

## Code of ethical conduct and core competencies for medical educators: Fostering integrity and excellence

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Ethics refers to a branch of philosophy that deals with the study of moral principles and values that directs individual and group behaviour. It is apprehensive to what is right and what is wrong under certain circumstance and in different situations. The code of ethics are the fundamental values that guides code of conduct.<sup>1</sup> There is imperative need to develop code of ethics and code of conduct for medical educators in Pakistan. Code of ethics plays a guiding role to implement code of conduct. There should be some standards to set levels of acceptable medical educator performance. Performance benchmark should be created to assess level of competence in medical educators by defining core competencies<sup>1</sup>. Alignment of basic principles of ethics with medical education is mandatory to implement code of ethics in medical education. The principles of ethics are used in numerous fields such as medicine, law and business to guide ethical decision-making. They provide a framework for evaluating ethical quandaries and making verdicts that are reliable with ethical values.<sup>2</sup> Code of ethics plays a guiding role to implement code of conduct. There are no codes of ethics for medical teachers by regulatory bodies of Pakistan. However there is well-established code of ethics developed by Pakistan Teachers Association.<sup>3,4</sup> All medical educators at any teaching campus should be expected to follow given code of conduct aligned to the specific standards or code of ethics. The code of ethics aims to provide a set of standards, principles, and guidelines that all medical teachers should implement in broader parameters in variable situations, along with their decision-making based on experience, knowledge, and skills. The code of conduct should be divided into sections, including an introduction to professional ethics and code of conduct, standards of professionalism in dealing with medical students, other medical teachers. It should also include sections on ethical issues such as confidentiality, informed consent, respect for privacy, desirable attitudes in teachers. They should uphold ethical norms of integrity, honesty, behaviour, and

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**Submission complete:** 06-09-2023

**Review began:** 20-12-2023

**Acceptance:** 15-05-2024

**Review end:** 05-04-2024

reliability, and cultivate the practice of professionalism.<sup>3</sup> They should treat all medical students fairly, respectfully, and without bias related to their age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or national origin. They should be prepared and on-time for teaching sessions. Distinguish between the Socratic Method which employs intuitive inquiries as a stimulus to learning from excessively aggressive questioning, which focuses on small details and persists with the end point of disregarding or degradation of the medical students.<sup>5</sup> Teachers should also provide learners with timely, constructive, and accurate feedback and opportunities for remediation. This feedback should be given in a timely and constructive manner that provides guidance. They should be aware of and act in accordance with medical students cognitive, physical, and emotional limitations. Take steps to act on constructive criticism and to ask for help when needed. They should work towards up gradation of the professional knowledge and skills regarding medical student teaching and incorporate this new learning into teaching. Ethics in medical teaching and assessment are foundational principles that underpin the education process and shape the development of responsible, competent, and ethical professionals. The ethical dimension of education extends far beyond the mere transfer of knowledge; it encompasses the cultivation of values, integrity, and a sense of responsibility among medical educators and students. Aim of this article is highlight importance of the crucial role of ethics and core competencies in teaching and assessment, emphasizing its impact on academic integrity, fairness, and the overall quality of education. Ethics in teaching can be divided in broad ways: Academic integrity and ethical teaching, ethics in assessments, ethics contributing to medical educational polices, as reflection of moral education, and professional

### Code of Ethics

Autonomy	Autonomy refers to the free right of medical educators to make decisions based on their own values and beliefs.
Beneficence	Beneficence is an obligation to direct activities to promote the welfare and betterment of medical students.
Non-maleficence	Non-maleficence is the compulsion to avoid causing harm to medical students.
Justice	Justice is the commitment to treat medical students fairly and equitably.
Fidelity	Fidelity refers to the responsibility to keep promises and be loyal to medical students.
Confidentiality	Confidentiality is keeping students matters confidential.
Veracity	Veracity is the responsibility of medical educators to be truthful.

### Core Competencies

Subject matter Knowledge	Cognitive, psychomotor and attitude skills on a specific subject, how this subject relates to other subjects and its implementation in clinical practice. Effectively explains the content in different prospective relating all disciplines.
Adult Learning, human growth and development	Identify development abilities of students with respect to specific values and culture. Apply adult learning theories during teaching and learning
Social Life Skills	Understand the values which are globally acceptable and need of national community. Awareness of negative impact of gender, race and social class discrimination
Instructional Planning Strategies	Planning of instructional strategies according to need of students and appropriately using resources.
Assessment	Practice ethical assessment practices that are intrinsically linked to fairness and equity. Assessment is not solely about evaluating a student's knowledge but also their understanding, skills, and application of knowledge. It must be conducted in a manner that respects each student's individuality and potential while maintaining rigorous standards.
Learning Environment	Understand principles of classroom management and how environment promotes positive behaviour in medical students.
Effective Communication	Ability to integrate technology in teaching sessions. Effectively communicate using verbal and non-verbal communication skills use of Technology
Collaboration and Teamwork	Ability to apply different approaches for collaboration with medical students, medical faculty and community.
Continuous Professional Development	Inventive and innovative about teaching practice. Develop and maintain professional portfolio with continuous professional development activities.
Leadership Skills	Demonstrate leadership role inside as well as outside teaching sessions by role modelling to build positive medical college culture.

ethics. This latter area, has been somewhat neglected until recently.<sup>5,6</sup> At the heart of ethical teaching lies the commitment to fostering academic integrity. Academic institutions have a responsibility to cultivate an environment where honesty, originality, and responsible scholarship are not just expected but celebrated. Ethical teaching means instilling in yourself a deep appreciation for intellectual honesty and the value. Medical educators play a pivotal role in modelling ethical behaviour. They must follow set criteria regarding plagiarism, collaboration, and proper citation of sources. Furthermore, medical educators should provide guidance on avoiding unintentional plagiarism and ensure that they understand the consequences of academic dishonesty. Ethical assessment practices are intrinsically linked to fairness and equity.<sup>7-9</sup>

It should be mandatory for all medical educators at any teaching campus to follow given code of conduct aligned to the specific standards or code of ethics. The code of ethics aims to provide a set of standards, principles, and guidelines that all medical teachers should implement in broader parameters in variable situations, along with their decision-making based on experience, knowledge, and skills.<sup>10</sup>

#### Author Contribution:

KF: Write-up, central idea and accountable for all aspects of the work.

### Conclusion

Code of ethics would serve as a guiding framework, delineating ethical principles, responsibilities, and expectations for educators in their teaching, research, and professional conduct. It would not only foster a culture of accountability and transparency but also reinforce the trust and confidence of students, patients, and the broader community in the medical education. By promoting ethical behaviour, respect for diversity, and a commitment to lifelong learning, the code can empower educators to fulfill their roles as mentors. However, the implementation and enforcement of such a code require collaborative efforts from various stakeholders, including educational institutions, regulatory bodies, professional associations, and policymakers. Moreover, ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation are essential to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the code in addressing emerging ethical challenges and advancing the quality of medical education in Pakistan.

**Disclaimer:** None.

**Conflict of interest:** None.

**Funding disclosure:** None.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.47391/JPMA.10776>

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