

POLICY ON APPROPRIATE STUDENT TREATMENT
The University of Texas Medical School at Houston

I. Standards for Conduct in the Teacher-Learner Relationship

The academic environment, particularly in medical education, requires civility from all participants, regardless of role or level, and a particular respect for the values of professionalism, ethics, and humanism in the practice of medicine.

The relationship between teacher and learner is based on mutual respect and trust. Faculty must respect students' level of knowledge and skills, which students have the responsibility to represent honestly to faculty. Faculty are obligated to evaluate students' work fairly and honestly, without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs. Faculty have a duty not only to promote growth of the intellect but at the same time to model the qualities of candor, compassion, perseverance, diligence, humility, and respect for all human beings.

Because this policy and document pertains to students as learners, references to teachers and faculty also include residents and fellows in their teaching and supervisory role with regard to students.

Examples of behavior that are unacceptable at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston include:

- Physical or sexual harassment or abuse
- Discrimination or harassment based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or disability
- Speaking in disparaging ways about an individual including humor that demeans an individual or a group
- Sending students on inappropriate errands
- Loss of personal civility: shouting, displays of temper, publicly or privately abusing, belittling, or humiliating a student
- Use of grading or other forms of evaluation in a punitive or retaliatory manner

Students are also expected to maintain the same high standards of conduct in their relationships with faculty, residents, support staff, and fellow students.

II. Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Violations

Students enrolled in the Medical School (or Medical School portion of the M.D./Ph.D. program) should report abuse or mistreatment to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will meet with the student to discuss the incident or behavior and the options for action.

UTHSC-Houston policies and procedures concerning misconduct by faculty and staff, including sexual and physical abuse and harassment, are outlined in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP). The Rules and Regulations of the Board of Regents (“Regents’ Rules”) contain provisions for student misconduct, including misconduct against fellow students. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will advise and assist the student in following applicable procedures of the institution.

In the event there is no applicable existing procedure, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs in consultation with the student will determine the most appropriate plan of action. This may involve an investigation by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to establish the facts while respecting the rights and confidentiality of the involved parties.

Depending on the nature or scope of the reported mistreatment, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs has the authority to appoint an ad hoc Committee on Student Treatment consisting of three faculty members, one of whom will be appointed to chair the committee. An attorney from the UTHSC-H Office of Legal Affairs and Risk Management will serve as an ex officio member of the Committee to insure that University and Health Science Center policies and procedures are followed. The purpose of the ad hoc Committee will be to investigate the complaint, establish facts respecting the rights and confidentiality of the involved parties, and recommend a course of action to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

It will be made clear from the fact-finding or investigation stage forward and through final disposition of the report that retaliatory behavior or reprisals of any kind will not be tolerated.

The Committee on Student Treatment will be required to report its findings in writing within thirty days of its constitution to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

If, following determination of the facts and considering the recommendation of the ad hoc Committee on Student Treatment, if one was appointed, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs may take one or more of the following actions in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs and Risk Management:

- Arrange mediation between the parties
- Report findings and recommendations to the perpetrator
- Report findings and recommendations to the Dean
- Report findings and recommendations to the perpetrator’s department chair
- Report findings and recommendations to the faculty member in charge of the course, clerkship, or elective in which the mistreatment took place
- In the event the perpetrator is a resident, report findings and recommendations to the residency program director and Associate Dean for Educational Programs

These actions may be in addition to or superseded by actions taken by the appropriate bodies or individuals if specific UTHSC-H procedures (for example, the Policy on Sexual Harassment) are followed.

III. Dissemination and Education

In order to make sure that faculty, residents, fellows, and students are aware of the Policy on Appropriate Student Treatment, several mechanisms for dissemination will be used.

The Policy will be added to the Medical School website on the principal students, faculty, and house staff web pages.

A hard copy of the Policy will be given to current house staff and fellows and given to new house staff during orientation.

A hard copy of the Policy will be given to current students and thereafter to entering students at orientation. It will be reviewed and discussed at Orientation and later in the fall semester meetings of the Master Advisory groups.

A hard copy of the Policy will be given to faculty and distributed at faculty orientations. Chairmen and Directors will be responsible for seeing that the Policy is made known to their faculty and discussed at departmental/division meetings.

Each course director, clerkship director and residency director will be responsible for seeing that the Policy is made known to their teaching faculty and to all students at the start of each course, clerkship or rotation.