

Wellness Guidelines for Health Professional Learners

Temerty Faculty of Medicine

Purpose

Temerty Medicine (TM) at the University of Toronto (the “University”) prioritizes the health and well-being of all learners to succeed in their clinical training across diverse learning environments. These guidelines outline strategic goals, responsibilities, resources, and support to promote learner health and well-being across programs and the learning continuum.

These guidelines focus key initiatives that enable learners to thrive academically, professionally and personally throughout training, with the goal of fostering safe and supportive learning environments. To support programs to achieve this goal, the guideline outlines key responsibilities at the faculty, program, supervisor, and learner level. Programs include Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME), Undergraduate Medical Program (MD Program), and health professional training programs including Medical Radiation Science, Physician Assistants and Occupational Sciences, Physical Therapy, and Speech Language Pathology.

The guidelines were developed in consultation with learners, faculty, staff, education, diversity and inclusion and well-being experts.

Scope

1. These guidelines outline key principles, best practices and shared roles and responsibilities of programs & placement sites, supervisors/teachers, and learners across Medical Education and Rehabilitation Sciences to promote organizational and individual wellbeing. While Temerty Medicine and continuant programs recognize the need to foster health promoting learning environments, learners also have a responsibility to engage in behaviour and activities that foster their health and well-being. Programs and supervisors, in collaboration with key groups (the University, hospitals, etc.), must attend to the training and practice environment and foster the conditions and resources necessary to promote individual and organizational health and well-being in collaboration with learners.
2. Key resources and support for programs, supervisors and learners are also outlined including the [Office of Learner Affairs](#) (OLA) and continuant portfolios including the [Learner Experience Unit](#) (LEU), and Career Advising team in addition to program-specific supports outlined in the appendices.
3. These guidelines apply to all clinical learners of programs that are affiliated with the Temerty Faculty of Medicine and Rehabilitation Sciences and/or affiliated with the OLA, including those completing electives visiting from other schools registered in the following programs:
 - Medical Radiation Sciences
 - Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy
 - Physician Assistant
 - Speech Language Pathology
 - Physical Therapy

- MD (all years)
- MD/PhD
- Postgraduate Medical Education including:
 - International Medical Graduates (IMGs), once fully registered following PEAP*
 - Externally sponsored trainees, once fully registered following AVP*
 - Medical Physics Residents

4. Learners at Temerty Medicine are trained in a wide variety of locations including, but not limited to, hospitals, clinics, schools and school boards, other post-secondary institutions, and community settings. For ease of reference, these will be collectively described herein as “placement sites”.
5. These guidelines do not replace or limit the legal and ethical standards established by professional or regulatory bodies, the policies and procedures at placement sites, or by other applicable Temerty Medicine or University standards, policies, and procedures that are outlined in [Appendix 1](#).
6. Notwithstanding, Temerty Medicine acknowledges that achieving optimal health is not always possible for individuals. In these instances, the University will seek to support learners to perform at their optimal potential by accommodating their wellness needs in the work and learning environment and supporting leaves from training and graduate return to training when required. See [Guidelines for Accommodations for Postgraduate Learners with a Disability](#) and [Guidelines for Residency Leaves of Absence](#).

Definition of Health and Well-being

The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) constitution states: ‘Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.’ Furthermore, the WHO indicates that “mental health is an integral and essential component of health”. An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities. Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the common stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to their community. Mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living, and enjoy life.

Learner Well-being as a Priority

Temerty Medicine places the utmost importance on supporting the well-being of learners across all programs and placement sites and throughout the continuum of training. All members of the Temerty Medicine community, including learners, have a responsibility to promote and support learner health and well-being. Learner well-being is linked to the maintenance of positive and safe learning environments across our training programs and placement sites. To ensure positive and safe learning environments, programs, supervisors, and learners must create and support conditions to support learner's well-being through education, interventions and policy at an individual, program, and departmental level.

Health professional training requires rapid acquisition of new knowledge with frequent transitions that impact learners professionally and personally, including but not limited to exposure to human pain and distress, loss of human life and grief. Providing support and care to patients and families can also be deeply rewarding and meaningful. While learners are supported to develop knowledge and skills to

become competent clinicians, of equal importance is the development of coping skills and adaptive expertise to manage the complexity and uncertainty of clinical practice.

Priorities for Learner Health and Well-Being

Four priorities underpin the recommendations in this guideline to support learner well-being across programs and the learning continuum from early training to transition to professional practice.

1. Learner health and well-being must be approached with a shared responsibility involving commitments and interventions at the level of the faculty, training programs, teachers and clinical supervisors, and learners.
2. Learner well-being interventions must be informed by Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigeneity, and Accessibility (EDIIA).
 - a. Learner health and well-being is not one size fits all. Temerty Medicine recognizes that there is a power differential between individuals that can influence the learning environment and impact experiences of training and well-being.
 - b. Temerty Medicine appreciates that learners and faculty do not experience the burdens of the learning environment equally. These differences can be particularly pronounced for certain groups and their intersections, owing to systemic and structural factors, including but not limited to learners identifying as black or Indigenous, structurally marginalized and racialized populations, women, sexual or gender minorities, minoritized faith groups, and individuals living with a disability.
3. The inherent challenges of health professions training that create emotional, cognitive and physical demands for learners must be identified and discussed to effectively support learner well-being. Programs, teachers and learners must build awareness and support to navigate these challenges that include but are not limited to long hours of training, exposure to pain and distress, deaths, team conflicts, adverse events, academic setbacks, times of transition, after hours and overnight training.
 - a. It is the responsibility of the program and teachers/supervisors in partnership with sponsoring institutions to:
 - Develop offerings to prepare learners for anticipated challenges in training and encourage sharing of experiences, adaptive coping and help-seeking as a common aspect of training.
 - Provide information and access to resources and supports for learners within the Temerty Medicine, OLA, and broader campus and community supports.
 - In partnership with supervisors, provide orientation offerings to foster an awareness of inherent stressors in health professions training and opportunities to develop adaptive coping strategies and access informal and formal support including but not limited to the OLA.
 - Temerty Medicine programs and supervisors must foster awareness and support for learners during transitions in training.

- Professional transitions include but are not limited to: transition into training, transition to senior training and clinical placements, and transitions to elective/research leaves and transition to practice.
 - Support for transition into training for all learners with particular attention to learners transitioning from out of province and international learners.
 - Support international learners to transition to programs and placement sites and the local community.
 - Support for transition to different placement sites, ensure the need that orientation occurs during a new rotation and that learners are provided with time to attend orientation and training events at the start of a new rotation.
- Personal transitions may include but are not limited to: personal, parental, sick leaves, relationship changes, caregiving demands.
 - Programs must support as needed graduated transitions to return from professional and personal leaves.

Responsibilities of Programs, Supervisors and Learners

Program and Supervisor Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the program and its education/ program committee to identify and acknowledge factors in training that can impact learner health and well-being. Programs have a role to guide learners to resources available to navigate factors in training that can impact on their well-being that include but are not limited to:
 - Work-life integration: competing demands (caregiving of children, elderly dependents, part-time employment etc.)
 - Financial strain: cost of living, debt re-payment, budgeting
 - Time/space for self-care including a place to rest and eat, access to nutritious food, ability to attend healthcare appointments
 - Career and clinical placement planning, clinical placement matches, CaRMS matches (MD/PGME) job search, preparation for independent practice
 - Program/placement site/rotation learning environment factors that impact well-being:
2. If a program director, coordinator, or teacher recognizes that the performance of a learner may be impacted by their physical or mental health, including impairment due to excessive fatigue, they must take steps to ensure the safety of learners, and patients and families.
3. It is the responsibility of the University, including the program, to adhere to appropriate guidelines regarding accommodation for health professions learners in Temerty Medicine programs (see applicable policies re: accessibility and accommodations process in Appendix 1).
4. It is the responsibility of the program to provide reasonable accommodations (i.e. duty assignments, on-call schedules) to enable the learner to participate in required medical appointments, which are consistent with the program contracts or the [PARO-OTH Collective Agreement](#) for residents or the employment contract of fellows.
5. Program directors or designates are encouraged during annual reviews to inquire and address

individual and program level issues that may impact the learner's health and well-being and their subsequent success in training. Programs are required to provide information to learners about appropriate resources including the OLA and other resources at Temerty Medicine and beyond (see appendix_1).

6. Programs approach training and learner health with an awareness of the diverse experiences and needs of the learners in their program.
7. Programs must prioritize the development of community and a sense of belonging for learners through engagement and events that are inclusive and invite diverse participation of learners.
8. Programs, supervisors actively work to reduce stigma related to help seeking for physical and particularly mental health issues.
9. Programs, and supervisors and learners must together foster safe and inclusive learning environments for all learners.
10. Program, faculty and learners must be aware and address mistreatment that can contravene efforts to support learner health and well-being initiatives.

Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Supervisors are responsible for providing site and rotation specific orientation for learners, which includes a review of the rotation learning objectives, expectations (attendance, communication if learner is delayed/unwell/absent) and exploration of the learning needs of trainees. Rotation orientation must include a review of safety (psychological, cultural and physical) and expectations of supervisors, teams and learners to foster safety and how to report any safety concerns during the rotation.
2. Supervisors must, within their sphere of influence, support and uphold a positive learning environment within the relevant physical and virtual classrooms, and clinical and research spaces.

Learner Responsibilities

1. Learners are responsible for reporting fit for clinical placements and able to perform their clinical duties in a safe, appropriate, and effective manner. Learners have a professional responsibility to be appropriately rested and must manage their time before, during, and after clinical assignments to prevent excessive fatigue.
2. Learners are responsible for developing skills to recognize and respond to signs of stress in themselves, including that which is due to illness and/or fatigue. Learners experiencing such impairment are to seek appropriate help and/or access to the OLA for further support.
3. If a learner is experiencing an underlying health issue that could impair their ability to perform their clinical duties, they are encouraged to seek assistance from the OLA before clinical, educational, and/or professional performance, interpersonal relationships, or health are adversely affected. Learners are entitled to reasonable accommodation in accordance with, and subject to, applicable law and policy. In a case where a learner is unaware of a disability and a supervisor or program

notices a potential disability there is a duty to inquire with the learner as to whether they could benefit from seeking potential accommodations and encouraged to access OLA for further support. (See the [Guidelines for Accommodations for Postgraduate Learners with a Disability](#) for further information.)

4. If a learner recognizes physical, mental, or emotional difficulties affecting the performance of another learner, including impairment due to excessive fatigue, they should encourage their peer to notify a program director/coordinator or designate. If there is risk to patient safety, the learner must notify the program director/coordinator or applicable placement site lead about the situation. (See the [Postgraduate Learner Health and Safety Guidelines](#) for further information.)
5. At no time will learners be denied time off to seek acute care for illnesses (physical or mental) or dental emergencies during work hours.
6. Learners are encouraged to contact the Learner Experience Unit to seek support related to mistreatment. (See the [Learner Mistreatment Guidelines - Temerty Medicine](#) for further information.)
7. Learners, in their roles as peers, leaders and teachers, contribute to the physical, emotional, cultural and psychological safety in the learning environment where they train. Learners are required to support and uphold a positive learning environment within the physical and virtual classroom and clinical and research spaces where they train.

Developing Program-Specific Wellness Initiatives

The Temerty Learner Wellness Guidelines are applicable to all Health Professions programs affiliated with the Office of Learner Affairs, as outlined in the Scope section. In addition, many programs have their own thoughtful approaches, systems and processes in place to support learners' wellness concerns specific to their program. Each program is encouraged to review their program's structure and processes and ensure their program supports the priorities outlined in these guidelines.

To support programs to develop local initiatives that support learner health and well-being, these guidelines contain "guiding questions" to promote programs level initiatives and communications. These questions can help program directors/coordinators and program committees organize and/or develop initiatives that support learner wellness at a program level (See [Appendix 2](#)).

Additional PGME Program Responsibility (this section applies only to PGME programs)

1. Residency Program Committees (RPCs) must include planning and organization to support learner wellness as part of their mandate.
2. PGME programs must have an effective process for resident wellness and safety representatives to provide input to the residency program committee.
3. Policies and processes must be in place to address and actively promote residents' physical, psychological, cultural, and professional safety.
4. Curriculum plans must include education regarding fatigue risk management and consider methods

to address systemic issues leading to excessive fatigue. Among learners within the program.

Temerty Medicine Learner Wellness Resources:

Office of Learner Affairs

The Office of Learner Affairs at Temerty Medicine seeks to enhance the wellness of medical learners and support programs to foster learning environments that promote the health of learners at an individual and organizational level.

OLA Services

OLA provides all registered learners (residents and clinical fellows) a safe and confidential venue to seek out resources that protect and enhance their health and well-being. Learners have access to support from Learner Affairs Directors and Units (post-graduate and undergraduate) and can also access counseling with Learner Life Specialists (LLS) or through established support at the program level.

OLA works with programs through program directors/coordinators, program assistants, and the Learner Wellness Advisory Committee, with broad representation to support an organizational learning environment, with values and behaviors that promote self-care, growth, and compassion for self, our colleagues and our patients.

Learner Wellness Portfolio

The Learner Wellness portfolio seeks to:

- Support program and system-level approaches to address health and wellness in the learning environment.
- Educate learners, faculty and programs on the promotion of learner health and well-being at an individual, team, program, and organizational level.
- Support programs to identify key challenges, transitions and times of increased demand during training that impact learner well-being and develop individual and program level responses to promote explicit support and adaptive coping.
- Conduct scholarly work in the area of health professional well-being.

Learner Affairs Directors:

- Provide support during remediation/academic difficulty.
- Provide career and training guidance.
- Provide disability and accommodation support.
- Advise regarding leaves, transfers, mistreatment/intimidation/harassment.
- Administer the Board of Medical Assessor files (postgraduate).
- Support programs and program directors/coordinators focused on enhancing health and well-being.

Learner Life Specialists (LLS):

- Assess and provide short term counselling to support trainee's health, learning, and performance needs.

- Provide support to learners to navigate resources that exist at the University and beyond to support the health and well-being of learners.
- Create and facilitate educational programs and workshops on health professional learner wellness, learning, and performance.

Learner Experience Unit: <<Summary to be added by LEU team>>

All members of the OLA team aim to link learners to services at OLA, the University of Toronto, and in the community appropriate to health, safety and learning needs. OLA can be contacted by emailing ola.reception@utoronto.ca.

Board of Medical Assessors (BMA)

The Board of Medical Assessors (BMA) functions as a confidential process that provides recommendations to support and advocate for accommodations that enable learner success during education/training and remediation.

The BMA considers and determines whether there is a disability that affects or may affect the ability of a student or trainee to participate, perform or continue in Temerty Medicine health professional educational programs. The BMA makes recommendations regarding such matters to the Dean or delegate (e.g., the applicable Vice-Dean, Education).

Program directors/coordinators are strongly advised to discuss BMA referrals with OLA Directors prior to submitting a BMA referral because OLA may have additional information that the program is seeking. Board of Medical Assessors: Terms of Reference: <https://temertymedicine.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Medicine%20By-Laws%20-%20April%2028%2C%202025.pdf>

Boundaries between Office of Learner Affairs and Training Programs

- OLA operates at arms-length from the other programs and offices at Temerty Medicine.
- OLA will request a learner's consent before consulting with offices and individuals outside of the OLA, in order to assist a learner; except in the case of an emergency or where there may be a safety risk.
- When learners engage with the Learner Life Specialists for short term counselling, information is protected by PHIPPA, and disclosures are only made according to PHIPPA legislation.
- Data regarding operations is reported in aggregate form to programs, in order to preserve the privacy of individuals who use services.
- In some circumstances (for example, where health/safety is at risk) the OLA will consult with other internal members of the University on a need-to-know basis and otherwise as required or permitted by applicable provincial privacy legislation or regulatory bodies.
- The OLA works with the Boards of Medical Assessors (BMA) at the postgraduate and undergraduate level to assist learners and review the need for accommodations in the learning environment; medical information used in this process is disclosed to the BMA with consent of the learner, and medical information is not shared with other offices at Temerty Medicine.

References:

1. World Health Organization, Constitution. Retrieved from:

www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf

Appendix 1: Policies, Guidelines and Resources

Multiple policies and guidelines have been developed to support learners and faculty to navigate processes that support the health and well-being of learners at the University. Many of these policies and guidelines govern student support for all University learners and are not exclusive to an individual program. The Office of Learner Affairs (OLA) recognizes these policies and guidelines as the basis of student conduct, support and governance.

Applicable to ALL Temerty Medicine Learners

- [University Student Services and Support](#)
- [University Safety and Support](#)
- [Find a Doctor or Nurse practitioner](#)
- [Standards of Professional Practice Behaviour for all Health Professional Students](#)
- [Learner Mistreatment Guideline in the Temerty Faculty of Medicine](#)
- [Guidelines Regarding Infectious Diseases and Occupational Health for Applicants to and Learners of the Faculty of Medicine Academic Programs](#)
- [Guidelines for Ethics & Professionalism in Healthcare Professional Clinical Training and Teaching](#)
- [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Complaints involving Faculty Members and Students of the University of Toronto arising in Independent Research Institutions, Health Care Institutions and Teaching Agencies](#)
- [Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment](#)
- [Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Student's Guide to the Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Terms of Reference for the Office of the University Ombudsperson](#)

Applicable to Undergraduate Medical Education Learners

- <https://md.utoronto.ca/md-policies-guidelines>
- [OMA Physician Health Program](#)

Applicable to Postgraduate Medical Education Learners

- [Guidelines for Accommodations for Postgraduate Learners with a Disability](#)
- [Postgraduate Learner Health and Safety Guidelines](#)
- [Guidelines for Residency Leaves of Absence](#)
- Guideline on Fatigue Risk Management- pending
- [PARO Helpline](#)
- [OMA Physician Health Program](#)

Applicable to Rehabilitation Sciences Learners

- [Leave of Absence Policy](#) (Grad Studies)
- [Personal Time off Policy](#) (Grad Studies)
- [Special Considerations & Disability-Related Accommodations](#) (OT)
- [Guidelines on Student Accessibility](#) (PT)
- [Learner Mistreatment](#) (PT)

Applicable to Medical Radiation Sciences Learners (Michener Institute Policies)

- [Accessibility & Accommodation Policy](#)
- [Sexual Assault and Sexual Violence Policy](#)
- [Harassment and Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#)
- [Health & Safety Policy](#)
- [Commitment to Accessibility Policy](#)
- [Workplace Anti Violence Policy](#)
- [Michener Coaching and Counselling](#)

Applicable to Physician Assistant Learners (NOSM University Resources)

- [I Need Help](#)
- [Addressing Learner Mistreatment](#)

Commented [YI1]: All of the Michener links were broken.
I've updated them all except I'm not sure about this link. It
could be: <https://michener.ca/student-life/>

Appendix 2: Program-level Promotion of Learner Health and Well-being

The following questions and sample responses have been created to highlight some of the activities your program may already be engaged in that would be considered part of your program-specific wellness program. The questions and responses below are meant to be a resource as you determine the wellness needs of your program and learners.

1. How do you teach learners about potential stressors during training and available supports?
 - Orientation sessions
 - Safety and wellness reviews/audits of sites/programs
 - Wellness days
 - Wellness series on clinician health, managing stress and burnout, fatigue management, exam preparation, financial literacy and planning
 - Debriefing opportunities after a traumatic clinical exposure, death, adverse event
 - Peer mentorship opportunities
 - Involving learners in program planning committees that address policies affecting wellness (accommodations process, vacation and leaves policies)
 - Role modelling of wellness attitudes and behaviours by faculty
 - Implicitly via supportive culture of program
2. How do you monitor the wellness of learners in your program?
 - Needs assessment of learners
 - Annual/biannual meetings with learners/focus groups
 - Site meetings with learners to review learning environment
 - Annual learner retreat with program evaluation by learners that includes wellness issues on agenda
3. What aspects of your training program may impact and constrain learner wellness?

Factors could include but are not limited to:

Location and organization of training:

- Multiple placement sites: transition between sites causing possible fragmentation, isolation, administrative demands to meet credentialing of multiple sites
- Efficiency of clinical practice: documentation demands, electronic health record training and use, placement site orientation and training

Team-based learning:

- Team practice and learning: level of functioning of clinical/research teams and inclusion of learners

Demands of training:

- Physical demands of clinical work: long work hours, duty hours (evening/overnight/weekend shifts)
- Emotional demands of clinical work: stigmatized clients, exposure to traumatic narratives and scenarios, frequent exposure to patient deaths
- Academic demands, preparations for internal and external assessments/examinations

Program/learning environment factors that constrain learner wellness to monitor:

- Size of program, larger programs and risk of fragmentation across sites and levels of training, variation in support from team, clinical staff, supervisors
- Increasing autonomy/responsibility
- Increased clinical demands - acute care settings, clinical complexity, chronic care, on call experiences - high workloads, long work hours
- Research and scholarly projects and extent of pacing, support and integration with other training demands
- Electronic health record/administrative work

4. What aspects of your training program, clinical practice and learning environments support trainee wellness?

- Program and site directors/coordinates
- Balint support groups for learners
- Wellness advisors and leads in your program
- Leisure activities to acknowledge learners, promote team development
- Mentorship program linking learners with senior learners or staff supports/mentors
- Ensuring learners are able to find time to attend healthcare appts (working with supervisors to ensure appts are prioritized in planning work flow)
- Culture of program and division
- Central: Office of Learner Affairs, wellness workshops, support sessions/groups, coaching and learner support

5. How do learners in your program become aware of specific processes to develop an accommodation plan?

- Refer to the [Office of Learner Affairs](#) or [Accessibility Office](#)
- Refer to Board of Medical Assessors
- Work with OLA regarding specific needs for the learning environment to optimize success in the training and work environment
- Occupational health office in the hospital
- Work with program director/coordinates and wellness leads within program

6. Learner mistreatment in the work and learning environment is linked to poor health. Temerty Medicine has a [learner mistreatment guideline](#) and reporting process and procedures. How do you verify that your learners, including elective learners, are aware of this process?

- Discussed at new trainee orientation
- Discussed at biannual program director/wellness meetings if need arises
- Posted on departmental Intranet pages

7. Do you have any internal faculty/staff members who learners can approach if they are distressed and need support?

- Learner Wellness advisors
- Wellness leads

8. How does your program promote professional values?

- Education of learners and faculty on professional values and standards, Education and awareness of "Voices of" surveys and data on learner experiences, TAHSN survey on the work

and learning environment

- Work with faculty to ensure professional behaviour is modeled (Faculty Development)
- Role modelling within the program and division

9. Do you have a learner or faculty lead for learner wellness? If so, what is their job description?

- What are the deliverables of the wellness lead?
- How do these individuals champion physician health in your program?
- How are these roles supported? (financial, administrative, protected time)
- Does the Wellness Lead sit on the training program committee?
- Do they report learner wellness issues to the residency program, program director, Department Chair?
- Do you have a faculty leadership role that supports learner well-being initiatives in your program: resident advisors, wellness lead
- Is the wellness leadership role embedded in role of program director or associate program director with appropriate competencies/capacity building of Medical Education leaders re: learner well-being and developing learning environments that foster well-being

10. What wellness initiatives/programs are offered to learners and faculty in your program?

- Wellness Committee
- Wellness programming (inclusive social events, workshops, educational sessions, visits from PARO representatives)
- Wellness lead/advisor for learners to see/meet
- Peer support program
- Mentorship program
- Exercise and nutrition education/programs
- Annual Trainee retreat (social/program evaluation)
- Learner book club
- Learner Balint groups, portfolio, reflection groups