

ADEA Tool for Action on Professionalism in Dental Education

Each academic dental education institution has its own unique culture, institutional values, principles and processes, and (in some cases) code of conduct. The ADEA Tool for Action is intended not to replace or supersede these, but to help you understand and define professionalism and evaluate your own performance in this area.

SIX VALUES DEFINING PROFESSIONALISM IN DENTAL EDUCATION

■ **1. Competence: acquiring and maintaining the high level of special knowledge, technical ability, and professional behavior necessary for the provision of clinical care to patients and for effective functioning in the dental education environment.**

Competence includes knowledge of oral health care; a lifelong commitment to maintaining skills and knowledge; developing the ability to communicate effectively with patients, peers, colleagues, and other professionals; recognizing the limits of one's own knowledge and skills; and recognizing and acting upon the need for collaboration with peers, colleagues, allied professionals, and other health professionals. It also includes recognizing the need for new knowledge and engaging in evidence-based practice.

Questions to consider for self-evaluation of competence:

- Is learning oral health care my top priority?
- Am I developing the habits and practices of lifelong learning, including self-assessment skills?
- Do I accept and respond to fair negative feedback about my performance (i.e., recognize when I need to learn)?
- Am I learning and practicing effective communication skills?
- Do I know the limits of my knowledge and skills and practice within them?
- Do I know when and how to refer?
- Am I engaging in lifelong learning?
- Am I modeling continuous professional development in oral health care and pedagogy?
- Do I ensure curricular materials are current and relevant?
- Do I model effective interactions with patients, colleagues, and students?
- Do I acknowledge and act on the need for collaboration?
- Do I generate new knowledge?
- Do I set high standards?
- Do I support the learning needs of all members of the institution and encourage them to pursue lifelong learning?

■ **2. Fairness: demonstrating consistency and even-handedness in dealings with others.**

Fairness includes considering how to best distribute benefits and burdens; striving for just consideration for all; ensuring consistency in process while recognizing that different outcomes are possible; transparency in process and calibration; creating consistent, reliable, and unbiased evaluation systems; and working for access to oral health care services for underserved populations.

Questions to consider for self-evaluation of fairness:

- Do I follow institutional rules and regulations?
- Do I promote equal access to learning materials for all students and equal access to care for the public?
- Do I use appropriate assessment and evaluation methods for students?
- Do I view situations from multiple perspectives, especially those that require evaluation?
- Do I provide balanced feedback to students, colleagues, and the institution?
- Do I use evidence-based practices?
- Do I promote equal access to oral health care? Do I set high standards for the conduct of research and use unbiased processes to assess research outcomes?
- Do I generate data to support evidence-based practice and education?
- Do I set high standards and ensure fair, unbiased assessment and evaluation processes for all members of the institution, including applicants to educational programs?
- Do I ensure that institutional policies and procedures are unbiased and applied consistently?
- Do I ensure transparency of process?
- Do I provide leadership in promoting equal access to care for the public?

■ **3. Integrity: being honest and demonstrating congruence between one's values, words, and actions.**

Integrity includes congruence between word and deed (i.e., meaning what you say); representing one's knowledge, skills, abilities, and accomplishments honestly and truthfully; willingness to engage in self-assessment and self-reflection; willingness to acknowledge mistakes; developing moral insight and moral reasoning skills; making a continual, conscientious effort to exceed ordinary expectations; and willingness to suffer personal discomfort or inconvenience for the sake of a moral good.

Questions to consider for self-evaluation of integrity:

- Do I strive for personal and professional excellence?
- Do I take examinations honestly?
- Do I make entries in patients' records honestly?
- Do I represent my knowledge honestly?
- Do I report research outcomes honestly?
- Do I use appropriate outcomes measures?
- Do I acknowledge openly when improvements need to be made?
- Do I ensure institutional systems and structures are honest, open, and respectful and do not create undue conflicts?

■ **4. Responsibility: being accountable for one's actions and recognizing and acting upon the special obligations to others that one assumes in joining a profession.**

Responsibility includes the concepts of obligation, duty, and accountability, and it requires an appreciation of the trusting relationship between oral health professionals and patients, and between the profession and society. It also requires striking a morally defensible balance between self-interest and the interest of those who place their trust in us, our patients and society.

Questions to consider for self-evaluation of responsibility:

- Do I meet commitments, complete assignments on time, and make learning a top priority?
- Do I acknowledge and correct errors?
- Do I report misconduct and participate in peer review?
- Do I stay current as a teacher and set high standards?
- Do I respect time commitments to others?
- Am I available to students when assigned to teach?
- Do I report and manage conflicts of interest or commitment?
- Do I ensure that all patient care provided is in the best interest of the patient?
- Do I ensure that patient care provided is appropriate and complete?
- Do I protect students, patients, and society from harm?
- Do I know and practice the rules and regulations for the responsible conduct of research?
- Do I continuously improve as an administrator?
- Do I use appropriate institutional outcomes assessments and continuously improve institutional systems and processes?

■ **5. Respect: honoring the worth of others.**

Respect includes acknowledging the worth of an individual and his or her beliefs and value system; being sensitive and responsive to diversity in patients' culture, age, gender, race, religion, disabilities, and sexual orientation; obtaining informed consent for care; and maintaining patient confidentiality and privacy. It also includes extending the same considerations to colleagues in oral health care and other health professions, students and other learners, institutions, systems, and processes.

Questions to consider for self-evaluation of respect:

- Am I developing a nuanced understanding of the rights and values of patients?
- Do I protect patients from harm and support patient autonomy?
- Am I mindful of patients' time and ensure timeliness in the continuity of patient care?
- Do I keep confidences?
- Do I accept and embrace cultural diversity?
- Am I learning cross-cultural communication skills?
- Do I accept and embrace differences?
- Do I acknowledge and support the contributions of peers and faculty?
- Do I model valuing others and their rights, particularly those of patients?
- Do I model effective cross-cultural communication skills?
- Do I accept, understand, and address the developmental needs of learners?
- Do I maintain confidentiality of student records?

- Do I maintain confidentiality of feedback to students, especially in the presence of patients and peers?
- Do I protect human research subjects from harm?
- Do I recognize and support the rights and values of all members of the institution?
- Do I create and sustain healthy learning environments?
- Do I ensure fair institutional processes?

■ **6. Service-mindedness: acting for the benefit of the patients and the public we serve, and approaching those served with compassion.**

Service-mindedness includes seeking to benefit others and putting the needs of the patient or the public before self interest. It also includes the ability to understand and appreciate another person's perspective without losing sight of one's professional role and responsibilities. These considerations also extend to your peers and co-workers. Dental education institutions are also expected to serve the oral health needs of society not only by educating oral health care providers, but also by being collaborators in solutions to problems of access to care.

Questions to consider for self-evaluation of service-mindedness:

- Do I contribute to and support the learning needs of peers and the dental profession?
- Do I recognize and act on the primacy of the well-being and the oral health needs of patients and society?
- Do I provide compassionate care?
- Do I support the values of the profession?
- Do I volunteer to work for the benefit of patients, society, colleagues, and the profession?
- Do I model a sincere concern for students, patients, peers, and humanity?
- Do I model recognition of the primacy of the needs of the patients and society in the oral health care setting and, at the same time, support the learning needs of students?
- Do I contribute to and support the knowledge base of the profession?
- Do I model service to the dental profession and to relevant scientific and research associations?
- Do I recognize and act on opportunities to provide oral health care for underserved populations?
- Do I encourage and support all members of the institution in their service activities?
- Do I provide leadership in modeling service to the profession and the public?