INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy and procedures document is to provide guidance for promoting the professional behavior of medical students at Chicago Medical School (CMS) at Rosalind Franklin University (RFU) and to provide guidance for addressing unprofessional behavior. Medical students participating in medical education and patient care are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner in all of their interactions with patients, members of the public, the University community, and each other.

CANCELLATION:

This policy replaces the previous Medical Student Professionalism Policy, which was approved by the CMS Faculty Executive Council in 2016.

SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY:

This policy applies to all students of Chicago Medical School.

POLICY STATEMENTS:

Statement of Policy on Professionalism and Ethics

All students at Rosalind Franklin University are expected to exhibit professional, responsible and ethical behavior. Students should display this behavior as students in the University, as health care providers in the clinical setting and as researchers in the laboratory or clinic. All students should, therefore, possess the highest degree of personal integrity and be able to reason about ethical issues in their professional life. Students are expected to treat patients and research subjects with respect, compassion and sincerity, irrespective of race, color, creed, ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic class, and to maintain strict confidentiality. Students are expected to be honest and trustworthy, to respect the property of others, and to follow the code of professional ethics appropriate to their discipline. Any departures from these standards may result in disciplinary action.
DEFINITIONS:

A core competency of Chicago Medical School is Professionalism. In order to meet this competency, students must demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities, adherence to ethical principles, sensitivity to a diverse patient population, and the qualities required to sustain lifelong professional growth. Professionalism extends beyond interactions with patients and their families to also include relationships and interactions between all those engaged in medical education and the delivery of patient care by physicians, students, administrators, and other health care providers.

According to the American Council on Graduate Medical Education and American Board of Medical Specialties, professionalism is to “demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities, adherence to ethical principles and sensitivity to diverse patient populations.”

Profession

In medicine, professionalism arises from the medical profession. In 1914, US Superior Court Justice Louis Brandeis defined a profession as follows:

- A profession is an occupation for which the necessary preliminary training is intellectual in character, involving knowledge and, to some extent, learning, as distinguished from mere skill.
- A profession is an occupation which is pursued largely for others and not merely for one’s self.
- It is an occupation in which the amount of financial return is not the accepted measure of success.

The definition of Justice Brandeis is an introductory consideration of the meaning and aspirations of professionalism.

Categories of Unprofessional Behavior

Three categories of unprofessional behavior include the following:

- Professional Misconduct: Egregious professional behavior.
  1. A student who posts information online about a patient using identifying information.
  2. A student who steals a professor’s laptop before an exam.
  3. A student who forges the signature on a prescription.

- Lapse in Professionalism: Episodic break from normal professional behavior.
  1. A student arrives thirty minutes late to take an exam
  2. A student who does not respond to an important administrative email due to a busy clinical schedule.
3. A student who starts to look disheveled, emaciated, and less interactive during a clinical rotation after a beloved grandmother recently passed away.

- Professional delay: Lapse in professional behavior due to the stage of development of the learner.
  1. A student who sends text messages during patient care rounds.
  2. A student who is disrespectful or insensitive to the needs of others.
  3. A student who does not complete assigned tasks in a timely manner.

Attributes of Professionalism
According to the American Board of Internal Medicine, “Professionalism aspires to altruism, accountability, excellence, duty, service, honor, integrity, and respect for others.” These values provide guidance for promoting professional behavior and for making challenging ethical decisions.

1. Based on Core Competencies, American Board of Medical Specialties. http://www.abms.org/board-certification/a-trusted-credential/based-on-core-competencies/

PROCEDURES:

A. Procedure for Reporting Medical Student Professionalism Complaints

Two ways to report medical student professionalism complaints are as follows:
1. Faculty, students, and staff may report any allegations of breaches of medical student professional conduct by completing and submitting the Medical Student Professionalism Complaint Reporting Form at https://rosalindfranklin.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5A2zFl192QMJLb7. The form provides a uniform approach to collecting data on professionalism. The Assistant Dean for ERSL will have access to the submitted forms. Anonymous submissions of the form will not be possible.

2. Faculty, students, and staff may report professionalism complaints directly to the Senior Associate Dean for ALE or the Assistant Dean for ERSL.

B. Procedure for Referral of Medical Student Professionalism Complaints

After a preliminary investigation of a professionalism complaint, the Senior Associate Dean for SAE, Senior Associate Dean for ALE, and Assistant Dean for ERSL will use three categories to characterize a complaint as either professional delay, professional lapse, or professional
misconduct. These categories will guide the action or referral of a complaint to one of the following three bodies for further review and appropriate action.

1. CMS Professionalism Committee (PC): The Professionalism Committee, comprised of faculty appointed by the Dean of Chicago Medical School, monitors the learning environment for medical students and serves as an advisory committee to the Office of Academic Learning Environment and Office of Student Affairs and Education. The committee’s primary role is education in regard to professionalism and is not involved in making decisions regarding dismissal and retention. It also promotes and develops the measures of excellence in professionalism in the learning environment.

The PC holds meetings to review complaints of professional delay. For a given case, the PC may recommend a remediation plan that is designed to help the medical student develop. The Professionalism Committee may also refer the complaint to one of the other bodies for further review and action.

2. CMS Student Evaluation, Promotion and Awards Committee: According to the May 10, 2019 version of the SEPAC Handbook, pages 6-7, “Students who exhibit egregious or habitual behavior that is inconsistent with this standard [of professional conduct], with the CMS competencies, with University policy or with the law will be referred to SEPAC for consideration for dismissal.”

“A student under suspicion of ethical or professional misconduct will be afforded due notice and process in the investigation, deliberation, and decision about such allegations and potential penalties. The decisions of SEPAC will be transmitted by the Committee Chair to the student and the Dean of the Medical School. The student will also be afforded the right to appeal any negative outcomes to the Dean of Chicago Medical School.”

3. RFU Student Affairs Judiciary Committee (SAJC): “The SAJC hears cases of behavioral misconduct. The SAJC is comprised of faculty, students and student affairs professionals. Hearings will be convened with a minimum of the quorum for the committee which will be five voting members and which will include a minimum of one student voting member and one representative from each school.”. 2019-20 RFU Student Handbook, pg. 9.

C. Professionalism and the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE)

Actions taken by the Professionalism Committee, as a rule, are not reported on the MSPE. However, patterns of unprofessional behavior may be noted on the MSPE at the discretion of the Professionalism Committee and the Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Education.

SEPAC or SAJC may render an adverse action on the grounds of professional misconduct, including probation or suspension. All adverse actions will be noted on the Medical Student
Performance Evaluation (MSPE). The Office of Student Affairs and Education will amend a fourth-year medical student’s MSPE and notify him/her as well as the relevant residency program director in case an adverse action is rendered after the release of the student’s MSPE.

D. Procedure to Appeal

If an accused student receives a negative outcome from a formal review, he/she may appeal following the stipulations for an appeal of the review body, including the CMS Professionalism Committee, CMS Student Evaluation, Promotion, and Awards Committee and RFU Student Affairs Judiciary Committee.

POINTS OF CONTACT:

Senior Associate Dean for Academic Learning Environment
Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Education
Assistant Dean for Educational Research and Student Learning
RFU Vice President for Student Success and Inclusion
RFU Compliance Counsel
CMS Clinical Affiliates

REFERENCES AND RELATED POLICIES:

CMS Competency V
SEPAC Handbook
CMS Catalog
RFU Student Handbook
RFU Social Networking Policy
RFU Student Handbook
University-wide Reporting Systems Policy
AAMC Uniform Clinical Training Affiliation Agreement - Exhibit A: Teacher-Learner Expectations
LCME Standard 3.5