Division of Physician Assistant Studies
Professionalism Policy

I. Purpose

Professionalism is a fundamental competency of physician assistant education and practice. Students admitted to the physician assistant studies program are expected to demonstrate professional conduct that reflects the ethical, behavioral, and performance standards of the PA profession. Professional behavior is essential to the development of clinical competence, the safety and welfare of patients, effective collaboration with healthcare team members, and the maintenance of public trust.

Professionalism is evaluated throughout all phases of the curriculum and applies to all academic, clinical, service, and extracurricular activities associated with the program.

II. Policy Statement

Students are expected to consistently demonstrate professional behavior in their interactions with patients, families, peers, faculty, staff, preceptors, healthcare professionals, and members of the public. Professional conduct is expected in all environments, including classrooms, laboratories, simulation activities, clinical settings, community activities, electronic communications, and social media platforms.

Professionalism encompasses the demonstration of integrity, accountability, respect, ethical conduct, effective communication, reliability, cultural humility, commitment to learning, and responsibility for one's actions.

Students who fail to meet established standards of professionalism may be subject to remediation, corrective action, academic probation, or dismissal from the Program.

III. Standards of Professional Behavior

A. Integrity and Honesty

Students shall:

1. Demonstrate honesty in all academic, clinical, and professional activities.
2. Accurately represent their knowledge, skills, experiences, and qualifications.
3. Refrain from cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, or other forms of academic dishonesty.
4. Maintain truthful documentation of clinical encounters, procedures, patient care activities, and educational records.

5. Promptly disclose errors or omissions when appropriate.

B. Accountability and Responsibility

Students shall:

1. Accept responsibility for their actions and decisions.
2. Fulfill academic and clinical obligations in a timely manner.
3. Follow program, university, clinical site, and healthcare institution policies.
4. Complete required assignments, evaluations, documentation, and administrative requirements by established deadlines.
5. Demonstrate ownership of their professional growth and educational progress.

C. Respect for Others

Students shall:

1. Treat all individuals with dignity, courtesy, and respect.
2. Demonstrate cultural humility and sensitivity toward diverse backgrounds, identities, beliefs, and experiences.
3. Refrain from discriminatory, harassing, threatening, intimidating, or disruptive behavior.
4. Engage in professional disagreement and conflict resolution while maintaining respect for others.
5. Foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

D. Professional Communication

Students shall:

1. Communicate clearly, respectfully, and professionally in verbal, written, and electronic formats.
2. Use professional language and demeanor in all program-related interactions.
3. Respond to program communications within established timelines.
4. Demonstrate appropriate professional conduct during meetings, classes, clinical experiences, and electronic interactions.
5. Maintain civility in discussions involving differing opinions or challenging circumstances.

E. Dependability and Reliability

Students shall:

1. Attend required educational and clinical activities.
2. Arrive punctually and prepared for all assigned responsibilities.
3. Notify appropriate personnel promptly when unable to meet scheduled obligations.

4. Follow through on commitments and assigned tasks.
5. Demonstrate consistent participation and engagement.

F. Patient-Centered Conduct

Students shall:

1. Prioritize patient welfare, dignity, and safety.
2. Demonstrate compassion, empathy, and respect for patient autonomy.
3. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with patients and families.
4. Advocate appropriately for patient needs.
5. Provide care without bias or discrimination.

G. Confidentiality and Privacy

Students shall:

1. Adhere to all applicable privacy and confidentiality regulations, including HIPAA requirements.
2. Safeguard patient, student, and institutional information.
3. Access confidential information only when authorized and necessary.
4. Refrain from discussing confidential information in inappropriate settings.
5. Protect confidential information contained in electronic communications and social media.

H. Professional Appearance

Students shall:

1. Comply with program and clinical site dress code requirements.
2. Maintain appropriate personal hygiene and grooming.
3. Wear required identification and credentials while participating in program-related activities.
4. Present an appearance consistent with professional standards of healthcare practice.

I. Teamwork and Interprofessional Collaboration

Students shall:

1. Work cooperatively with faculty, staff, peers, preceptors, and healthcare team members.
2. Respect the expertise and contributions of all members of the healthcare team.
3. Contribute positively to team functioning.
4. Address conflict professionally and constructively.

5. Support a collaborative learning and clinical environment.

J. Receptiveness to Feedback and Self-Improvement

Students shall:

1. Demonstrate insight into personal strengths and limitations.
2. Accept constructive feedback professionally.
3. Implement recommendations for improvement.
4. Seek assistance when additional guidance or supervision is needed.
5. Demonstrate commitment to lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

K. Ethical Conduct

Students shall:

1. Adhere to the ethical standards of the physician assistant profession.
2. Exercise sound judgment in academic and clinical situations.
3. Avoid conflicts of interest that may compromise professional responsibilities.
4. Report unethical, unsafe, or unlawful conduct through appropriate channels.
5. Uphold professional standards even when doing so may be difficult or unpopular.

IV. Electronic Communication and Social Media

Students are expected to exercise sound professional judgment when using electronic communication and social media platforms.

Unprofessional conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Posting confidential or protected information.
- Posting content that may reasonably be considered threatening, discriminatory, harassing, or defamatory.
- Misrepresenting professional credentials or Program affiliation.
- Engaging in conduct that adversely affects patient trust, public confidence, or the reputation of the Program, University, clinical affiliates, or profession.

Students remain accountable for professionalism standards in online environments.

V. Examples of Professionalism Concerns

Examples of behaviors that may constitute professionalism deficiencies include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated tardiness or absenteeism.
- Failure to communicate appropriately with faculty, staff, preceptors, or peers.
- Failure to complete assigned responsibilities.
- Disrespectful or disruptive behavior.
- Unprofessional conduct in clinical settings.
- Breaches of confidentiality.
- Academic dishonesty including unauthorized use of artificial intelligence
- Falsification of records or documentation.
- Failure to accept responsibility for actions.
- Failure to respond appropriately to feedback.
- Violation of program, university, or clinical site policies.

VI. Assessment of Professionalism

Professionalism shall be evaluated continuously throughout the curriculum through methods that may include:

- Faculty and academic advisor observations.
- Clinical preceptor evaluations.
- Professional behavior assessments.
- Simulation and laboratory evaluations.
- Documentation reviews.
- Reports from patients, healthcare personnel, or educational partners.

Professionalism concerns may be documented at any time and become part of the student's program record.

VII. Remediation and Corrective Action

When professionalism deficiencies are identified, corrective actions may include:

1. Informal counseling
2. Formal warning
3. Probation
4. Dismissal from the program
5. Professionalism remediation activities

The severity, frequency, pattern, and impact of the behavior will be considered when determining the appropriate response.

VIII. Acknowledgment

All students are expected to review, understand, and comply with this Professionalism Policy. By enrolling in the physician assistant studies program, students acknowledge their responsibility to uphold the standards of professional conduct expected of future physician assistants and representatives of the profession.

Applicable ARC-PA Standards

A3.01 Program policies are published, readily available, and consistently applied to all students, principal faculty, staff, and the program director regardless of location.

A3.14 The program publishes, consistently applies, and makes readily available to enrolled and prospective students:

a) Required academic standards to maintain enrollment and progression
b) Requirements and deadlines for completion of the program
c) Policies and procedures for remediation
d) Policies and procedures for deceleration
e) Policies and procedures for withdrawal
f) Policies and procedures for dismissal
g) Policies and procedures for student grievances
h) Policies and procedures for student appeals
i) Policies regarding student employment while enrolled in the program
j) Policies regarding student travel to required rotation sites

Approved: November 9, 2026
Next Review: November 2027