



Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) Program

Student Code of Conduct: Incorporating the Seven Grandfathers Teachings

Introduction

Professionalism is a core competency in Canadian physician assistant education and is assessed continuously throughout training. This Code of Conduct provides a framework for professional behaviour, ensuring early identification and remediation of unprofessional conduct while offering guidance for academic decision-making when remediation is unsuccessful or inappropriate.

This Code applies to all academic, clinical, and professional settings, including work placements and any conduct related to the student's role in the physician assistant profession. The following guiding principles reflect the values of professionalism, equity, diversity, inclusivity, and the Seven Grandfathers Teachings of Wisdom (Beaver), Love (Eagle), Respect (Bison), Bravery (Bear), Honesty (Raven), Humility (Wolf), and Truth (Turtle).

1. Respect for Others (Respect, Humility, Love)

Physician assistant students must demonstrate respect and consideration for all individuals, including patients, families, colleagues, faculty, healthcare professionals, and the broader community. Physician assistant students will:

- Foster a positive and inclusive learning and clinical environment free from harassment, bullying, discrimination, or intimidation.
- Avoid and actively challenge discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, political beliefs, marital status, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic.
- Demonstrate cultural humility by recognizing the limits of one's knowledge, being willing to learn of one's inherent bias, and pursuing opportunities to learn from diverse perspectives, including Indigenous worldviews.
- Identify one's role in Reconciliation as a healthcare professional and leader and pursue opportunities therein.
- Show love and kindness in interactions with patients and colleagues, listening from a place of curiosity, and ensuring care is delivered with genuine compassion.
- Respect patient autonomy and dignity, ensuring shared decision-making and considering cultural, linguistic, and accessibility needs.
- Maintain professional boundaries and refrain from inappropriate or exploitative relationships.



- Communicate respectfully and professionally in all face-to-face, written, and digital interactions, including social media.
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of patients and colleagues in accordance with ethical and legal obligations, ensuring equitable and trauma-informed care.
- Uphold zero tolerance for harassment, bullying, or mistreatment in any educational or clinical setting.
- Acknowledge and honour accommodations such as disability accommodations while respecting the privacy of the individual and their circumstance.
- Give grace to others (students, patients, families, faculty) regarding their level of understanding, and address questions with patience.
- Foster a community of learning and growth that is supporting, uplifting, and builds toward a legacy of support and mentorship for incoming students.
- Demonstrate receptiveness to feedback and provide constructive feedback to others in a respectful, encouraging way.

2. Honesty and Integrity (Honesty, Truth, Bravery)

Physician assistant students must uphold the highest standards of personal, professional, and academic honesty and integrity. Physician assistant students will:

- Embrace the discomfort of learning through acknowledging one's limitations, asking for help or clarity while developing competence, and holding each other accountable.
- Communicate truthfully in all professional and academic matters.
- Do not falsify records, documentation, research, or communications.
- Disclose and manage conflicts of interest, ensuring ethical transparency.
- Acknowledge, disclose, and take responsibility for errors with a commitment to learning and improvement.
- Accurately document and maintain confidentiality of clinical information, including patient histories, physical findings, and treatment plans.
- Take responsibility to understand and adhere to academic integrity principles, refraining from plagiarism, cheating, or unauthorized collaboration.
- Conduct research ethically, ensuring fair and accurate reporting of findings.
- Properly credit the contributions and intellectual property of others in academic and professional work.



- Report any observed violations of integrity in clinical or academic settings through proper channels.
- Have the courage to speak up when witnessing unethical practices or behaviours that compromise patient safety or professional integrity.
- Advocate for patient needs and autonomy where appropriate, emphasizing necessary care over profit, where applicable.
- Practice in a way that recognizes the impact that the Social Determinants of Health and ongoing effects of colonization have on individual health, community health and healthcare delivery.
- Communicate in an accessible manner to support understanding, remaining cognizant of potential power dynamics in a healthcare environment.

3. Compassion and Empathy (Love, Humility, Wisdom)

Physician assistant students must approach patient care with empathy, compassion, and a commitment to equitable and patient-centered medicine.

Empathy: *the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.*

Compassion: *sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.*

Physician assistant students will:

- Demonstrate an empathetic approach and active listening in all interactions.
- Acknowledge and respect cultural, social, and personal differences, ensuring care that is sensitive and responsive to diverse patient needs.
- Provide compassionate, culturally safe support to patients, families, and caregivers facing illness, loss, or distress.
- Demonstrate respect and compassion in all interactions, including within the cadaveric lab.
- Strive to recognize and mitigate implicit biases that may affect patient care and professional interactions.
- Support the well-being of colleagues, recognizing the importance of teamwork and emotional support in clinical practice and education.
- Show humility by taking ownership of mistakes, recognizing that learning is lifelong, and that every patient and colleague has wisdom to share.
- Practice a non-judgmental approach, remaining open to listening, learning, offering compassion, and respecting differences.
- Remain patient and professional when faced with potential critique or questions regarding the physician assistant profession.



- Practice ongoing self-reflection to support identification of growth opportunities, emphasizing compassion for oneself while maintaining accountability.
- Value collaboration over competition, emphasizing a team-centered approach with peers to contribute to group success.

4. Duty and Responsibility (Wisdom, Bravery, Truth)

Physician assistant students must recognize their duty to patients, the profession, and society, accepting the responsibilities that come with this commitment. Physician assistant students will:

- Prioritize patient well-being and best interests in all professional interactions.
- Collaborate effectively with colleagues to ensure optimal patient care and contribute to a respectful and inclusive work environment.
- Use healthcare resources responsibly, ensuring equitable access and allocation.
- Uphold public health responsibilities and advocate for health equity, particularly for historically marginalized communities.
- Adhere to ethical guidelines, policies, and legal regulations governing physician assistant practice in Canada.
- Participate in professional self-regulation, addressing misconduct or incompetence that could harm patients or colleagues, and honouring the duty to report.
- Maintain professional integrity by demonstrating confidence in one's own abilities, and ensuring fair workload distribution with consideration for the strengths and weaknesses of those involved as well as consideration of external circumstances.
- Engage in professional and academic responsibilities without exploiting patients, colleagues, or learners for personal or financial gain.
- Conduct research and educational activities involving patients or colleagues only with proper informed consent and adherence to ethical guidelines.
- Honour commitments, meet deadlines, and maintain punctuality; communicate proactively when delays are unavoidable.
- Commit to lifelong learning, striving for continuous personal growth, professional development of oneself and one's team, and shared excellence in clinical competence.
- Recognize the impact of personal health and well-being on professional performance, prioritizing self-care, seeking support, and advocating for oneself when needed.
- Adhere to professional dress codes and demeanor in educational and clinical settings while respecting cultural and religious attire choices.



- Actively participate in mentorship and peer support to foster a culture of professional growth and learning.
- Demonstrate a commitment to service and community engagement, promoting the role of physician assistants in advancing healthcare accessibility.
- Provide individualized care through listening to patients, believing concerns, and recognizing the opportunity to care for the *whole* patient.
- Show bravery by advocating for systemic changes that benefit patients, communities, healthcare teams, and the profession.
- Seek wisdom in decision-making, ensuring that actions align with ethical standards and the greater good of patient care.
- Demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and team development, including accountability to each other, attempting to resolve potential conflicts directly, and refraining from gossip.