

## EDITORIAL

## ASSESSING AND DOCUMENTING PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS

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*Father's most important gift to his child is good manners. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ*

Ultimate outcomes of undergraduate medical education is a doctor who has knowledge, skills, and professional attitude. Medical students had already partly formed professional attitudes before they started studying medicine. We, at medical college, just have to apprise or remind students that they have learned basic ethics/attitudes in premedical years. A scoring system is proposed to assess Professional Attitude of MBBS students. Positive or negative professional attitude/professional behaviour during the session will be closely monitored by the faculty. Positive behaviours increase the score; negative behaviours decrease the score. On the basis of this score, proper word will be entered in the relevant sentence on DMC or Character Certificate. Total Five year Marks: More than 85%= Excellent, 75.1–84.9= Very Good, 75%= Good, 70–74.9%= Fair, 65–69.9%= Satisfactory, Less than 65%= Poor. Assessment drives learning, so assessing students will guide their learning.

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Professional values, ethics, and attitudes are the characteristics that identify a professional as member of a profession. The relevant ethical requirements ordinarily set out five fundamental principles, i.e., integrity; objectivity; competence and due care; confidentiality and professional behaviour.<sup>1</sup> Medical education produces a doctor who has knowledge, skills, and professional attitude. A graduate should be polite, considerate, trustworthy and honest, act with integrity, maintain confidentiality, respect patients' dignity and privacy, and understand the importance of appropriate consent.<sup>2</sup> General Medical Council reviewed its 'Outcomes for Graduates' in 2018 and put 'Professional Values and Behaviours' at number one<sup>3</sup> which were previously placed at number three in its document of 2009, i.e., Tomorrow's Doctors.

A professional student is punctual (to class and laboratory meetings), follows the teacher's instructions; respects private and public property; arrives appropriately dressed and ready to work, armed with his/her tools. A professional is observant and sees what needs to be done; is responsible and helps maintain a safe workplace with a civilized atmosphere. A professional always acts in a manner that reflects favourably on that community. A professional asks a question rather than risk making a serious mistake with an unfamiliar scientific instrument.<sup>4,5</sup> Medical students had already partly formed attitudes toward professionalism before they started studying medicine. These attitudes were largely based on their own experience with the health care system and physicians.<sup>3</sup> They develop their professional attitude further in medical college.<sup>6</sup> We, at medical college, just have to apprise or remind

students that during twelve years of pre-medical education and five years of family training, they have developed basic behavioural/ethical traits. These behaviour traits were taught to them at school.<sup>5</sup> When students' behaviour assessment is instituted they will learn ethical and social skills of a good medical student and law abiding citizen as 'assessment drives learning'. Extracurricular activities such as sports, debates, hospital voluntary service, politics, the arts or community service can build skills in leadership, responsibility, and cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

There is no formal system for assessing and documenting professional attitude of undergraduate medical students in Pakistan. We are proposing a system of Professional Attitude Score for Pakistan (PAS-Pak) for MBBS classes. While preparing this scoring system, important points considered were:

- It should be simple to use
- It should clearly convey to students which behaviours are considered 'positive' and which behaviours are considered 'negative'
- It should not increase the burden on faculty
- To decrease the inter-personal bias and to ensure inter-rater objectivity, all faculty of particular session will be involved to evaluate the students
- It can be utilized to clearly elaborate the words (Excellent, Very Good, Good etc.) in the existing 'Character Certificate' and/or the 'Detailed Marks Certificate (DMC)' issued by the college.

**Professional Attitude Score (PAS-Pak)**

Twenty Marks for each Professional year; hundred in total for five years' MBBS course. Twenty Marks

each are allocated for all subjects in a Professional year. Head of the Department of each subject will calculate PAS-Pak for each student of the class during the session according to the given tables. The scores are then forwarded to the “In charge HoD” of the session (Senior most HoD of the session or as designated by the Principal of the College) who will calculate average of the session and report it to the Principal Office. On the basis of the total five year marks/score, proper word will be entered in the relevant sentence on DMC or Character Certificate. A Red Entry will be for: 1, Misbehaving with some teacher (Head of the department is authorized to give a red entry to student after investigation). 2, Punishment by the Disciplinary Committee. Each red entry will deduct 20 marks from the cumulative score at the end of the five-year session.

Total Five year Marks: More than 85%= Excellent, 75.1–84.9= Very Good, 75%=Good, 70–74.9%= Fair, 65–69.9%= Satisfactory, Less than 65%= Poor. ‘During his/her stay at medical college, his/her professional attitude score was .....’

#### Calculation for first year MBBS Class

At the start of the first year MBBS class, each admitted student will have fifteen (15) marks which can be increased or decreased on the basis of their positive or negative professional attitude/professional behaviour/ ethical behaviour during the session, as mentioned in Table-1 and Table-2. Students will be closely monitored by the faculty and will report to the head of the department about their attitude/behaviour/ethics. Positive behaviours increase the score more than fifteen; negative behaviours decrease the score less than fifteen. Positive behaviours not covered in the tables given can be covered under the heading ‘Behaviour befitting of a good medical student’ and negative behaviours not covered in the tables can be covered under the heading ‘Behaviour unbecoming of a good medical student’.

#### Calculation for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and Final Year Classes

At the start of the session, all students passing in first attempt will have baseline of 15 marks. Students passing in supplementary examination will be at 14 (minus one), students passing as detained students will be at baseline marks 13 (minus two).

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**Table-1: Positive Behaviour traits/Attitude**

University position in last professional exam	2 marks
Published a research paper during the session	One mark
Class tests; First position 2 marks; second one marks; third 0.5 mark	0.5–2 marks
Worked in arranging college convocation	1 mark
Respecting and behaving according to the local cultural traditions	One mark
Took position in Qirat, Na’at or Debate competition	1 mark
Served in the hospital volunteer service for helping the students/patients	One mark
Donated blood during this session	One mark
Attendance more than 85%, 2 marks; 76%–84%, one mark	1–2 marks
Behaviour befitting of a good medical student (HOD)	Plus 1
<b>At the start of the Session</b>	<b>15 marks</b>

**Table-2: Negative Behaviour Traits/Attitude**

<b>At the start of the Session</b>	<b>15 marks</b>
Behaviour unbecoming of a good medical student (HOD)	-1
Misbehaved with a teacher or college staff	-1
Missing one test minus one; two tests minus 2	1–2
Delay in vacating hostel room after new allotment	-1
Throwing waste in college premises	-1
Punished by a teacher on breaching discipline in the classroom etc.	-1
Quarrelled/misbehaved with fellow students	-1
Caught cheating in a test minus one	-1
Damaged college property minus one	-1
Not respecting and not behaving according to the local cultural traditions	-1

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