



# Learning Environment Policy and Complaint Review Procedures

## Summary of Purpose

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This Learning Environment Policy (this “Policy”) was created to confirm expectations for interpersonal academic and professional conduct in the learning environment in the Undergraduate Medical Education (“UME”) program at the Geisel School of Medicine (“Geisel”), to encourage conduct supportive of these expectations, and to clarify procedures for the filing and review of complaints for violations of these expectations.

## Scope and Applicability

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This Policy applies to all members of the Geisel academic community engaged in the UME Program.

## Policy Statement

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Geisel is committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic and professional success in learners and teachers at all levels. Members of our learning community are responsible for treating each other with mutual respect, and for acting in appropriate ways to monitor and continuously develop behaviors that are consistent with applicable professionalism policies.

The vast majority of Geisel community members engage in conduct that is supportive of a positive and inclusive learning environment, and Geisel encourages reports of such conduct so that the positive contributions of students, staff, faculty, residents, nurses and others to the Geisel educational experience may be recognized.

Mistreatment, however, is inappropriate and will not be tolerated. Students and others who witness or experience mistreatment are strongly encouraged to address it as described in the below-referenced reporting protocols. Processes for reporting and addressing a complaint of mistreatment or other unprofessional behaviors by faculty, non-faculty academic (NFA) appointees, and other non-NFA staff at Geisel<sup>1</sup> are set out in the Procedures for Reporting and Resolution of Complaints Against Faculty and Non-Faculty Academics, and Staff of the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in the document entitled, Appointments Promotions and Titles at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, or “APT Document”).

## Definitions

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**Professionalism:** The set of competencies and skills expected of members of our profession including a shared set of principles and expectations. Expectations for professional conduct for students are further set out in the applicable student handbooks and the UME Student Professionalism Policy, while expectations for faculty, staff and non-faculty academics are as further set out in other policies on professional conduct applicable to such groups (e.g., but not limited to the Geisel Policy on Expectations for Professionalism for Faculty, Non-Faculty and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Code of Ethical Conduct).

**Mistreatment<sup>2</sup>:** The Association of American Medical Colleges defines mistreatment as behavior that shows disrespect for the dignity of others and unreasonably interferes with the learning process. Many examples of mistreatment may be explicitly covered by Dartmouth's broader policies on nondiscrimination, research misconduct, sexual or gender-based misconduct, or other institutional policies or by law.

Examples of conduct that may be mistreatment, include, but are not limited to:

- Being subject to or an observer of offensive remarks, including those directed against race, color, citizenship, national origin, regional origin, religion/spirituality (and atheism), sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital or parental status, disease state, age, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information, military or veteran status, political affiliation, or any other category protected by law or Dartmouth/Geisel policy<sup>3</sup>.
  - Receiving lower grades or lesser evaluations predicated on criteria enumerated above.
  - Being asked to perform personal services for supervisors including, but not limited to, obtaining food or running errands not related to clinical care or academic obligations.
  - Being subject to any behavior that is prohibited by Dartmouth's Sexual and Gender-based Misconduct Policy.
  - Holding students responsible for academic/clinical obligations not clearly delineated and/or for making detrimental assessments of students based upon academic/clinical obligations not clearly delineated.
  - Being subject to retaliation with respect to any protected activity, such as the good faith reporting of a suspected violation of applicable laws, government or Dartmouth/Geisel policies.
  - Taking inappropriate credit for the contribution of a student or other team member, including not providing appropriate acknowledgment on scholarly work (e.g., as expected by Geisel according to ICMJE guidelines)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://students.med.psu.edu/academics/respectful-learning-environment/definitions/>; <http://med.stanford.edu/md/student-affairs/student-wellness/mistreatment.html>

<sup>3</sup> For acts of bias against members of a protected class, please also consider notifying Dartmouth Inclusive Excellence/Achieving Community Together, and please note that if you report behavior that violates Dartmouth's nondiscrimination policy, faculty and staff may be obligated to report this to the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity at Dartmouth.

- Pressuring students to not abide by their work hour limits.
- Pressuring students to perform patient care duties without sufficient training or supervision.
- Threatened or actual violence against individuals or damage to property (e.g., throwing objects, slamming doors).

To determine if conduct may constitute mistreatment, individuals may contact one of the UME coaches, course/clerkship directors, student advisors, any of the associate deans (Student Affairs, Preclinical, Clinical, Diversity, and Inclusion) or the Student Affairs or DICE offices at Geisel.

Individuals should also contact the Student Affairs or DICE offices at Geisel for assistance in filing a report under the appropriate policy and procedures.

In adhering to the stated goal that Geisel is committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic and professional success in learners and teachers at all levels, we also strongly encourage reports of positive and inclusive learning environments so we may publicly recognize students, staff, faculty, residents, nurses, and others who contribute positively to the Geisel educational experience.

Procedures for acknowledging behaviors for promoting a positive and inclusive learning environment and for reporting potential unprofessional behavior/mistreatment are set out below.

## Reporting Procedures

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Reports of supportive conduct or of mistreatment may be filed in connection with the conduct of:

- Geisel faculty members (at the Academic Medical Center<sup>4</sup> and all affiliated locations)
- Other Dartmouth students (all programs)
- Other Geisel or Dartmouth staff members
- Members of the community (including non-faculty clinical staff members or other employees of clinical affiliates, patients and patients' families)

Supportive conduct may be reported using the [Report of Positive Learning Environment form](#).

Mistreatment may be reported using the [Student Mistreatment Report form](#). Both forms are available for use at any time via the Student Affairs webpage and links to them are included in all post course and post clerkship surveys.

Please note that where individuals engaging in alleged mistreatment are not Geisel or Dartmouth College community members (for example, a patient or member of a patient's family; Dartmouth-Hitchcock staff without Geisel appointments), Geisel will take steps as appropriate and in accordance with applicable law to ensure that the alleged mistreatment is reported to the

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<sup>4</sup> Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, and the White River Junction Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

appropriate entity (e.g., Dartmouth-Hitchcock Human Resources) and to ensure that appropriate supportive measures are put in place where possible for any Geisel community member who is adversely affected by this mistreatment.

In addition to the Student Mistreatment Report form, there are many ways in which students may report an incident of alleged mistreatment (or other violations of applicable policies on appropriate conduct), including via:

- Dartmouth's [EthicsPoint](#) Hotline (anonymous)
- [Safety and Security at Dartmouth](#) (anonymous)
- Dartmouth College's Office of Human Resources
- Dartmouth's Title IX Office (for reports of sexual or gender-based misconduct)
- Dartmouth's Inclusive Excellence/Achieving Community Together [reporting form](#) (for incidents that may undermine the Dartmouth Principle of Community, such as acts of bias against members of a protected class).
- The Associate Deans and/or leadership in the Geisel Dean's Office (including the Dean of Faculty Affairs, the Executive Dean for Administration or the Dean's Chief of Staff).
- The Geisel Office of Student Affairs (see offices/officers at: [https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/students/about/staff\\_information/](https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/students/about/staff_information/))
- Contacting your course or Clerkship Director.
- Contacting your coach or advisor.

## Complaint Review Procedures

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Unless otherwise specified by superseding policies, when Geisel receives a report of mistreatment that may have an impact on a UME student, such reports will be referred to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs (ADSA). If complaints/reports received by the ADSA have not already been lodged with appropriate other Dartmouth or Geisel offices (e.g., the Title IX Office), the ADSA will refer incoming reports to the appropriate office or individual as required by any superseding Dartmouth/Geisel policy or by law (e.g., any faculty member receiving a complaint related to sexual or gender-based misconduct must refer that information to the Dartmouth College Title IX Office).

For reports that would not be handled via other Dartmouth/Geisel policies and procedures, and where action through Geisel Student Affairs is otherwise appropriate, the ADSA will review them with the Committee on Respectful Learning Environment (CRLE). The following individuals will constitute the CRLE: the ADSA, a pre-clinical Geisel faculty member, the student government Vice President for diversity, an associate provider and one other health professional (nonphysician) engaged in the UME program). The CRLE determines whether the reported instance constitutes "mistreatment." Depending on this determination, the CRLE will refer the reported instance to the appropriate Geisel/Dartmouth office or procedure, or, as appropriate and in accordance with applicable data privacy requirements, to the appropriate Geisel clinical affiliate, for further review. Unless otherwise provided by superseding policies, and where possible due to the nature of the complaint, students and other reporting parties may choose to

be identified or remain de-identified during this process and will be given an opportunity to express reasonable preferences regarding the timing of action undertaken through the CRLE.

Students who provide their name in a report will be given direct individual feedback on the outcome by the ADSA to the extent possible. Students might also choose to name a surrogate party to receive feedback through, while not entering their name in a report. This surrogate could be a coach, another dean, an advisor, course or clerkship director. The student would need to talk with their surrogate in order to receive feedback through them. A student could choose to remain anonymous but would then not receive any individual feedback on the outcome of the reporting. Aggregate reporting to the student body will occur through semi-annual written reports distributed to the student body and discussed at town halls.

Please note that it may not be possible to provide detailed feedback on reports of alleged mistreatment due to laws such as those protecting the confidentiality of personnel, student and/or patient records.

## Retaliation

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Members of the Geisel academic community engaged in the UME Program are reminded that retaliation with respect to any protected activity, such as the good faith reporting of a suspected violation of applicable Geisel/Dartmouth policies (including this Learning Environment Policy) is prohibited. Retaliation means engaging in conduct that may reasonably be perceived to:

- Adversely affect a person's educational, living, or work environment because of their good faith participation in protected activities;
- Discourage another person from making a report (e.g., on professionalism) or participating in any review or other investigative activities associated with such reports.

## Key Words

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Mistreatment, Professionalism, Learning Environment

## LCME Standard

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### **Standard 3.5 Learning Environment/Professionalism**

A medical school ensures that the learning environment of its medical education program is conducive to the ongoing development of explicit and appropriate professional behaviors in its medical students, faculty, and staff at all locations and is one in which all individuals are treated with respect. The medical school and its clinical affiliates share the responsibility for periodic evaluation of the learning environment in order to identify positive and negative influences on the maintenance of professional standards, develop and conduct appropriate strategies to

enhance positive and mitigate negative influences, and identify and promptly correct violations of professional standards.

### **Standard 3.6 Student Mistreatment**

A medical education program defines and publicizes its code of professional conduct for the relationships between medical students, including visiting medical students, and those individuals with whom students interact during the medical education program. A medical school develops effective written policies that address violations of the code, has effective mechanisms in place for a prompt response to any complaints, and supports educational activities aimed at preventing inappropriate behavior. Mechanisms for reporting violations of the code of professional conduct are understood by medical students, including visiting medical students, and ensure that any violations can be registered and investigated without fear of retaliation.

## **Related Information**

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### **Dartmouth College (Institutional)/Geisel-specific Documents**

[Professionalism Policy-Undergraduate Medical Education Program](#)

[Expectations for Professionalism for the Faculty and Staff at Geisel Policy and Procedures](#)

[Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#) (Dartmouth)

[EO/AA and non-discrimination policies](#) (Dartmouth)

[Research Misconduct Policy and Procedures](#) (Dartmouth)

### **Other Documents**

Note: policies and procedures set out in documents noted below may supersede Geisel policies when activities are outside the scope of Geisel-specific responsibilities and may apply, in addition to Geisel policies when overlap of authority exists.

[Notice of Non-discrimination in Health Programs](#) (D-H)

[Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion, No FEAR and Whistleblower Rights and Protection Statement](#) (WRJ-VAMC)

[Research Compliance](#) (D-H)

[Research Misconduct](#) (WRJ-VAMC)

[Code of Ethical Conduct and policies on Clinical Consultation](#) (D-H)

[Code of Ethical Business Conduct](#) (Dartmouth)

[Privacy rights](#) (D-H)

### **Related Links**

None.

## Policy Administration

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<b>Policy Number</b>	UME-OSA-0014	<b>Effective</b>	January 18, 2021
<b>Authorized By</b>	Dean's Senior Leadership Group	<b>Written By</b>	Associate Dean for Student Affairs
<b>Approved By</b>	Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education	<b>Date Approved</b>	December 15, 2020
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	January 18, 2021	<b>Date Revised</b>	January 18, 2021
<b>Responsible Office</b>	Associate Dean, Student Affairs	<b>Responsible Administrator</b>	Associate Dean for Student Affairs
<b>Inform</b>	Medical students, faculty, staff		

## Policy Contact Information

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**Geisel Department Chairs**

Please also see the most recent [Clerkship Contact Listing](#) document.

## History

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Date	History
January 18, 2021	Policy was created and put into effect.

## Background

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None.