



TITLE OF POLICY

Offices of Medical Student Education: Policy on Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This Policy:

- i. outlines the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ("University") School of Medicine's (SOM) commitment to creating and maintaining a Learning Environment that is conducive to learning, and
- ii. describes what constitutes mistreatment of Medical Doctorate (MD) degree program students ("Students").

This Policy applies to all MD degree program Students, faculty, and staff at all campuses and sites.

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

Approved October 2025 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.

Mistreatment: Inappropriate treatment of an individual, including, but not limited to:

- sexual harassment;
- discrimination based on race, color, genetic information, national origin, age, religion, disability, veteran's status, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or gender expression;
- purposeful humiliation, verbal abuse, threats, or other forms of psychological mistreatment;
- physical harassment, physical endangerment and/or physical harm; and
- any other conduct towards Students prohibited by the University's Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct Including Sex-Based Harassment, Sexual Assault, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking.

Specific examples of Mistreatment include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 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 performance of 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; and
- to make a person uncomfortable with respect to age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, appearance, or any other personal attribute.

POLICY

The SOM strives to create and maintain a Learning Environment that is safe for patients, welcoming to learners, and where all individuals involved in the SOM's health care endeavors are treated with respect and are made to feel that they belong. SOM is committed to furthering a Learning Environment which is supportive of its academic mission. The SOM fosters in its Students, postgraduate trainees, faculty, and other staff the development of professional and collegial attitudes needed to provide caring and compassionate health care. An atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality among teachers and Students is essential for nurturing these attitudes and promoting an effective Learning Environment.

Positive Learning Environment

A positive Learning Environment for Students includes the following features:

- Students are treated with respect.
 - Appropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to, calling a Student by their name, calling attention to micro-aggressions as a bystander, and apologizing for lapses in professionalism.
- Students are included in the team.
 - Appropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to, giving Students meaningful work and including Students in clinical discussions.
- Students receive help learning.
 - Appropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to, giving Students real-time feedback, imparting clinical knowledge upon Students, and providing Students with learning goals at the beginning of sessions/rotations.

Negative Learning Environment

SOM recognizes that the varying life experiences of members of the academic community combined with the intensity of interactions that occur in a health care setting may lead to incidents of inappropriate behavior, Mistreatment, or other similar occurrences, resulting in a negative Learning Environment. The individuals involved in, and on the receiving end of, such occurrences might include Students, pre-clinical and clinical faculty, administrators, fellows, residents, nurses, patients, and other staff.

Communication and Training on Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment

The SOM provides training on policies and procedures regarding Learning Environment and Mistreatment, including the following:

- 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 (Canvas) and the SOM's website, along with an online link through which a Student can submit a report of Mistreatment anonymously.
- Residents are made aware of policies and procedures during orientation through the Office of Graduate Medical Education (GME).
- Faculty are made aware of policies and procedures annually and aggregated data on the Learning Environment is made available to faculty leadership.
- Clinical department chairs are made aware of policies, procedures and metrics during annual chair evaluation meetings with the dean.

Monitoring Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment

Student Reports

Students may submit Mistreatment and/or negative Learning Environment concerns through Rotation Evaluations or the [Confidential Report Form](#) which can be accessed through the [Office of Student Affairs Website](#). The submission of a Mistreatment report on a Rotation Evaluation or Confidential Report Form triggers an immediate alert to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Director of the Learning Environment for Undergraduate Medical Education (DLE). Additionally, the DLE meets regularly with Human Resources and the University Compliance Office to review submitted reports.

Office of Student Affairs

The DLE, along with senior leadership in Student Affairs, tracks and reviews 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 the Confidential Report Form.

Clinical Course and Phase Directors

Clinical Course Directors in the Application and Individualization Phases receive aggregated data on Learning Environment and Mistreatment metrics from rotation evaluations at specific intervals throughout the academic year. Campus Deans at every campus receive aggregated data regularly. Phase directors from all curricular phases review aggregated data on Learning Environment and Mistreatment annually during phase evaluations. Data sources include reported incidents, teaching evaluations, rotation and course evaluations, external surveys (Y2Q and GQ), and internal surveys (Post Application Phase and Finish Line surveys). Senior leadership in Student Affairs (Associate Dean, Assistant Deans, and Senior Director of Student Affairs) also reviews this data to be used to inform initiatives for educating SOM faculty and the SOM community about standards of conduct, ways to prevent learner Mistreatment, and ways to develop and uphold a positive Learning Environment.

PROCEDURES

Mistreatment Response Protocols

Response to Students

Upon receiving a report of Mistreatment or a poor Learning Environment:

- The Director of the Learning Environment (DLE) will contact the Student who made the report.
- The DLE and the Student will decide if and when to pursue action in response unless Human Resources and/or the University Compliance Office dictate otherwise. If the report was submitted anonymously, the DLE will move forward immediately with the response protocol.
- If the report involves risk of immediate harm to an individual or a compliance concern, the DLE shall have the discretion to move forward while maintaining the Student's confidentiality.
- The DLE will "close the loop" with the Student to let the Student know that their report has been managed per protocol. The DLE will not provide the Student with details about institutional responses specific to the Student's report but may provide the Student with information regarding general resulting systemic changes in processes and/or procedures.
- If the Learning Environment report is serious enough to consider removing the Student immediately, the DLE will confer with representatives from the Office for Curricular Affairs and the Office for Student Affairs. Together, this group will make a decision about any shift in the Student's schedule. Oftentimes, an immediate substitution cannot be made but every effort will be made to provide the Student a comparable clinical experience while taking into account the Student's planned graduation date, limitations of preceptor availability, campus capacity, general clinical capacity as well as site contracts that are already in place.

Incident Management

- The DLE reviews all Mistreatment and Learning Environment reports with Human Resources and, if appropriate, the University Compliance Office (UCO).
 - The DLE must report Discrimination and harassment to the UCO in accordance with the University's Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct Including Sex-Based Harassment, Sexual Assault, Interpersonal Violence and Stalking
 - Human Resources will assume responsibility for reports which the DLE determines involve egregious or concerning repetitive patterns of behavior.
- The DLE must inform department leadership of reports as follows:
 - Department chairs are provided aggregate data without specific faculty information for minor Learning Environment issues (i.e., concern that does not constitute Mistreatment or a policy violation).
 - Program directors will be informed of any Graduate Medical Education (GME) learners who are reported.
 - Any report involving GME learner Mistreatment will be shared with the Chief Graduate Medical Education Officer/Accreditation Counsel for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Designated Institutional Official.
 - The Vice Dean for Education will be informed of reports that involve a program director or department chair.
- The DLE or departmental/divisional designees will meet with reported faculty to provide feedback while maintaining Student anonymity.
 - The DLE will manage any reports involving a staff member with the staff member's supervisor.
 - The DLE will manage any reports involving a resident with the resident's program director.

Learning Environment Reports

- The DLE will share all Learning Environment reports from branch campuses will be shared with campus leaders at SOM regional campuses and sites on a bimonthly basis unless the severity of the concern dictates otherwise.
- All learning environment reports are tracked by the DLE to help identify those individuals or locations with repetitive reports.
- The DLE will share aggregated Learning Environment data with all department chairs, branch campus leaders, the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Student Education, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and the Associate Dean for Curricular Affairs.
- The DLE will provide separate trimester reports to departments and divisions with higher numbers of learning environment reports, branch campus leaders and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.