

Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine Administrative Policies

Subject: Conflict of Interest in Academic Evaluation of Students by Faculty
Effective Date: March 15, 2019
Supersedes: COM Administrative Policies Initially Adopted February 28, 2007; amended June 1, 2009; September 30, 2010; January 19, 2011; June 12, 2012; May 10, 2013; July 10, 2014; Recusal from Academic Evaluation of Students by Faculty Renamed Faculty Recusal and Amended January 17, 2019; Faculty Recusal Renamed Conflict of Interest in Academic Evaluation of Students by Faculty and Amended March 15, 2019.
Responsible Authority: Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs

Policy Statement:

Conflicts of Interest Related to Student as a Patient

Faculty members and residents or fellows with academic assessment/evaluation responsibilities for students are precluded from evaluating any students who are also their patients, because of dual relationship and conflict of interest issues. The conflict created by this dual role could affect both the quality of medical care and the content of such evaluations in the following way:

- A student-patient might be less likely to report a sensitive medical issue (e.g., drug abuse) to his/her physician if that physician will be providing an evaluation or grade for the student; and
- A faculty member's evaluation or grade (which could include some subjective elements) could potentially be, despite the evaluator's commitment to neutrality, positively or negatively affected as a result of the therapeutic relationship.

In instances of pre-existing doctor-patient/student relationships, the physician must discuss with the student the potential for a dual relationship and inform the student that he/she will recuse him/herself from any situation in which a formal evaluation is required.

In emergent situations or other instances in which an appropriate referral is not available, a student can seek the care of any faculty member or resident. In this circumstance as well, the physician must discuss with the student the potential for a dual relationship and recuse him/ herself from any situation in which a formal evaluation is required.

Conflict of Interest Related to Student in an Official Mentoring Relationship with Evaluating Faculty

The College of Medicine supports an active advising program for students in every year of medical school. This program supports faculty members, who are selected and trained by the College of Medicine, to counsel students regarding academic progress, career direction, and personal well-being. In order to preserve the integrity of the assessment system and protect students from either real or perceived bias, faculty members who serve in formal advisory roles and who have a conflict of interest related to their student mentees, will not assign summative course or clerkship grades to such student mentees without the participation of a faculty grading committee. Such faculty members may, however, provide formative feedback to their student mentees. Any faculty member contributing to the summative assessment process of a student with whom he/she has a conflict of interest must disclose the conflict of interest to the pertinent course, clerkship, or curriculum director or grading committee.

Conflicts of Interest Related to Student with a Close or Personal Relationship with Evaluating Faculty

In addition to conflicts due to a pre-existing doctor-patient/student relationship (as described above), other conflicts might exist as a result of familial relationships, close personal relationships, or other circumstances which might create a conflict of interest, or the perception of a conflict within the evaluation process of a student. It is a professional obligation of the student to choose objective learning environments that are free of bias or perceived bias, so that they can be evaluated fairly. When the potential for nepotism, or any other bias or perception of bias exists, it is required that the students and faculty notify the course and curriculum directors so that changes in assignments can be made.

Notification and Scheduling

At the beginning of each course, rotation, or clerkship at the College of Medicine, the Office for Medical Education provides students and faculty with small group facilitator, preceptor, attending, and/or clinical site assignments as a routine part of the scheduling process. Students and faculty must report any potential and/or actual conflicts of interest with one another that might necessitate a change in assignments.

Regarding the psychiatry clerkship, information about potential teacher/physician dual relationship will be provided to the medical students on the first day. Students are told that if they have seen a clinician at the facility as a patient, they should notify the curriculum coordinator who will modify the schedule to avoid activities with the clinician in question, without alerting the site director as to the purpose of the schedule change.

If a change in assignment needs to be made as a result of any of the conflicts mentioned above, the type of conflict will generally not be disclosed to the individuals involved, in the interest of privacy. The course administrator(s) will be instructed to facilitate such requests without inquiring as to the nature of the conflict of interest. Students have the obligation to avoid small groups, preceptor assignments, clinical sites, as well as specific clerkship and elective rotations where evaluating faculty have a close or personal relationship with the student. Final schedules and assignments remain at the discretion of the College of Medicine.

Policy Approval
(For use by the Office of the Dean)

Legal Review: February 27, 2019

Dean: March 13, 2019

Vice Provost: March 15, 2019

Approval documentation is available in the Office of the Dean.