Guidelines for Teacher Assessments and Course Evaluations

**Approval body:** MD Program Curriculum Committee

**Date of original adoption:** 13 August 2013

**Date of last review:** 13 October 2020

**Date of last amendment:** 13 October 2020

**Date of next scheduled review:** 13 October 2024

---

**Overview**

The MD Program relies on various sources of information to provide feedback on the quality of the program as a whole, on individual components including courses, and on individual teachers. This feedback enables evidence-based, continuous quality improvement of the program and student experience. It is also a core element of a faculty member’s teaching dossier, which is used for promotion and related purposes. One of the chief sources of such feedback is data obtained from students via teacher assessments and course evaluations.

Curriculum leaders should work with student course representatives to ensure that the importance of timely evaluation completion is well understood. Course directors should communicate their evaluation expectations to students at the beginning of the course and at subsequent points as necessary.

**Principles**

1. One of the most powerful and effective tools used to assess the quality and effectiveness of the MD Program curriculum and its teachers is constructive student feedback.

2. Students in the MD Program are in training to enter a profession that relies to a considerable extent on collegial critique for self-improvement. Giving effective feedback and responding to feedback are competencies essential for effective self-regulation.

3. The MD Program endeavours to educate medical students in a manner that fosters the development of competencies essential for effective self-regulation.

4. Students are essential partners in the education program and should contribute to the planning and implementation of a reasonable, required program of course evaluation and teacher assessment.

5. The time required to complete assessments of teachers and evaluation of courses should be minimized by ensuring:
   a. That the process of completion of forms be as easy as possible, including:
      i. That the forms be concise and only include essential information.
      ii. That whenever possible, dedicated time be set aside during school hours for students to complete course evaluations and teacher assessments.
      iii. That the forms be available for completion on a variety of technological platforms.
   b. That the number of students required to complete the forms be determined with regard to statistical principles.
   c. That reminders to complete any forms be limited to no more than once per week.
Expectations

1. In light of the preceding principles, students are to evaluate all activities, faculty teaching events and faculty/residents interactions where they have substantial contact. The minimum number of clinical teacher assessments should be no less than three. In courses where there is substantial contact with residents it is also expected that students will complete no less than three resident assessments. Students are also expected to complete all end of course evaluations.

2. Students are expected to complete all evaluations forms upon receipt of the request and will receive reminders every two weeks. Evaluations forms must be submitted prior to a cut-off of 30 days from the time of receipt of the original request. The cut-off date is intended to ensure that feedback data remains valid, is not unduly influenced by recall bias, and is available in a timely manner to facilitate quality improvement activities.

3. Completion of course evaluation and teacher assessment forms will be monitored by the central MD Program administration. Clerkship students who have not completed the end of course evaluation will not have electronic access to assessments completed on MedSIS pertaining to their own performance until they have submitted the required evaluations in that course. If a student does not meet this requirement (completing end of course evaluation) they may still access their own assessment by scheduling a meeting with the course director at which time they should be prepared to discuss why they have not completed their evaluations as requested.

4. If students encounter a technical difficulty that hinders the completion of an evaluation form, it is their responsibility to bring this problem to the attention of the course administrator, course director, or technical staff in a timely manner.

Standards for the timely release of teacher assessment scores and feedback

The MD Program places great value on the commitment of the many teachers who contribute to the education of our students. In recognition of their efforts, student assessment of teacher effectiveness scores and other formal feedback will be made available to teachers within two months of the end of the course (in Foundations) and within two months of the end of the academic year (in Clerkship). The MD Program will facilitate the provision of each teacher’s student assessment of teacher effectiveness scores to the relevant University Department Chair(s).

Teacher assessment data will, however, only be released when a minimum of three assessments have been received for a given teacher for each learning activity in order to protect the confidentiality of the students who provided the feedback.

Courses that run for a prolonged period of time (particularly the entire length of the academic year) and courses with multiple rotations are encouraged to share interim or informal feedback earlier when this can be done without compromising student anonymity.

Failure to meet the two-month deadline will be brought to the attention of the Foundations Director or Clerkship Director as appropriate, and if necessary the Vice Dean, MD Program and/or the relevant Department Chair.

Standards for the use of teacher assessment scores and feedback

Student assessment of teacher effectiveness scores and other evaluation feedback about individual teachers must not be disclosed to those outside of the MD Program, nor to individuals within the MD Program, who do not have the authority to access that data. The only exceptions are when the disclosure is required by official MD Program business, by University policy, or by law.
Letters of reference or external award nominations written by MD Program leaders for teachers must not contain student assessment of teacher effectiveness scores or student comments retrieved from evaluation forms without the specific consent of the teacher.

Individuals aware of inappropriate disclosure of teacher assessment information outside of the MD Program should inform the Vice Dean, MD Program as soon as possible.

**Teacher assessment appeals process**

MD Program teachers have the right to request an appeal of their teacher assessments. Included below are guidelines for appeal requests and the adjudication appeal requests, including the reporting process.

**Appellant Responsibilities:**
1. Appeal requests are to be directed to the attention of the Evaluation Scientist, Office of Assessment and Evaluation, MD Program by email (md.oae@utoronto.ca) and copied to the appellant’s Clinical Chief and Departmental Chair/Divisional Head, and the Course Director.
2. Appeal requests must be submitted no more than one year after the release of the assessments in question.
3. Notices of such requests are to provide a rationale for such request.

**Process & Reporting:**
1. Teacher assessment records are compiled by the Office of Assessment and Evaluation for review by an ad hoc three member Appeals Committee, which is chaired by a Senior Educator appointed by the Vice Dean, MD Program and includes both a faculty and student representative. This committee convenes as required.
2. Reviews are limited to appeal requests submitted by the deadline indicated above, and which pertain to teaching within the immediately preceding academic year unless more than one year of data was required in order to reach an aggregate of three assessments.
3. If successful, the outcome of the appeal will include the elimination of the assessment in question.
4. All outcomes are considered final and are reported to the appellant and copied to the appellants’ respective Clinical Chief and Departmental Chair/Divisional Head as either supported or denied.
5. Students will not normally be notified when an appeal is made, nor will they be notified regarding the outcome of the appeal.
6. A summary of all appeals and their outcomes will be provided to the Vice Dean, MD Program.

**Standards & Guiding Principles:**

In order to ensure uniformity and fairness, the committee relies on standards in its adjudication process that may include:

1. Face validity:
   a. A presentation of reasonably refuting evidence.
   b. Undue influence of a statistically atypical assessment(s).
   c. Whether an evaluation(s) is (are) program or teacher oriented.
   d. Obvious transposition of scale ratings.
2. For assessments in question, additional considerations may include:
   a. Whether there is evidence supporting apparent retribution by a student.
   b. Whether or not a student(s) has (have) substantiated their ratings in narrative form.
   c. Whether the degree of contact between teacher and student is reasonable for purposes of rendering an assessment of teaching effectiveness.
3. In circumstances where arguments for and against upholding an appeal are balanced, the resolution will be to favour the appellant.