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 (Cook, et al., 2010).

Medical students are encouraged to reflect and interpret experiences while in training and 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:

1. **INDIVIDUAL**: Who am I?
2. **RELATIONAL**: Who am I in relation to others?
3. **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. 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 31-32 for examples of values.
Reflection is an effective and powerful paradigm to boost Professional Identity Formation.
“Reflection is a metacognitive process that occurs before, during, and after situations with the purpose of developing greater understanding” (Sanders, 2009)

- Allows for the construction of meaning
- Promotes individual and professional well-being
- Internalizes learning in both cognitive and affective domains
- Frames experiences across different perspectives and mindsets
Use the photos in this guide to cultivate further reflection.
Strategies for Self-Reflection

- **Practice reflection during milestone training experiences and events.** There are a variety of moments throughout your medical school experience 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 and empty the mind by entering reflective space without judgement or preconceived notions.

- **Get out of your comfort zone and question yourself.** To help uncover thoughts and feelings, ask yourself questions. Don't allow the prompts in this guide to serve as parameters in 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.
Reflective Moments

WHITE COAT CEREMONY

STUDENT CLINICIAN CEREMONY

MATCH DAY

COMMENCEMENT
self is the beginning
## Word Play

**WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN TO YOU?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocacy</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Grief</td>
<td>Pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the start and end of each academic year, come back to these prompts and reflect on how your answers have evolved throughout your training. Understanding this evolution will offer insight into your growth and development as a physician.

**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 the most challenging hurdle 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?
First-year reflection focuses on the first phase of PIF, awareness and understanding 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 limitations? What are your boundaries?
- 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 recognize your limitations? What are your boundaries?

• Do you have healthy habits or coping strategies that allow you to release stress and tension? If so, do you practice them regularly?

• 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?

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felt stressed, what did you do elf. What was the outcome?

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ur MS4 self to remember?
Reflection for Language of Medicine

- 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 of body donation 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.
Reflection for 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?

Prompts adapted from Clinical Skills Course
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?
- Describe a time you learned by observing others.
- Reflect on a time you compared yourself to others.
- Do you feel a misalignment of who you are and who you think you should be in medicine?
- Describe a time you were unable to see friends/family because of school obligations. How did this make you feel?
- Reflect on an interaction that made you feel uncomfortable and why.
- Reflect on a time you encouraged or comforted someone; how did it make you feel?
- Reflect on a time when a peer taught you a valuable lesson.
- Reflect on an experience surrounding conflict with others. What triggered it? What was the outcome? What did you learn?

Suggested Reflection Prompts for Second-Year Students
- 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?

- 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?
Reflection for 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?

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 for Leadership Roles

- Describe a leadership experience. What was most meaningful?
- What do you expect of yourself? 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?
- What happens when you want to say "no" but don't feel you can?
- 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?
Suggested Reflection Prompts for Third-Year Students

Third-year reflection continues in the second phase of PIF and enters the third phase, gaining 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.
- 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. 9 at the start and end of 3rd 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 for each Clerkship

- What did you like/dislike about this clerkship?
- How did this clerkship impact you physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and intellectually?
- What were the circumstances surrounding a time you felt most happy/fulfilled in this clerkship?
- Describe your interactions with the ancillary staff.
- What questions/doubts come to mind when you envision a career in this specialty?
- Has your clinical experience reinforced or challenged previously held assumptions or beliefs?
- What skills, perhaps ones you didn't know you had, have been an asset to your clinical team?
- What skills could you develop or strengthen to be successful in this specialty?
Reflection if 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 medicine enjoyable?
Fourth-year reflection continues 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 to your medical school peers.

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

- 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.

Suggested Reflection Prompts for Fourth-Year Students

Revisit prompts on pg. 9 at the start and end of 4th 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?

• How does the social and political environment impact individual and population health?

• 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 inform your professional practice?

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

• Reflect on what is important to you in a residency program.
“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
Person Values

Acceptance
Acceptance
Accountability
Achievement
Adaptability
Alertness
Altruism
Ambition
Amusement
Assertiveness
Attentive
Awareness
Balance
Beauty
Boldness
Bravery
Brilliance
Calm
Candor

Capable
Careful
Certainty
Challenge
Charity
Cleanliness
Clear
Clever
Comfort
Commitment
Common sense
Communication
Community
Compassion
Competence
Concentration
Confidence
Connection
Consciousness
Consistency
Contentment
Contribution
Control
Conviction
Cooperation
Courage
Courtesey
Creation
Creativity
Credibility

Curiosity
Decisive
Decisiveness
Dedication
Dependability
Determination
Development
Devotion
Dignity
Dignity
Discipline
Discovery
Drive
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Empathy
Empower
Endurance
Energy
Enjoyment
Enthusiasm
Equality
Ethical
Excellence
Experience
Exploration
Expressive
Fairness
Family
Famous

Fearless
Feelings
Ferocious
Fidelity
Focus
Foresight
Fortitude
Freedom
Friendship
Fun
Generosity
Genius
Giving
Goodness
Grace
Grit
Gratitude
Greatness
Growth
Happiness
Hard work
Harmony
Health
Honesty
Honor
Hope
Humility
Imagination
Improvement
Independence
Individuality
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
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

Personal Values
MEANINGFUL MOMENT

*Use this space to vividly capture thoughts around special moments.*

DATE: ____________________________
MEANINGFUL MOMENT

Use this space to vividly capture thoughts around special moments.

DATE: ______________________
MEANINGFUL MOMENT

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DATE: ____________________________
MEANINGFUL MOMENT

*Use this space to vividly capture thoughts around special moments.*

DATE: ______________________
We Make Lives Better