



## POLICY

**Number: 417**

**Area: Education**

**Title: Medical Student Mistreatment (See also Policy 416: Guidelines for the Teacher-Learner Relationship)**

This policy defines the policy and procedure for reporting student mistreatment. It applies to OU students and visiting students.

The definition of mistreatment may be found in Policy 416: Guidelines for the Teacher-Learner Relationship.

**NOTE:** Issues related to Sexual Harassment/Assault (Appendix H), Consensual Sexual Relations (Appendix I), or related to Racial or Ethnic Harassment (Appendix J) are specifically addressed in the Health Sciences Center Faculty Handbook and are to be reported to the University Office of Equal Opportunity, Room 113 of the Service Center Building, 405-271-2110. They are not explicitly incorporated into this policy.

### 1. Education

Disseminate the document: *Guidelines for the Teacher-Learner Relationship.....*

- a. to students
- b. to faculty members
- c. to residents

Disseminate the expectation that Course Directors will inform students of their right to report perceived mistreatment as a part of the orientation of students to their rotations. Course Directors will be encouraged to actively and regularly solicit feedback from students on the nature of the educational environment they experience.

Disseminate to all students, Course Directors, and Department Chairs the reporting and evaluation processes which are available to students if mistreatment is perceived.

### 2. Evaluation and Reporting of Perceived Mistreatment

Several options exist for reporting, evaluating, and resolving issues of perceived medical student mistreatment. The affected student, or a witness to student mistreatment, may select from among the following processes:

- As “adult learners” medical students are encouraged to address perceived breaches of the principles of the ideal teacher-learner relationship directly to involved parties. Utilization of this option does not require that any documentation be maintained or other steps taken if satisfactory resolution is achieved.
- A student who perceives that the principles of the ideal teacher-learner relationship have been breached may choose to report the alleged incident(s) to the **Course Director** for the involved course, clerkship, or elective. The student may also elect to contact the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

Course Directors shall provide the student an impartial hearing, and gather information from others as necessary, while maintaining the confidentiality of the involved parties consistent with information gathering. Appropriate protection of the accused must be preserved. If the issue is resolved to the satisfaction of the student, the respondent, and the Course Director, the issue will be considered closed.

The Course Director shall submit a report to the Department Chair and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Associate Dean for Academic Services in Tulsa), which summarizes the essence of the complaint, its evaluation, and the nature of its resolution. Identity of the principals may remain anonymous. A record will be maintained in the Dean’s office and reviewed to detect repetitive incidents or trends toward which additional educational or corrective efforts should be directed.

If satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the student, the respondent, or the Course Director may request review by the Department Chair or the Associate Dean, or request referral to the Medical Student Mistreatment Committee for a formal hearing.

- A student who perceives that the principles of the ideal teacher-learner relationship have been breached may choose to report the alleged incident(s) to the **Department Chair** representing the involved course, clerkship, or elective. The Department Chair shall provide the student an impartial hearing, and gather information from others as necessary, while maintaining the confidentiality of the involved parties consistent with information gathering. Appropriate protection of the accused must be preserved. If the issue is resolved to the satisfaction of the student, the respondent, and the Department Chair, the issue will be considered closed.

The Department Chair shall submit a report to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Associate Dean for Academic Services in Tulsa) summarizing the essence of the complaint, its evaluation, and the nature of its resolution. Identity of the principals may remain anonymous. A record will be maintained in the Dean’s office and reviewed to detect repetitive incidents or trends toward which additional educational or corrective efforts should be directed. If satisfactory resolution is not achieved, the student, the respondent, or the Department Chair may request review by the Associate Dean or request referral to the Medical Student Mistreatment Committee for a formal hearing.

- The affected student has the option to take his/her issue to the **Student Ombudsperson**. This is an individual selected annually by the Medical Student Council on each campus to serve as a “peer” contact for reporting breaches of the ideal teacher-learner relationship. These individuals may be contacted by sending an email to: [COM-STU-OMBUDS@OUHSC.edu](mailto:COM-STU-OMBUDS@OUHSC.edu)

The Ombudsperson will hear the concern(s) of the student and consult with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Associate Dean for Academic Services in Tulsa) for advice as deemed desirable. Initially, the identity of the reporting student will remain anonymous, and suggestions for evaluation or resolution will be returned via the Ombudsperson. However, should it be necessary to involve the accused party(ies) directly in either the investigation or plans for redress, the identity of the

student will need to be revealed, and the Associate Dean will become directly involved. The Ombudsperson will maintain a record of all contacts made and a summary report (names of the principals withheld) will be made to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Associate Dean for Academic Services in Tulsa).

- The affected student may report perceived breaches of the ideal teacher-learner relationship directly to the **Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Associate Dean for Academic Services in Tulsa)**.

Information will be gathered initially from the affected student, and others will be consulted as necessary. Records of all such contacts will be maintained in the Dean's office and used to determine the need for additional preventive educational efforts. Information will be fed back to the Chairman of the involved Department as well as to Course Directors or Residency Directors of the involved parties as necessary. Incidents that cannot satisfactorily be resolved will be referred to the Medical Student Mistreatment Committee.

At any point in the process, or when satisfactory resolution has not been achieved, any party (the student lodging the complaint, the respondent, or the evaluating individual) may request a formal hearing of the Medical Student Mistreatment Committee. The Committee will hear statements and evidence from all parties, may request input from others as necessary, and will reach a decision regarding the merits of the complaint. The results of the deliberation and suggestions for appropriate redress will be made to the Dean. The Associate Dean will determine appropriate re-education efforts, behavioral modification, or disciplinary action in concert with the Dean as well as with the supervisor (Chairman, Program Director, etc) of the involved party(ies).

- Allegations of mistreatment may be made and investigated without fear of retaliation. Retaliation is governed by the Retaliation Statement in the University of Oklahoma Non-Discrimination Policy which strictly prohibits retaliation associated with any form of adverse action against a person because of his or her filing of a complaint of discrimination or harassment and/or participating or assisting in any manner with an investigation or resolution of a complaint of discrimination or harassment. Adverse action includes, but is not limited to, making threats, intimidation, reprisals or any other adverse action relating to employment, academic, health care, or institutional benefits. The Retaliation Statement may be found at: <http://www.ou.edu/eoo/policies-procedures/non-discrimination.html>

### 3. Ad Hoc Medical Student Mistreatment Committee

This Committee is charged with hearing, investigating, and recommending corrective actions related to assertions of medical student mistreatment in the educational environment. It is understood that the investigating, hearing, and deliberative processes of the Committee are of an academic, not a formal legal, nature.

- **Membership**  
Permanent members of the Committee shall include the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (OKC) and the Associate Dean for Academic Services (Tulsa) in non-voting, administrative support capacities, a Committee Chairman, and 4-5 additional faculty members appointed by the Dean. When the Committee is called upon to evaluate and review an issue of possible student mistreatment, the Chairman will identify two additional voting members who are "peers" of both the person bringing the complaint, and the individual(s) implicated in breaching the principles of the ideal student-teacher relationship. All potential voting members will be polled by the Chairman to ensure that there are no apparent conflicts of interest with respect to the principals

involved. Replacements may be selected as necessary by the Chairman.

- **Procedures**  
Procedures for the timing and conduct of the investigation and the hearings will be determined by the Committee.
- **Disposition**  
The Committee ultimately shall report the results of the investigation, necessary hearings, and its deliberation to the Dean of the College of Medicine. The Committee shall either hold that the allegation was confirmed to have merit, that it was determined to be without merit, or that there was insufficient information to make a determination.

The Dean, in concert with the supervisor of the involved parties, will determine what, if any, educational, disciplinary, or other corrective action should be taken.

**Policy Date: 5/24/04**  
**Approved By: Medical Education Committee**  
**Date Revised: 8/3/17**  
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