

University of Texas Medical Branch
Statement of Principles for Teacher and Learner Conduct in the Educational Setting

I. Introduction

UTMB's institutional values of respect and integrity place an obligation on both teachers and learners to conduct themselves appropriately in the educational setting. Accrediting agencies expect the same of us. The UTMB Academic Affairs Council (AAC) has been discussing such expectations, and the need for them to be (a) clear, (b) reasonable, and (c) distributed to and acknowledged by teachers and learners. Many of these principles are not unique to education, and are established by institutional policies. Therefore, terminology used in this document is similar to that used in the institutional policies that pertain to these matters.

IHOP 8.1.4 Workplace Violence

IHOP 3.2.4 Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

IHOP 3.2.5 Consensual Relationships

IHOP 3.2.1 Nondiscrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action

IHOP 7.1.3 Student Conduct and Discipline Policy

IHOP 3.2.9 Non-retaliation Policy

Other appropriate expectations go beyond the Institutional Handbook of Operating Procedures (IHOP), such as attention to fulfilling teaching and learning responsibilities, and interactions respectful of the power differential inherent in a teacher-learner environment. This Statement focuses on behaviors at the teacher-learner interface and is not inclusive of all issues impacting the educational environment, such as treatment of patients, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), free speech, classroom disruptions or use of social media. These are typically covered by other IHOP, Medical Staff, UT System or school-based rules or policies.

II. Philosophy

The University of Texas Medical Branch is committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic and professional success in learners and teachers at all levels and in all settings. The achievement of such success is dependent on an environment free of behaviors which can undermine the important missions of our institution. An atmosphere of integrity, transparency, mutual respect, collegiality, fairness, and trust is essential. Although both teachers and learners bear significant responsibility in creating and maintaining this atmosphere, teachers also bear particular responsibility with respect to their evaluative roles relative to student work and with respect to modeling appropriate professional behaviors. Teachers must be ever mindful of this responsibility in their interactions with their colleagues, their patients, and those whose education has been entrusted to them. These principles extend to learners enrolled as students in each of the schools and postdoctoral trainees in medicine and the biomedical sciences. Faculty and trainees in the biomedical sciences may be further guided by national frameworks, such as the *Compact between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors*, and the *Compact between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors* (see Section VIII).

III. Responsibilities of Teachers and Learners

A. Responsibilities of Teachers

1. Treat learners and fellow teachers/colleagues with respect and fairness.
2. Treat learners and fellow teachers/colleagues equally regardless of age, sex (including pregnancy), race, color, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, or veteran status.
3. Be on time for educational activities and submit evaluations/grades on time.
4. Provide timely feedback to learners about their performance in a respectful manner with constructive suggestions for improvement.
5. Provide current educational materials in an effective format for learning, equally available to all.
6. Grade or evaluate learners based on demonstrated ability, according to the objectives and standards of the course.
7. Solicit evaluations of educational experiences by learners, accept positive and negative feedback in a professional manner and review evaluations for educational improvement.

B. Responsibilities of Learners

1. Treat teachers and fellow learners with respect and fairness.
2. Treat teachers and fellow learners equally regardless of age, sex (including pregnancy), race, color, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, or veteran status.
3. Be on time for educational activities and submit assignments and evaluations on time.
4. Provide timely feedback regarding educational experiences in a respectful manner with constructive suggestions for enhanced learning.
5. Accept constructive feedback in a professional manner.
6. Commit the time and energy necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of each educational activity.

IV. Teacher and Learner Behaviors Inappropriate to the Educational Setting

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

1. Unwanted physical contact (e.g. hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing) or the threat of the same, loss of personal civility including shouting, personal attacks or insults, or displays of temper (such as throwing objects), as defined by the Workplace Violence Policy (IHOP 8.1.4), and the Student Conduct and Discipline Policy (IHOP 7.1.3). Any individual who experiences, is aware of, or witnesses Workplace Violence, or who has reason to suspect that Workplace Violence is occurring or poses danger should immediately report this behavior to the University Police Department.
2. Sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, including inappropriate or unwelcome touching, as defined by the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy (IHOP 3.2.4). Note that
 - a. If a Responsible Employee does not report incidents of alleged sexual harassment within three (3) business days to the Title IX Coordinator, he or she could be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
 - b. A Responsible Employee must immediately report alleged acts of sexual violence to the Title IX Coordinator; any delay beyond 24 hours could result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
3. Consensual romantic relationships between teachers and learners, as defined by the Consensual Relationships Policy (IHOP 3.2.5).
4. Harassment or discrimination in teaching or assessment based on race, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, or veteran status, as defined by the Nondiscrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy (IHOP 3.2.1).
5. Requests for others to perform inappropriate errands or duties unrelated to the learning environment.
6. Grading/evaluation on (a) factors unrelated to performance or level of achievement; or (b) level of career interest in the teacher's specialty.
7. Vulgar, demeaning or disrespectful acts or language toward or in the presence of a teacher or learner.
8. Retaliation of any kind (including intimidation, threats, coercion, discrimination or false reports/evaluations) toward any individual who makes a good faith report of violation of these or other UTMB policies, as defined by the Non-retaliation Policy (IHOP 3.2.9).

V. Avenues for Addressing Inappropriate Teacher and Learner Behavior in the Educational Setting

When a learner has a grievance about a teacher or other learner's behavior, the learner's options are^{1, 2, 3}

- Include in an evaluation of the course or other educational experience
- Address directly with the person who is the subject of the learner's concerns
- Contact the Student Ombudsperson (<http://www.utmb.edu/ombudsman> or 409-747-9055)
- Submit a report to the Professionalism webpage. Reports can be made anonymously (<http://www.utmb.edu/professionalism>)
- Contact the person's supervisor, Chair or Director
- Contact the relevant course, clerkship or program director or an Assistant/Associate Dean

When a teacher has a grievance about a learner's behavior, the teacher's options are^{1, 2, 3}

- Address directly with the learner who is the subject of the teacher's concerns
- Contact the relevant course, clerkship or clinical program director or coordinator, an Assistant or Associate Dean, or the Dean or his or her designee
- Include as part of the learner's grade or evaluation relevant to professional behavior
- Submit an Early Concern Note (see school-specific links below)

¹If the grievance is related to sexual misconduct or sexual harassment, the complainant should contact the Title IX officer (<http://www.utmb.edu/student-services/titleix.asp> or 409-772-2112) and consult the UTMB Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy. UTMB employees and faculty members who are designated as Responsible Employees under the law, including administrators, supervisory staff, advisors, graduate teaching assistants, and faculty with teaching, advising, coaching, mentoring or clinical supervision responsibilities have mandatory reporting and response obligations and may not be able to honor a complainant's request for confidentiality.

²If the grievance is related to discrimination, the complainant should contact the Office of Internal Investigations at 409-747-5742 and consult the UTMB Nondiscrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action Policy.

³If the grievance is related to violence or a threat of violence, it should be reported to the complainant's supervisor, or as needed to University Police, in accordance with the UTMB Workplace Violence Policy (IHOP 8.1.4) and the Student Conduct and Discipline Policy (IHOP 7.1.3).

VI. Policy References

IHOP 8.1.4 Workplace Violence

http://www.utmb.edu/policies_and_procedures/15248330

IHOP 3.2.4 Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

http://www.utmb.edu/policies_and_procedures/10509160

IHOP 3.2.5 Consensual Relationships

http://www.utmb.edu/policies_and_procedures/15137372

IHOP 3.2.1 Nondiscrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action

http://www.utmb.edu/policies_and_procedures/13752700

IHOP 7.1.3 Student Conduct and Discipline Policy

http://www.utmb.edu/policies_and_procedures/15705413

IHOP 3.2.9 Non-retaliation Policy

http://www.utmb.edu/policies_and_procedures/14927210

VII. Early Concern Notes

School of Medicine

<https://www.utmb.edu/meded/edaffairs/ecn/userLogin.asp>

School of Nursing

<https://sandbox.utmb.edu/sonnet/student-resources/SON%20Early%20Concern%20Note%2007022015.pdf>

<https://sandbox.utmb.edu/sonnet/student-resources/Early%20Concern%20Guidelines.pdf>

School of Health Professions

<https://shp.utmb.edu/ASA/resources.asp>

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

<http://gsbs.utmb.edu/forms/#faculty>

VIII. Additional Reference Documents

Compact Between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors

<https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/research/gradcompact/>

Compact Between Postdoctoral Appointees and Their Mentors

<https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/research/postdoccompact/>