



Conflict of Interest during Assessment of Student Performance Policy

Category: Academic

Responsibility: Academic Director, UGME

Approval: Student Academic Management Committee

Date initially approved: Aug, 15, 2017

Date(s) reformatted or revised: Aug. 16, 2019; Oct. 15, 2019; Sept. 22, 2022; Oct. 11, 2022; April 1, 2025; July 2026

Contents

1. [Purpose](#)
2. [Introduction](#)
3. [Scope](#)
4. [Definitions](#)
5. [Policy](#)
 - a) [Proactive Disclosure](#)
 - b) [Reactive Disclosure](#)
 - c) [Post-Assessment Disclosure](#)
6. [Responsibilities](#)
7. [Internal References](#)
8. [Change History](#)
9. [Appendix](#)

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.

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.

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.

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).

Policy:

SPECIFIC PROCEDURE – CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

A. 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.

B. 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.

C. 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](#).

D. How to Disclose

Where an individual identifies a significant prior conflict, dispute, or relationship—whether positive or negative—that may introduce bias, or where there is uncertainty regarding potential conflict of interest, a formal process must be followed. Additionally, if a reasonable, neutral third party could question the individual's objectivity, this concern should be addressed.

See Appendix A: if a potential concern regarding objectivity is identified, individuals are expected to take appropriate action. Ensure to inform the appropriate authority of the situation by submitting a Conflict of Interest (COI) disclosure form to ensure transparency and appropriate review. If confidentiality or sensitivity is a concern, students are encouraged to first seek guidance from the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), which will provide confidential advice and support prior to or in place of formal disclosure, as appropriate.

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.

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](#)

Change History:

SOP no.	Effective Date	Significant Changes	Previous SOP no.
	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	
	April 2025	Reformatted and reviewed by SAMC	
	July 1 2026	Addition of appendix A and B How to disclose	

Appendix A:

Checklist to identify conflict of Interest (COI) for Assessments- guidance for Medical Students

Use this checklist before any summative assessment (e.g., OSCEs,) when there is a COI or uncertainty that exists around bias or fairness. Seek advice or disclose to protect you and the integrity of the assessment process.

If you answer “Yes” or “Unsure,” you may be asked for confidential disclosure.

A. Relationship with Evaluator

- ☐ Do I have a personal relationship (family, partner, close friend) with someone assessing me?
- ☐ Have I had a recent or ongoing personal relationship that could influence their judgment?
- ☐ Is the evaluator someone I interact with outside normal professional roles?

B. Prior or Dual Roles

- ☐ Has this evaluator acted as my advisor, mentor, or Student Affairs counsellor?
- ☐ Does this person have significant influence over my academic progression (e.g., references, promotion decisions)?
- ☐ Do I hold a dual role (e.g., student and employee) in the same setting?

C. Fairness and Objectivity

- ☐ Could this relationship influence or appear to influence my assessment outcome?
- ☐ Would others reasonably question the fairness of this assessment setup?
- ☐ Would I feel uncomfortable if this situation were transparent to others?

D. Access or Advantage

- ☐ Do I have prior access to assessment materials (exam content, OSCE cases, scoring tools not publicly available)?
- ☐ Have I been involved in creating or organizing this assessment?
- ☐ Do I have any unfair advantage over other students?

E. Financial or Personal Benefit

- ☐ Is there any financial relationship (employment, sponsorship, incentives) linked to this evaluator or setting?
- ☐ Have I given or received gifts, favours, or special consideration?

F. Prior Interactions Affecting Judgment

(Important in a small medical community where repeated interactions are common)

- ☐ Have I had a significant conflict or dispute with this evaluator that could affect impartiality?
- ☐ Has there been a prior relationship (positive or negative) that could introduce bias?

G. General Reflection (uncertainty or perceived bias)

- ☐ Am I unsure whether this situation represents a conflict of interest?
- ☐ Would a reasonable, neutral third-party question objectivity?

If Sections F and/ or G (Small Community Context) has yes to the answer, formal disclosure will be required. However, if concerns are minor and typical of training, no action may be needed.

If you answered “Yes” to any item in Section F or G, you should:

Choose **one** of the following:

Option 1: Formal Disclosure; Submit a COI disclosure form for review and guidance, Information will be handled confidentially, within professional limits

Option 2: Confidential Discussion (Recommended if unsure or sensitive); You may seek advice from the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) before making a formal disclosure. Information will be handled confidentially, within professional limits. OSA will review your concern and confirm to UGME whether a conflict of interest exists, without disclosing personal or sensitive details.

Appendix B:

Why we ask

We are committed to creating a fair, transparent, and trustworthy learning environment. A conflict of interest (COI) occurs when personal, professional, or financial relationships could influence or appear to influence your academic work, clinical decisions, or evaluations.

Disclosing a potential conflict helps ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Conflict of interest disclosures will be securely maintained within the official UGME confidential student record. Where a disclosure includes sensitive personal information, additional details may be held separately by the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) and will not be accessible to UGME. Students may choose to disclose confidentially through OSA, which will review the situation and communicate to UGME only whether a conflict of interest exists, without sharing personal or sensitive details. All information related to disclosures will be managed with strict confidentiality and shared on a need-to-know basis, solely to support fair assessment processes and academic progression or promotion decision.

Student Information

- Name: _____
- Program / Year: _____
- Course / Rotation: _____
- Date: _____

Disclosure Statement

Please indicate whether you have any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest related to your academic activities, clinical work, research, or assessments:

☐ No, I do not have any conflicts to disclose

☐ Yes, I have a potential conflict to disclose (If yes, please complete the sections below)

Choose **one** of the following:

Option One: Describe the Situation. Briefly describe the relationship, activity, or circumstance:

Option Two: Confidential Discussion (Recommended if unsure or sensitive)

- You may seek advice from the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) before making a formal disclosure. Information is handled confidentially, within professional limits
- OSA will review your concern and confirm to UGME whether a conflict of interest exists, without disclosing personal or sensitive details

Reason for Disclosure (Select all that apply): Please identify the theme(s) that best describe your situation:

1. Financial Interests

☐ Employment (outside or related work)

☐ Paid consultancy / honoraria

☐ Gifts or incentives

☐ Funding, grants, or sponsorship

2. Personal Relationships

☐ Family relationship with faculty/staff
or ongoing relationship affecting objectivity

☐ Close personal relationship (friend/partner) ☐ Prior

3. Academic or Professional Roles

☐ Leadership position affecting evaluation or access, reference

☐ Significant conflict or dispute previously with this evaluator that could affect impartiality

4. Clinical Care Relationships

☐ Personal involvement that may affect objectivity in care

5. Research or Scholarly Activities

☐ Collaboration affecting independence ☐ Access to privileged or non-public information ☐
Competing research interests

6. Other (please specify) ☐ _____

What impact could this have? (optional)

How might this situation influence (or appear to influence) your learning, decisions, or evaluations?

Student Acknowledgment

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that disclosure supports fairness and does not automatically result in any penalty.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For Program Use (if needed)

Action taken / Mitigation plan:

Reviewed by: _____

Date: _____