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Purpose of Self-Reflection Guide

The goal of this reflection guide is to encourage medical students to become reflective practitioners and develop their professional identity formation. This guide provides a framework to:

- describe, interpret, generalize, and apply learning.
- understand how you think, feel, and see the world.
- strengthen skills in self-awareness, curiosity, wellness, relationships, teamwork, conflict management, emotional intelligence, self-confidence, cultural competence, and communication.
- assess and analyze your capabilities, performance, interests, and career aspirations. Understanding these concepts will present the narrative that will help you in your residency application and interviews.
What is Professional Identity?

**Professional Identity Formation (PIF)** is a journey of personal development and social construction. It is the process of enculturation into the actions, interactions, values, and norms of the medical profession. Professional identity has long been claimed to be the fundamental goal of the learning process in medical education.

Medical students are encouraged to reflect and interpret experiences while in training to create meaning. Students seek a steady alignment between themselves and their environment. When that equilibrium is disrupted, it can activate cognitive and/or affective discomfort or tension. Processing this dissonance through self-reflection, expressed in writing or inner dialogue can bolster emotional resilience and overall well-being.

Three domains that influence Professional Identity Formation:

- **Individual**: Who am I?
- **Relational**: Who am I in relation to others?
- **Collective**: Who am I in relation to the profession?
The Importance of Values

Your values highlight what you stand for and represent your unique individual essence. Research has found that individuals experience greater fulfillment when they live by those values. Your mental, emotional, and physical states can suffer when your values are not honored. However, values change and evolve throughout a lifetime. It is important to regularly assess your personal and professional values to better understand how your identity as a physician takes form.

See pages 4-5 for a list of common values.
Personal Values

Innovation
Inquisitive
Insightful
Inspiring
Integrity
Intelligence
Intensity
Intuitive
Irreverent
Joy
Justice
Kindness
Knowledge
Lawful
Leadership
Learning
Liberty
Logic
Love
Loyalty
Mastery
Maturity
Meaning
Moderation
Motivation
Openness
Optimism
Order
Organization
Originality
Passion
Patience
Peace
Performance
Persistence
Playfulness
Poise
Potential
Power
Present
Productivity
Professionalism
Prosperity
Purpose
Quality
Realistic
Reason
Recognition
Recreation
Reflective
Respect
Responsibility
Restraint
Results-oriented
Reverence
Rigor
Risk
Satisfaction
Security
Self-reliance
Selfless
Sensitivity
Serenity
Service
Sharing
Significance
Silence
Simplicity
Sincerity
Skill
Skillfulness
Smart
Solitude
Spirit
Spirituality
Spontaneous
Stability
Status
Stewardship
Strength
Structure
Success
Support
Surprise
Sustainability
Talent
Teamwork
Temperance
Thankful
Thorough
Thoughtful
Timeliness
Tolerance
Toughness
Traditional
Tranquility
Transparency
Trust
Trustworthy
Truth
Understanding
Uniqueness
Unity
Valor
Victory
Vigor
Vision
Vitality
Wealth
Welcoming
Winning
Wisdom
Wonder
Reflection is an effective and powerful paradigm to boost Professional Identity Formation.
Being a Self-Reflective Practitioner

- Promotes individual and professional well-being
- Internalizes experiences in both cognitive and affective domains
- Frames experiences across different perspectives and mindsets

Reflective Moments

Allows for the construction of meaning
• **Practice reflection during** **milestone experiences and events.** There are a variety of moments throughout your medical training where self-reflection can be really valuable.

• **Create an environment for reflection.** Be intentional about setting aside time to reflect and create an environment free from distractions. Take a deep breath, empty the mind, and enter the reflective space without judgement or preconceived notions.

• **Get out of your comfort zone and question yourself.** To help uncover thoughts and feelings, ask yourself further questions. Don't allow the prompts in this guide to limit your reflection.

• **Complement reflection with tools that inspire you.** Use art, literature, photography, music, etc. to stimulate thought and expression.

• **Embrace imperfection.** Whether using inner dialogue or written journaling, do not feel the need to strive for perfection. For example, don't worry about grammar and spelling if journaling, simply write what comes to mind.
Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.
Milestone Events

- Match Day
- Hooding Ceremony
- White Coat Ceremony
- Student Clinician Ceremony

Commencement
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<tr>
<th>Advocacy</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Equity</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
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Use the photos in this guide to cultivate further reflection.
Beginning of Year Prompts

- What identities currently define you? Which are most important?
- What values are most important to you? How do you live them out in your life?
- How can you give yourself compassion this year?

End of Year Prompts

- What did you experience or achieve this past year that made you proud?
- What was a challenge you faced this year? What did you learn from it?
- Did you take any personal or professional risks this year? What did you learn from them?
- Who did you build a positive relationship with? What drew you to this person? How did this relationship impact you?
- How has your perception of medicine evolved this year?

At the start and end of each academic year, come back to these prompts and reflect on how your answers have evolved. Understanding this evolution will offer insight into your growth and development as a physician.
First-year reflection focuses on the first phase of PIF - awareness and understanding of the self. Prompts tap into your needs, values, and exploration of your emotional landscape.

- What brings you joy? What makes you feel most alive?
- What motivates you to pursue a career in medicine?
- What interests you about a career in medicine?
- What makes you feel grounded and safe?
- What do you expect of yourself in the first year of medical school?
- What is something that amazes you?
- Do you recognize your current capabilities and limitations?
- Describe your personal and professional qualities. How will they positively contribute to your success in medical school?
Do you feel the need to complete all tasks before you practice self-care? Why?

Do you have healthy habits or coping strategies that allow you to release stress and tension? If so, do you practice them regularly? If not, why?

Describe a time you compared yourself to your past or future self.

In what ways do positive and negative emotions affect you?

Describe a time you doubted your abilities. What triggered these doubts?

What is your relationship with failure? What have you learned from past failures?

Reflect on a time you felt stressed, what did you do and not do for yourself. What was the outcome?

What triggers feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear, irritability, inadequacy, and/or comparison?

What is your level of comfort with uncertainty and/or change? How come?

What do you want your MS4 self to remember?

Revisit prompts on pg. 13 at the start and end of year.
• Reflect on the altruism of the body donor and their contribution to human kind. Consider their decision and possible reasons why they chose to donate their body to education and research.

• Consider the sacrifice of the loved ones who honored the donor’s wishes.

• Reflect on the emotional impact of cadaveric dissection and how you overcame possible reservations.

• Reflect on the impact that body donation has on your sense of altruism, empathy, and compassion.

• Describe how the dissection experience has contributed to the development of your professional identity and sense of purpose.

• Reflect on the shared experience with your fellow students and the value of your tank dissection team.

• Describe how the experience of learning from a body donor has impacted your view of mortality, disease, and human suffering.

• Reflect on the value of the dissection experience in facilitating your ability to balance objective scientific process with the empathy required of a future physician.
Suggested Reflection in Second-Year

Second-year reflection focuses on the second phase of PIF - gaining awareness and understanding of yourself in relation to others. Prompts center around interactions and relationships.

- What personal and professional qualities make a good colleague?
- What do others expect of you in medical school? How do these expectations affect you?
- Describe a time you learned by observing others.
- Reflect on a time you compared yourself to others.
- Reflect on an interaction that made you feel uncomfortable and why.
- Do you feel there is a misalignment of who you are and who you think you should be in medicine?
- Describe a time you were unable to connect with friends/family because of school obligations. How did this make you feel?
- Reflect on an experience surrounding conflict with others. What triggered it? What was the outcome? What did you learn?
- Reflect on a time you encouraged or comforted someone; how did it make you feel?
- Reflect on a time when a friend and/or colleague taught you a valuable lesson.

Revisit prompts on pg. 13 at the start and end of year.
- Describe how another student might remember you based on an incident or memorable encounter you shared.

- Reflect on a time you felt offended by something or someone.

- Reflect on a time when one of your values or beliefs were challenged.

- Has your experience/relationship with your own physician changed since starting medical school? In what ways?

- Reflect on a time when you may have felt lesser than, or different, from others.

- Are you able to ask for help without feeling guilt or shame?

- Are you able to be vulnerable and/or articulate your thoughts and feelings with others? Why or why not?

- How often do you put other’s needs or wants above your own? Why?
Suggested Reflection in Third-Year

Third-year reflection lives in both the second and third phase of PIF, where you gain awareness and understanding of yourself in relation to the profession. Prompts explore interactions with patients and the health-care team.

- Reflect on a time you encouraged or comforted a patient.
- Write about a patient or colleague who unexpectedly taught you something.
- Whether through observation or personal experience, describe a situation involving unprofessional conduct. What did you think and feel?
- Reflect on a night on call or night shift. How was this experience different, if at all, from working in the daytime?
- Reflect on a time when you received critical feedback. What did you think and feel?
- Reflect on a time you were put on the spot. What did you think and feel?
- Reflect on a time you felt discouraged.
- Reflect on a time you had difficulty communicating with a patient or their family.

Revisit prompts on pg. 13 at the start and end of year.
• Reflect on a time when a patient asked you a personal question. How did you respond?

• Reflect on the patient population that interests you. What do you like about this population?

• Reflect on the experience of a patient who may be suffering in a way that is invisible to others.

• Reflect on a time when a patient’s cultural or socio-economic orientation altered their course of treatment.

• How do you feel when you see others (colleagues, patients, patient families, etc) going through hardship?

• Reflect on a time when you had to deliver (good or bad) news to a patient or family. What did you think and feel?

• Reflect on a memorable patient encounter. What made it memorable?
Reflection in Clinical Experiences

- Reflect on how emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) was a factor in the clinical setting.

- Describe a patient encounter in which access to health care was a concern/barrier. Did this influence your relationship with the patient? Did it influence your course of treatment?

- Describe an encounter where the patient was experiencing non-physical pain (social, emotional, psychological, spiritual pain, etc).

- In observing your preceptor, how did they express elements of respect, listening, empathy, and vulnerability in their communication with patients.

- Did you observe the death of a patient? How did you feel as you observed the death? What did you notice about how others reacted to the death (family, preceptor, nurses, technicians, etc). Did their reaction have an impact on yours?

- If you saw a patient under emergency detention or received emergency pharmacological intervention for agitated or threatening behavior, describe your thoughts and feelings surrounding the encounter.

- How do clinical experiences correlate or differ from what you have learned in the curriculum?

- How do your patients feel about their disease?
Reflection around Trauma Calls

- How, if at all, was your personal stamina (physical/mental/emotional) challenged during trauma call? How, if at all, did you manage it?

- When faced with a difficult trauma case, what emotions emerged? What beliefs/values were challenged through the experience, and why?

- How, if at all, did your emotions through the experience influence your behaviors?

- How did your emotions align and differ from team members present through the same experience? Did their behaviors influence your own?

- What new capabilities and/or limitations did you notice through the experience?
Reflection for Specialty Discernment

- What did you like/dislike about this clerkship?
- How did this clerkship impact your personal stamina (physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual)?
- What were the circumstances surrounding a time you felt most fulfilled in this clerkship?
- What questions or thoughts come to mind when you envision a career in this specialty?
- Has your clinical experience reinforced or challenged previously held assumptions or beliefs about this specialty?
- What personal capabilities and/or limitations did you notice in this clerkship?
- How, if at all, did your emotional landscape in this clerkship influence your behaviors?
- How did your emotions align and differ from team members present through the same experience? Did their behaviors influence your own?
- Describe your interactions with the ancillary staff.
Fourth-year reflection remains in the third phase of PIF - gaining awareness and understanding of yourself in relation to the profession. Prompts not only uncover how your training translates into a career but the ways you want to contribute to the greater good of humanity.

- What do you wish your MS1 self knew?
- What is your personal and professional vision for the future?
- Reflect on how you want to be remembered by your medical school peers.
- Reflect on the strengthening or disintegration of a relationship or team you have been a part of.
- Describe a social issue/cause that has impacted you and/or is important to you.
- Describe a time when one of your values or beliefs were challenged.
- Reflect on a professional mistake you have made or witnessed.
- Reflect on a time someone trusted you to carry out something important.

Revisit prompts on pg. 13 at the start and end of year.
• Reflect on the times in your life that have contributed to your resilience.

• How have interactions with other healthcare professionals affected your understanding of your own professional identity?

• Describe a colleague you admire and why.

• Reflect on your process for making decisions.

• Are you able to recognize when only your emotions are driving your decisions?

• How will your training shape your professional practice?

• Do you experience FOMO (fear of missing out)? Why?

• Reflect on what is important to you in a residency program.
Reflection in Community Service Learning

- What assumptions of your own, perhaps ones you didn’t know you had, have you become aware of? How has your experience reinforced or challenged those assumptions or beliefs?

- What skills of yours, perhaps ones you didn’t realize you had, have been an asset in the community?

- What thoughts do you have about the kind of community member you want to be or community you want to serve?

- What does a civically-minded physician look like?

- Why is there a need for the service you provided? What conditions of inequity make the service necessary? What next steps do you think you could take to better understand these underlying inequities? What role do you see you can take in creating more equity?

- Did any part of the experience make you uncomfortable? Why?

- How does social conditioning related to your cultural identities (age, class, disabilities, gender, language, race, religious affiliation, sexual identity) influence your teaching, facilitation and reflection styles?

Additional Benefits of reflection in CSL

- Increased understanding of self, others, community, and planet

- Increased quality of community contributions

- Capacity to see all partners in the process more holistically

- Deeper capacity for action that results in social justice and personal transformation
Reflection in Leadership

- Describe a meaningful leadership experience. What made it meaningful?
- What do you expect of yourself in a leadership role? What do others expect of you?
- Do you have a hard time delegating? Why?
- Are you able to recognize when personal emotions are driving your leadership decisions?
- Describe a time you made a decision that wasn't popular.
- How do you react when you feel pressured to make a decision?
- Do you feel you need to change who you are in order to fit in?
- Are you able to ask others for help without feeling guilt or shame?
- Do you compare yourself to other student leaders, both in positive or negative ways?
- Are you able to be vulnerable with your constituents? Why or why not?
- What boundaries, if any, have you placed around your leadership role?
- What barriers, if any, have you encountered when advocating for your constituents? What are the reasons for these barriers? Are those barriers in your control?
Reflection for Dual-Degree Students

• What skills and experiences do you want to get out of the dual-degree program?

• How has your perception of the intersection of both disciplines changed this year?

• Do you define your identity within both disciplines?
Reflection around Societal Affliction

Over time, the role of a physician has evolved from "healer" to encompass other roles - scientist, advocate, leader, teacher, etc. The responsibility of multiple roles can enhance personal and professional affliction in times of national disasters, social injustice, political debates, humanitarian crises, and tragedies.

- What are you learning about yourself? medicine? society? and the world?

- Is there a discrepancy between how you feel versus how you think you "should" feel?

- What advice would you give your future physician self?

- Has this experience inspired you in any way?

- How can you offer support to others? What barriers exist?

- How are you encouraging yourself during this time?

- How have you been positively or negatively impacted by the outcome(s) of this experience?

- Has your sense of responsibility or agency changed through this experience?
What are your personal and professional values? Is there a misalignment between the them that is creating dissonance?

What habits are allowing/preventing you from being present with your family?

Do you tend to your needs in the same way you tend to your child(ren)'s needs? If not, why not?

What would your child(ren) say about how you are living your life right now?

What do you expect of yourself as a medical student? What do you expect of yourself as a parent? Is it possible for these expectations to coexist?

What lessons have your learned from being a parent in medical school?

How are others supporting you as a parent and medical student? How are you showing gratitude?
Doubting a Career in Medicine?

- What is missing from my training experience?
- What is scaring me about a career in medicine?
- What is holding me back from feeling fulfilled?
- Will I be disappointing someone if I choose a different path?
- How can I make a career in medicine more fulfilling?
“Writing is a tool for crystallizing ideas. It exposes gaps in your knowledge and logic. It pushes you to articulate assumptions and consider counterarguments. One of the best paths to sharper thinking is frequent writing.”

- Adam Grant
Use this space to vividly capture thoughts and feelings around personal meaningful moments.

DATE: _________________________
Use this space to vividly capture thoughts and feelings around personal meaningful moments.

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