

## ***Principles governing the use of personal information in Undergraduate Medical Education***

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**Approved by:** Undergraduate Medical Education Curriculum Committee

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In fulfilling their responsibilities, Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) leaders<sup>1</sup>, staff, and teachers necessarily have access to information regarding academic and/or personal details of UME students and teachers. For example, depending on their particular role, UME leaders, staff members, or teachers may have knowledge of student marks and assessments, reports on student conduct and professionalism, and information on health or family concerns that have affected studies. They may also receive information about teachers such as teaching evaluations and reports about conduct.

Such information is inherently sensitive and should be used only for its intended purpose.

In order to safeguard information about students and teachers, and prevent it from being used for unauthorized purposes, the UME program has established the following two principles:

### **1. Non-disclosure of information**

Personal information about individual students or teachers must not be disclosed to those outside of UME, nor to individuals within UME, who do not have the authority to access this data. The only exceptions are when the disclosure is required by *official* UME business, by University policy, or by law.

Official UME business is that activity which is conducted by offices of the UME program as part of their mandate. An example of this is when the Office of the Faculty Registrar issues transcripts and Medical Student Performance Records (MSPRs) to the Canadian Residency Match Service (CaRMS).

Sharing of individual student grades or assessment results by individuals with other institutions outside UME or with residency selection committees, both verbally or in writing, does not constitute official UME business, and is therefore strictly prohibited.

Specifically:

- Letters of reference or external award nominations written by UME leaders or teachers for students must not contain grades or assessment results. Letters of reference for use in the CaRMS match must not report course grades or quote clinical assessments. It should be noted that UME routinely issues to CaRMS for all students, both official transcripts which indicate whether credit has been obtained in a particular course, and official Medical School Performance Records (MSPR) which indicate clinical competencies attained on clerkship rotations.
- Letters of reference or external award nominations written by UME leaders for teachers must not contain Teaching Effectiveness Scores or student comments retrieved from evaluation forms without

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<sup>1</sup>For this document, Undergraduate Medical Education leaders are defined as the Vice-Dean, UME Associate Deans, Academy Directors, the Preclerkship and Clerkship Directors, course directors, and thematic faculty leads.

the specific consent of the teacher.

Individuals aware of inappropriate disclosure of information outside of UME should inform the Vice-Dean UME as soon as possible.

## **2. Separation of UME leadership roles from other decision-making positions**

The UME program wishes to avoid conflict of roles that could lead to unintentional misuse of sensitive, personal information.

UME leaders maybe in a conflict of leadership roles if in addition to their UME role they also hold other decision-making or advisory positions vis-à-vis UME students within the UME portfolio or external to it.

### **Examples:**

#### **A. A conflict would arise if a UME leader were also:**

- i. a member of a Resident Selection Committee<sup>2</sup>
- ii. a member of the UME Board of Examiners (unless specified *ex officio*)
- iii. a member of the Faculty of Medicine Board of Undergraduate Medical Assessors (unless specified *ex officio*)
- iv. a member of the Faculty of Medicine Appeals Committee
- v. a member of the Governing Council Academic Appeals Committee

#### **B. Because of the potential for conflict, a person should not be both:**

- i. an Academy Director and a course director
- ii. an Associate Dean and a course director

*(The preceding are examples only and not a complete list of possible conflicts.)*

All potential conflicts must be declared as soon as known to the Vice-Dean UME, and also, if pertaining to resident selection, the Vice-Dean PGME/Associate Dean PGME (Admissions)<sup>3</sup>, who will determine the appropriate course of action. Every attempt should be made to avoid assuming or continuing in a role that constitutes a conflict of interest as defined above, and the individual in conflict may be required to step down from one of the conflicting positions. In those instances where a conflict cannot be avoided (e.g. in very small residency programs), the individual must declare the conflict of interest to the participants in the relevant process and refrain from disclosing confidential information in contravention of the principles outlined in this document. Those responsible for overseeing resident selection processes (e.g., selection committee chairs) must ensure that potential conflicts are managed appropriately and that inappropriately disclosed information is not included in selection decisions.

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<sup>2</sup> Conflicts may also arise if UME leaders participate in file review or interviews for resident selection. If in doubt, declare the potential conflict and seek advice from senior leaders in both UME and PGME.

<sup>3</sup> If the Vice-Dean is perceived to have a conflict of roles, this conflict should be discussed with the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, who will determine the course of action to follow.