

## SOP Title Procedure for Conflict of Interest during Assessment of Student Performance

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## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Procedure for Conflict of Interest During Assessment of Student Performance is to articulate the implementation of the University of Saskatchewan's Conflict of Interest policy. This provides transparent processes whereby medical students, faculty and staff are able to identify and report instances of conflict of interest related to assessments.

These procedures ensure that the Undergraduate Medical Education program meets or exceeds the following Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools (CACMS) accreditation standards:

1.2 Conflict of Interest Policies: A medical school has in place and follows effective policies and procedures applicable to board members, faculty members, and any individuals with responsibility for the medical education program to avoid the impact of conflicts of interest in the operation of the medical education program, its associated clinical facilities, and any related enterprises.

9.8 Fair and Timely Summative Assessment: A medical school has in place a system of fair and timely summative assessment of medical student achievement in each required learning experience of the medical education program.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

The University of Saskatchewan's Conflict of Interest Policy applies to all university members, as described in this excerpt:

This policy applies to everyone who is a member of the University of Saskatchewan. A university member means all faculty, staff, trainees, students, and adjuncts of the University of Saskatchewan, whether full-time, reduced, or part-time, and any other person while acting on behalf of, or at the request of, the university including, but not limited to, members of a university committee (including the senate and board of governors), persons giving advice or providing services to the university at the request of the university, and anyone involved in a decision making process.

Each university member has a responsibility to avoid conflicts of interest, and the appearance of conflict of interest, and to disclose to their unit head any conflict of interest situations and all disclosures should be made in writing immediately upon discovery.

Faculty, trainees, adjuncts, administrative, professional, or technical staff and student members who have disclosed a conflict of interest should, in consultation with their unit head, resolve the conflict of interest, which may require the discontinuance of the activities through which the conflict of interest will arise or has arisen.

## **3. SCOPE**

These procedures apply to instances where undergraduate students registered in the Doctor of Medicine (MD) program at the University of Saskatchewan, irrespective of the geographically distributed site to which they are currently assigned, as well as faculty and staff identify instances of perceived or real conflict of interest in assessment of student performance.

## **4. DEFINITIONS**

A conflict of interest is a situation in which financial or other personal considerations have the potential to compromise or bias professional judgement and objectivity. An apparent conflict of interest is one in which it is reasonable to think that the professional's judgement is likely to be compromised. A potential conflict of interest may develop into an actual conflict of interest. A conflict of interest exists whether or not decisions are affected by personal interest. A conflict of interest implies only the potential for bias and not a likelihood.

Examples of conflict of interest in the assessment of student performance include but are not limited to:

- Accepting gifts, benefits or favours from students, instructors, faculty or preceptors.
- Supervising or evaluating a student who is a member of the immediate family or with whom there exists or has recently existed an intimate or personal relationship.
- Participating in decisions, interviews or assessment of candidates for admission to the MD Program where one or more candidates is a member of their immediate family, or a person with whom there exists or has recently existed a friendship, intimate, personal or financial relationship.
- Directing a course, year or term where one or more students is a member of the immediate family.
- Supervision or evaluation of a student by a member of the Office of Student Affairs where there exists or has recently existed a counselling/advising relationship.

\*Adapted from Queen's University Undergraduate Medical Education Standard Operating Procedures Concerning Conflicts of Interest for Undergraduate Medical Education Faculty and Students (August 12, 2016).

## **5. RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the Procedure for Conflict of Interest During Assessment of Student Performance.

## **6. SPECIFIC PROCEDURE – CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT**

### **6.1 Proactive Disclosure**

The Undergraduate Medical Education Office will inform preceptors of the Procedure for Conflict of Interest During Assessment of Student Performance on an annual basis.

Preceptors are expected to review the student lists provided to them by the Undergraduate Medical Education Office well in advance of assessing medical students in courses, modules, or rotations. Preceptors should proactively disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest pertaining to medical student assessments to the course administrator.

Medical students are expected to review individual course outlines well in advance of being assessed by a preceptor in a course, module, or rotation. Medical students should proactively disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest pertaining to academic assessment to the course administrator.

For forms of assessment of student performance in which there may be potential for subjectivity in the assessment, the course administrator will arrange for an alternative assessment to be made. For objective forms of assessment (example: multiple choice questions) the assessment shall proceed as planned.

When the Director or Chair of a course or year would potentially be influential in making academic decisions for a student for whom their relationship presents a potential conflict of interest, that Director or Course/Year Chair shall recuse themselves from being involved in that decision and, if necessary, an alternate faculty member will be appointed by the Director, Academic or Associate Dean, UGME to be involved in academic decisions for that student.

### **6.2 Reactive Disclosure**

Preceptors who identify a perceived or actual conflict of interest while assessing a medical student must cease the assessment immediately and inform the course administrator.

Medical students who identify a perceived or actual conflict of interest while being assessed must discretely inform the preceptor who in turn shall cease the assessment. Both parties must inform the course administrator of the occurrence.

For forms of assessment of student performance in which there may be a potential for subjectivity in the assessment, the course administrator should arrange an alternative assessment to be made. For

objective forms of assessment (example: multiple choice questions) the assessment shall proceed as planned.

In the situation that a preceptor or medical student recognizes a conflict of interest during supervision/assessment in the clinical setting, then the preceptor should arrange alternative clinical supervision as soon as is feasible to ensure student and patient safety, and inform the Rotation Coordinator/ course administrator as soon as possible.

### 6.3 Post-Assessment Disclosure

Medical students who identify a perceived or actual conflict of interest after having been assessed in a course, module, or rotation will be assigned the grade submitted by the preceptor. The only recourse available to a medical student dissatisfied with their assigned grade are the regulations described in the college-level [Procedures for Academic Appeal](#).

## 7. INTERNAL REFERENCES

University of Saskatchewan's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

College of Medicine's [Non-Involvement of Providers of Student Health Services in Student Assessment Policy](#)

## 8. CHANGE HISTORY

Effective Date	Significant Changes
Sept 15, 2017	Procedure approved "Conflict of Interest during Student Assessment"
Nov 28, 2019	Additional information on clinical settings, procedures in meetings, title revised to "Conflict of Interest during Assessment of Student Performance"
Oct 11, 2022	Minor revisions

SOP no.	Effective Date	Significant Changes	Previous SOP no.