

UPSOM Code of Professionalism

Medicine is a profession of service, trust, and integrity. UPSOM graduates will, like all physicians, be entrusted with the sacred responsibility to care for patients. Therefore, physicians' professional and personal behavior must demonstrate worthiness for that sacred responsibility. As physicians in training, UPSOM medical students are obligated to conduct themselves in alignment with the [mission and core values](#) of UPSOM and are accountable for their personal and professional behavior, including respecting the rights and dignity of all members of the UPSOM community.

Consequently, UPSOM students are expected to adhere to this code of professional and personal conduct specific to the School of Medicine. Violation(s) of this code of conduct may result in remediation or sanctions, including dismissal from the UPSOM. Initial review is typically carried out by the Professionalism Subcommittee (PS). The PS determines if a case should be referred to the Committee on Student Promotions (CSP). The CSP oversees the overall administration of the UPSOM Student Code of Professionalism and determines required remediations or sanctions for all referred cases.

Additionally, all UPSOM students are expected to adhere to all University of Pittsburgh policies, procedures and guidelines, including but not limited to the Student Code of Conduct available at: <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/conduct/>. Any student who violates the University Student Code of Conduct may also be referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct by UPSOM officials and may face University as well as UPSOM sanctions.

I. Lapses in Professional Behavior

Lapses in professional behavior at UPSOM are categorized as "minor" or "major." Examples of each type of professional misconduct include, but are not limited to, those listed below. For purposes of this policy, "repeated" is defined as any lapses in professionalism occurring three or more times within 12 months. Students experiencing extenuating circumstances should discuss their individual situations with the Phase Dean.

Minor Lapses in Professional Behavior:

*A **minor lapse in professional behavior** refers to relatively small, even unintentional, failures to meet established professional standards. These are typically isolated incidents or those that do not cause significant harm or disruption. Minor lapses are usually addressed with feedback or minor corrective action. The following list of examples is neither hierarchical nor exhaustive. Each of the following constitutes 1 Minor Lapse*

1. Three (3) tardies to mandatory teaching session or assessment
2. Two (2) early departures from a required learning activity without appropriate communication or documented approval per the requirements of each curriculum phase
3. Two (2) late or missing course evaluations

4. Two (2) late or missing medical/clearance forms required for enrollment
5. Two (2) late responses (more than 3 business days) to professional communication
6. One (1) unexcused absence
7. Two (2) documented instances of lack of engagement in class (in-person or virtual)
8. Two (2) class assignments not completed on time
9. Two (2) failures to attend a scheduled meeting with any school-affiliated faculty or staff without prior communication unless it is an emergency.
10. Two (2) instances of consistent defensiveness or ignoring of constructive feedback

Major Lapses in Professional Behavior

*A **major lapse in professional behavior**—also referred to as a professionalism violation or gross misconduct—is a serious breach of professional and ethical standards that is either egregious, deliberate, or causes significant harm or disruption. Such lapses are distinguished from minor lapses by their severity, intent, or potential consequences. The following list of examples is neither hierarchical nor exhaustive:*

1. Repeated minor violations that continue even after being addressed
2. Dishonesty (including, but not limited to, cheating on an exam, plagiarism, signing in without attendance, badging into a required session and leaving early, copying reports, data on patients, lying about prior behavior, etc.)
3. Sexual misconduct or other Title IX violations*
4. HIPAA violations**
5. Title VI violations; discriminatory actions***
6. Verbal, physical, or electronic behavior that interrupts, disrupts, or causes any kind of harm in a private or public space, including at any school event
7. Coming to a clinical or educational setting under the influence of non-prescribed mind-altering substances (e.g., alcohol or controlled substances)
8. Breach of confidentiality
9. Failure to attend a meeting of the Professionalism Subcommittee, a meeting of the CSP, or other disciplinary meeting
10. Behavior that poses a threat to the safety of others
11. Bias, mistreatment, or discrimination of a person or group
12. Lack of professionalism in interactions with others in the UPSOM community
13. Inappropriate posting on social media, including adherence to Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s laws and regulations***
14. Other major negative impacts on the learning environment (e.g., egregious actions, as defined per the Mayo Clinic Values (2019): "Causing major (or potential) harm to individuals, groups or the organization; willful, conscious, or reckless disregard of policies, procedures, or law...")
15. Any violation of the University of Pittsburgh’s university-wide Student Code of Conduct.****

*Any accusations of Title IX violations are reported to the University of Pittsburgh's Civil Rights & Title IX Team. This may result in additional, university-level proceedings and disciplinary action above and beyond any school-level disciplinary action.

**HIPAA violations may be investigated by the relevant clinical site. In determining whether any school-level sanctions are warranted, the PS and CSP consider the outcomes of the clinical site's investigation to be authoritative.

*** UPSOM expectation is that the PittMed community is a supportive, collaborative, and inclusive learning environment that is free from experiences that manifest in harassment, intimidation, or coercion including through electronic means such as social media. Students should use particular caution when referencing their experiences in or events associated with the medical school or clinical sites. Always be transparent, making clear your posts are your opinion unless you are authorized to speak on behalf of the medical school. The use of the official UPSOM or University of Pittsburgh logo must be approved by the School prior to any post. Furthermore, students must adhere strictly to social media policies of the medical center and specific clinical sites, hospitals, and University in their social media. It is extremely important to remember the sharing of personal health information is strictly prohibited under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Any violations of these guidelines using social media will be handled according to the specific University, UPSOM, or clinical sites/hospital policy violated.

****Any accusations of conduct that violates the University of Pittsburgh's Student Code of Conduct may be referred to the university's Office of Student Conduct for a hearing. This may result in additional, university-level proceedings and disciplinary action above and beyond any school-level disciplinary action.

Removal from the Educational or Clinical Setting

A student who behaves in a way that is materially or substantially disruptive to a class or curricular activity (including clinical activities), disrupts others from the benefit of the instructional program, disrupts a University- or School-sponsored event, is disorderly or displays a breach of peace under the law, interferes with the rights of others to carry out their duties on behalf of the University or School, creates a hostile or unsafe learning environment, or poses a potential threat to the safety or emotional or physical well-being of others (including but not limited to patients, faculty, staff, or fellow students) may be immediately removed (and suspended) from any educational or clinical setting at the discretion of any faculty or staff person responsible for the student. After removing the student from the immediate situation, the faculty or staff person shall file a Professionalism Accolade and Incident Reporting (PAIR) system incident report as outlined in Section II below and notify the Vice Dean for Education.

A student may be immediately removed from any educational or clinical setting or University- or School- sponsored event at the discretion of the responsible faculty or staff member if their behavior meets any of the following criteria:

- **Materially or substantially disrupts** a class, curricular activity (including clinical activities), or a University- or School-sponsored event.
- **Interferes with the instructional program** or prevents others from benefiting fully from the learning environment.
- **Creates disorder or a breach of peace** under the law, or otherwise interferes with the rights of others to carry out their University or School duties.
- **Creates a hostile, unsafe, or threatening environment**, whether physical or emotional, for patients, faculty, staff, or fellow students.
- **Poses a potential threat** to the safety, security, or well-being of others.

In such cases, immediate removal may be necessary to preserve the integrity, safety, and functioning of the educational or clinical environment. After removing the student from the immediate situation, the faculty or staff person shall file a PAIR system incident report as outlined in Section II below and notify the Vice Dean for Education who will refer the situation to either the Professionalism Subcommittee and/or the Committee on Student Promotions as appropriate.

The right of patients and the public to safe professional practice supersedes students' learning and skill acquisition needs.

II. Procedural Steps by Phase Deans: Student Notification and Initial Decision-making Processes

Within a 12 Month Period						
	Alert status	Lapse (any type)	Student notified in writing by phase Dean and/or course director	Required meeting w/ faculty mentor (e.g., Coach, AD, MSTP Director)	Required meeting with phase Dean and/or course director	Referral to PS/PAIR Submission
Minor Lapse	Awareness	1 st	Yes	--	--	--
		2 nd	Yes	--	--	--
	Potential Concern	3 rd	Yes	Yes	Possible	--
		4 th	Yes	--	Yes	Possible
	Concern	5 th +	Yes	--	--	Yes
Major Lapse	Concern	Any	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

A student who has a documented lapse in professionalism will meet with a relevant Phase Dean or other faculty/senior leader. individual or repeated minor lapses or major lapses in professionalism are reported via an online incident report submission in the PAIR system, which is

managed by the Office of the Learning Environment (OLE). Any faculty members, staff members, or students may submit PAIR incident reports when they believe they have observed unprofessional behavior, including on the part of a UPSOM student.

The OLE refers all confidential (vs anonymous) PAIR incident reports about student professionalism to the Professionalism Subcommittee (PS) of the Committee on Student Promotions (CSP) by assigning the report to the PS lead in the PAIR system within two business days of report receipt. Students who are reported will be informed of the report by the PS lead via a PAIR system email and provided with pertinent information including a list of resources such as the Health Sciences Ombuds Office, UPSOM mental health team, etc.

PAIR incident reports about lapses in student professionalism will not be referred to nor receive an inquiry or action by the PS unless the reporter includes their name (confidential report); anonymously submitted reports will not be counted as contributing toward “repeated” lapses. If a student were to anonymously include in a PAIR incident report any threat to harm someone else or themselves then the PS may “break the glass” and notify appropriate parties, in order to ensure the safety of all parties. If a submitter were to include in a PAIR incident report any threat to harm someone else or themselves then school leadership will be notified, regardless of submission type (anonymous or confidential) or submitter preference for action, in order to ensure the safety of all parties. Reports alleging Title IX violations will be referred to the University of Pittsburgh Civil Rights & Title IX program as required by law and by University policy, whether submitted confidentially or anonymously.

The PS investigates the report, may ask to meet with the student and/or the individual who filed the report, and may request additional evidence as required to make a decision. Students who are asked to meet with the PS may choose to bring one faculty advocate and may submit evidence that they would like the PS to consider.

Minor Lapses

The PS has the power to determine that a reported violation qualifies as a “minor” lapse in professionalism and to adjudicate minor violations. Using the preponderance of evidence standard and with approval of a simple majority of the members voting, the PS can determine that the student is found responsible for a minor violation. The PS can then, by simple majority of members voting, impose sanctions on the student. The PS determines by simple majority if the violation will be noted on the MSPE. The violation and outcome are reported to the CSP.

Possible sanctions for a minor violation may include, but are not limited to: a restorative justice exercise (e.g., public apology); a professionalism reflection assignment; regular meetings with a professionalism coach or a faculty member with appropriate expertise; mandated community service, etc. The PS will determine and assign an appropriate sanction given the severity of the violation.

"The PS addresses minor lapses through formative and educational processes rather than disciplinary action. Accordingly, its determinations are final and not subject to appeal. Students who

believe a PS decision contains a material factual error or that proper procedures were not followed may request reconsideration in writing to the PS Chair within ten (10) business days of notification. Reconsideration is limited to correcting such errors and does not reopen the underlying professionalism concern. The PS Chair's decision on reconsideration requests is final.

Major Lapses

The PS has the power to identify, but not to determine responsibility or impose sanctions for, potential “major” lapses in professionalism. If the PS determines that it is reasonably possible that the student may have committed a “major” violation, or if the PS is unable to decide that a violation qualifies as “minor,” the PS refers the matter to CSP for full adjudication as outlined below:

At least five days in advance, the student is asked to attend a meeting of the CSP, is informed of the purpose of the meeting, and is provided with the documents/evidence that the CSP has received regarding the alleged violation.

The student is required to submit a one-page written response at least one business day prior to the meeting and is required to respond to the charges at the meeting. The student must be present at the meeting.

The student may choose to bring one faculty support to the meeting. The student may not bring legal counsel.

The student may raise conflict of interest concerns regarding committee or subcommittee members to the CSP chair, who makes any necessary decisions regarding the validity of such concerns.

The chairperson of the CSP presides and makes all rulings with respect to questions of practice and procedure. The CSP chair may request additional evidence as required to make a decision.

In executive session, and in absence of the student and faculty advocate, the CSP determines whether a violation has occurred based on the preponderance of evidence standard, defines any found violation as major or minor, and determines what sanction should be imposed. 51% of the voting members is considered a quorum. A violation may be determined to be “major” if at least 60% of the CSP members present concur. A violation may be determined to be “minor” if a simple majority of the CSP members present concur.

The CSP informs the student in writing following its determination.

III. Sanctions

If the student is found to have committed a lapse in professionalism, the CSP rules on sanctions, potentially including dismissal for major violations.

Major violations are typically noted in the student's MSPE unless the CSP rules otherwise.

The CSP rules on remediation plans and/or sanctions, which may include, but are not limited to:

1. Restorative justice exercise (e.g., public apology)
2. Professionalism reflection assignment
3. Regular meetings with a professionalism coach or a faculty member with appropriate expertise
4. Mandated community service
5. Failure for a course (major violations only)
6. Mandated leave (major violations only)
7. Suspension for a definite time (major violations only)
8. Dismissal (major violations only)

A dismissal action requires approval by at least 60% of the voting members present. Other sanctions may be approved by a simple majority.

IV. Review and Appeal

The student may appeal the decision of the CSP following the standard appeals process used for all CSP decisions as listed on the OMED website: <https://www.omed.pitt.edu/policies-and-procedures>.

Between April and July of the final year of enrollment, a student who has professionalism violation(s) noted on the MSPE may petition the CSP to expunge that comment from the MSPE. If the CSP feels that it is reasonable to remove the comment with the approval of the Executive Vice Dean of the School of Medicine, that comment may be expunged.

V. Custody of Disciplinary Records Separate from Academic Records

Records pertaining to accusations and disciplinary proceedings are documented by the assigned PS lead in the PAIR database, separately from the student's academic record. Any decisions made by the CSP or PS, including the letters sent by the CSP or the PS to inform the student of those decisions, are part of the student's academic record. Please refer to the Policy on Access to Medical Student Academic Records (with link below in References section).

VI. References and Other Documents

- ACGME Statement on Professionalism
- University of Pittsburgh Title IX Policy

- University of Pittsburgh Student Code of Conduct
- UPSOM Policy on Access to Medical Student Academic Records
- Learning Environment Statement
- Policy on Mistreatment and Harassment
- University of Pittsburgh Access and Use of University Computing Resources

VI. Approval

Educational Policy Council approved on January 7, 2026

This code is not a contract.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine may revise this code at any time. All revisions will go into effect immediately for the entire student body.