



Guide to Professional Conduct

Version control		
Document name	Guide to Professional Conduct	
Owner	GP Training Academic Council	
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Version	Version 1.0	
Approved	GPTAC	
Date	30th Sept 2026	



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1.0 Purpose

Trainees enrolled in the National Specialist Training in General Practice (GP Training Programme) of the Irish College of GPs (College) are an integral part of the reputation of the College and its members. They are expected to be familiar and comply with the [Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners 9th Edition 2024](#) from the Irish Medical Council (IMC).

This Guide:

- Supplements the IMC Guide in meeting the highest professional standards
- Focuses the Guide's fundamental behaviours within the context of the GP Training Programme
- Reinforces the GP Training Programme Requirements as defined in the Training Agreement
- Defines conduct and behaviours required of doctors working towards award of the Certificate of Satisfactory Completion of Specialist Training (CSCST)

2.0 Scope

This Guide applies to:

- All trainees enrolled on the GP Training Programme
- Conduct in:
 - Clinical settings
 - Educational environments
 - College-related activities
 - Public or private contexts where behaviour may impact the College or profession

3.0 Policy Statement

When nominating a trainee for CSCST, the Competency Progression Committee (CPC) must be satisfied that the trainee will be a safe and competent independent general practitioner. Nomination depends upon the satisfactory completion of theory and practice assessments as well as demonstrating appropriate standards of behaviour, health and professional conduct relevant to future employment in general practice.

Trainees should embody the behaviours expected of qualified general practitioners, and, in addition to honing their clinical skills and knowledge during their training programme, should embrace the qualities of professionalism as required by the IMC.



Trainees are required to sign the Training Agreement before they are formally accepted onto the Training Programme. It is expected that all trainees have read and understand this Guide to Professional Conduct as well and attest to same in their Annual Declaration.

3.1 Breach of the Guide

The College treats academic misconduct, unethical or unprofessional behaviour of any kind extremely seriously. Lack of understanding of this Guide, the IMC Guide or the Training Agreement does not mitigate the severity of a breach. A breach of this Guide may constitute misconduct under the Disciplinary Action Policy.

Compliance with this Guide may also be considered as evidence of fitness to continue in training under the Progression Review Policy.

4.0 Guide to Professional Conduct

4.1 Conduct yourself in a manner which enhances the service provided to society and which will maintain the good name of the Irish College of GPs and your profession.

Trainees must:

- Act at all times with a high degree of professionalism, integrity and mutual respect
- Treat colleagues and members of the College community with dignity and respect, free from bullying, harassment or other inappropriate behaviour
- Respect the training, knowledge and experience of others and promote mutual respect
- Value the contributions of others, and work in a collaborative and cooperative manner
- Comply with all relevant College policies and any lawful and reasonable direction of the College set out in its policies and procedures

4.1.1 Communication, Social Media and Public Conduct

Trainees must:

- Provide clear, accurate, and timely information to colleagues and patients, checking understanding and adapting communication methods as needed
- Possess an adequate level of English proficiency necessary to improve their skills and ensure patients¹ receive the best care possible

¹ Patient also includes carers, guardians, parents, and any other person affiliated with the patient.

- Exercise caution when using social media, including in a private capacity, and observe the same levels of respect for others when using social media as a College member would in a public forum
- Refrain from misrepresenting or publishing misleading information about the College, training programme and any member of the College community in any forum
- Not express opinions that may damage the College's reputation or constitute a threat to public health or safety
- Ensure their beliefs and actions do not compromise patients, College staff, trainers or trainees
- Monitor the College's website, educational platform and ePortfolio regularly for communications and updates (e.g. policy updates)
- Where relevant, declare any conflict of interest

4.2 Your primary concern must be to maintain and improve the health, wellbeing, confidentiality, care and safety of patients.

4.2.1 Patient Safety and Care

Trainees must:

- Prioritise patient safety and quality of care
- Ensure continuity of care
- Be available for work per rotas, including out of hours requirements
- Recognise their limits or when they are unfit to work
- Ask for help where and when appropriate
- Obtain the consent of patients or their legal guardian before they interview or examine them.
- Respect a patient's right to refuse health care or take part in teaching
- Be prepared to undertake physical examination, including intimate physical examination of patients, if appropriate
- Not abuse the trust of a patient and maintain professional boundaries with all

4.2.2 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- Always maintain patient confidentiality
 - Do not include patient identifiers on ePortfolio or any publicly available artificial intelligence tools such as large language models
- Handle personal and clinical data in accordance with GDPR and professional standards
- Maintain the confidentiality of College information to which they are given access

4.3 Maintain your wellbeing and continuously develop your professional competence, skills and performance.

Trainee must:

- Seek prompt and appropriate professional advice about their wellbeing which may impact their ability to fully engage with the GP Training Programme or interact with patients, College staff or colleagues
- Inform College staff if there is anything that could impact their ability to fully engage with the GP Training Programme or interact with patients, College staff or colleagues
- Actively participate in learning activities, optimising the educational experiences and opportunities presented
- Undertake to evaluate and reflect on their own performance to improve knowledge and skills. This includes:
 - reflecting on their own performance
 - openly discussing with their trainer, supervisor, mentor and scheme directing team any errors and weaknesses, and
 - alerting their supervisor to any problems that might adversely affect their performance as a trainee and as a doctor.
- Commit to developing, and continuously improving clinical competence and knowledge
- Engage constructively in assessment

4.4 Be honest, trustworthy and accountable, and comply with your regulatory and legal obligations.

Trainees must:

- Comply with all legal and regulatory obligations, including College policies and procedures and maintaining registration with the Irish Medical Council
- Act honestly in all academic and clinical work
- To the best of their ability, plan and report absences well in advance to ensure continuity of care and manage training progression effectively
- Apply skills, knowledge, learning for the maximum benefit of patients
- Use available educational material and clinical resources in a professional manner to maintain knowledge, skills and practice
- Comply with the College's placement requirements
- Ensure that the use of alcohol or drugs does not impede participation in the training programme or assessments, or impact professional behaviour
- Carry out tasks or duties assigned by the training scheme diligently and professionally
- Fully cooperate with any investigation by the College into any breach of this Guide or other College policies.

4.5 Be aware of your obligations under this Guide and behave in a way that upholds public trust and professional standards.

Trainees must:

- Promote and support the principles of this Guide by leading by example
- Act in good faith
- Avoid behaviour that could undermine the trust in general practitioners
- Recognise diversity and respect cultural differences, values and beliefs
- Interact with members of the College community in a constructive manner
- Act respectfully and constructively
- Meet prescribed deadlines and respond to requests for information in a timely manner
- Meet deadlines and administrative requirements
- Maintain accurate and truthful records
- Notify the College of relevant changes (e.g. IMC status, leave, restrictions)
- Report concerns about unsafe and unethical behaviour
- Use ePortfolio appropriately and record accurate information only, including personal and professional details
- Notify the College of:
 - relevant changes in personal or professional information
 - employment leave that impacts their ability to maintain skill and knowledge currency
 - restrictions on their professional standing with the IMC which may impact employment or participation in the Training Programme
 - Any other circumstance that may impede compliance with the requirements of the training programme

Trainees must not:

- Disrupt or interfere with academic, administrative, clinical and other activities of the College whether on College premises or elsewhere
- Disrupt, obstruct or interfere with the functions, duties, or activities of any trainee, faculty or College staff
- Engage in any behaviour that may bring the College into disrepute
- Engage in any behaviour (physical or verbal) which a reasonable person would deem to be unwelcome, offensive, humiliating or intimidating;
- Engage in, facilitate or condone any communication or actions which involve discrimination, bullying or harassment
- Ignore actual or perceived behaviour or conduct that may be in breach of this Guide

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Trainees	• Adhere to this Guide and IMC guidance • Maintain professional standards • Engage with training and assessment
Trainers/Supervisors	• Provide guidance and feedback • Support professional development • Raise concerns where necessary
College Staff	• Provide clear standards and processes • Ensure fair assessment and governance • Protect public safety and training standards

6.0 Definitions

Professionalism	• Conduct aligned with IMC ethical and professional standards. • Conduct which doctors of experience, competence and good repute consider in line with standards expected of doctors.
Misconduct	As defined in the Disciplinary Action Policy, namely: Major misconduct: Conduct which doctors of experience, competence and good repute consider disgraceful or dishonourable and/or conduct connected with their profession in which the doctor has seriously fallen short of by omission or commission of expected standards of conduct. Minor misconduct: Acts of indiscipline or behaviour by a trainee that causes minimal harm or damage.

7.0 Related and Supporting Documentation

- IMC Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics (2024)
- Disciplinary Action Policy
- Progression Review Policy
- Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Conscientious Objection Guideline
- Training Agreement
- Annual Trainee Declaration



8.0 Contact

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