



#### TITLE OF POLICY

Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment Policy

#### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the school's commitment to a learning environment that is conducive to learning, describe mistreatment of medical students, and list the steps for reporting mistreatment.

#### RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE

The Education Committee with input from Student Affairs reviews in odd numbered-years or on an as-needed basis this policy.

#### LCME REFERENCE(S)

LCME 3.5: Learning Environment/Professionalism  
LCME 3.6: Student Mistreatment

#### HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES

Approved June 2019 by Education Committee

#### DEFINITION(S)

**Learning Environment:** Diverse physical locations, contexts and cultures in which students learn. The learning environment influences 1) Engagement, motivation, 2) Wellness, belonging, and 3) Emotional and social dimensions of the classroom.

#### POLICY

This policy complies with the [University's Policy on Non-Discrimination and Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Conduct](#). It also takes into account the [UNC Medical Center Patient Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#).

#### Commitment to a Positive Learning Environment

UNC SOM strives to create a learning environment that is safe for patients and welcoming to learners, where all individuals involved in the health care endeavor are treated with respect and are made to feel that they belong.

A positive learning environment for medical student includes the following features:



- Treat student with respect. Example behaviors include, but are not limited to, calling the student by name, calling attention to micro-aggressions as a bystander, and apologizing for lapses in professionalism.
- Include students in the team. Example behaviors include, but are not limited to, giving meaningful work and including in clinical discussions.
- Help students learn. Example behaviors include, but are not limited to, giving real time feedback, imparting clinical knowledge, and providing learning goals at the beginning of session/rotation.

### **Description of Student Mistreatment**

The University Of North Carolina School Of Medicine has a responsibility to foster in medical students, postgraduate trainees, faculty, and other staff the development of professional and collegial attitudes needed to provide caring and compassionate health care. To nurture these attitudes and promote an effective learning environment, an atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality among teachers and students is essential. While such an environment is extremely important to the academic mission of the School of Medicine, the diversity of members of the academic community combined with the intensity of interactions that occur in the health care setting may lead to incidents of inappropriate behavior or mistreatment. The victims and perpetrators of such behavior might include students, pre-clinical and clinical faculty, administrators, fellows, residents, nurses, and other staff.

Mistreatment includes sexual harassment; discrimination based on race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression; purposeful humiliation, verbal abuse, threats, or other forms of psychological mistreatment; and physical harassment, physical endangerment and/or physical harm.

The following are specific examples of types of mistreatment and are not inclusive

- to speak insultingly or unjustifiably harshly to or about a person
- to ask for sexual favors
- to belittle or humiliate
- to threaten with physical harm
- to physically attack (e.g., hit, slap, kick)
- to require to perform personal services (e.g., shopping, babysitting)
- to deliberately and repeatedly exclude from reasonable learning experiences (faculty, residents or staff)
- retaliation for making an allegation of mistreatment
- to make a person uncomfortable with respect to age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, appearance, or any other personal attribute

### **Communication and Training on Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment**

Education of the medical school community concerning mistreatment serves several purposes. First, it promotes a positive environment for learning, characterized by attitudes of mutual respect and collegiality. Second, it informs persons who believe that they have been mistreated that avenues for



seeking redress are available. Third, it alerts potential perpetrators of mistreatment to the school's policy on and process of responding to allegations of mistreatment.

Training on Policies and Procedures on Learning Environment and Mistreatment include:

- Medical Students are made aware of policies and procedures at MS1 orientation, ongoing class meetings, Transition to Application Phase course, and orientation for each core clinical course. Policies and procedures are accessible on each clinical course's learning management system site and the school's website, along with an online link through which a student can submit a report of mistreatment anonymously.
- Residents are made of the policies and procedures through an annual online module coordinated through the Office of Graduate Medical Education.
- Faculty are made of aware of aware of policies and procedures annually and aggregated data on the learning environment is made available each quarter.
- Clinical department chairs are made of policies, procedures and metrics during annual chair evaluation meetings with the dean.

## PROCEDURES

### Monitoring Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment

#### *Office of Student Affairs*

The Assistant and Associate Dean for Student Affairs track and review data on the learning environment. Data sources include learning environment metrics and reports of mistreatment submitted through rotation evaluations distributed multiple times during clinical courses, direct reports to the Deans for Student Affairs, and reports submitted through a confidential online link (<https://www.med.unc.edu/md/governance/mistreatment/>). The submission of a mistreatment report on a rotation evaluation or submission from the online link triggers an immediate alert sent to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

#### *Learning Environment Committee*

Learning Environment Committee is charged by the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and composed of 20 members from across the institution, including representation from School of Nursing, Allied Health, and PhD Basic Science Program. The committee meets monthly to monitor new institutional efforts to improve the learning environment. As part of the functioning of this committee, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs meets regularly with the Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance to discuss reports of mistreatment and with Human Resources as needed.

#### *Clinical Course Directors*

##### *Clinical Course and Phase Directors*

Clinical Course Directors in Application and Individualization Phases receive aggregated data on learning environment and mistreatment metrics from rotation evaluations at specific intervals throughout the academic year. Application Phase clinical course directors at every campus receive aggregated data



each trimester, whereas Individualization Phase clinical course directors receive aggregated twice a year. Phase directors from all curricular phases review aggregated on learning environment and mistreatment annually during the phase evaluation. Data sources include rotation evaluations, external surveys (Y2Q and GQ), and internal surveys (Post Application Phase and Finish Line surveys). The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs also reviews these data.

### **Reporting Mistreatment**

Students can report mistreatment through the following mechanisms:

- Directly to the Associate and Assistant Deans for Student Affairs.
- Directly to course director, college advisor, or campus director.
- Directly to the [Learning Environment Liaisons at each campus](https://www.med.unc.edu/md/governance/ombuds/) (<https://www.med.unc.edu/md/governance/ombuds/>)
- Through the confidential online link (<https://www.med.unc.edu/md/anonymous-report/>)
- Through rotation and course evaluations distributed in every clinical course.

### **Mistreatment Response Protocols**

#### *Response to Students*

The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs contacts the students upon receiving a report of mistreatment or poor learning environment. Together they decide if and when to pursue action in response. (If it is an anonymous report, i.e. the identity of the reporter is unknown, the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs will move forward immediately.) If the report involves immediate harm, the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs reserves the right to move forward while maintaining the student's confidentiality. .

#### *Incidence Management*

Learning Environment Committee will triage complaints

- Low intensity complaints will be addressed with peer-to-peer conversations.
- Data will be tracked to identify repeat offenders.
- Program Directors will be notified if residents or fellows are involved in mistreatment.

SOM and/or Human Resources will be informed of egregious or repeated patterns of concern for full investigation.

- Department Chairs and Program Directors will be informed.
- Discrimination has to be reported to the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office.