

# MD Program Phase 1: Peer Physical Examination Guidelines 2020

## Background

Teaching of clinical examination skills during the UQ MD Program occurs during the year 1 and 2 Clinical Practice courses in scheduled learning activities such as clinical coaching, living anatomy and masterclasses. These sessions focus on developing skills in history taking and physical examination under the guidance of experienced clinicians and tutors.

Examination also occurs in the Clinical Science courses, where learning activities explore the anatomy, physiology and pathology of the human body. An example is the use of electrocardiograms (ECGs) and spirometry in physiology practicals.

Classes in Phase 1 of the MD Program use a variety of teaching modalities including standardised patients, mannequins, anatomical models and peer physical examination (PPE). Modalities such as ultrasound are utilised to explore relevant living anatomy that correlates with clinical examination of relevant body systems.

## Definition

Peer physical examination is a method of teaching and learning clinical skills where students act as model patients for one another to allow practice of physical examination techniques. Peer physical examination is a widely adopted and an integral component of the curriculum for many medical schools and health science programs.

Additionally, students may work with standardised patients and clinical teaching associates to learn, practise and be assessed on physical examination skills.

In this program, peer physical examination is only approved for non-intimate body region examination. For example, the year 1 Clinical Practice courses cover examination of the cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, and musculoskeletal and nervous systems. Genital, groin, breast or rectal examinations **are not** undertaken as peer physical examination. In year 2, intimate examinations are taught in a specialty Men's and Women's Health masterclass.

The advantages of peer physical examination include:

- Appreciation of normal anatomy and function
- Helps in the development of compassion and empathy
- Gaining insight into what it feels like to be examined from a patient's perspective
- Improvement of communication skills in a supervised and safe environment
- Correcting errors in technique easily and without causing distress or alarm to patients
- Protecting patients from repeated, often uncomfortable examinations by beginners
- Obtaining constructive feedback from tutors, models, patients and peers.

Perceived disadvantages could include:

- Embarrassment, anxiety or discomfort
- Lack of privacy
- Unable to nominate who will be members of one's group
- Unexpected findings of abnormal physical signs in peers, models or patients

## Expectation

Peer physical examination, or examination using models and standardised patients, is undertaken in a respectful, professional manner. As a core component of learning clinical skills, it is expected that all students participate in this learning activity. We appreciate that students' culture, religion, gender, background, upbringing and prior experience may influence their willingness to participate in peer physical examination.

Our expectation is that every student should be willing to contribute to each tutorial in a way that is acceptable to them.

Students who feel unable to take part in peer physical examination should convey their preference via the approval form. Students are also welcome to discuss reasonable accommodations with the Clinical Practice course coordinator, who can act as a liaison with the School of Biomedical Sciences teaching team where required.

All discussions are handled both sensitively and confidentially.

### Attire for Tutorials

If students approve to be examined by their peers, students are encouraged to dress in casual attire that allows easy examination of relevant body areas. Examples include shorts and a t-shirt for male students, and shorts, a t-shirt or singlet, and a sports bra or swim top for females. Depending on the location of the learning activity, closed-in shoes may or may not be required.

Changing facilities are available at all sites.

## Code of Conduct

The University of Queensland Student Conduct Policy applies at all times. In particular, inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the Student Integrity and Misconduct Policy <http://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.60.04-student-integrity-and-misconduct>

## Student Participation in Peer Physical Examination

As part of learning within both Clinical Practice and Clinical Science in Phase 1 of the MD Program, students will have opportunities to practise examination on each other, known as peer physical examination.

## Participation as an Examiner

Participation as an 'examiner' in clinical activities is a requirement of the Program.

If a student foresees any difficulty in examining their peers, they must contact the Clinical Practice course coordinator for further guidance as soon as possible ([med.clinicalpractice1@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.clinicalpractice1@uq.edu.au)).

Participation does require that students adhere to agreed policy and guidance on appropriate behaviour and have signed the Peer Physical Examination Approval and Confidentiality form.

## Participation as a Subject

Participation as a 'subject' of peer examinations is encouraged, but students who do not wish to participate are able to opt out of being a subject. This preference should be registered on the approval form, and will be conveyed to their clinical coach and other relevant teaching staff.

Students who are unsure to what level they are comfortable participating as subjects should consult the Clinical Practice course coordinator ([med.clinicalpractice1@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.clinicalpractice1@uq.edu.au)) for more information or to discuss accommodations.

Students are able to change their level of approval throughout the semester. This can be done by completing a paper version of the form indicating your new level of approval. Paper copies of the approval form will be available at each relevant learning activity, **and/or** at the local Clinical Unit reception. This approval form should be forwarded to the Clinical Practice course coordinator by the tutor or administration staff at the venue.

## Support and Conduct

During all scheduled examination tutorials, a tutor employed by the Faculty of Medicine will be present to support student learning.

Staff, models and students must treat each other in a professional manner and with respect and courtesy at all times. All participants need to be mindful of the range of personal, social and cultural responses to the body and to touch.

## Confidentiality

All personal and health information revealed or discovered as a result of participation in these tutorials should remain confidential to the participants. Tutors will convey the finding to the relevant staff and/or course coordinator for documentation.

## Unexpected Findings

Where an unexpected health-related finding is uncovered as a part of the learning activity, the tutor must document this finding and advise the student to see their general practitioner. In the event that the unexpected finding appears serious and requires emergent care, a tutor may recognise the need to refer the student to the emergency department or call an ambulance.

## **Student Concerns or Questions**

Any student with concerns about participating in peer physical examination should make contact with the Year 1 Clinical Practice course coordinator or assistants prior to the clinical coaching tutorials and living anatomy tutorials which begin in Week 2 of semester ([med.clinicalpractice1@uq.edu.au](mailto:med.clinicalpractice1@uq.edu.au)).