



Policy: School of Graduate Studies and Research Mistreatment Policy	Applicability: SOGSR Students
Policy Owner: School of Graduate Studies and Research	Approved By: Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research
Effective Date: November 20, 2013	Last Reviewed:
Next Review:	Contact:

PURPOSE: To outline expectations of behaviors that promote a positive learning environment for Meharry Medical College graduate students and other learners and to delineate grievance procedures to address alleged violations without fear of retaliation. This policy offers a definition of mistreatment and provides examples of unacceptable treatment of graduate students, and describes the procedures available to report incidents of mistreatment in a safe and effective manner.

POLICY: Meharry Medical College is an institution rooted in the care of the whole person. Our motto promises the “Worship of God through service to mankind”; interaction between teachers, learners and administrative staff should emulate this founding principle. As such, Meharry is committed to creating and sustaining an educational environment that fosters the values and virtues of:

- Mutual respect
- Trust
- Honesty
- Collegiality
- Compassion
- Accountability

Such values are especially critical to effective relationships between faculty, students, and administrative staff. The graduate learning environment is expected to facilitate students' acquisition of professional and collegial attitudes necessary to be effective biomedical researchers, clinical investigators, and public health workers. The development and nurturing of these attitudes are enhanced and, indeed, based on the presence of mutual respect between teacher, learner and staff. Characteristics of this respect are the expectation that all participants in the educational program assume their responsibilities in a manner that enriches the quality of the learning process.

DEFINITIONS:

Mistreatment of Students:



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Mistreatment of students can occur in a variety of forms and may seriously impair learning. Types of abuse include verbal power, ethnic, physical, and sexual harassment. Examples of student mistreatment include, but are not limited to repeated instances of single egregious instances of:

- Verbally abusing, belittling, or actions that can reasonably be interpreted as demeaning or humiliating
- Assigning duties as punishment rather than education
- Unwarranted exclusion from reasonable learning opportunities
- Threats to fail, give lower grades, or give a poor evaluation for inappropriate reasons
- Asking a student to carry out personal chores or errands
- Pressuring students to exceed reasonable work hours
- Committing an act of physical abuse or violence of any kind such as pushing, shoving, slapping, hitting, tripping, throwing objects at, or taunting remarks about a person's protected status as defined by Meharry Medical College's Nondiscrimination Policy Statement:

Meharry Medical College is an EOE/AE employer and does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, race, religion, color, national origin, handicap, veteran, or immigrant status in its admissions, employment, and education programs or activities.

PROCEDURE: Graduate students who themselves experience or observe other students experiencing possible mistreatment are encouraged to discuss it with someone in a position to understand the context and address necessary action. The individual considering making a report of mistreatment should first, if possible, attempt to resolve the matter directly with the alleged offender. Suggested options for graduate students include:

Informal Resolution

Students will be encouraged to utilize any of the informal mechanisms described below whenever possible:

- Direct discussion with the alleged offender
- Conversation with the Course Coordinator, Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)



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Formal Process

When a student is unable to resolve a situation of abuse or mistreatment using informal mechanisms, he/she will contact the Department Chair. The student will give a written description of the circumstances leading to the complaint to the Department Chair, who will contact the Associate Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research (SOGSR). The complainant must be willing to be identified to the person against whom the complaint is directed. A Student Mistreatment ad hoc committee will be appointed by the Associate Dean of the SOGSR consisting of one faculty member, the DGS (as appropriate) and one student. Selection will be matched to the specifics of the case (e.g. students on committees with student complainant). The DGS will serve as the chair. Particular attention will be made to considerations of continuity, experience, sensitivity to the concerns of students and faculty, and gender, racial, cultural and economic diversity when making appointments to the committee.

The *ad hoc* committee will be investigatory and advisory to the Associate Dean in questions regarding conduct of students, faculty, and staff. The recommendations and findings of the ad hoc committee will be reviewed by the Associate Dean, who will have the responsibility and authority to determine if the basis exists for referral to the Dean, Human Resources, or to a committee of the Faculty Senate for further review:

- The *ad hoc* committee will convene within 10 working days after the Chair receives the written complaint. Any member with a conflict of interest will be replaced.
- The *ad hoc* committee will conduct an investigation by interviewing all parties involved with any witnesses available. Legal counsel is not permitted at this point and the accused or any witnesses have the right to refuse to appear without prejudice against their case.
- All materials will be reviewed by the ad hoc committee and any conclusions regarding the investigation will be reported to the Associate Dean within 15 working days of receiving the complaint. The ad hoc committee will determine:
 - There is no significant basis to conclude that mistreatment or abuse did occur; or
 - Find that mistreatment or abuse probably did occur
- The Associate Dean will review the findings and make a decision on corrective action to take. Notification for the involved parties will occur within 10 working days after



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receiving the recommendations of the ad hoc committee. The Associate Dean will work with the appropriate Department Chair, Dean, etc. to assure corrective action is taken. Referral to the appropriate authority will ensue.

- The Dean and ad hoc committee will be notified of the final disposition

If the allegation of mistreatment is against the Associate Dean, the Dean will serve in the role specified for the Associate Dean.

Graduate Students requesting complete anonymity should be made aware that doing so may interfere with the Graduate School's ability to investigate the concern and their ability to receive information about the follow-up investigation.

Graduate Students may also choose to pursue claims of unlawful discrimination or harassment as noted below as noted by the College's statement:

Inquiries concerning the College's non-discrimination policies may be referred to the Office of the General Counsel, S.S. Kresge Learning Resources Center, (615) 327-6102, or to the Affirmative Action Officer, Office of the President, (615) 327-6904.

No Retaliation

Retaliation is strictly prohibited. Individuals who believe they are experiencing retaliation are strongly encouraged to contact the Associate Dean. Alleged retaliation will be subject to investigation and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or expulsion.

Appeals

Students have the right to appeal to the Dean of the SOGSR

EXHIBITS: None.

RELATED POLICIES: None.