

2007-2008 Group on Faculty Affairs  
AAMC Listserve Queries & Responses

**Query: Faculty Misconduct**

*Question from Paula Trief, SUNY Upstate ([triefp@upstate.edu](mailto:triefp@upstate.edu)):*

If your institution has written policies and procedures regarding "faculty misconduct" I would appreciate being able to see them. I am not referring to plagiarism (we are handling that separately), or research misconduct (handled by our research administration office), but other forms of misconduct, broadly defined, e.g., grading favoritism, conflicts of interest, hostile interactions with students. I googled and found some from universities, but none from medical schools, thus the request.

**Responses:**

*From Lois Geist, UIowa ([lois-geist@uiowa.edu](mailto:lois-geist@uiowa.edu)):*

Ours are basically what the University has. We do not have separate policies.

*From Stephen Bogdewic, Indiana University ([bogdewic@iupui.edu](mailto:bogdewic@iupui.edu)):*

We have a Teacher-Learner Advocacy Committee (TLAC) at Indiana University school of Medicine which reports to me. The purpose of the committee is to address issues involving breaches in professional behavior between teachers and learners. The attached brochure spells out what some of those behaviors could be.

<http://msaa.iusm.iu.edu/StudentManual/tladvocacy.htm>

In addition, we are in the process of developing a Professional Standards Committee for the medical school, similar to those committees that exist in clinical (hospital) settings. I have attached two similar policies—University of Washington and Washington University Department of Surgery. While these may predominantly exist to address behavior in clinical settings, the Washington Code of Conduct “reflects the Department’s dedication to a positive working and learning environment in which every member of the Department, as well as those with whom we work in hospitals and other settings, are treated with professionalism and respect.” I take the phrase “in other settings” to mean other than clinical (such as classroom, laboratory, offices spaces, etc.).

<http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/faculty-dev/wellness/home.cfm>

[http://www.surgery.wustl.edu/Surgery.aspx?id=1146&menu\\_id=96&terms=behavioral+code+of+conduct](http://www.surgery.wustl.edu/Surgery.aspx?id=1146&menu_id=96&terms=behavioral+code+of+conduct)

*From Peter Williams, Stony Brook ([pwilliams@notes.cc.sunysb.edu](mailto:pwilliams@notes.cc.sunysb.edu)):*

A timely question. I just finished a search at our medical school and campus to see what sorts of avenues for counseling, remediation or punishment there was for faculty who misbehaved outside of the clinical environment, e.g. at department meetings or in the classroom. We have a faculty honor code with no enforcement mechanisms, so I was

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mostly searching for ways to respond to folk who violated it. Here is what I've found. I hope the links survive the list serve.

Paula, You'll be happy to notice that the biggest one is SUNY-wide, so apply to Upstate as well.

What avenues are available to respond to faculty who behave unprofessionally as defined by the Faculty Code of Ethics outside of clinical settings?

There are a number of avenues available.

1. **Private discussions.** The Code of Ethics itself suggest that someone who observes inappropriate behavior "discuss" the incident with the perpetrator or, if the discussion doesn't help or the observer is afraid of risks that might accompany doing so, the observer should notify the "appropriate supervisor, department chair, and/or dean" who is, presumably, expected to do follow the procedures specified on the [Counseling and Discipline](#) (see below) pages of the web.
2. **Employee Assistance Program** Employees who exhibit behavioral problems or who act in any way that jeopardizes a safe and productive workplace may be referred to the EAP. Participation in EAP intervention is confidential and voluntary.
3. The **University Ombuds Office** is an informal and confidential service available to Stony Brook students, staff, faculty and administrators to resolve complaints of any sort and evaluate options for positive action. Complaints and actions are unofficial, off the record, voluntary and confidential.
4. **Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Employment** This organization provides training and consultation to supervisors and staff and conducts investigations of allegations of discriminations and sexual harassment. There are powerful enforcement measures available for this kind of misbehavior.
5. **Counseling and Discipline** through the Labor Relations Office. A report to a supervisor regarding any kind of misbehavior by an employee may trigger a counseling session described at this web page. Malfeasance may result in disciplinary action of various kinds - from a letter in the personnel file to suspension with or without pay pursuant pursuant to Article 19 of the union contract.
6. The **Faculty Assistance Committee of the Faculty Senate**, like the university wide counterpart, may receive complaints about and review any unprofessional behavior. It has the choice of referring the issue to one of the other procedures specified above or, if after its own review it finds the complaint legitimate, it may forward recommendations to the Dean.

*From Kevin Grigsby, Penn State ([rgrigsby@hmc.psu.edu](mailto:rgrigsby@hmc.psu.edu)):*

Paula: Those policies are all university level policies at Penn State. However, we have an Educator's Code of Conduct specific to the College of Medicine. It includes a section on how we handle violations. <http://www.hmc.psu.edu/college/education/conduct.pdf>

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