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		Contact:	Dr. José L. Oliver-Sostre
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	Policy Addressing Student Abuse, Mistreatment, Bullying & Cyberbullying	Last Reviewed/Update:	July 2025
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		Approval by:	Dr. Waleska Crespo

The mission of the Universidad Central del Caribe (UCC) is to prepare high-quality and committed health professionals to meet the community's health needs in its biological, physical, and social context with a humanistic focus and a high sense of moral obligation. It is characterized by its emphasis on the excellence of its educational programs, research activities, and services of health maintenance, prevention, and early detection of illness. It is committed to improving the quality of life of the Puerto Rican community through its services, as well as to developing health care professionals. This Policy Addressing Student Abuse and Mistreatment (in all its manifestations including bullying and cyberbullying) aims to contribute toward the achievement of a professional and collegiate academic environment.

This policy outlines an additional process within the UCC for responding to complaints of student mistreatment. However, it should be considered applicable to other institutional policies. These include, but are not limited to the following policies and procedures:

- *UCC General Student Rules and Regulations*
- *UCC General Regulations*
- *Institutional Policy Regarding Prevention of Sexual Harassment*

UCC has established a policy that student mistreatment or abuse, in all its manifestations, **will not be tolerated**. Student abuse may be verbal, psychological, or physical. It is understood that all faculty, non-teaching personnel, staff, and other students will professionally treat students. UCC is committed to the principle of mutual respect. Thus, all students and personnel, regardless of their activity at the Institution, must professionally treat each other under any circumstances.

The relationship between teacher and student should be based on mutual trust and respect. It is the position of UCC that certain behaviors by teachers, house staff, and other students that could be abusive and disruptive of the learning process **will not be tolerated**. Some examples of these behaviors include the following:

- *Verbal comments of a derogatory or demeaning nature that do not contribute to a constructive learning environment.*
- *Physical violence of any nature*
- *Physical threats or punishments*
- *Sexual harassment*
- *Degrading comments or discrimination based on gender, nationality, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or physical characteristics.*
- *Grading or threats of grading used to punish a student rather than to objectively evaluate academic or clinical performance.*
- *Attempts at deception concerning credit for the work of others.*

- *Mistreatment in the care of patients*
- *Request for the performance of personal services*
- *Requiring the performance of hazardous medical procedures without sound medical indication or proper protective equipment*
- *Overbearing supervision, shouting, verbal, written, online, or other published abuse.*
- *Abuse of power or behavior that causes fear or distress for others.*
- *Academic bullying, for example, asserting a position of intellectual superiority in an aggressive, abusive, or offensive way, including by electronic media (for example, by email or on social media).*
- *Deliberately undermining someone by not allocating work fairly or constantly criticizing them.*
    - *Inconsistent management style where some people are favored more than others.*
    - *Public ridicule, sarcasm, or humiliation.*

UCC contends that student abuse results in inferior learning; less effective patient care; cynicism; diminished humanitarianism; and persistent psychological problems including feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, depression, and frustration. Such outcomes interfere with the practice of medicine and the practice of other health professions and with the physical and psychological well-being of healthcare providers, their colleagues, and their families.

Definitions

1. ***Student Mistreatment:*** behavior that shows disrespect for the dignity of others and unreasonably interferes with the learning process. Disrespectful behaviors including abuse, harassment, and discrimination are inherently destructive to the learning environment.
2. ***Abuse:*** unnecessarily harmful, injurious, or offensive treatment inflicted by one person upon another. Abuse is further defined to be particularly unnecessary or avoidable acts or words of a negative nature inflicted by one person on another person or persons. This includes but is not limited to verbal (swearing, humiliation), emotional (intentional neglect, a hostile environment), behavioral (creating a hostile environment), sexual (physical or verbal advances, discomforting attempts at "humor"), and physical harassment or assault (threats, harm). To abuse is to treat in a harmful, injurious, or offensive way; to pressure into performing personal services (especially if an evaluative or potentially evaluative relationship exists); to attack in words; to speak insultingly, harshly, and to revile by name calling or speaking unkindly to or about an individual in a contentious manner.
3. ***Bullying:*** can be described as threatening, abusive, intimidating, undermining, or insulting behavior that may be an abuse of power, position, or knowledge. What one person may consider bullying behavior may be viewed as no more than firm management or strong personality by another and so may sometimes be difficult to define. However, inappropriate behavior that leads to other people becoming stressed, demotivated, or frightened is unacceptable. Bullying can take many forms, and we consider all types equally serious (For example Cyberbullying).
4. ***Harassment:*** verbal or physical conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile work or learning environment in which submission to such conduct is a condition of continuing one's professional training.
5. ***Discrimination:*** constitutes those behaviors, actions, interactions, and policies that have an adverse effect because of disparate treatment, disparate impact, or the creation of a

hostile or intimidating work or learning environment due to gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, or other biases. In all considerations, the circumstances surrounding the alleged mistreatment must be taken into consideration, especially regarding patient care, which cannot be compromised at the expense of educational goals.

6. ***Teacher:*** anyone who engages in the teaching process of a student at UCC. This includes and is not limited to faculty members, attendings, residents, community preceptors, and clinical supervisors.
7. ***Student:*** anyone enrolled, registered, and matriculated as a full-time or part-time student in any of the academic offerings at the UCC as well as the graduate student/resident physicians at Ramón Ruiz Arnau Hospital.

8. ***Ad Hoc - Student Abuse Committee (Ad Hoc SAC):*** a committee appointed by the President comprising members from the faculty, student body, resident physician, and the Director of Human Resources. It is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations to the President on cases in which a formal complaint of mistreatment is reported to the Dean for Student Affairs. The Ad Hoc SAC is activated when the Dean for Student Affairs is unable to resolve a formal complaint of a student mistreatment incident.

Policy

The UCC, therefore, opposes all forms of student and staff abuse and advocates educational and institutional policies to identify and effectively eliminate abusive behavior in the learning environment. UCC promotes the following:

- *Education of faculty, resident physicians, and students regarding rights and responsibilities.*
- *A safe, non-threatening mechanism for reporting and evaluating allegations of mistreatment including anonymous reporting (**U-REPORT**).*
- *The guarantee of rights of privacy and due process.*
- *Appointment of grievance procedures and committees to investigate ongoing disputes.*
- *Establishment of procedures to educate involved parties and punish persistent offenders.*
- *Availability of counseling for all parties involved.*
- *Procedures to evaluate and promote faculty with consideration of their effectiveness in teaching and evaluation.*
- *Involvement of student and resident representatives in establishing clear performance goals and evaluation*

Procedures to Address an Infraction of this Policy

Students who believe that a violation of this policy has taken place should immediately contact the Dean for Student Affairs or the corresponding delegate. UCC has created a method and procedure to receive reports of alleged misconduct or other potential violations as well as positive comments regarding the learning environment. Unless you identify yourself, all reports received are confidential and anonymous. The UCC values your right to privacy on all reported information and will not knowingly disclose any information that would identify you without your express permission. The following link within the Current Students Section is for the **U-REPORT** in

the UCC web system: http://www.uccaribe.edu/ureport/. See the terms and conditions for more information. Students still could report directly to the Dean for Student Affairs or the corresponding delegate (orientation about **U-REPORT** will always be conducted). Several options may be pursued:

1. *The first inquiry can be informal, and the student may ask that the discussion go no further. An informal record of this interchange, lacking the student's name (Addendum # 1), should be filed in the central mistreatment file at the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs. Names will not be in this record if the student requests anonymity. Nevertheless, the accused will be notified of the alleged violation.*
2. *If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, no formal action will be taken. However, the anonymous complaint will be filed in the Office of Student Affairs and reviewed to monitor patterns of abuse. All reports of incidents will be held in confidence and will be dealt with expeditiously (Addendum # 1). Anonymously, the accused will be notified of the alleged violation.*
3. *If a formal complaint is made, the Dean for Student Affairs will discuss the allegations with the consent of the accuser, among all involved parties, in an attempt to resolve. The mediation of the matter may involve contacting the chairperson of the relevant department, administrator, Clerkship or Residency Program Director, clinical supervisor, community preceptor, and others.*

Mechanism of Reporting and Investigating Incidents of Student Abuse

As mentioned above, the following link is for the **U-REPORT** UCC web system: https://www.uccaribe.edu/deanship-students-affairs/confidential-reporting-service/. An algorithm outlining the steps to report, investigate, and resolve an incident of student mistreatment is included (see Figure A). The system and the plan for its implementation are designed to protect students from retaliation and to protect those charged with abuse from unfair accusations. The names of the students, the reporting individual, and the alleged abuser will be held in strict confidence on a need-to-know basis.

An incident of mistreatment may be reported by a student or by an individual who witnessed the incident of abuse. An incident can be reported directly to the Dean of Student Affairs. An incident reported to a trusted faculty member, a class officer, a member of academic administration, or a close friend may be reported to the Dean for Student Affairs, who will evaluate the case. When a faculty member is involved in a case of student mistreatment, he/she will be notified in writing about the procedures to be conducted. On a need-to-know basis, the Program Coordinator, the Program Director, the Course Director, the Year Director, or the Departmental Chair will also be notified about the procedures to be followed with the complaint.

The Dean for Student Affairs will notify the University's legal counsel of the incident, receive necessary advice, and gather information on the incident from the students and from any known witnesses to the incident, and the accused offender. The communication and interaction involved in this process may lead to a resolution of the incident. If the incident is resolved, no further action needs to be taken. The Dean for Student Affairs will file a report describing any documented incident with a committee comprised of members of the faculty, student body, physician residents, and members of the

administration (named Ad Hoc Student Abuse Committee, "Ad Hoc SAC"). The report of a resolved incident will be anonymous. The Dean for Student Affairs will follow up on the incident 4 weeks after the report to ensure that there has been no retribution.

If the incident is not resolved, the Dean for Student Affairs will consult with the University's legal counsel again, gather more information, if needed, and present the case to the Ad Hoc SAC. The Ad Hoc SAC will review the information and make a recommendation to the President for further action. Disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to:

a) *Verbal or written reprimand*
b) *Suspension*
c) *Dismissal*
d) *Possible criminal prosecution if warranted*

In the strictest confidence, the Dean for Student Affairs including information regarding verification and resolution will document all reported incidents of abuse. During a follow-up assessment, 4 weeks after the process, the Dean for Student Affairs will determine if there has been any retribution to the student.

Once a formal complaint is reported, any faculty member, administrator, or university staff will be allowed due process following the provisions of the Institutional General Regulations.

Documentation will be forwarded to the Ad Hoc SAC, which will compile an annual report on all incidents of abuse or student mistreatment. This annual report will be sent to the University President and kept on file.

Addendum # 1

Name of student _____ *Student Number* _____
Telephone ---------- *Academic Program* _____
Address _____
_____

Name of an accused person of alleged student mistreatment: _____
Position: _____
Nature of alleged offense (include any specific comments or observations that are directly related to the alleged incident, the individuals involved, and the specific location where the incident took place:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Date of incident ___/___/___ *Date of report* ___/___/___

I agree to pursue a formal investigation.

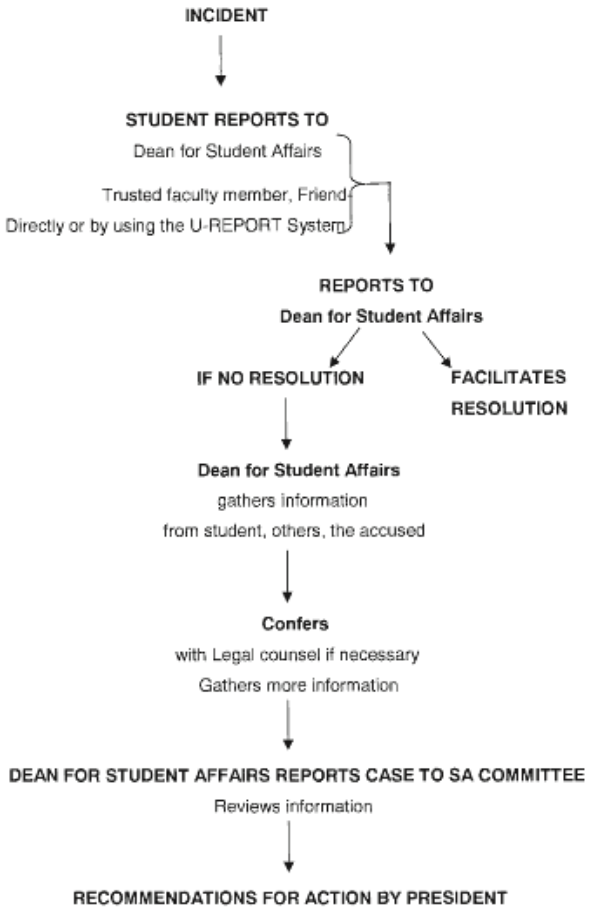
☐ *Yes. Please, explain:* _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

☐ *No. Please, explain:* _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

*Student's signature*_____

ALGORITHM FOR REPORTING INCIDENTS OF STUDENT ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT

(FIGURE A)



In all instances the report from the Dean for Student Affairs will include at least the following:

- a description of the complaint, with pertinent documentation
- channels already pursued to resolve the issue(s)
- results of the investigation

To promulgate this policy of Student Mistreatment, this document will be posted electronically on the University's website, and a copy will be distributed to faculty members, residents, and other individuals who teach students. Additionally, this policy will become part of the institutional policies and regulations.

Reviewed on: July 2025

Reviewed by: Dr. José Luis Oliver-Sostre
Dean of Students

Dr. José L. Oliver-Sostre
Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs

7/10/2025
Date

Approved by:

Waleska Crespo, DrPH
President

7/11/2025
Date

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