

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Recusal Policy for Conflicts of Interest

I. PURPOSE

To define “dual relationships” to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest and to ensure the most constructive and supportive learning environment for University of Pittsburgh medical students.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all faculty, graduate medical education trainees, staff, and others involved in decisions related to medical students, including but not limited to admissions, grading, academic progress, professionalism, remediation, and disciplinary actions. This policy is designed to proactively identify and manage situations that may compromise impartiality in decision-making processes related to applicants/medical students or create the appearance of such an impartiality.

Categories of conflict of interest include:

- **Familial relationships:** refers to parents, guardians, siblings, spouse, grandparents, aunts/uncles, or cousins, including in-law and step relationships
- **Personal Relationships:** close friends, advisors/mentors/coaches, and those relationships involving mutual consent in romantic, physically intimate, and/or sexual activity, which may include marriage or domestic partnership
- **Physician-patient** (health care) relationships: Current or past healthcare relationships with the student/applicant or with or their close relative, including psychiatric/psychological services
- **Financial relationships** (including direct supervisor of employment): Has a financial interest with, or relating to, the student/applicant or their close relative
- **Academic relationships:** Is the faculty member of record for an academic deficiency being discussed by the Committee on Student Promotions, or has direct involvement in an adverse action under review by the Professionalism Subcommittee of the Committee on Student Promotions.
- Any other current or past relationships that may reasonably be perceived to compromise impartiality or create a real or perceived conflict of interest

III. POLICY

Student Assessment

Faculty and graduate medical trainees must avoid, whenever possible, dual relationships with students. In the learning environment, if such a relationship does exist, it is the primary responsibility of the involved faculty or graduate medical education trainee (resident/fellow) to immediately notify the course director or clerkship/rotation director to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest during teaching and assessment periods or ask that the student be reassigned. Residents/fellows who have dual relationships with medical students shall not complete any assessment of any student with whom a real or perceived conflict exists. Physician-patient relationships are further defined in the [Non-Involvement of Care Providers in Medical Student Assessment and Promotion](#).

Committee Meetings

All committee members must disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest and shall recuse themselves from the discussion and the vote. Recusals must be reflected in the committee minutes.

It is the responsibility of the faculty member to notify the committee chair of the dual relationship. The committee chair, with input from the committee member in question, will rule on the validity of any student objection to a committee member's participation. In the event that a student objects to the participation of the chair, the Vice Dean for Education (or in the case the Vice Dean for Education chairing a committee then the Executive Vice Dean for Academic Affairs) will rule on the validity of the objection. Decision-making regarding recusal must follow the committee's policy.

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

- Office of Accreditation and Continuous Quality Improvement

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Admissions Policy
- Admissions Procedures
- Policy on Academic Progress and Promotions
- Policy on Non-Involvement of Providers of Student Health Services in Student Assessment
- Policy on Medical Student Assessment in Courses and Clerkships: Narrative Assessment

VI. REFERENCES

LCME Element 1.2: Conflict of Interest Policies

VII. APPROVALS

Educational Policy Council approved September 11, 2025.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine reserves the right to change these policies and procedures as needed.