

## **I. POLICY**

Professional Learning Environment and Appropriate Treatment of Medical Students

## **II. PURPOSE**

This policy outlines medical students' rights to a learning environment that is characterized by appropriate treatment of students and by faculty, resident, and staff adherence to professional behavior. This policy also provides information on institutional monitoring of and training about the professional learning environment and procedures for students to report concerns about the learning environment.

## **III. RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE**

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will review this document annually. The Medical Education Committee will review and approve any changes to this policy as recommended by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

## **IV. ACCREDITATION REFERENCES**

LCME 3.5	Learning Environment/Professionalism
LCME 3.6	Student Mistreatment
SACSCOC 12.3	Student Rights
SACSCOC 12.4	Student Complaints

## **V. DEFINITION(S)**

**Learning Environment:** Diverse educational approaches, cultural contexts, or physical settings in which teaching and learning occur and that influence student engagement and motivation, as well as students' sense of well-being, belonging, and personal safety. EVMS' holistic definition of the learning environment includes the following components:

- Student mistreatment
- Preceptor and student positive and negative professional behaviors
- Duty hour compliance
- Medical student well-being
- Clinical supervision

## **VI. DESCRIPTION**

EVMS is committed to maintaining a professional, positive, and safe environment for study and training. Students in EVMS' learning environment will be judged solely on relevant factors such as ability and performance and can pursue their educational and professional activities in a humane and respectful atmosphere with a sense of belonging.

EVMS is also committed to the professional development of its medical students and to providing a learning environment that is reflective of the Professionalism objective of the

Unified Competency Objectives which prioritizes professionalism in patient care, teamwork, and recognition of limitations, as well as the Professionalism and Professional Identity Development policy.

Unprofessional behaviors and student mistreatment by faculty, residents, and staff are destructive of these fundamental principles and will not be tolerated within the EVMS community and its affiliated learning sites.

EVMS defines mistreatment as behavior that shows disrespect for learners and interferes with their respective learning process. Such behavior may be verbal, emotional, or physical. More detailed information regarding student mistreatment is provided in the institutional Students' Rights to Professional Learning Environment Policy. The primary categories of mistreatment include the following:

- **Public Embarrassment or Humiliation**: Any behavior that dishonors or disgraces a student in a public space or uses shame or embarrassment to publicly hold a student accountable for their actions.
- **Abuse of Power**: Any behavior that uses one's position of power to negatively impact a student or that requires a student to complete tasks unrelated to learning.
- **Physical Abuse**: An intentional act that does or has the potential to cause injury, trauma, or other physical suffering or bodily harm to a student.
- **Harassment Based on Sex, Gender or Sexual Orientation**: Behavior directed at a student based on their sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity/transgender status, and pregnancy or parental status) that is unwelcome by the student, and alters the educational environment for the student.
- **Harassment Based on Race or Ethnicity**: Behavior directed at a student based on their race or ethnicity that is unwelcome by the student and creates a hostile learning environment.

### **Monitoring Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment**

Monitoring occurs through coordinated efforts of the Associate and Assistant Deans for Student Affairs, the Associate Deans for Academic Affairs and Clinical Education, the Associate Dean for Educational Assessment and Evaluation, the Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities, and the Director of Assessment. Data sources include end of module and clerkship evaluations, AAMC Graduation Questionnaires, Concerns in the Learning Environment Reporting Form, in-person or email reports, and the institutional Compliance Hotline.

### **Communication and Training on Learning Environment and Student Treatment Expectations**

Education of the EVMS community on expectations for a professional learning environment and appropriate treatment of students is critical to promote a positive environment and to inform

all parties about the policy on and procedures for reporting and institutional responding to allegations of unprofessional behavior and/or student mistreatment.

Trainings of students, residents, faculty, and staff are coordinated annually by Student Affairs. Student Affairs and Medical Education collaborate annually on a Learning Environment Report.

### **Contributions of Faculty, Residents, and Staff to the Professional Learning Environment**

In support of a professional learning environment, EVMS expects the following behaviors from all faculty, residents, allied health professionals, and staff who interact with medical students:

- Adhere to the same standards for professional behavior as the learners, including adherence to the EVMS Code of Conduct
- Adhere to the Compact between Teachers and Learners of Medicine and Health Professions, the institutional Students' Rights to Professional Learning Environment Policy, the institutional Title IX Policy, and all related policies.
- Model professional behavior in interactions with patients, learners, staff and all other individuals in the health care team.
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate responsibility and ownership for patient care responsibilities in accordance with standards of appropriate clinical supervision (as discussed in more detail below).
- Provide students with regular feedback, both positive and constructive.
- Notify module or clerkship directors immediately regarding concerns for serious unprofessional behaviors by students.
- Complete student assessments in a timely manner, with all assessments completed in time for calculation of final grades.

### **Contributions of Module, Clerkship, or Course Directors to the Professional Learning Environment**

EVMS has the following expectations of responsibility for module, clerkship, or course directors with regard to the professional learning environment:

- Ensure that the above-mentioned expectations of faculty, residents, allied health professionals, and staff are followed.
- Provide the following information to all individuals engaged in the medical student learning environment on an annual basis:
  - Objectives of the module, clerkship, or course with regard to professional development,
  - Policies and procedures related to the appropriate treatment of medical students,
  - Policies and procedures related to medical student professional behaviors,
  - Methods of reporting mistreatment of students, and
  - Methods of reporting concerns for unprofessional behaviors by students.

- In conjunction with Medical Education and Student Affairs, monitor the assessment of the professional learning environment via E\*Value faculty evaluations; E\*Value module, clerkship, and course evaluations; submissions of the Concerns in the Learning Environment Reporting Form; or submissions of the EVMS Ethics and Compliance Hotline.
- Communicate to medical students and adhere to standard procedures through which students can report concerns regarding the professional nature of the learning environment and/or suspected mistreatment.
- Respond appropriately when informed of founded concerns for faculty, resident, or staff unprofessional behaviors, student unprofessional behaviors, or student mistreatment.

**Procedures for Students to Report Concerns for the Professional Learning Environment, including Mistreatment**

Students in the MD Program at EVMS have the right to report concerns about the professional learning environment, including suspected mistreatment, using the following steps:

1. The student should first address their concerns with the supervising faculty member involved, if they feel comfortable doing so.
2. If the concern is not resolved to the student's satisfaction through conversation with the faculty or if the student does not feel comfortable discussing the concern with the faculty member, the student has multiple options for reporting the grievance, as follows:
  - a. E\*Value module, clerkship, or course evaluation forms
  - b. Personal contact with a member of Student Affairs. Students should consider Student Affairs their primary point of contact for non-academic complaints. If the individual receiving the complaint is not the Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the complaint shall be forwarded to the Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities within 24 hours.
  - c. Concerns in the Learning Environment Reporting Form. The reporting form is sent automatically to Student Affairs.
  - d. EVMS Ethics and Compliance Hotline
    - i. The Hotline is a confidential and anonymous reporting system which may be accessed through the hyperlink or via phone at 800.461.9330.
    - ii. Complaints made through the Hotline will be investigated by the institutional compliance officer or his/her designee.
3. The procedures outlined in the Appeal and Complaint Procedures Policy will then proceed.

**VII. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Appeal and Complaint Procedures Policy

Compact Between Teacher and Learners of Medicine and Health Professions Policy

EVMS Code of Conduct  
Professionalism and Professional Identity Development Policy  
Student Non-Academic Complaint and Formal Grievance Policy  
Students' Right to Respectful and Professional Learning Environment Policy  
Unified Competency Objectives

### **VIII. HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES**

The following list documents policy approvals and updates by oversight authority, date, and summary of changes. This policy is housed on the MD Student Handbook webpage.

- On June 29, 2020, the Medical Education Committee approved the update to separate the policy from the MD Student Handbook and to include the new Student Affairs reporting form.