

Approved by Academic Council: 2012

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Rationale and background

The purposes of this policy are two-fold: (1) to demonstrate the priority placed on professional behaviour by the School of Rehabilitation Therapy, and (2) to provide faculty, staff and students of the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Programs with a clear articulation of expectations vis à vis student professional behaviour. Therefore, the intent of this policy is to provide a process through which to educate students when their behaviour is not acceptable and fails to meet professional standards so that the behaviour does not continue.

Responsibilities of the student, as outlined in this document, are a part of the professional requirements of the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Programs. Evaluation of professional behaviour is an ongoing and integral part of the curriculums of these programs, in both academic and clinical settings. Consequently, evaluation of professional behaviour can affect both grading and a student's status within each program. Professionalism is reflected in each student's conduct in the different program contexts, and is essential for collegiality, collaboration, learning, and effective communication.

The School of Rehabilitation Therapy has an obligation to patients/clients, students, the healthcare community, and society to educate students on their professional obligations. This policy provides the School with clearly articulated authority to act when dealing with professional behaviour concerns. When a student falls short of professional behaviour expectations, the School must make them aware of the improper conduct.

In addition to professional behaviour, students are also expected to behave with [academic integrity](#) and in accordance with the [Queen's University Code of Conduct](#). Other university policies have set out those expectations and the possible sanctions for violations. This Professional Behaviour Policy is intended to complement those policies.

These policy provides guidance for students, faculty and staff at the SRT on the **minimum** expected behaviour and performance of students.

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all students in the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Programs as they engage in learning activities related to their programs of study, including but not limited to:

1. All classroom-based milieu (e.g., learning teams, laboratory, Clinical Education Centre, lecture hall, exam hall, etc.);
2. All clinical settings that are part of the learning program (e.g., hospitals, clinics, community health centres, ambulatory settings, community development locales, etc.);
3. Other milieu that contribute to the learning process. Examples include but are not limited to: student-groups/meetings, clubs and governance structures; interactions with University administrators and other members of the campus community; University-supported events.

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4. Electronic communication
5. Any time a student is identified as a student associated with the School of Rehabilitation Therapy

Policy statements

1. Throughout their participation in their respective programs, students are expected to engage in professional behaviour that complies with the standards of the School of Rehabilitation Therapy and their respective professions more broadly. The key standards include, but are not limited to:
 - a) **Professional Responsibility, Integrity and Accountability:** Students demonstrate professional responsibility, integrity and accountability by fulfilling all responsibilities reliably and promptly; protecting confidential information; representing information accurately and accepting responsibility for their own actions; dressing appropriately and professionally, including proper identification; maintaining the highest standard of safety; and advocating for the patient/client and profession rather than promoting self-interest.
 - b) **Self-improvement and Professional Development:** Students demonstrate self-improvement and professional development by acknowledging and improving upon their own limitations or difficulties; responding reasonably and responsibly to feedback; maintaining a positive attitude toward their responsibilities; consulting with those more knowledgeable when necessary; and adapting to changing circumstances with the goal of achieving excellence.
 - c) **Respectful Professional Relationships and Communication:** Students demonstrate respectful professional relationships and communication by using respectful language in all communication. This includes, but is not limited to face-to-face, video, email, phone, text and social media. Students also recognize appropriate professional boundaries, and show sensitivity to the values, attitudes and assumptions of other cultures, and how these affect practice. Students remain open to exploring the personal impact of self on others; listening attentively to the concerns of others; promoting inclusivity; and demonstrating empathy and compassion.
2. The School recognizes that some lapses in professional behaviour are more serious than others. Minor, major and critical lapses will be defined as follows:

Minor lapses – These are errors that have minimal consequences. Often there is no awareness of the unprofessional act, or the student realizes the error after the fact. There may be mitigating circumstances. It is accepted that some minor lapses may be better dealt with informally, outside of this policy and at the discretion of the involved faculty. It is further acknowledged however, that while a single minor lapse may be dealt with outside of this policy, it is also acknowledged that repeated minor lapses similar in character, time, or context will fall under the jurisdiction of this policy.

Examples:

- a) Student does not meet deadline for paper due to family illness but fails to notify anyone;
- b) Student does not meet a deadline to submit clinical documentation and fails to communicate any delay to the preceptor/clinical instructor;
- c) Student is overheard voicing frustration in a non-constructive manner about a peer, or instructor;
- d) Student uses his or her computer for purposes other than learning in the classroom environment;
- e) Student has a habit of being late for class and disrupting the classroom environment.

Major lapses – Major lapses are errors that have potentially serious consequences. Often the student has awareness of the unprofessional act. Usually there are no mitigating circumstances.

Examples:

- a) Student fails to return phone calls and/or emails from an instructor within the requested time frame, and no extenuating circumstances are identified;
- b) Student is overheard voicing frustration in a non-constructive manner about a client;
- c) Student posts volunteer/client/peer/faculty information that does not belong in the public domain on a social networking website (note: may also be considered a critical lapse dependent on content and intent);
- d) Student has a pattern of unexcused absences in academic or clinical courses which jeopardize his/her competence in the course material(s);
- e) Inappropriate behaviour in class in the presence of guest speakers or invited guests;
- f) Student's disruptive behaviour in the classroom environment has negative consequences for others' learning.

Critical Lapses – Critical lapses have direct harmful consequences or are clear breaches of well-recognized standards. They are serious errors that will require immediate action by a faculty member, preceptor, or Associate Director of the student's Program. They are a clear violation of the professional code of conduct.

Examples:

- a) Student being dishonest either by lying or misrepresenting himself/herself;
- b) Student is verbally abusive to a volunteer/mentor, client, peer, faculty member or preceptor;
- c) Student is sexually inappropriate with a client, other member of the health care team, or their peers;
- d) Student violates the confidentiality of a client, volunteer/mentor or peer.

3. All members of the School of Rehabilitation Therapy community – teaching or academic assistants, faculty, staff, preceptors, and students – have responsibility for reporting lapses in professional behaviour as follows:

- a) Students → Faculty (*all lapses*)
- b) Teaching or Academic Assistants → Faculty (*all lapses*)

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- c) Preceptors → Clinical Education Coordinators (*repeated minor lapses; all major and critical lapses*)
 - d) Staff or Faculty → Associate Director (*repeated minor lapses; all major and critical lapses*)
 - e) Associate Director → Director (*all critical lapses*)
 - f) Director → Dean (*all critical lapses*)
4. Consequences will vary based on the severity of the lapse. A minor lapse will be identified to the student and a note to file may be issued by a faculty member. However, consequences of repeated minor lapses, and major and critical lapses will be determined by the appropriate Progress and Awards Committee after considering the following factors:
- a) Details and context of the lapse
 - b) Whether the student has had previous lapses
 - c) The level of responsibility shown by the student
 - d) Extenuating circumstances
5. Consequences may include, but are not limited to one or more of the following:
- a) Research and reflection resulting in a written submission
 - b) Issuance of an apology (verbally and/or written)
 - c) Counselling
 - d) Mandated meetings with a mentor
 - e) Academic penalty
 - f) Repetition of a course, placement/fieldwork
 - g) Request to withdraw from the program
6. Any decision about a professional lapse is an academic decision that is subject to the Appeals Policy.

Procedures

Identified lapses in professional behaviour will be addressed by the faculty member responsible for the course or program based on severity as follows:

Procedures for minor lapses:

- a) Faculty will notify the student of the lapse by email and copy the program's Associate Director. An explanation and an opportunity to respond would be provided to the student. The email notification would result in a note to file.
- b) If a student receives multiple notes to file, or at the discretion of the faculty member, the Associate Director responsible for the program will be notified so that the Progress and Awards Committee can meet and determine the consequence.

Procedures for major or critical lapses:

- a)** Faculty will notify the student of the lapse by email and copy the program's Associate Director. An explanation and an opportunity to respond will be provided to the student.
- b)** The Progress and Awards Committee will evaluate the situation and make three decisions: (1) minor, major or critical lapse, (2) whether a pattern of behaviour is evident, and (3) consequences.
- c)** The Progress and Awards committee will communicate their decision, with any sanctions, to the student, and that the letter will remain on the student's file.
- d)** The student will be provided with information about the appeals process.
- e)** Depending on the nature of the lapse, the Director or Dean may be notified of the situation.