



Complete Policy Title	Policy on Anonymous Evaluations by Students
Approved by	MD Executive Committee
Date of Original Approval	May 4, 2016
Date of Most Recent Approval	
Supersedes/Amends Policy dated	

Background:

The UGME Program collects evaluation data and feedback from students to continuously improve all aspects of the Program. Evaluation data and feedback is shared with Program leaders and teaching faculty. Students want to provide feedback about the Program and be reassured that providing negative or constructive feedback is not associated with negative consequences or the risk thereof, either real or perceived. It is in the best interest of students and the Program to collect the most accurate and honest feedback possible which is best achieved by minimizing the perceived and real risk of consequences in response to negative or constructive feedback. Where possible, the Program will protect the identities of students completing evaluations on faculty or the Program.

Related Policies:

Confidentiality Policy – Student Affairs

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/appforms/confidentiality.pdf>

Background information sheet following this policy

Definitions:

“Anonymous” means that it is not possible to connect specific evaluation data (e.g. scores or comments) to the identity of a given evaluator. This includes ensuring anonymity in the reporting process by suppressing data in low frequency cells. This excludes circumstances where the evaluator provides self-identifying information in comments – for example, by including reference to a specific situation.

“Confidential” means that it is possible to connect specific evaluation data to the identity of a given evaluator; however, every effort will be made to limit who has access to this knowledge. The number of individuals with knowledge of the evaluator’s identity may change based on the need to respond to the data provided.

“Faculty member” is any individual who has a faculty appointment of any rank with McMaster University. For the purposes of this policy, this may also include other teachers, supervisors, preceptors, and leaders associated with all aspects of the Program (e.g. resident teachers, elective supervisors).

“Program component” is any part of the Program that is self-contained temporally, in leadership or organizational structure, particularly, but not exclusively, curriculum-oriented – for example: Pre-Clerkship, Clerkship, Medical Foundations, Professional Competencies, Clinical Skills, Clerkship rotations, Student Affairs, etc.

Procedures – Protecting the Identities of Student Evaluators:

Collection of Data

1. Students will be given opportunities to evaluate faculty teachers and supervisors, and curricular components throughout the Program. Faculty member and Program evaluation is overseen by the Chair of Program Evaluation in collaboration with the UGME Executive Committee, its Chairs and sub-committees.
2. Where evaluations are administered through MedSIS, the evaluation is triggered when a student is scheduled in a curricular component and an evaluation is attached to that curricular component.
3. All evaluations used in the Program will include a disclaimer at the beginning of the evaluation as to whether the data is being treated anonymously or not.
4. If evaluation data is being treated anonymously, the evaluation will include the following disclaimer at the beginning of the evaluation:
 - a. “This evaluation is being treated anonymously. The information you provide in the evaluation will only be available after at least 3 evaluations of the same faculty member, teacher, curriculum component and/or site are completed, therefore, there may be some delay before your evaluation can be reviewed. We encourage you to use this evaluation to report issues that are very positive or of significant concern. **If you feel that urgent attention is required, please contact Student Affairs or MD Program leadership directly to report these concerns.**”
5. While data is being treated anonymously, students are encouraged to provide feedback that is honest yet constructive. Egregiously harsh or vexatious feedback should be avoided and may be seen as unprofessional. In anonymous evaluation, no attempt will be made to identify the source of an evaluation comment. Course and clerkship directors will be able to suppress any egregiously harsh or vexatious comments after evaluation aggregation has occurred and before evaluation reporting.
6. If an anonymous evaluation is submitted for the incorrect individual faculty member, teacher, supervisor, or Program component, there is no way to remove the evaluation, so students should ensure that the evaluation they are completing is for the intended recipient individual or program component.

7. Once a student completes an evaluation, the original evaluation and the raw data and feedback remain linked to the student's evaluation within the MedSIS database; however, the student's identity is anonymized in the following ways:
 - a. Neither the original evaluation nor the raw data are available, displayed or reported with any identifying information of any student;
 - b. Any database fields linking students' identifying data to evaluation data will not be used or revealed under any circumstances to attempt to identify any student who has completed an evaluation.

Data Reporting

8. Anonymity is further preserved during the reporting process in the following ways:
 - a. Only aggregated data is available in reports. As a result, it is not possible to use data in one field (e.g. identity-revealing comments) to identify the origin of data in another field (e.g. satisfaction scores).
 - b. Faculty evaluations are only available to faculty members after at least 3 students have completed evaluations on that faculty member for the same teaching activity;
 - c. Program, course and clerkship evaluations are filtered for reporting along a number of classifications – e.g. by campus, by clinical site, etc. No evaluation data will be presented when any filtered cell has 3 or fewer evaluations. To protect anonymity, if there is only one cell that has 3 or fewer evaluations, then the data in the next largest cell will also be suppressed;
 - d. When multiple reports are available that draw on the same data, the data in any given cell will only be reported when 3 or more evaluations have been added since the data was last reported in that cell;

Monitoring and Reporting Concerns

9. The Chair of Program Evaluation, working with the UGME Executive Committee and the Program Evaluation Committee, will monitor adherence to this policy.
10. Anyone with concerns about the application of this policy should report those concerns to the Chair of Program Evaluation, to Program leadership, or to student leadership (e.g. McMaster Medical Students' Council or student representatives on Program committees).
11. Where concerns are ultimately identified to the Chair of Program Evaluation, they will be addressed by the Program Evaluation Committee.

Background: How Student Anonymity is Maintained in Undergraduate Medical Education Program Evaluations

How evaluations are generated in MedSIS?

- Evaluations are generated in three ways:
 - When students are 'enrolled' in a course (or clerkship rotation), any evaluations associated with that course will be applied to the student for that course;
 - When a student registers for an elective; and,
 - In a clerkship that has access to 'on demand' evaluations, students can generate an on demand evaluation.
- Other than for electives, it is up to a MedSIS System Administrator or UGME System Administrator to 'attach' certain types of evaluations to courses
- At a pre-determined time in the course, MedSIS will automatically make the evaluation available to the student

How are evaluations stored in MedSIS?

- Students' evaluations of their teachers and courses are stored in MedSIS attached to the student to whom the evaluation was/is assigned
 - Until an evaluation is completed, it remains on the student's dashboard to be completed
 - Once an evaluation is completed, it can still be reviewed by the student, but it can not be changed

How are students' identities kept anonymous?

- Other than on the page within the profile of the student who completed the evaluation, no other page within MedSIS shows the name of the student who completed any evaluation. Even 'super-users' within the UGME Program are not able to access any page that has the identity of a student who completed an evaluation. MedSIS was specifically programmed to ensure that this does not occur for any McMaster medical student. This is different than how MedSIS works at other medical schools.
- No one outside of the MedSIS staff have access to the database that contains evaluations. MedSIS staff will not search the evaluations database in any way that identifies any student who has completed an evaluation of a teacher or course. MedSIS staff are administrators in the Faculty of Health Sciences Computer Services Unit and Education Services and are not staff of the UGME Program or any associated partners of the UGME Program that have any role in assessment of medical students.

How are students' identities kept anonymous for teacher evaluations?

- No teacher evaluations can be viewed by anyone until at least 3 evaluations of a given teacher for a given educational activity (e.g. tutor, clerkship supervisor, electives supervisor, etc.) are completed.

- Once 3 or more evaluations have been completed for a given teacher for a given educational activity, the Director for that activity (e.g. MF Director, Professional Competencies Co-Chairs, Clerkship Director, etc.) can view an aggregated teacher evaluation report (TER). All of the information below appears on one aggregated report:
 - The teacher's identification
 - An average score and standard deviation for each of the domains evaluated
 - A count of each score given for the domains evaluated (e.g. the number of 5's given, the number of 4's given, etc.)
 - All comments from individual student's evaluations listed verbatim and without any identifiers
- Before publishing the teacher's aggregate evaluation report, the Director may "suppress" any comments which are felt to be egregiously harmful. Suppressed comments are still stored within MedSIS but they will not be present on the published evaluation report.
- Once the Director publishes the aggregate evaluation report, the teacher can access the report directly through MedSIS. The TER will also be made available to the teacher's department and/or campus leads.

How are students' identities kept anonymous for course/clerkship evaluations?

- Individual, completed course and clerkship evaluations can not be viewed separately.
- Aggregate data is pulled from the MedSIS system by the UGME Program Coordinator, Mike Weir
 - Pre-Clerkship data: An aggregated, composite report is completed for each MF and Professional Competencies with data compared by campus. Any fields with less than 3 evaluations are suppressed.
 - Clerkship data:
 - Aggregated reports are produced twice per year for each clerkship rotation, aggregating across four rotations.
 - Evaluation data must ultimately be reported and analyzed by clinical site. This is important for both program evaluation and accreditation purposes (e.g. continuous quality assurance and improvement). In some clinical sites, there may only be one or two students per year. Data will be suppressed in any cells with fewer than 3 new students reporting since the last reporting period. This ensures that not only are students raw evaluations unavailable to UGME Program leadership, but it is also not possible to infer evaluation data due to low reporting numbers.