



Code of Conduct

of the Faculty of Medicine at the
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms University of Bonn

The Code of Conduct serves as a fundamental guide for teaching, studying, and working at the Faculty of Medicine at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms University of Bonn. It is intended to provide a sense of security in our interactions for faculty, students, and staff of diverse nationalities, backgrounds, and religious affiliations, and to foster a trusting atmosphere for learning, studying, and working.

At our Faculty of Medicine at the University of Bonn, we are committed to treating one another with respect and appreciation. Our collaboration with the Universitäts Klinik Bonn is characterized by mutual trust and respect. At the Faculty of Medicine, we do not tolerate any form of discrimination. In particular, any discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual identity is prohibited. This applies regardless of whether the discrimination is direct, indirect, through harassment, sexual harassment, or through instructions to discriminate. All faculty members, students, and staff of the Faculty of Medicine adhere to these principles of respectful and appreciative interaction with one another and actively contribute to a discrimination-free study and work environment.

Particularly in the fields of human medicine, dentistry, and midwifery, as well as in the day-to-day practice of medicine, situations involving physical contact regularly arise in which personal space is encroached upon—for example, when learning medical examination and treatment techniques. Interactions with patients are always conducted with respect and take into account the dignity and individual boundaries of each person.

In such cases, it is particularly important that all parties involved are willing to engage with one another and take criticism seriously.

The Code of Conduct therefore establishes binding ground rules for both sides and describes the appropriate way to handle sensitive situations.

In principle, both teaching staff and students are equally obligated to engage in respectful, open, non-discriminatory, and tolerant communication and conduct. Personally expressed boundaries must be respected. All parties involved should be open to constructive criticism.

The Faculty of Medicine is characterized by academic and structural hierarchies. These hierarchies serve to organize teaching, research, and administration; however, they must not lead to power imbalances that hinder respectful interaction, freedom of expression, or open communication. In particular, when it comes to the education of students and doctoral candidates, as well as in scholarly exchange, we must strive for a collegial atmosphere of mutual respect. All members of the faculty—regardless of their academic position—should feel confident asking questions, offering criticism, and contributing ideas. Leaders bear the responsibility for fostering a transparent, participatory, and respectful work and learning culture.

This Code of Conduct is based on the Guidelines on Protection against Sexualized Discrimination and Violence published by the University of Bonn on February 15, 2023, and the Anti-Discrimination Guidelines dated November 14, 2024.

Responsibilities of Teaching Staff

Teaching and faculty staff in academic leadership positions bear a special responsibility for fostering a respectful, open, and supportive learning and working environment. They should promote an atmosphere in which all participants—especially students and research staff—feel

valued and safe to express their opinions and ask questions. Personal views and concerns that go beyond the academic scope of teaching and research have no place in courses.

Teaching staff are required to prepare appropriately for the students' respective level of knowledge—depending on the semester. They should be open to feedback on the course without students having to fear disadvantages such as a lower grade or exclusion from the course.

In many teaching and training situations—such as seminars, examination courses, clinical rotations, operating rooms, or clinical case conferences—there may be close physical proximity between faculty, medical staff, and students. In such situations, a high degree of sensitivity, professionalism, and respect is required. This applies to verbal communication and nonverbal cues as well as physical proximity. Any form of inappropriate behavior—whether verbal, in terms of content, or physical—must be avoided. Faculty and medical staff are responsible for maintaining boundaries and creating an environment in which students feel safe and respected.

Students are required to learn the physical examination techniques covered in the curriculum and to acquire the relevant skills. However, participation in physically intimate examination situations within the context of teaching (e.g., examination courses, clinical internships) as an examined person is always voluntary. Students must not face any disadvantages if they choose not to participate in practical exercises as an examined person. It must be ensured that the assignment of roles (e.g., examining or examined person) is not dictated by faculty or medical staff, but is decided by the group in a consensual and

respectful manner. In doing so, the preference for same-sex collaboration must be respected and made possible through organizational arrangements.

All examinations, and in particular those that may intrude on the privacy of the person concerned, must be clearly and transparently announced in advance. This gives students the opportunity to prepare appropriately, for example by choosing suitable clothing or by discussing within the group who will volunteer for the exercise. Such examinations may only be conducted with the explicit consent of the students involved and under no circumstances under duress. This consent must be actively obtained at the beginning of the respective course.

Teaching and faculty staff have a special obligation to serve as role models. They are responsible for fostering a respectful learning environment and are expected to demonstrate a professional and empathetic attitude in their interactions with students, trainees, and, in particular, patients. They are obligated to treat students with respect and to refrain from any form of sexualisation, discrimination, or demeaning behavior. They ensure equal treatment and promote a working and learning environment characterized by trust and mutual respect in academic studies, teaching, and research.

Responsibilities of Students

Students commit to punctuality, attentiveness, and adequate preparation for courses. This applies in both the preclinical and clinical contexts. They demonstrate a willingness to actively participate in classes and to learn the necessary examination techniques. In doing so, they acknowledge that hands-on exercises are an integral part of their medical education.

When exercises are announced that could be perceived as an invasion of privacy, students should prepare for them appropriately—for example, by choosing appropriate clothing or by agreeing within the group on who will volunteer.

Students are obligated to respect instructors in their professional role and to refrain from any form of sexualization, discrimination, or demeaning behavior. Mutual respect, equal treatment, and respectful interaction are essential foundations for successful and trusting collaboration in academic studies, teaching, and research.

Interaction with patients must be appropriate and respectful.

Handling Physical Contact

Physical contact must always be announced well in advance. The extent of the contact should be clearly explained, and the benefit or necessity must be evident at all times. Under these conditions and with due regard for individual boundaries, active participation by students is expected. A respectful interaction between faculty members and students is a prerequisite.

Respectful Conduct Beyond Teaching Sessions

The Code of Conduct applies generally within the university setting, within the faculty, in teaching and training, in research, in clinical settings, in social interactions, and in the university's public image. It also applies in the context of university life, for example at university parties, study group meetings, or continuing education events. Respectful and considerate interaction with one another is also fundamental outside of classes. This applies equally to all teaching staff and students.

Maintain appropriate distance: During conversations and social interactions, a respectful physical distance must be maintained. This applies both to students interacting with one another and to the relationship between faculty and students.

Take boundaries seriously: Respect the personal and emotional boundaries of others. If in doubt, ask. At the same time, everyone is encouraged to clearly communicate their own boundaries and to look after their own well-being.

Respect physical boundaries: Physical contact and closeness require mutual, explicit consent. A “yes” is required—silence or hesitation does not constitute consent.

Addressing Inappropriate Behavior or Violations of the Code

Behaviors or situations that are not in accordance with this Code of Conduct may be openly addressed and resolved collaboratively. A respectful tone must be maintained at all times. Inappropriate behavior or violations of the Code may result in consequences.

Anyone who observes or learns of inappropriate behavior as defined by this Code can help support the affected person by acting appropriately.

Respond with empathy: Listen, take time, remain calm, and take the account seriously.

Offer support without pressuring: The affected person can be encouraged to seek professional help or visit a counseling center. However, no steps may be taken without their consent.

Practice self-care: The emotional strain of such situations can be high. Observers or listeners should also take care of themselves and seek support if needed—

without disclosing confidential information.

Maintain confidentiality: Information shared in counseling situations may only be disclosed with the affected person's consent.

To resolve issues, the following steps may be taken—as needed—until a satisfactory solution is reached for the person involved:

- + A discussion between the parties involved (with an escort if necessary).
- + A discussion with the instructor (also with an escort if necessary).
- + Contacting the SDG Counseling Center:
[SDG-Beratung](#)
- + Contacting the Office for Gender Equality at the Faculty of Medicine:
[Gleichstellungsbüro](#)
- + Contacting the Office for Gender Equality at the University of Bonn:
[Gleichstellungsbüro](#)
- + Contact the Office for Protection Against Discrimination at the University of Bonn:
[Diskriminierungsschutz](#)

The Counseling Center, the Equal Opportunity Teams at the Faculty of Medicine or the University of Bonn, and/or the Office for Protection Against Discrimination can be consulted for support at any of these stages. It is recommended that the Office for Protection Against Discrimination (AGG) be notified no later than when the Counseling Center and/or the Equal Opportunity Office is contacted and they recommend notifying the Office for Protection Against Discrimination (AGG). However, this is left to the discretion of the affected person and may also be carried out by the counseling center with the affected person's consent.

Counseling may also take place with the express request that no further formal report or follow-up be pursued. A report may be made anonymously upon express request. In this way, recurring situations can be collected, addressed, and addressed. Should the affected person expressly request a formal report, the possible procedures are based on the Guidelines on Protection against Sexualized Discrimination and Violence published by the University of Bonn on February 15, 2023, and the Anti-Discrimination Guidelines dated November 15, 2024.

If a faculty member is informed in their capacity as a supervisor, they must clearly state before the start of a conversation with the affected party that, due to existing duties of care and responsibility, it may be necessary in individual cases to share the information with other departments, such as Human Resources, Occupational Safety, and the Administrative Office for Protection Against Discrimination. In such cases, the faculty member may refer the individual to counseling services that guarantee confidentiality. Those seeking advice can thus decide for themselves whether to seek counseling from the faculty member.

Equality and counseling offices at the University of Bonn are obligated to comply with applicable confidentiality and professional secrecy regulations. The basis for this is the University of Bonn's Policy on Protection Against Disadvantage, Discrimination, Harassment, and Violence (Anti-Discrimination Policy) as well as the Policy on Protection Against Sexualized Discrimination and Violence, in the light of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) and—where applicable—the State Equality Act (LGG). These regulations apply to both initial consultations and complaint proceedings and ensure the responsible and

protected handling of sensitive information. Information obtained during counseling sessions is generally disclosed only with the explicit consent of the individual concerned.

External counseling services can also be utilized to support affected individuals. These resources can be found on the following page:

[Beratung bei sexualisierter Gewalt](#)

Reports must be made to the best of one's knowledge and belief. However, anyone who intentionally or recklessly makes false or unfounded accusations must expect appropriate consequences.

Further Information and Support

For more information, practical guidance, and contact information regarding sexual discrimination and violence, as well as respectful interaction, please visit:

[Beratung bei sexualisierter Gewalt](#)

