

The University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine Guidelines for Conduct in Teacher-Learner Relationships

I. Statement of Philosophy

All individuals at the University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine are 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 which can undermine the important missions not only of our Faculty but also those of our affiliated institutions. An atmosphere of mutual respect, collegiality, fairness, and trust is essential; both teachers and learners bear significant responsibility in creating and maintaining this atmosphere. Additionally, teachers bear particular responsibility not only for the evaluation of learners but also for the modeling of appropriate professional behaviors. Teachers must be ever mindful of these responsibilities in their interactions with their inter- and intra-professional colleagues, their patients and families, and those whose education has been entrusted to them.

II. Responsibilities in the Teacher-Learner Relationship

A. Responsibilities of teachers

1. Treat all learners with respect and fairness.
2. Treat all learners equitably regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion and spiritual belief, disability, or sexual orientation.
3. Provide appropriate learning objectives and learning resources for sessions for which you are responsible, and ensure that the objectives are consistent with the overarching goals and objectives of the course(s).
4. Be on time for didactic, clinical encounters, and other scheduled events.
5. Provide timely feedback with constructive suggestions and opportunities for improvement/remediation when needed.

The University of Manitoba has a comprehensive policy document that identifies the individual and collective responsibilities of academic staff with regards to students.

B. Responsibilities of learners

1. Treat all fellow learners and teachers with respect and fairness.
2. Treat all fellow learners and teachers equitably regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion and spiritual belief, disability, or sexual orientation.

3. Commit the time and energy to your studies necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of each course.
4. Be prepared for teaching sessions and clinical encounters.
5. Be on time for didactic, clinical encounters, and other scheduled events. Provide advance notification of absence from curricular events.
6. Communicate concerns/suggestions about the curriculum, didactic methods, teachers, or the learning environment in a respectful, professional manner.

III. Behaviors Inappropriate to the Teacher-Learner Relationship

These behaviors are those which demonstrate disrespect for others or lack of professionalism in interpersonal conduct. Although there is inevitably a subjective element in the witnessing or experiencing of such behaviors, certain actions are clearly inappropriate and will not be tolerated by the institution. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- unwanted or unwarranted physical contact or the threat of the same;
- sexual harassment (including romantic relationships between teachers and learners in which the teacher has authority over the learner's academic progress) or harassment based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation;
- unwanted personal communication whether it be verbal, written, or electronic;
- loss of personal civility including shouting, personal attacks or insults, displays of temper (such as throwing objects or damaging property);
- discrimination of any form including in teaching and assessment based upon age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion and spiritual belief, disability, or sexual orientation;
- requests for others to perform inappropriate personal errands unrelated to the didactic, investigational, or clinical situation at hand; and
- assessment of academic or professional performance based on factors unrelated to the established criteria of the evaluation.

IV. Avenues for Addressing Inappropriate Behavior in the Teacher-Learner Context

A. Learners' Concerns

Learners may address situations in which they feel that they have been the object of inappropriate behavior at various levels. At the most basic level, the most effective way to handle a situation may be to address it immediately and non-confrontationally. Oftentimes, a person is simply unaware that his/her behavior has offended someone, or even if aware, will correct the behavior appropriately if given the opportunity to do so in a way that is not threatening. The way to raise such an issue is to describe the behavior factually ("When you said..."), describe how the behavior made you feel ("That made me feel ..."), and state that the behavior needs to stop or not be repeated ("Please, don't do that again.")

Sometimes, such a request is not successful, or the person repeats the behavior, or the learner does not feel comfortable speaking directly to the teacher about his/her behavior. In those cases, it may be helpful to discuss the behavior with course directors, laboratory and research mentors, program directors, or department chairs. Learners may also elect to speak to their respective Associate or Assistant Deans, or Department Head within the School of Medical Rehabilitation, for informal advice and counsel about these issues. These individuals may offer additional suggestions for resolving the matter informally, such as, for example, speaking to the individual on the learner's behalf or on behalf of an entire class, raising the general issue in a faculty meeting, assisting the learner with writing to the individual teacher or even direct intervention to get the behavior to stop.

If no satisfactory resolution is reached after these discussions or the learner does not feel comfortable speaking to these individuals, he/she may bring the matter formally to the attention of the Faculty of Medicine administration. The avenues for this more formal reporting vary depending upon the status of the reporting individual.

1. If the person reporting the behavior is a medical student:

The student should speak with the Associate Dean, Students.

2. If the person reporting the behavior is a student in the Physician Assistant Education Program:

The student should speak with the Associate Dean, Students.

3. If the person reporting the behavior is a student in the School of Medical Rehabilitation:

The student should speak with the Director, School of Medical Rehabilitation.

4. If the person reporting the behavior is a health sciences graduate student:

The student should speak with the Assistant Dean, Graduate Studies.

5. If the person reporting the behavior is an M.D./Ph.D. pursuing their graduate studies, or BSc(Med) student engaged in their concurrent degree activities:

The student should speak with the Director, Advanced Degrees in Medicine.

6. If the person reporting the behavior is a post-graduate trainee (i.e. resident or clinical fellow):

The trainee should speak with the Residency Program Director who will inform the Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education, if not resolved.

7. If the person reporting the behavior is a research fellow:

The trainee should speak with the Assistant Dean, Research.

At any time any learner may wish to access the Student Advocacy Office of Student Affairs or the University of Manitoba.

B. Teachers' Concerns

If a teacher feels that a learner has engaged in inappropriate behavior, it is likewise most effective to address the situation immediately and non-confrontationally. If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily, the teacher should contact the course director, program director, or laboratory mentor to discuss the matter. If the teacher wishes to make a formal allegation of misconduct, they should contact the following members of the administration:

1. If the matter involves a medical student, contact the Associate Dean, Students.
2. If the matter involves a student in the Physician Assistant Education Program, contact the Associate Dean, Students.
3. If the matter involves a student in the School of Medical Rehabilitation, contact the Department Head of the respective Program of the School of Medical Rehabilitation.
4. If the matter involves a health sciences graduate student, contact the Assistant Dean, Graduate Studies.
5. If the matter involves a student in the M.D./Ph.D. program pursuing their graduate studies, or BSc(Med) student engaged in their concurrent degree activities, contact the Director, Advanced Degrees in Medicine.
6. If the matter involves a post-graduate trainee (i.e. resident or clinical fellow), contact the Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education.
7. If the matter involves a research fellow, contact the Assistant Dean, Research.

These allegations will be handled according to established Faculty of Medicine policies published elsewhere.

V. Procedures for Handling Allegations of Inappropriate Behavior in the Teacher-Learner Context

- A. Upon being notified of alleged inappropriate behavior, the Associate or Assistant Dean or Department Head of the School of Medical Rehabilitation will notify senior administration officials in a written report within 5 business days of the allegation as follows:
1. If the complaint is lodged against a faculty member, the Associate Dean, Academic Affairs will be notified. Other than those matters referred to the Office of Academic Affairs the matter will be handled in accordance with the Faculty of Medicine's Procedures for Dealing with Issues of Professional Misconduct.
 2. If the complaint is lodged against a faculty member of the School of Medical Rehabilitation, the Director will be notified and the matter will be handled in accordance with procedures of the School of Medical Rehabilitation.
 3. If the complaint is lodged against a post-graduate trainee, the Associate Dean, PGME, will be notified. If the complaint is lodged against a research fellow, the Assistant Dean, Research, will be notified. If based on the written report, those Deans decide that a formal investigation is merited, they will convene an ad hoc committee to investigate the complaint and will notify the complainant, the respondent and appropriate department chairs and program directors of such an action. The ad hoc committee will be composed of three faculty members from departments other than those of the complainant or respondent. The committee will be responsible for gathering information and interviewing the complainant, respondent, and other individuals as they deem appropriate. Based upon information gathered and their deliberations, the committee will submit a written report to the Deans involved within ten days from when they were convened which will include their findings and recommendations for dismissal of the complaint or for disciplinary action(s). The senior Deans will then communicate to the complainant and respondent in writing that a determination has been made. If the committee finds against a post-graduate trainee, the findings will be communicated to the appropriate Department Chair and Program Director and sanctions will be determined and enforced according to the Faculty of Medicine Policy on Evaluation, Remediation, Probation and Dismissal, published elsewhere, which also includes an avenue of appeal.
- B. If the behavior involves unlawful discrimination or sexual or other forms of unlawful harassment, the Associate Dean, Professionalism and Diversity, should ordinarily be consulted and the matter may thereafter be handled in accordance with University policies and processes regarding respectful work and learning environment. A learner may also directly contact an Equity Services Advisor or a Student Advocacy representative.

- C. If the behavior involves unwanted physical contact or other forms of violent or threatening acts, the matter may be referred for evaluation under the University's policy addressing respectful work and learning environment, or the University's policy on violent or threatening behavior.
- D. The Faculty of Medicine is committed to the fair treatment of all individuals involved in this process. All efforts will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the resolution process to the extent possible and subject to the overriding concern of a prompt and fair investigation and/or resolution of the complaint.
- E. The Faculty of Medicine will not tolerate any form of retaliatory behavior toward those who have made allegations in good faith, regardless whether the allegations were made by a learner or a teacher. Individuals who believe that action has been taken against them in retaliation for raising concerns under this guideline, may address those concerns through the procedures described in this document.
- F. Records of all communications as well as the written reports of the Associate Deans and ad hoc committee will be kept in the Office of the Associate Dean, Professionalism and Diversity.
- G. If it is determined that the allegations from the complainant were not made in good faith, the complainant, whether a learner or a teacher, will be referred for disciplinary action under the appropriate University procedures which are described elsewhere.

Acknowledgement

The University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine gratefully acknowledges Johns Hopkins School of Medicine who have permitted adaptation of their document entitled *Guidelines for Conduct in Teacher/Learner Relationships*.

Cross References for University of Manitoba Policies

The University of Manitoba policy entitled *Respectful Work and Learning Environment* may be accessed from:

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/230.html

The University of Manitoba policy entitled *Responsibilities of Academic Staff with Regard to Students* may be accessed from:

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/278.html

The University of Manitoba policy entitled *Violent or Threatening Behaviour* may be accessed from:

http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/669.html

References

Hickson GB, Pichert JW, Webb LE, and Gabbe SG. A Complementary Approach to Promoting Professionalism: Identifying, Measuring, and Addressing Unprofessional Behaviors. *Academic Medicine*. 2007; 82:1040–1048.

Heru A, Gagne G, Strong D. Medical student mistreatment results in symptoms of posttraumatic stress. *Academic Psychiatry*. 2009; 33(4):302-6.

Papadakis MA, Osborn EHS, Cooke M, Healy K. A strategy for the detection and evaluation of unprofessional behavior in medical students. *Academic Medicine*. 1999;74:980–990.

Accreditation Standards

These guidelines address the Liaison Committee on Medical Education standards regarding the teacher-learner relationship as articulated in, but not limited to Standard MS-32 of the Medical Student standards pertaining to the Learning Environment.