

Professional Behaviour Guidelines for Student Experiential Education (EE) Activities in the Faculty of Health

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Faculty of Health Working Group on Professional Behaviour Guidelines for Non-Professional Programs

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Professional Behaviour Guidelines for Experiential Education (EE) in the Faculty of Health

INTRODUCTION

Professionalism is defined as attitudes, values, behaviours, skills, and capabilities appropriate to specific working environments and demonstrated by occupational groups.¹ The concept of professionalism applies not only to regulated professions, but also to all occupational roles and work contexts. This document is a guideline and does not replace existing School or Department-specific policies on professional behaviour expectations. Additionally, there are existing policies within York University that address academic and non-academic expectations for students and [these guidelines are not meant to replace](#) those. Professional behaviour expectations may be context specific, and application of professional guidelines should be viewed with consideration of issues impacting equity, diversity, and inclusion.

PART 1: PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

Commitment to an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Approach

Professional behaviour guidelines are situated within York University and the Faculty of Health's commitment to supporting welcoming, inclusive, equitable and supportive learning environments for diverse students both on and off campus and in student engagements, in person and remotely. Strategies to support equity, diversity, and inclusion by removing barriers for historically disadvantaged groups are underway at the university, Faculty of Health, and department/school levels. These groups include but are not limited to women, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ peoples. We recognize that these groups have demonstrated resilience in the face of systemic barriers; however concerted and comprehensive strategies are needed to address the everyday challenges that these groups can face. Where possible, the importance of consideration of the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion have been highlighted throughout the document.

Human rights and York University policies and equity, diversity, and inclusion approaches such as those that promote BIPOC inclusion are described on the following sites and will inform the professionalism guidelines in this document and their application in practice:

- [The Centre for Human Rights, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(CHREDI\)](#)
- [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities \(Guidelines, Procedures\) A](#)
- [The Indigenous Framework for York University; A Guide to Action](#)
- [Addressing Anti-Black Racism: A Framework on Black Inclusion](#)
- [The Centre for Indigenous Student Services](#)
- [SexGen York](#)
- [Enable York](#)

Students in the Faculty of Health engage in variety of Experiential Education (EE) activities that require them to interact with various partners, including community partners, clients/patients & the public. These opportunities offer students an invaluable, comprehensive education that supports their specialized learning and career readiness.

While students undoubtedly benefit from participating in EE activities, they also have an accompanying responsibility to engage professionally and ethically with all concerned.

¹ van Mook, W. N., van Luijk, S. J., O'Sullivan, H., Wass, V., Zwaveling, J. H., Schuwirth, L. W., & van der Vleuten, C. P. (2009). The concepts of professionalism and professional behaviour: Conflicts in both definition and learning outcomes. *European Journal of Internal Medicine*, 20(4), e85-e89.

Students will be expected to behave with professionalism, whether it is while they are engaged with guest speakers on campus or while in a community placement.

The Faculty of Health has a mutual responsibility to ensure that students who engage with community partners, clients, and members of the public are aware of expected professional behaviour and are supported in developing these skills. This document is intended to provide direction to students and EE stakeholders around expected professional behaviour when engaging in all types and formats of EE opportunities.

In addition to professional behaviour, students are also expected to behave with integrity and comply with the [York University Code of Student Conduct Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all non-academic matters. These Professional Behaviour Guidelines are intended to complement, not replace, existing School/Department or university-wide policies that govern behaviour expectations and sanctions for violations.

Objectives of the guidelines

The Faculty of Health recognizes the importance of professional behaviour, as such the primary objectives of the guidelines are to:

- Demonstrate the Faculty's commitment to professional behaviour
- Foster acceptable standards of professional behaviour among all students engaged in EE
- Provide students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders an understanding of expectations of student professional conduct
- Identify concerns with professional behaviour to apply early interventions and mitigate negative consequences related to the placement or EE opportunity
- Outline procedures for managing potential concerns in student professional behaviour
- Identify University resources available to support professional skills development in students
- Consider the importance of dialogue among community partners, faculty members, students, and administrators, and
- Highlighting current or new EDI policies and promising practices as integral to supporting inclusive and equitable learning environments to meet the needs of diverse students.

Scope of the Guidelines

These guidelines apply to all students engaged in *for-credit* EE activities in the Faculty of Health related to their program of study including:

- **Work Integrated Learning (WIL)** – Where students “develop competencies and skills and augment the theories and concepts learned in their degree programs by getting hands-on work experience within organizational environments” through program-based placements, internships, or co-operative placements.
- **Community Based Learning (CBL)** – Where students interact with community partners in a classroom setting
- **Community Based Research (CBR)** – Where students work on a course related research project that has been co-created and developed collaboratively with a community partner and a researcher
- **Community Service Learning (CSL)** – Where students travel into the community, to “engage in activities that address community needs together with structured opportunities designed to promote intentional learning goals”^{2 4}
- **Classroom Focused Learning** – Where students are encouraged to engage in structured reflection as they apply course content to concrete experiences

² National Society for Experiential Education – www.nsee.org

These guidelines apply to EE activities that occur in a face-to-face format and activities offered in a remote or online format within a for-credit course. Please refer to the [Faculty of Health Common Language for Experiential Education](#) document for additional information about EE activities.

PART 2: PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR EXPECTATIONS

Throughout their participation in EE activities, students are to conduct themselves professionally and adhere to the behavioural standards of York University, the Faculty of Health and if applicable, the policies of the community partner offering the EE activity. Professionalism is comprised of various attitudes, values, behaviours, skills, and capabilities appropriate to specific learning and working environments. These are captured in the four domains of:^{3, 4}

1. Responsibility, Integrity and Accountability
2. Respectful Relationships and Communication
3. Cross-Cultural Competency
4. Self-Improvement and Development

The following behaviours, skills, and capabilities can be observed within the four domains of professionalism:

- Respect for human dignity (Domains 2, 3, 4)
- Open-mindedness (2,3,4)
- Confidence (2, 4)
- Integrity (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Self-Awareness (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Respectful Communication (Assertiveness, Active Listening, Accepting, Affirming) (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Empathy (2, 3, 4)
- Navigation of interpersonal, team and organizational dynamics (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Ethical Conduct (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Self-direction (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Accountability (1,2,3,4)
- Patience (2, 4)

At York University in the Faculty of Health and with our EE partners, students are required to demonstrate professional capabilities within the following 4 domains regardless of whether the interactions are in person, or remote/online:

1. Responsibility, Integrity, and Accountability

Students demonstrate professional responsibility, integrity, and accountability by:

- Adhering to attendance requirements and ensuring punctual arrival for all EE activities
- Fulfilling all responsibilities and assigned tasks reliably within agreed upon timelines and ensuring alignment with academic accommodations when necessary
- Maintaining confidentiality and following EE placement policies on privacy and confidentiality
- Representing information accurately and truthfully in all communications
- Maintaining the standards of academic honesty
- Accepting responsibility for their own actions
- Follow the professional attire and grooming expectations for the learning and working environment

³ Akhtar-Danesh, N., Baumann, A., Kolotylo, C., Lawlor, Y., Tompkins, C., & Lee, R. (2013). Perceptions of professionalism among nursing faculty and nursing students. *Western journal of nursing research*, 35(2), 248-271.

⁴ Bartol, K. M. (1979). Professionalism as a predictor of organizational commitment, role stress, and turnover: A multidimensional approach. *Academy of Management Journal*, 22(4), 815-821.

- Adhering to the Faculty of Health and EE placement organization codes of conduct, [York University Student Rights & Responsibilities](#)

2. Respectful Relationships and Communication

Students demonstrate respectful professional relationships and communication by:

- Using respectful language in all communication. This includes, but is not limited to in-person, videoconferencing, email, phone, text, and social media.
- Adhering to Faculty of Health and EE organizational policies on anti-discrimination and harassment for all modes of communication
- Being “present” while communicating with others so that students use electronic equipment in support of their work and refrain from using it as a distraction
- Listening attentively to the concerns of others and demonstrating empathy and compassion.
- Recognizing and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
- Taking a collaborative approach to teamwork.

3. Cross-Cultural Competency

Students demonstrate cross-cultural competency by:

- Showing awareness and sensitivity to the values, attitudes, and experiences of other cultures, and how these values, attitudes, and experiences effect individual experience
- Respecting diversity and understanding and honoring the histories, cultures, languages, and traditions of others
- Modeling inclusivity and the removal of barriers to participation for others
- Demonstrating an understanding of how unconscious bias shapes all social interactions, privileging certain groups and marginalizing or silencing others and the importance of self-reflection on knowledge, language, and behaviour as they influence one’s engagement with others.

4. Self-Improvement and Development

Students demonstrate self-improvement and professional development by:

- Acknowledging and improving upon self
- Recognizing when they are at the limits of their current skill or knowledge base and seeking guidance and direction from those more knowledgeable when necessary
- Seeking accommodations if appropriate to their unique situation
- Responding respectfully and responsibly to feedback
- Maintaining a positive attitude toward their responsibilities
- Seeking out additional opportunities for self-development for personal, professional, and academic success
- Adapting to changing circumstances by demonstrating flexibility, resiliency, and personal growth

Interpreting the Guidelines using an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Approach^{5, 6, 7, 8}

The Faculty of Health acknowledges that a critical lens is useful to discussions of professionalism as a concept with implications for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. Dynamics of power related to gender, racialization, ability, class, and sexuality are relevant to the way that normative features of professionalism are often unrecognized. Yet taken-for-granted knowledges and practices are based on dominant assumptions about the nature of professionalism.

Unconscious bias in relation to race, class, gender, sexuality and disability and their intersections shape how professional knowledges, appearance and behaviours are interpreted and valued in each context. These dynamics have impacted how diverse groups experience or understand what constitutes professionalism. Dominant assumptions about professionalism can exclude, marginalize, or devalue the knowledges and practices that are linked to individuals' identities, histories and/or social affiliations. There are often unacknowledged social norms that influence dress codes and social interaction that can be problematic for racialized groups and 2SLGBTQ+ communities and affect whether they are deemed to meet standards of professionalism. Similarly, where assumptions about professionalism that are equated with ableism, people with disabilities can face unwelcoming environments and contend with exclusion that focus on their deficits rather than affirming their strengths and contributions to education and society.

While students may be involved in promoting inclusivity and the removal of barriers to participation for others as one component of demonstrating professionalism, systemic barriers to meaningful inclusion and achieving equity for diverse students are deeply embedded in all social institutions. They are shaped by complex dynamics of power and privilege. In an educational setting, it is not the responsibility of students who are members of disadvantaged group to teach others about the disadvantages, traumas, and discriminatory dynamics that they may have faced or be facing; nor should they be expected to be leading change initiatives based on their social location. It is the responsibility of the institution to support frameworks, strategies, and resources such as educational initiatives that can guide all individuals and levels of the university to move towards a more inclusive, equitable and diverse institution.

PART 3: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS ACHIEVE PROFESSIONALISM EXPECTATIONS

There are several resources (within and outside York) to support students in developing professionalism behaviours. Students are expected to access available resources in preparation for EE opportunities; and Course Directors and EE Coordinators can draw upon the resources to support the continued development of students:

- [Faculty of Health Experiential Education Resources](#)
- [Becoming YU](#)
- [York University Learning Skills Services](#)
- [York University Leadership Development](#)
- [Work Integrated Learning Self-Study Modules – Niagara College](#)
- [Indigenous Health and Cultural Competency Modules – Ontario Health/Cancer Care Ontario](#)
- [Indigenous Canada – Massive Open Online Course offered through University of Alberta](#)

⁵ Marom, L. (2019). Under the cloak of professionalism: covert racism in teacher education. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 22(3): 319-337

⁶ Nicolazzo, Z, Wagner, R., & Marine, S. B. (2017). Gender-expansive campuses: Building Paths to Success for Trans* Students. *NASPA Leadership Exchange*, 15(3), 21–24.

⁷ Greiner, T. (2010, May). Back Talk: Diversity in the MLS. *Library Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=backtalk-diversity-and-the-mls>

⁸ MacDonnell, J.A. (2007). Comparative life histories of nurses who advocate for lesbian health in a Canadian context: Sexual orientation as a factor in career and workplace dynamics. In M.V.L. Badgett & J. Frank. (Eds.). *Sexual orientation discrimination: An international perspective* (pp. 118-135). London: Routledge

Students and Course Directors are encouraged to discuss specific development needs with EE Coordinators, Educational and Curricular Development Specialists, and engage York University extra-curricular and co-curricular student programming for advice on additional resources when necessary.

PART 4: DEFINITIONS OF CONCERNS OF PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR

The goal of the School/Department, Course Director, and EE Coordinator is to ensure that professionalism is demonstrated among all students, and where possible support students who require feedback and guidance to develop and demonstrate professional behaviours. Concerns in professional behaviour can be categorized into Minor Concerns, Major Concerns and Critical Concerns. To determine the type of potential concern, Course Directors and EE Coordinators should seek to understand the particulars of the incident and explore contextual factors.

Minor Concerns

These concerns are characterized by a lack of awareness of expectations or policies, or the student realizes the concern after the fact. It may involve mitigating circumstances and the concern has limited consequences. The Course Director and EE Coordinator shall approach the situation as a teachable moment to be dealt with informally and at the discretion of the Course Director and/or Field Supervisor.

NOTE: Repeated Minor Concerns of a similar nature can be elevated to Major Concerns

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- a) Failure to meet deadline due to medical reasons without notifying appropriate EE contact
- b) Improper use of electronic equipment during any EE placement activities
- c) Student habitually late and disrupts class/EE placement centre
- d) Student overheard expressing themselves in non-constructive manner about a peer or instructor
- e) Student takes breaks that are beyond the scope of what has been agreed upon with EE placement supervisor
- f) Student inappropriately uses social media while engaged in experiential education activities.

Major Concerns

These concerns may result in serious consequences. The student has an awareness of the unprofessional conduct but chooses to engage in the behaviour anyway. There are no mitigating circumstances.

NOTE: Repeated Major Concerns of a similar nature can be elevated to Critical Concerns

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- a) Student fails to maintain contact and communication; fails to return phone calls and emails in time required; without extenuating circumstances
- b) Student overheard expressing themselves in non-constructive manner about a client or other community partner
- c) Student posts information/photos on public domain, social networking sites, etc. without proper authorization
- d) Student demonstrates a pattern of unexcused absences

Critical Concerns

This is conduct that clearly violates acceptable standards of behaviour and results in harmful consequences. This requires immediate attention by Course Director, Field Supervisor and/or other appropriate designate to determine next steps.

If there is compelling evidence that a critical concern has occurred, including a **suspected illegal act or there is concern that an individual or group’s health and safety has been/may be impacted:**

- The Course Director is advised to consult with the Undergraduate Program Director/Chair and the [Office of Student and Community Relations](#) (OSCR) for advice; and
- There may be a requirement to engage with police and applicable authorities for suspected unlawful behaviour.

PART 5: RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

Encouraging and safeguarding professional behaviour and ethical conduct is the responsibility of all stakeholders involved in EE, including faculty members, EE Coordinators, community partners and students. As such, all stakeholders are expected to notify persons of responsibility of any concern in professional behaviour they witness or experience.

Note: Schools/Department may need to consult [Placement Conflict Resolution Guidelines](#) for students involved in Community Based Experiential Education and Work Integrated Learning.

The following table identifies the trajectory for reporting concerns:

I.Procedures for Reporting

The reporting guideline below is based on comparable guidelines, however reporting direction may also be left to the discretion of each unit.

Type of Concern	Concern shall be reported to:
All concerns	Course Director (Faculty Member) & EE Coordinator
Repeated minor concerns All major concerns All critical concerns	Course Director (Faculty Member) & EE Coordinator and Undergraduate Program Director and/or Program Chair OSCR
All critical concerns	Course Director (Faculty Member) & EE Coordinator and Undergraduate Program Director and/or Program Chair OSCR and Dean or Associate Dean

II.Procedures for Assessing Professional Behaviour and Developing Action Plans

i.Assessment

The assessment of professional behaviour and ethical performance and any finding of a concern is an academic decision that is subject to the Appeals Policy of each School or Department within the Faculty of Health. The faculty member in compliance with procedural directives from their own units will assess and determine the:

1. Classification of the concern (is it minor, major, or critical?)
2. If there is a pattern of repeat behaviour? And,
3. Action plan to address the concern

It is important that all people involved in exploring potential concerns consider how issues related to [equity, diversity, and inclusion](#) can assist in understanding the context and details of the situation, and when necessary, seek advice on interpretation of the potential concern from individuals with specific cultural or equity-group knowledge and context.

The following factors will need to be considered in the assessment of professional behaviour and development of an action plan:

- a. A summary of the events, including details of the behaviour and circumstances surrounding the concern
- b. The student's sense of personal responsibility/ownership for the incident/behaviour
- c. Whether there are repeated concerns of a similar nature
- d. Mitigating or extenuating circumstances, including how the event is viewed through an EDI lens
- e. Is there a reasonable expectation that the student ought to have known that the behaviour constituted unprofessional conduct?

ii. Determination of Action Plans and Outcomes

Minor Concerns: For minor concerns, students will be informed of the concerns by the Course Director via email. Students will have an opportunity to respond to the issues raised and an action plan will be developed accordingly. The Course Director will ensure that any action plan and/or outcome of concerns raised are communicated in writing to the student.

Note: When students are involved in Community Based Experiential Education opportunities, Course Directors should also refer to the [Placement Conflict Resolution Guidelines](#).

The development of action plans and/or outcomes will be determined by the seriousness of the concern. Once the assessment is completed and all the noted factors considered, faculty members may choose to incorporate a remediation approach^{9, 10} which may involve developing action plans that include some or all the following components:

(a) Modifying antecedents of unprofessional behaviour by:

- *Restructuring of the physical or social environment (removing opportunities to engage in behaviour)*
- *Avoidance/changing exposure to cues for the behaviour*

(b) Feedback and monitoring:

- *Providing written and verbal feedback on behaviour*
- *Recommending and teaching self-monitoring strategies*
- *Modeling desired behaviour and supporting student through mentoring*

(c) Developing behavioural goals and creating proactive plans to demonstrate professional behaviour

- *Developing problem solving and coping strategies*

⁹ Michie S, van Stralen MM, West R. The behaviour change wheel: a new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Science*. 2011;6(1):42.

¹⁰ Michie, S., Richardson, M., Johnston, M., Abraham, C., Francis, J., Hardeman, W., Eccles, M., Cane, J. & Wood, C. E. (2013). The behavior change technique taxonomy (v1) of 93 hierarchically clustered techniques: building an international consensus for the reporting of behavior change interventions. *Annals of behavioral medicine*, 46(1), 81-95.

- *Employing a goal setting approach and/or use of behavioural contracts*

(d) Recommending supports and resources to increase the student's knowledge and skills in the area of concern

Depending on the program, community partners may be involved in development of the remediation plan or outcomes for the student so that community partner's organizational and cultural values and traditional practices can be reflected in the overall approach with the student.

Repeat, Major or Critical Concerns: For more serious concerns, including repeated minor concerns and major or critical concerns, the Course Director will notify the student by email and will copy the Undergraduate Program Director (UPD). Students will be given a chance to respond in writing or by meeting, students affiliated with student accessibility services can be accompanied by a person from that office. The Course Director and UPD may collect additional information from the community partner. Findings, sanctions, consequences, or action plans will be communicated to the student in writing. The Course Director and/or UPD reserve the right to notify the Dean or designate (Associate Dean, Students).

Note: When students are involved in Community Based Experiential Education opportunities, Course Directors should also refer to the [Placement Conflict Resolution Guidelines](#) and the [practicum action plan for success](#)

The outcomes of repeat, major, or critical concerns may include recommendation of the following:

- Research and reflection resulting in a written submission
- Producing a deliverable to strengthen the community
- Issuance of an apology (verbally and/or written)
- Mandated meetings with a mentor
- Academic penalty
- Repetition of the course, placement, or fieldwork
- Request to withdraw from the placement, course, or program

If students have concerns about the outcome of the concern, they are encouraged to consult with their UPD.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who should use these guidelines?

These guidelines apply to students who are engaging in **curricular experiential education opportunities**. For example, Course Directors and EE Coordinators and students can apply these guidelines when a **student is taking a course for-credit** that involves any type of [experiential education opportunity](#).

2. How should this document be applied to students in experiential education opportunities?

These guidelines are a **framework** that can be used to **guide** how students, Course Directors, and EE Coordinators understand:

- Professional behaviour expectations of students while engaged in EE opportunities
- How to identify, understand, and interpret potential concerns of professionalism expectations during EE opportunities
- How to respond to and develop a plan to address issues with student professionalism during EE opportunities

It is important that during every step of the process, this framework is applied using an EDI lens to understand and interpret the situation, and to develop an action plan. Resources to assist in applying an EDI lens can be found at the [Centre for Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusion](#) website. Course Directors may wish to review Faculty Resource Guides on [Gender Expression/Gender Identity](#), [Accommodating Creed \(Religion\)](#), [Accommodating Disability](#), [Accommodating Family](#), [Teaching Students with Disabilities](#), and [Understanding Racism](#).

Course Directors and EE Coordinators may also wish to seek advice from their UPD/Chair, [OSCR](#), as well as from individuals with lived experience from equity-seeking groups when applying this framework.

3. How do these guidelines relate to York University policies?

These guidelines are intended to be **applied within the context of current York University policies**. The guidelines do not supersede existing School, Department, or York University Senate policies. In addition to demonstrating professional behaviours during EE opportunities, students are expected to comply with the [York University Code of Student Conduct Rights and Responsibilities](#) and demonstrate [Academic Honesty](#).

These guidelines can be used in conjunction with current professionalism guidelines that may exist within programs leading to clinical practice (e.g., School of Nursing).

4. How would these guidelines be applied if a student is suspected of engaging in a breach of Academic Honesty while involved in an EE opportunity?

When a student is suspected of breaching the Academic Honesty policy, the Course Director and UPD are required to follow the process outlined in Senate's [Academic Honesty Policy](#).

5. If a behaviour of a student engaging in an EE experience does not appear to be consistent with professionalism expectations, then what should a course director do?

- Gather as much information about the issue as possible. Speak to the student, EE Coordinator, Course Director, Community Partner.
- Understand the situation using an [EDI lens](#) and consult EDI subject matter experts if required.
- Consult with the UPD/chair if you need assistance with [classifying](#) and interpreting the potential concern or the behaviour is more serious than a minor concern.
- Consider using the [Placement Conflict Resolution Guidelines](#) if the student is involved in Community Based Placement or Work Integrated Learning
- Develop an [action plan](#) with the student to address the issue.

6. A student engaging in an EE experience is demonstrating concerning behaviour, but their behaviour is not listed within the examples of concerns found in this document. Is this still related to a concern of professionalism?

The examples provided in this framework may not be inclusive of all types of concerns of professional behaviour. When a student is demonstrating concerning behaviour, we recommend that Course Directors refer to the [four domains of professionalism](#) to guide interpretation of the student's behaviour. If the student's behaviour is not consistent with one or more of the four domains of professionalism, then the Course Director should consult with the UPD/Chair to determine if this framework should be applied.