Reporting a complaint

Any student who feels he or she has been mistreated is encouraged to report the incident(s), using the procedure developed for this purpose: Appropriate Treatment of Students: Procedure for Reporting Complaints of Inappropriate Treatment. To obtain a copy of the procedure, students may contact the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO), which is responsible for coordinating, overseeing, monitoring and implementing the policy and procedures, or the Office of the Interim Provost/Vice Chancellor for Faculty Administration.

EOO and the Office of the Interim Provost/Vice Chancellor for Faculty Administration also can provide students with the names and locations of resource persons who are trained in ATS and available to assist students using this procedure. Resource persons are selected because of their credibility and standing in the organization; in addition, they represent a cross section of the organization. They receive extensive training in serving as resources, and they are responsible for receiving and acting upon complaints from students regarding the types of mistreatment discussed in this pamphlet.

Resource persons and EOO are committed to confidentiality, to the extent possible, in the process of following up on a complaint. To the extent possible, UMMS will ensure that those involved in a complaint are treated fairly and with dignity, and that complainants, or those who cooperate with an investigation, will not be subjected to retaliation or adverse impact on their academic standing.

Students and other members of the campus community also may obtain a copy of the complaint procedure from the dean's office for any of the three schools, or access it on the UMMS Web site:

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
inside.umassmed.edu/gsbs/

Graduate School of Nursing
inside.umassmed.edu/gsn/

Student Affairs
inside.umassmed.edu/studentaffairs/

Equal Opportunity Office
inside.umassmed.edu/eoo/

Office of the Interim Provost/Vice Chancellor for Faculty Administration
www.umassmed.edu/facultyadmin/

This pamphlet was produced in collaboration with the Office of Medical Education, Graduate School of Nursing, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, and Graduate Medical Education. For more information contact:

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Identifying behavior as inappropriate

As defined in the AAMC’s graduation questionnaire, mistreatment arises when behavior shows disrespect for the dignity of others and unreasonably interferes with the learning process. Mistreatment can take the form of physical punishment or threat, sexual harassment, psychological cruelty, and discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, veteran status, or disability. Examples of unacceptable behavior toward students (including residents) include, but are not limited to:

- disrespect for students’ dignity;
- intentional neglect or lack of communication;
- verbal attack, abuse, or inappropriate anger;
- unjustifiably harsh language in speaking to or about a student;
- belittling or humiliation, either verbal or by requiring performance of tasks intended to belittle or humiliate;
- threats of physical harm or actual physical attacks (e.g., hitting, slapping, kicking);
- requiring personal services (e.g., shopping, babysitting);
- conduct intended to insult or stigmatize a student;
- disregard for student safety;
- sexual harassment;*
- use of professional position to engage in romantic or sexual relationships;* and/or
- discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, veteran status, or disability.*

*Note: Separate school-wide policies and guidelines are in place covering sexual harassment, consensual amorous relationships, and discrimination. Copies of these policies are available in the Equal Opportunity Office, H1-728 or in the deans’ offices of the three schools and of Graduate Medical Education.

Other relevant policies

The University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) has specific policies that cover several inappropriate types of behavior as listed below. If a student’s complaint falls within the definition of one of those behaviors, the policy and procedure for that behavior is applied in the investigation of the complaint. If the complaint does not fall under the types of behavior noted below, it is investigated under the policy and procedure established for the appropriate treatment of students (ATS). The behaviors covered by previously established campus policies and procedures include:

- sexual harassment; and
- discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin, veteran status, or disability.

In addition, the administration has established guidelines on consensual amorous relationships and appropriate use of electronic communication methods. These guidelines are applicable to students, faculty and all other UMMS employees.

Training and awareness

For faculty and staff members who may routinely interact with students in any of the three schools, or in graduate medical education, UMMS will provide training on what constitutes inappropriate treatment. In addition, UMMS will undertake annually a broad campaign of awareness of the ATS policy for incoming students, through use of internal communications.