NORTHEAST OHIO MEDICAL UNIVERSITY	Policy No: 3349-5-30
POLICY TITLE: Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment Concerns Policy	EFFECTIVE DATE: August 1, 2016 REVISED DATE: November 1, 2026
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: Academic Affairs & Student Services	Students

(A) PURPOSE

(1) The University is committed to maintaining a professional and welcoming learning environment in which all students are treated with respect and dignity. This environment should promote interactions based on individual strengths and characteristics to encourage constructive, thoughtful, respectful, sensitive behavior, consistent with the standards of the various health professions in which our students are being trained.

(B) SCOPE

(1) A complaint or concern within the learning environment of Mistreatment, Inappropriate Professional Interaction, or Bias may be made by any student against any other member of the University community, so long as it relates to the educational activities of NEOMED. Student complaints of Mistreatment, Inappropriate Professional Interactions, or Bias about course instructors, teaching methods, evaluations, or course-related matters are to be handled in accordance with this policy.

(2) This policy will not be interpreted, administered, or applied to infringe upon the academic freedom of any faculty member of the University. The frank discussion of controversial ideas, the provision of constructive criticism related to educational performance, the pursuit and publication of controversial research, and the study and teaching of material with controversial content do not constitute Mistreatment, provided these activities are conducted in an atmosphere of respect.

(3) This policy is not to be interpreted, administered, or applied in such a way as to detract from the rights and obligations of those in an evaluative role to manage and discipline students, subject to the University's policies and procedures.

(4) A student may not use this policy to review the decisions or recommendations of the Committee on Academic and Professional Progress (CAPP). These decisions may only be reviewed in accordance with the University policy on CAPP.

(5) This policy does not govern situations where students believe that they have been subjected to sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, discriminatory treatment, or other illegal activity. Complaints of that nature are addressed under separate University policies.

(C) DEFINITIONS

(1) "Bias" refers to a completed, attempted or threatened incident where abusive or hostile acts against a person or persons where such acts manifest evidence that the target was intentionally selected on the basis of the target's actual or perceived age, class, color, disability, ethnic/regional/national origin group, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation, including any hate crime.

(2) "Complainant" refers to any student who seeks recourse pursuant to this policy because he/she has reasonable cause to believe he/she has experienced Mistreatment or Inappropriate Professional Interaction.

(3) "Inappropriate Professional Interaction" refers to conduct that is offensive, uncivil, and generally disrespectful to a reasonable professional in the field.

(4) "Learning Environment" refers to any location where NEOMED academic activities, including, but not limited to, didactic, simulation, laboratory, or clinical, associated with a program of study, take place.

(5) "Mistreatment" refers to words, gestures, or actions that tend to alarm, intimidate, or demean another.

(6) "Respondent" refers to a person or person against whom an allegation of Mistreatment or Inappropriate Professional Interaction has been made.

(D) BODY OF THE POLICY

(1) All students of the NEOMED community are encouraged to resolve complaints informally. Students who feel they have experienced Mistreatment, Inappropriate Professional Interaction, or Bias in the Learning Environment should discuss the matter with their faculty advisor, personal advisor, or the Dean of Students. These individuals will:

(a) Provide students a forum for expressing concerns and exploring options for addressing the concern at issue;

(b) Advise students on both informal and formal procedures for addressing their concerns; and

(c) Discuss the student's concerns, with the permission of the student, with the person about whom the student has an issue (e.g., faculty member, resident, etc.).

If one of the individuals identified above believes that Mistreatment, an Inappropriate Professional Interaction, or Bias in the Learning Environment has occurred, the individual has the responsibility to discuss the issue with their college dean or their designee, even if the student does not wish to file a Formal Complaint.

(2) Unless a Formal Complaint is filed, no further action will be taken by the University other than what is set forth in this policy.

(3) Formal Complaint

(a) A Complaint becomes formal when a Complainant completes the Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment Concern Form online and it is received by one of the members of the NEOMED community designated to receive such Complaints.

(b) Copies of the Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment Concern Form shall be included in the NEOMED Compass and on the NEOMED website.

(4) Investigation Process for a Formal Complaint

(a) The initial assessment shall be conducted by the Dean of Students or their designee in conjunction with a person in the appropriate college who has been designated by the Dean of that college. In most circumstances, the Dean of Students (or designee) will delegate the investigatory duties set forth below to appropriate college personnel. The assigned investigator may consult the General Counsel on matters of evidence, policy interpretation, and/or procedure as appropriate.

(b) The assigned investigator, for good cause shown, exercises discretion in delaying the investigatory phase of a Formal Complaint if proceeding otherwise would compromise the investigation or adversely affect the student's matriculation.

(c) The investigation process will include one or more of the following steps as appropriate:

(i) Confirm name, year, and college of the Complainant;

(ii) Identify the name, title, and role of the Respondent;

(iii) Develop a thorough understanding of the professional relationship, degree of control, and amount of interaction between the Complainant and Respondent; and

(iv) Determine the frequency/severity and type of alleged Mistreatment, Inappropriate Professional Interaction or Bias.

(5) Discipline and Sanctions

(a) Failure to cooperate with the investigation or resolution of a Formal Complaint is considered a violation of this policy and may be grounds for discipline or sanctions.

(b) Disciplinary sanctions related to faculty will be undertaken in accordance with the Faculty Bylaws. In addition, the Respondent may be required to participate in a special education or counseling experience.

(c) When criminal conduct is suspected or has occurred, the Dean of Students (or designee) will refer the matter to the General Counsel and/or the University police as appropriate.

(d) If the investigation reveals that the allegation was frivolous, vexatious, or malicious, the Dean of Students (or designee) may recommend sanctions against the Complainant.

(e) The Dean of Student (or designee) may inform the involved parties of the final disposition of the Formal Complaint. A copy of the final decision and the report of the Dean of Students (or designee) will be documented and, when applicable, placed in the appropriate personnel file and/or student file if the Respondent is found to have violated this Policy.

(6) Documentation of Complaints

(a) NEOMED is required by The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) to track all student Formal Complaints. The Dean of Students (or designee) will maintain all Formal Complaints, along with the final written discussion of such complaints as set forth below. Students should understand that the University is required to share information about complaints with each college's respective accreditation agencies. Every effort shall be made to treat the information with discretion and privacy to protect the individual identities regarding such Complaints.

(b) The Dean of Students (or designee) will maintain a database on Formal Complaints in accordance with the respective accreditation standards for each college.

(7) Discretion in Releasing Complaints or Formal Investigation Records

(a) Other University personnel shall be made aware of the allegations, investigations, and outcome on a need-to-know basis. These persons may include, but are not limited to, the Complainant, the Respondent, and any witnesses or persons involved in the formal or informal investigation of the Complaint.

(b) Records created as a result of any Formal Complaint or investigation will be maintained and released in accordance with state and federal law.