L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty of
Medicine & Surgery

Department
of Pharmacy

Code of Conduct for Students:

Professionalism and Appropriate Behaviour

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Introduction

The courses offered by the Department of Pharmacy are intended to prepare you to become a caring, dedicated, and qualified healthcare professional who will be participating in activities that are, directly or indirectly, affecting patient safety and health. Your experience during the course is an important step in your personal and professional development. It provides the knowledge, skills, and competences for you to acquire professional characteristics and to contribute and perform as a worthy member of the healthcare profession.

The importance of professional behaviour cannot be emphasised enough. This document outlines some key issues aimed at helping you prevent misunderstandings or unfavourable attitudes about what is expected of you as a student. This document will serve as an important guide for your future profession.

Characteristics of Professionalism

A professional who abides by the most important characteristics of professionalism is an individual who:

- Acts in accordance with the professional code of ethics
- Is responsible, reliable, trustworthy, and punctual
- Behaves in a manner that is respectful, ethical, and culturally sensitive
- Wears appropriate attire and observes personal hygiene
- Shows leadership, tactfulness, and diplomacy
- Promotes creativity and innovation
- Follows through on assignments and is accountable for his/her work
- Accepts and learns from constructive criticism
- Demonstrates knowledge and skills of the profession
- Commits to Continuing Professional Development
- Takes pride in one's work and profession

Responsibilities

As a student following a professional programme, responsibilities demonstrating integrity, accountability and professionalism are expected, namely:

- Abiding by practice and research ethical principles
- Refraining from plagiarism and falsification in documentation
- Prioritising participation in learning activities
- Availability as full-time students during term time.

1. Programme of Study

The study programmes offered by the Department of Pharmacy are intended to provide you with knowledge, skills and competences. During your formative years, issues may arise that affect you on an individual basis or as a member of your group. When there is an individual circumstance, such as personal illness, a question of academic performance or other issues of personal importance, you are encouraged to meet with the Head of Department or the Course Coordinator as soon as possible.

2. Academic Integrity

The Department of Pharmacy expects you to demonstrate academic integrity and uphold its principles as you progress through your professional education. Academic integrity includes values such as honesty, including the avoidance of cheating or plagiarism, maintaining academic standards and thoroughness in research and academic writing. Research and laboratory data should be used honestly and ethically, seeking permission to use data as required. Assignments should be well-presented, comprehensive, and submitted within the stipulated deadline.

3. Communicating with others

a. Respect for Students and Staff

The Department of Pharmacy will not tolerate disrespectful behaviour towards any member of staff, member of the University community, other fellow students, healthcare professionals and mentors. A healthy academic environment requires mutual respect between and among students and its academic, administrative, technical and research staff. Any verbal, written or e-mail communication that is found to violate professional approach and University policy will be dealt with through informal and formal procedures.

b. Learning Activities Etiquette

The way that you communicate and relate with lecturers, tutors and fellow students during participation in learning activities, including class-based sessions, tutorials and seminars, should reflect professional behaviour.

- **Punctuality:** Being punctual is an important principle of being a professional and you should make every attempt to be on time when the session begins. If you arrive late, you should enter discretely with minimum disturbance.
- **Absence:** Justify any absence by completing a 'Notification of Absence Form' with a medical certificate if applicable, and submit these documents to the Department Administration Office by not later than five working days following your return.
- **Avoidance of potential distractions:** It is disrespectful to leave the class before the session is completed. If it is unavoidable and necessary, it is important to advise your lecturer/tutor beforehand. Other potential distractions, such as electronic devices, should be put on silent mode during classes. Sleeping in class or participating in other behaviour, such as browsing electronic sites is distracting and disrespectful to your peers and lecturer/tutor. Furthermore, the most disruptive activity in the classroom setting is unnecessary chatter during course content presentation and/or discussion. There should be no conversation during

lecture presentations and/or discussions if not otherwise indicated by the lecturer/ tutor.

- **Ensure active participation:** Presentations should be fora for discussion. Your colleagues' questions and/or comments should be respected. Material that is understandable to you may not be so to your classmates. A simple rule is to show respect for your classmates as you would want them to demonstrate to you, and allow them to express concerns and/or questions. You are welcome to approach the lecturer after the sessions to ask questions. If as a student you have individual needs that you would like to have considered to facilitate your learning experience, it is important that you make these known to the Head of Department at the beginning of the semester/ course. Although it may not be possible to meet everyone's special needs, the goal of the staff is to support everyone's learning experience and to create an environment that is conducive to that end.
- **Prioritising attendance**: Participate fully in learning activities in the academic programme. Travel that is not relevant to the learning experiences during term time is not allowed.

c. Laboratory Etiquette

Appropriate behaviour in the laboratory is primarily important for your safety and for the safety of your demonstrator and colleagues. When in the laboratory, always adhere to the 'Laboratory Safety Rules' and ensure that you read and understand the main Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for laboratory practice namely 'Health and Safety in the Laboratory', 'Good Laboratory Practice' and 'Training'. Ensure that you always come prepared for a practical session with the requirements stipulated in the handbook. When you are using equipment always read and understand the respective SOP and when using a chemical always refer to the respective Material Safety Data Sheet.

d. Experiential Etiquette

While participating in any experiential activity (placement), professional behaviour is always expected. During all experiential activities including pharmacy practice in community pharmacies, fieldwork for data collection for projects and dissertations, you should always wear your student identification card. You are expected to be well-groomed and dress in appropriate attire, such as pharmacy student uniform for hospital placements, and according to the specifications given by the mentor at your experiential learning site. Attire which is strictly not allowed includes halter or low-cut tops and dresses, sleeveless tops and dresses, miniskirts and shorts, see-through clothing, jeans, faded, bleached or torn clothing. Shoes should be clean and comfortable; flip flops should be avoided. Make-up and nail polish should be subtle and not overdone, and jewellery worn must be discrete and subtle; in some sites, particularly the manufacturing industry, make-up, nail polish or jewellery are not allowed. If a lab coat is worn, it should be clean and neat looking.

Professional behaviour includes treating your mentor, employees, colleagues, patients, and consumers at the experiential learning site with respect, while upholding confidentiality and integrity, and following all the policies and procedures for that site. Remember that you represent yourself and the Department of Pharmacy in all that you do at the site.

Prior to starting your placement, get in touch with your mentor and determine where, when, what to bring, and how to prepare before you arrive on your first day at the site. Inform your mentor if you will not be attending on specific days due to other commitments at university, or if you are unwell. Complete a 'Notification of Absence Form' with medical certificate if applicable. At the end of your placement, it is recommended that you thank your mentor to be consistent with professional behaviour. You should submit a well-presented, organised portfolio to the Department of Pharmacy at the end of the placement, adhering to the stipulated deadline.

You should keep in mind that these placements are unique learning experiences that have been established through hard work and dedication by the Department of Pharmacy, and they should not be taken lightly or carelessly. There will always be something to learn which will be helpful some time in your future career. It is important to be flexible and open to embrace new learning experiences with enthusiasm.

e. E-mail Netiquette

Check your University of Malta mailbox regularly. Use a professional tone and language in the body of the e-mail and the subject line. Messages should be concise and to the point. Address superiors and those you may not know as Mr., Ms., Dr., or Prof., as applicable. Avoid use of emoticons and slang and avoid overuse of acronyms. After sending an e-mail, allow the recipient adequate time to access the e-mail and action follow-up required before sending a gentle reminder.

4. Ethics and Plagiarism

Students should act consistent with professional standards, ethics and University of Malta Policies. You should demonstrate trustworthiness and integrity. It is expected that you ensure truthful communication including appropriate acknowledgement of information to avoid plagiarism and abiding by research ethics policies at the University of Malta. Please refer to the University of Malta Research Code of Practice which provides guiding principles and standards of good practice in research across and the University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures which lay out the procedure to be followed to review ethics in research.

5. Responsible use of AI

While the utility of AI is recognised, its ethical and responsible use is expected. All use of Gen AI tools should be acknowledged and supported by human oversight.

Conclusion

Your greatest challenge right now might appear to be that of succeeding in your academic endeavours. It is equally important to develop a professional orientation that will serve as a basis for your career in the areas of pharmacy and pharmaceutical technology.

Relevant links:

https://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/studentconduct

https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/about/studentscharter.pdf

https://www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/research/urec/ResearchCodeofPractice.pdf

www.um.edu.mt/media/um/docs/research/urec/ResearchEthicsReviewProcedures.pdf