Medical Student Professionalism Policy and Supporting Procedures

This Policy is in addition to and should be read in conjunction with the College Policy B5: Fitness for registration and practise regulations. Details of which can be found on the College website Policy Zone - http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/assets/files/students/B5_Fitness_for_registration_and_practise_regulations_2013-14_Final.pdf

Introduction
As stated by the General Medical Council (GMC), “Medical students have certain privileges and responsibilities different from those of other students. Because of this, different standards of professional behaviour are expected of them.” (Paragraph 3, Medical Students: Professional Values and Fitness to Practise, Guidance from the GMC and MSC, 2009).

This policy sets out the methods by which the School of Medical Education monitors the behaviour of its students with a view to ensuring that all students meet the expectations set out in the GMC’s guidance, whilst also exhibiting the attributes stated in the King’s Student Doctor (Appendix 1).

The GMC, Medical Schools Council (MSC) and the School of Medical Education documents are designed to set out the standards that students should meet as they progress through to qualification. The School takes its responsibility in supporting students to meet these expectations very seriously. People can make mistakes or can take time to adjust to the behaviours and conduct expected on embarking on a profession; acknowledging this, minor indiscretion will not generally prevent anyone being approved as professionally fit to practise.

Generally only in the most serious of cases does the School need to invoke formal fitness to practise investigations or proceedings. In the majority of cases, the School and/or the College are able to provide students with appropriate supportive measures such as advice, guidance, and practical support or focused remedial measures which should enable students to gain an insight into their challenges and to address these without detriment to their programme or professional career.

With over 2000 students actively registered in the School of Medical Education each year, typically less than 1% reaches a formal stage of fitness to practise procedure. This should not make anyone complacent but is information which underlines the importance the School places on support, not penalisation.

The approach outlined in this document is to help the School identify, monitor and provide support to those students in need and to prevent serious problems arising unexpectedly.

Professional behaviour and causes for concern
The College has three sets of procedures which cover the serious issues that may arise in relation to student behaviour. These are:

- Academic Misconduct
- Misconduct
- Fitness for Registration and Practise

These procedures each deal with serious and specific concerns about student behaviour and details can be found in the Policy Zone on the King’s website http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/

Conduct or behaviour which is sufficiently serious on its own merits will be referred by the School of Medical Education to the College. However, there is some behaviour which students’ exhibit which can be considered less serious but still give the School cause for concern. Taken individually, they may not seem important in assessing professionalism, but multiple instances of low level concerns can often signal either that a student needs additional support or that there is a professionalism issue that needs to be addressed.
This supporting document has been put in place to detail the procedures for how behaviours will be monitored and recorded.

The types of behaviour that would constitute lower level concerns include, but are not limited to:

- Missed teaching sessions for which students are required to register, e.g. IPE, BLS etc.
- Failure to meet deadlines for submission of non-assessment related items
- Debts to the College (unless these are caused by external factors beyond a student’s control)
- Inappropriate behaviour towards patients or staff
- Missed appointments with Occupational Health, personal tutors, clinical advisers or other support provision
- Demonstration of an uncaring attitude or lack of insight

The types of behaviours that would constitute serious concern could include, but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism or cheating in an examination
- Forging of a healthcare workers signature
- Failure to declare CRB issues at the point of admission or during the medical programme
- Serious threats or abusive behaviour
- Being untruthful

Professional behaviour that supports commendation
The School is very keen to hold positive information about its students. To this end, the School proactively records evidence of good professional behaviour that would not generally be noted as part of the assessment processes.

For example:

- Voluntary activity for the School, hospitals, community groups etc.
- Particular kindnesses and support of students, staff, College
- Ethical behaviours such as reporting concerns

How concerns or potential commendations can be notified to the School
Any member of staff (clinical, academic or administrative) at any organisation at which the student spends time, any patient, fellow student or member of the public may report any concern they have about a student.

Anyone who wishes to report a concern, pass on such a report or send a commendation should notify the Academic Centre as quickly as possible, specifically contacting one of the following:

- Student Support Manager
- Student Record and Programme Manager
- Academic Centre Manager

Students will receive an email notifying them of any issue or commendation added to their record. This will support the students in tracking their own professionalism, serve as a reminder of the professional obligations of medical students and also enable any mis-information to be identified and amended promptly.

In addition, sites at which students are on placement rotation will be contacted at the end of each rotation to request any feedback about student behaviour whilst on clinical placement, whether positive or negative.

Convictions and lesser sanctions
In the case of the issuing of a Penalty Notice for Disorder, Reprimand, Warning, Caution or Conviction, we require students to self-declare this immediately to the School. When students accept the College’s regulations at the point of initial registration and each subsequent year during re-enrolment, they are agreeing to the statement that requires these matters to be declared. Although this is often a cause of anxiety, the School remains supportive of its students and is in a better position to help and advise when it is fully informed. A delay in any such declaration is often of more concern than the declaration itself. NOTE: medical students have often been misinformed by well-intentioned police officers who claim there is no need to tell the School about a transgression and that it will not show up on a CRB check.
The School does need to be informed and these matters will show on an enhanced check which all FY1s must complete.

School response to concerns
Instances of reported behaviour that are purely factual, e.g. missed appointments will be recorded on the student record.
Instances which are potentially subject to interpretation, e.g. rudeness will be first discussed with a more senior member of staff who has not been involved in the communication previously. This will ensure that any decision as to whether to record the inappropriate behaviour is not subject solely to the reaction of the individual who received the report about the behaviour in question.

Students will receive an email notifying them of any issue that is being considered for inclusion on their record, to enable them opportunity to respond prior to records being updated. Any mis-information may also then be identified and amended promptly.

Depending on what the issue is and to who the concern is first reported, less serious concerns are followed up in a number of ways. Those parties involved in follow-up are the Academic Centre, the student’s Personal Tutor or Clinical Adviser, Senior Personal Tutor or Senior Clinical Adviser, Site Dean, Head of Phase or Dean/Deputy Dean of Student Affairs. Where necessary, more complex decisions about follow-up will be shared and decided by the Student Support Group.

Behaviours that are reported that constitute serious allegations will be referred directly to the Academic Centre Manager, or Deputy or a senior member of academic staff. These allegations will then be considered under the appropriate College policy, as mentioned above, by an academic member of staff or academic Panel.

The list of students for whom concerns or commendations are recorded will be reviewed twice yearly, once at the end of the first term and once again during the second half of the academic year. The timing may vary according to year of study. The Professionalism Lead and Professionalism Officer will present the list of student concerns/commendations to the Student Support Group who will undertake the review and advise the Dean of Medical Education if further action regarding individual students should be taken. It is here that a number of low level concerns about a student may be detected that suggest a more serious problem.

Patterns or instance of behaviour which constitute serious concerns are likely to be referred to the School of Medical Education Fitness to Practice Panel for further investigation.

Patterns or instances of commended behaviour will be considered at a senior level by the student’s Senior Personal Tutor or Senior Clinical Adviser, Site Dean, Head of Phase or Dean/Deputy Dean of Student Affairs and, where deemed appropriate, a letter of formal commendation will be issued to the student at the end of the academic year and placed on file.

At the end of each academic year, personal tutors / clinical advisers will be emailed with a summary for their students of any records kept under this policy. Students will be copied into that email.

Student Records
At the end of a student’s final year, the record will be reviewed by the Student Support Group. If it is determined that there are no significant issues that need to be retained for future reference, the concerns will be expunged and the record updated to note this.

The general criteria in determining whether information is ‘significant’ and therefore to be retained, will be that unless matters were sufficiently important to merit inclusion in the Transfer of Information process to Foundation Schools (see Appendix 2) or if formal fitness to practise proceedings were necessary, the concerns will generally be deleted from the student’s record. If the decision is taken to retain details about a concern the student would be informed by the School.

The School of Medical Education is also required to record specific information on the Medical Schools Council database. The Medical Schools Council have to be made aware of any students who have had an impairment made against them during their training years and who have subsequently voluntarily left their course or who are excluded from the medical school on Fitness to Practice Grounds.

Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine - School of Medical Education– Revised August 2014
General Medical Council Declarations
At point of applying for provisional GMC registration, all applicants are asked to declare any issues under a number of different categories. If the School deems any student to have exhibited behaviour which it believes should be declared to the GMC under fitness to practise or professionalism, the student will be notified of this.

Other matters that must be declared include academic misconduct (or investigations) and criminal convictions (or lesser sanctions). In any instance when a student declares something to the GMC, the School is contacted for further information, in addition to the student being asked for a statement and any documents held. Students are informed at the time of what is being submitted to the GMC and it should therefore not come as a surprise. If any of these types of issue have been declared to the School in a timely fashion, and if a student has been permitted to continue on the grounds that there are no fitness to practise concerns, this is made clear to the GMC by the School.
Typical flow of professionalism behavioural concerns once reported:

1. **Conduct Concern is Raised**
   - College member of staff
   - Student
   - Patient
   - External Organisation
   - Member of public

2. **Low level concern**
   - Referred to Student Support Group
   - Continue on course
   - Student Support Provided

3. **Recurrent low level concern**
   - School Fitness to Practice Investigation Panel
   - Student Suspended pending investigation
   - Continues on Course
   - Student Support Provided

4. **Serious concern**
   - College Fitness to Practice Investigation
   - College withdraws student

This document is maintained by the Academic Centre on behalf of the Dean of Student Affairs. Information or enquiries regarding it content should be directed to the Academic Centre Manager.
Appendix 1

THE KING’S STUDENT DOCTOR AND FITNESS TO PRACTISE
ATTRIBUTES OF STUDENT AND DOCTOR

The King’s School of Medical Education student will aim, throughout the undergraduate course, to become a doctor who will aspire to the highest standards of clinical practice and patient care. He or she will train to achieve professional excellence, to have good relationships with patients and colleagues, and to observe the profession’s ethical obligations.

On entering the School of Medical Education the student will
- have a high level of commitment to entering a caring profession
- demonstrate an interest in people and their health, and in the importance of the health and cultural issues in society
- have achieved high academic standards and have shown qualities of self-motivation
- show a sense of personal responsibility and a wide range of personal interests

During the undergraduate course the student will
- be educated in a multi-faculty college with the cultural opportunities offered by a central London location
- study medicine in a local community of wide ethnic, cultural and socio-economic diversity
- develop an inquiring and critical approach to learning
- understand the scientific principles of medicine
- learn about patients in a variety of settings: in hospitals, general practice and the community
- learn the essentials of good clinical practice which will be based on the core knowledge, skills and attitudes required for the safe practice of medicine

The student will learn about
- health and its promotion
- the scientific basis, presentation, management and prevention of common diseases and the impact of illness on the patient and the patient’s family
- the environmental and social basis of health and illness in the context of populations
- the ethical and legal issues relevant to the practice of medicine
- the organisation, management and provision of health care

The student will develop skills by
- learning to communicate effectively with patients, relatives and professionals
- becoming proficient in essential clinical examination skills
- becoming proficient in essential practical procedures

The student will demonstrate appropriate attitudes by
- treating patients with politeness, consideration and learning to involve them in decisions about their care
- showing respect for patients and colleagues that encompasses, without prejudice, diversity of background, language, culture and way of life.
- recognising the rights of patients, particularly with regard to confidentiality and informed consent
- respecting the professional values of competence in performance, reliability and conduct

The King’s graduate doctor will be guided by
- a commitment to build on the essentials of good clinical practice acquired during the undergraduate course
- sound reasoning and judgement in the establishment of medical diagnosis and management of patients
- awareness of the limitations of medical knowledge and knowing how and when to seek help
- the importance of offering treatment based on evidence of clinical effectiveness
- the need for continuing professional development throughout his or her working life
- the need to monitor and maintain an awareness of the quality of care that he, she or their colleagues provide
Appendix 2

Extract from the UK Foundation Programme Transfer of Information Process and Form Document
(correct as at January 2013 for F1 entry in 2014)

We recommend referring directly to the UK Foundation Programme website Key Documents for the most up-to-date procedural guidance.

General principles (excerpt from FP Reference Guide 2012):

The transfer of information (TOI) processes are a means of supporting medical students during the transition from medical school to foundation school, and during the F1 year.

Under the Medical Act 1983, universities have formal responsibility for confirming that doctors at the end of F1 are eligible for full registration. It is therefore essential that there is a two-way transfer of information between the university/medical school and the deanery/foundation school until the point of full registration with the GMC.

The TOI process aims to highlight doctors who may require additional support during the Foundation Programme. In particular, it is essential that information regarding any potential patient safety issues, significant educational, health, welfare, absences, other problems and areas of the student’s relative weakness are passed to those responsible for foundation training.

The TOI process is facilitated by completion of a TOI form. Every Foundation Programme applicant is required to comply with the TOI process and complete a TOI form.

The TOI form is completed by the student. Information on the TOI form is endorsed by the medical school and medical schools may provide further information where appropriate. TOI forms should be shared only with relevant individuals at the applicant’s allocated foundation school. There are two key components to the form:

- Information concerning health and welfare (Section 1)
- Information concerning educational progress (Section 2).

Health and welfare - Health and welfare information aims to highlight health and welfare issues that may be of relevance to the setting or delivery of the Foundation Programme. This allows the student to manage their health in a professional manner.

Educational progression - Educational progress information outlines any additional support that may be required during the Foundation Programme. This information will be used by the educational supervisor to assist the student in producing a personal development plan as a new foundation doctor and to identify any additional educational support that may be needed. This also allows the medical school to meet the GMC requirement of ensuring that graduates’ areas of relative weakness are fed into their Foundation Programme portfolios.

Completion of the TOI form does not replace the need to report any fitness to practise issues to the GMC or to inform the Local Education Providers (LEPs) HR/Occupational Health departments of any health issues.