



## POLICY

**Number: 416**

**Area: Education**

**Title: Guidelines for the Teacher-Learner Relationship & Professionalism Attributes  
(See also Policy 417: Medical Student Mistreatment Policy)**

This policy outlines: i) the expected standards of conduct for both students (including University of Oklahoma College of Medicine MD program students and visiting students) and those individuals with whom students interact during the medical education program, and ii) the professionalism attributes and associated behaviors expected of students.

This policy defines the following:

- The principles of a positive learning environment
- The expected standards of conduct (i.e., responsibilities) of teachers
- The expected standards of conduct (i.e., responsibilities) of learners, including the expected professionalism attributes and behaviors
- The definition of student mistreatment

### Background

The College of Medicine undertakes multiple missions, but its clearly unique mission is the education of future physicians. The focus of this mission includes our medical students who have chosen the University of Oklahoma for their medical education. Students face the challenge of learning both the art and science of medicine, as well as the professional attributes that characterize the ideal physician.

The College is committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic and professional success in learners and teachers at all levels. The achievement of such success is dependent on an environment free of behaviors that can undermine the important mission of our institution.

The College holds in high regard the time-honored personal virtues of altruism, accountability, excellence, duty, service, honor, integrity, and respect for others and believes that these principles apply equally to students (including OU students and visiting students), resident physicians, other health care providers, faculty (including full-time, part-time, and volunteer faculty), and staff who participate with our educational programs.

The diversity represented by the many participants in the learning process requires medical schools to reaffirm, on a periodic and regular basis, the expectations of faculty, students, residents, and staff. This policy serves to establish goals for the teacher-learner relationship as well as to provide examples of behaviors that can impair optimum learning. A separate policy establishes procedures for evaluation and/or intervention when difficulties have been perceived.

### **Principles of a Positive Learning Environment**

The College holds that a positive learning environment

- is supportive, respectful, and collegial
- inspires students to learn and give their best
- encourages the development of professional behaviors among both students and faculty
- emphasizes the importance of medical education among its stakeholders
- provides effective instruction and fair assessment activities
- provides an avenue for students to voice concerns
- provides support for students that are experiencing difficulty
- is a comfortable place for people of all genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations to learn
- protects students against mistreatment, coercion, and other unacceptable behaviors

### **Responsibilities of Teachers and Learners**

Behavior that embodies the ideal teacher-learner relationship fosters mutual respect among the participants, minimizes the likelihood of mistreatment, and optimizes the educational experience.

In the context of medical education, the term instructor or teacher is used broadly to include peers, resident physicians, full-time and volunteer faculty members, clinical preceptors, nurses and ancillary support staff, as well as others from whom students can and do learn.

### **Responsibilities of Teachers**

**Teachers must be mindful of their role and responsibility during their interactions with their colleagues, patients, and those whose education has been entrusted to them. Students learn professional behavior primarily by observing the actions of**

**their teachers as role models. Teachers are expected to model the below behaviors with students.**

Teachers are expected to...

- treat students fairly, respectfully, and without bias related to age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or national origin.
- comply with all applicable college, campus and University policies and procedures related to unlawful discrimination, harassment (including all forms of sexual harassment) and misconduct.
- avoid asking or expecting students to perform personal errands or tasks.
- refrain from any act of retaliation against a student who has reported an incident of mistreatment.
- avoid behaviors that violate professional boundaries (e.g., engaging in a romantic or business relationship while in the teacher/student role).
- be prepared and on time.
- provide up-to-date information.
- provide explicit learning and behavioral expectations early in the contact period.
- provide timely, focused, accurate, and constructive feedback regularly.
- be cognizant of their own behavior as representatives of the University and as role models for the profession.
- display honesty, integrity, and compassion.
- use professional language and avoid the use of derogatory language.
- distinguish between insightful (Socratic) questioning, which stimulates learning or self discovery, and overly aggressive questioning which may be perceived as hurtful, humiliating, degrading, or punitive.
- respect other specialties and health professions.
- resolve conflicts in ways that respect the dignity of all involved.
- provide thoughtful and timely evaluation as required by courses or the College.
- solicit feedback from learners regarding students' perceptions of the nature of the educational experience and personal interaction.

### **Responsibilities of Learners**

As future members of the profession, students must recognize that their responsibility to patients, healthcare professionals, and society requires that they acquire and maintain behaviors that are compatible with the medical profession's standards of conduct.

The expected student behaviors listed below are organized by professionalism attributes that were approved by the Medical Education Committee. These professionalism attributes are addressed throughout the curriculum. Students are expected to exhibit the below behaviors.

**Professionalism  
Attribute**

**Behaviors**

Students are expected to . . .

Honesty and integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate honesty and integrity in all interactions with others*</li> <li>• Perform and submit assignments, exams, research and clinical activities, etc., in an honest, professional, and ethical manner</li> <li>• Adhere to legal and professional standards of conduct, including those established through college, campus and university policies, procedures and guidelines</li> </ul>
Care and compassion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display empathy and compassion towards others*</li> </ul>
Courtesy and respect for others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display courteous, considerate, and respectful behaviors in all interactions with others*</li> <li>• Avoid inappropriate, repetitive, disrespectful or unprofessional demands on teachers, fellow students and administrative and other healthcare staff</li> </ul>
Cultural sensitivity and humility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to others*</li> </ul>
Accountability and responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the privileges and responsibilities which derive from their opportunities to interact in clinical settings and the need to place patient welfare above their own</li> <li>• Complete tasks in a timely manner and in accordance with the teacher expectations</li> <li>• Recognize that not all learning stems from formal structured curricular activities</li> <li>• Provide teachers and the College with constructive feedback which can be used to improve the educational experience</li> </ul>
Punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrive prepared and on-time</li> </ul>
Professional appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate respect for others and uphold the standards of the profession by maintaining a professional appearance when in the company of real and simulated patients</li> </ul>
Attentiveness and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be active, engaged, enthusiastic, curious learners who enhance the learning environment</li> </ul>
Accuracy in representation of clinical findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurately represent all clinical findings</li> </ul>
Commitment to selfimprovement and accepting feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept and learn from constructive criticism</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize personal limitations, solicit feedback and engage in self-improvement</li> </ul>
Admission of mistakes or errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept responsibility for mistakes or omissions and disclose errors to appropriate supervisors</li> </ul>
Privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize and respect patients' rights of privacy</li> </ul>
Recognition of patient autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a commitment to patient autonomy by understanding the patient's preference and delivering patient-centered care</li> </ul>
Recognition of conflicts of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the nature of conflicts of interest and how they pertain to the practice of medicine</li> </ul>
Maintenance of a "fitness for duty"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept their responsibility for developing resilience in an atmosphere that can be inherently uncomfortable and challenging</li> <li>• Maintain awareness of and take steps to manage stress levels</li> <li>• Maintain a level of personal physical and mental health that is required to successfully complete all medical school requirements for graduation</li> <li>• Exercise appropriate judgment in seeking evaluation and assistance for their own injury, illness, impairment, and mental/emotional health</li> </ul>

\*Others include faculty, peers, staff, and patients.

### **Behaviors That Impair Education and Erode the Ideal Teacher-Learner Relationship:**

Student Mistreatment - For purposes of this policy and Policy 417, student mistreatment is defined as perceived behavior that reasonably may be expected to cause counterproductive emotional or physical distress on the part of the student that erodes the ideal teacher-learner relationship. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Any behavior that is not consistent with the expected teacher behaviors listed above.
- Any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment (including all forms of sexual harassment) or misconduct.\*
- Criticism which serves to belittle, humiliate, or excessively embarrass.
- Intellectual bullying (aka "pimping"), which is perceived as malicious.
- Intentional neglect or selective exclusion from educationally valuable activities.
- Implied or explicit requests for a student to perform personal services that benefit the teacher or supervisor but have no significant intrinsic educational value.

- Repetitive performance of clinical procedures (commonly referred to as “scut”) beyond what is necessary for personal educational enrichment or demonstration of proficiency.
- Real, threatened, or implied physical contact which serves to intimidate, threaten, or injure.
- Disregard for patient or student safety by requiring a student to perform a procedure or engage in patient care without adequate supervision.

\*as outlined in the University of Oklahoma Non-Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, and Harassment

Policies: <http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo.html>

(See also Policy Number 417: *Medical Student Mistreatment Policy*)

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