

Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine

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Appropriate Treatment in Medicine (ATM) Policy

Policy Statement

Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine is committed to providing a work and educational environment that is conducive to teaching and learning, research, the practice of medicine and patient care. This includes a shared commitment among all members of the School's community to respect each person's worth and dignity, and to contribute to a positive learning environment where medical students are enabled and encouraged to excel.

Chobanian & Avedisian SOM has a **ZERO** tolerance policy for medical student mistreatment.

All of the school's community members are expected to:

- contribute to a welcoming and respectful academic atmosphere;
- promote the medical school's educational goals through example, education, and support;
- treat others in a respectful manner grounded in civility and honesty;
- maintain an inclusive learning environment that encourages open inquiry and expression among community members while recognizing and respecting diversity of background, values, and views.

This Appropriate Treatment in Medicine (ATM) Policy:

- was developed to support an environment conducive to learning by investigating and responding to reports of student mistreatment.
- provides a process for prompt, non-adversarial, and respectful responses to complaints of medical student mistreatment by conducting any investigations thoroughly, promptly, and impartially.

Defined Terms

Learning Environment

"The medical school learning environment encompasses the physical, social, and psychological contexts in which students learn; interactions with faculty, staff and peers; and the formal, informal and hidden curricula."ⁱ

Positive Learning Environment

The school defines a positive learning environment as one in which:

- students:
 - feel well supported
 - are able to learn in the environment they're in
 - receive support to handle health issues, family emergencies and other outside factors

- that could impact their learning experience
 - have a feeling of wellbeing and the overall ability to feel successful and well while immersed in the learning environment
 - have time for physical and mental maintenance (e.g., medical appointments, time for self-care)
- Learning spaces are physically/emotionally safe
- The learning environment is inclusive and respectful of our diverse learner population
- All individuals (students, faculty, and staff) within the learning environment are professional and respectful of one another

Mistreatment

For the purposes of the ATM Policy, mistreatment includes but is not limited to:

- Humiliation or intimidation of students;
- Verbal attacks;
- Deliberate and repeated exclusion from reasonable learning opportunities;
- Requests or expectations to perform personal services (e.g. errands);
- Assignment of tasks or chores to punish or belittle students;
- Disregard for student safety.

The ATM Policy does *not* apply to complaints relating to:

- *sexual misconduct, violence, or discrimination*, which are addressed by other University policies including the [Equal Opportunity policy](#) and [Sexual Misconduct/Title IX policy](#) and investigated by other University offices. For links to other University policies and reporting mechanisms, please see the [Interim Equal Opportunity and Title IX Policy](#) and the [Interim Equal Opportunity and Title IX Procedures](#).
- *grading*, which are addressed in the school's [Evaluation, Grading, and Promotion Policy](#), unless it also meets the criteria outlined in mistreatment above.

Commented [RH1]: The old policy is linked here: <https://www.bu.edu/policies/sexual-misconduct-title-ix-hr/> - University policy is a bit confusing in how it is linking to the various old and new policies, not sure if any of the other links need to be included here?

Responsible Parties

BU Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine expects all members of its community to adhere to the expectations outlined in this policy. This includes, faculty, staff, non-faculty educators (e.g., residents, hospital staff), and students.

Activities to Prevent Mistreatment

The school affirms its commitment to fostering a positive learning environment by:

- informing the medical school community of the policy and procedures for reporting mistreatment via course/clerkship guidelines, orientations, and faculty clinical guidelines
- communicating a zero-tolerance policy for medical student mistreatment via course and clerkship orientations and within course and clerkship guidelines provided to students and educators
- outlining a shared commitment to maintaining a positive learning environment when establishing affiliate relationships with sites

Learning Environment Sessions

Learning Environment Sessions (LES) are student-facilitated meetings that occur in each block of each clinical clerkship/selective to allow students to provide real-time feedback about their

experiences in the clinical learning environment. Feedback is anonymously provided to the clerkship directors and the Medical Education Office, who create action steps and plans.

Learning Environment Summit

The Learning Environment Summit is an annual event that brings the medical school and hospital leadership, faculty, and students together to review data from the past year and to discuss ways to further prevent humiliation and mistreatment.

Appropriate Treatment in Medicine (ATM) Committee

Composition

The composition of the ATM Committee is outlined in Article 5, Section G4 of the [school's Bylaws](#). The ATM Committee chair will orient new committee members to ATM policies and procedures.

Charge

The ATM Committee is charged with:

- disseminating to students the reporting mechanisms for reporting and procedures used to address alleged student mistreatment;
- responding to, investigating, documenting, and acting upon reported complaints of mistreatment submitted to the Committee;
- reviewing all complaints and investigation outcomes on a quarterly basis to identify patterns of student mistreatment and reporting those trends to responsible parties (e.g. residency program director, director of nursing, department chair) for appropriate action; and
- providing regular reports to the school dean, the Executive Committee, and the Medical Education Committee to guide appropriate targeted and school-wide interventions to address learning climate concerns.

Procedures

A student who feels mistreated or witnesses mistreatment should submit a report to the ATM Committee:

1. through an [online form](#) on the [ATM website](#).
2. by contacting the [ATM chair or any member of the ATM Committee](#):
 - a. *via email or via a signed statement*: Only emails sent from the student's BU email account can be accepted without a personal signature. The subject line should state "ATM complaint" to ensure a timely response.
 - b. *in person*: After the meeting, submit a written statement or report through the ATM website.

The school is committed to ensuring that students can report mistreatment without fear of retaliation. We will protect the identity of the student who initiated the complaint to the extent allowed by law.

Investigation of a Complaint of Student Mistreatment

The ATM chair or designee will acknowledge the receipt of complaints of mistreatment by an identified or identifiable person within one (1) business day and begin planning or conducting an investigation.

If the alleged mistreatment occurred in a course or during a clerkship, the investigation generally will not begin until the student's final grade is submitted and finalized by the medical school Registrar. In a situation that might result in harm, the investigation would begin immediately after discussion with the reporting student.

The ATM chair or designee (member of the ATM Committee) will:

1. provide the person accused of mistreatment with a written description of the allegations that protects the anonymity of the reporting student to the extent possible.
2. meet with the person accused of mistreatment who may be accompanied by a faculty advisor of their choice (but not an attorney) to discuss the allegations and to hear evidence in their defense.
3. conduct the investigation to the extent possible based on the information provided. Incidents reported anonymously that cannot be fully investigated will be included in the trends analysis.
4. monitor the progress of the complaint.
5. provide a written summary of the complaint and findings of the initial investigation to the person accused of mistreatment and to the reporting student for their written comments.
 - The **person accused of mistreatment** must submit their written comments to the ATM committee within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the summary.
 - The **reporting student** must submit their written comments to the ATM committee within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the summary.

Commented [RH2]: Angela/Nichole: Is there any additional information we can provide here as to what monitoring entails that isn't already outlined in the process?

The ATM Committee will meet, deliberate, and determine their recommendations.

The ATM chair or administrator will draft the ATM Committee's written report of findings and recommendations, and remediation plan (if appropriate) and convey the report to the medical school Dean by email within seven (7) calendar days of the ATM meeting.

The Dean may accept, modify, or reject the report, or request that the ATM Committee conduct additional investigations.

The ATM chair will notify the reporting student how their allegations have been addressed. The outcome of the committee's investigation will be shared to the extent permitted by university policies and law.

Office of the Ombuds

A reporting student who is not satisfied with the outcome of the ATM Committee's investigation should contact the University Ombuds for assistance. The [Office of the Ombuds](#) is an independent, impartial, informal problem-solving resource serving faculty, staff, and students on the Charles River

and Medical Campuses. The Ombuds maintains strict confidentiality and provides a safe place for students to have off-the-record conversations on issues related to life, work, or study at Boston University. Talking to the Ombuds can be a good first step if students have a concern and don't know where to turn for help. The [contact information](#) for the two office locations are as follows:

Charles River Campus: 930 Commonwealth Ave; (617) 358-5960

Medical Campus: Solomon Carter Fuller building, Suite 818; (617) 358-7645

Managing Records of Complaints and Committee Meetings

The ATM chair and associate dean of Student Affairs will retain a file of supporting documents from formal investigations and meeting minutes in a password protected electronic file for seven (7) years from the graduation date or last day of attendance of the reporting student.

ⁱ [Enhancing the Medical School Learning Environment: A Complex Challenge, Reena Karani](#)