

Dear medical school,

Following recent and concerning reports of sexual misconduct and harassment involving medical students, we are writing to all UK medical schools to remind them of their responsibilities and to emphasise that students should feel able to report concerns without fear of repercussions.

The experiences described are deeply concerning. Every medical student should be able to learn in an environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful, and should feel confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

The reports also suggest that some students may feel unable to speak up because they fear consequences for their future careers. That is particularly concerning. Students should be clear that reporting sexual misconduct, harassment, abuse or other concerns will not raise questions about their fitness to practise.

Students should never be discouraged from reporting behaviour that is harmful, inappropriate, or puts them and others at risk. Speaking up is a professional responsibility and an important part of maintaining a positive, professional culture.

We recognise that medical schools and placement providers across the UK are taking action to tackle sexual misconduct and improve support for students. However, the experiences described in these reports are a reminder that sustained focus is needed. Medical schools should continue to review their policies, reporting mechanisms and cultures to ensure students feel safe, supported and confident to raise concerns.

As the regulator responsible for setting the standards of medical education and training, the GMC is clear that medical schools and placement providers must ensure students are supported in environments that are inclusive, respectful and free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and abuse. This includes working together to ensure there are clear routes for reporting concerns, appropriate support mechanisms, and effective processes for responding to allegations of misconduct.

Medical schools should take steps to ensure that students understand:

- How and where concerns can be raised.
- What support is available to those affected by harassment, discrimination, bullying, misconduct or sexual assault.
- How concerns will be handled.

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We also want to remind schools that professional standards apply to all students. Behaviours such as sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and discrimination are incompatible with the values expected of future doctors.

Medical schools should ensure that concerns of this nature are investigated appropriately, and that proportionate action is taken where concerns are substantiated.

Such conduct may also have implications for future registration. When students apply to join the medical register, relevant fitness to practise investigations will be considered, and concerns about conduct could affect an individual's ability to enter the profession.

The GMC is currently reviewing and updating relevant guidance relating to professional behaviours and student fitness to practise.

This work reflects the profession's growing understanding of sexual misconduct, harassment, discrimination and abuse of power, and the need for clear expectations and effective responses when concerns arise.

Alongside this, we are contributing to the Medical Schools Council's Short Life Working Group on Sexual Misconduct, which is considering how medical schools can strengthen prevention, reporting and support arrangements, and promote greater consistency in responding to concerns across the sector.

We know many medical schools are already undertaking significant work in this area and would welcome the opportunity to hear more about effective approaches, challenges and areas where further guidance or support from the GMC would be helpful.

Our education quality assurance and outreach teams are available to discuss local issues and share emerging good practice from across the sector.

Creating safe, respectful and inclusive learning environments is a shared responsibility, requiring leadership from medical schools and placement providers, as well as commitment from the doctors who teach, supervise and support students every day.

We look forward to continuing to work with medical schools, students, and placement providers to ensure that medical education environments meet the highest standards that students, patients, and the public rightly expect.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Pushpinder Mangat

Medical Director and Director of Education and Standards

