairs.
- Provide educational materials, support and faculty development to programs and supervisors to facilitate implementation of this policy.