



# The Medical College of Georgia Office of Academic Affairs

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Applicable to: All Clerkship/Enrichment  
Students

Approved by: COC

Category: Professionalism

Context:

## Addressing Unprofessional Behavior in Clinical Settings

Professional and ethical behavior is extremely important in performance as a medical student and as a practicing physician. At the Medical College of Georgia, professionalism has been identified as a goal within the Competency Based Objectives (CBOs). The Professionalism Goal states that *Medical students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior, commitment to ethical principles, and sensitivity to diverse patient populations.* This goal is measured through the attainment of identified professionalism core competencies/CBOs.

Faculty strive to assist students in the development of professionalism and also to recognize outstanding performance in this domain. It is also important to recognize unprofessional behavior, which can range from relatively minor to egregious. Feedback can be offered to improve behavior but at times, the behavior might be so serious that it precludes an individual from remaining enrolled and becoming a physician.

This policy addresses how MCG handles unprofessional behavior that may directly impact patients, their confidentiality, and their medical care. For further information about what constitutes unprofessional behavior, please see the MCG Professionalism Policy which can be found on the policies web page (<https://www.augusta.edu/mcg/coffice/curriculum/policies.php>) and in the appropriate section of the MCG Student Promotions Policies and Procedures Handbook (Redbook).

### Reporting Egregious Unprofessional Behavior Requiring Immediate Suspension

When egregious unprofessional behavior occurs that requires immediate suspension, the behavior must be reported by the Clerkship Administrator/s (Clerkship Director, Site Clerkship Director, Campus Dean, or Department Chair) to the Vice Dean. If the student is an Athens students, it must be reported to the Vice Dean and to the AU/UGA Medical Partnership Campus Dean.

### Unprofessional Behavior Not Requiring Immediate Suspension

During their third and fourth years, students are evaluated on Professionalism by faculty utilizing the Clerkship Evaluation Form. Students can earn a score of Exemplary, Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Marginal, or Does Not Meet Expectations. In the Student Academic and Professionalism Policies and Procedures manual it is stated that *Students rated “Does Not Meet Expectations” or “Marginal” in any category of Professionalism that is endorsed by the clerkship director as warranted, will earn a “D” or “F” and will require consideration for remediation.* Reports of unprofessional behavior, due to a rating of “Marginal” or “Does Not Meet Expectations,” are taken very seriously however, it is recognized that there is variability in what individual evaluators would consider to be

\*DISCLAIMER: Printed version of this document is unofficial for reference only; official version can be found online: <https://www.augusta.edu/mcg/coffice/curriculum/policies.php>



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unprofessional behavior and the implications of being labeled as unprofessional have significant ramifications for a student.

### Reporting of Unprofessional Behavior

1. Report clerkship professional behavior to the Clerkship Director as soon as it is identified and/or on the end of clerkship evaluation form.
2. Following the report of unprofessional behavior, it is the responsibility of the Clerkship Director (with assistance of site clerkship directors and Athens Clinical Chair, when appropriate) to investigate the allegation.
  - There may be varied use of the term “unprofessional” by preceptors, and the Clerkship Director is required to provide a consistent approach in evaluating professionalism.
3. Following the Clerkship Director’s investigation of scores of “Marginal” or “Does Not Meet Expectations” on any professionalism category on the clerkship evaluation form, the Clerkship Director may choose to:
  - a. re-score the course evaluation form;
  - b. provide verbal feedback to the student;
  - c. edit the comments.
4. In addition, the Clerkship Director may take one or more further actions:
  - a. decide grade earned stands based on the usual calculations (A,B,C, grades possible);
  - b. assign a grade of D;
  - c. assign a grade of F;
  - d. require appropriate remediation.
5. If a remediation is required, and/or a grade of D or F is obtained for the final clerkship grade, a recommendation must be made to the Student Promotions committee for remediation approval and for clerkship remediation approval.

### Students Right to Appeal

1. Students have the right to appeal their clerkship grade and the Clerkship Director recommendations through the usual grade appeal system.
2. The decision of the student promotions subcommittee may also be appealed through the usual appeal procedures.
3. For the appeal procedures, see the Student Academic and Professionalism Policies and Procedures manual.