



**NORWICH
MEDICAL
SCHOOL**

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences



Norwich Medical School

'Speaking Up Speaking Out' Policy

**Process for reporting concerns
made by a student about inappropriate or offensive behaviour**

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A. Introduction

The Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) policy has been developed to guide students* in Norwich Medical School (NMS) who want to raise a concern about inappropriate, or offensive, behaviour in their programme learning environment on campus, on placement, or in the workplace. It aims to provide a safe and supportive route for the student to report their concern. It creates a shared understanding about what happened, and a process that outlines how that information should be used and actions that should be taken in a supportive non-judgmental environment where the identity of the person reporting is protected. It also provides guidance for staff members who are supporting students in these circumstances.

Concerns raised by students linked to this process may relate to areas linked to:

- Discrimination and harassment
- Patient/client/service user safety
- Expression that a safe learning environment as part of their course was not being offered.

Concerns can also be raised by students with their student representatives and through SSLC, module leads, or course directors. This policy is supported by the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) principles on raising concerns, speaking up, and whistleblowing. It complements the independent University of East Anglia (UEA) 'Report and Support' process linked to concern with the campus experience and ensures that our learners can report concerns in all areas of their course, be it on or off campus.

Please note that this policy and process is not aimed at concerns about course curriculum, timetables, room quality etc. Concerns around these areas should be carried out through the usual routes and if you need more information contact the student representative, course director, or year/module lead.

For the purposes of this guidance, the senior staff member acting on behalf of NMS is referred to as 'the School'.

B. Background

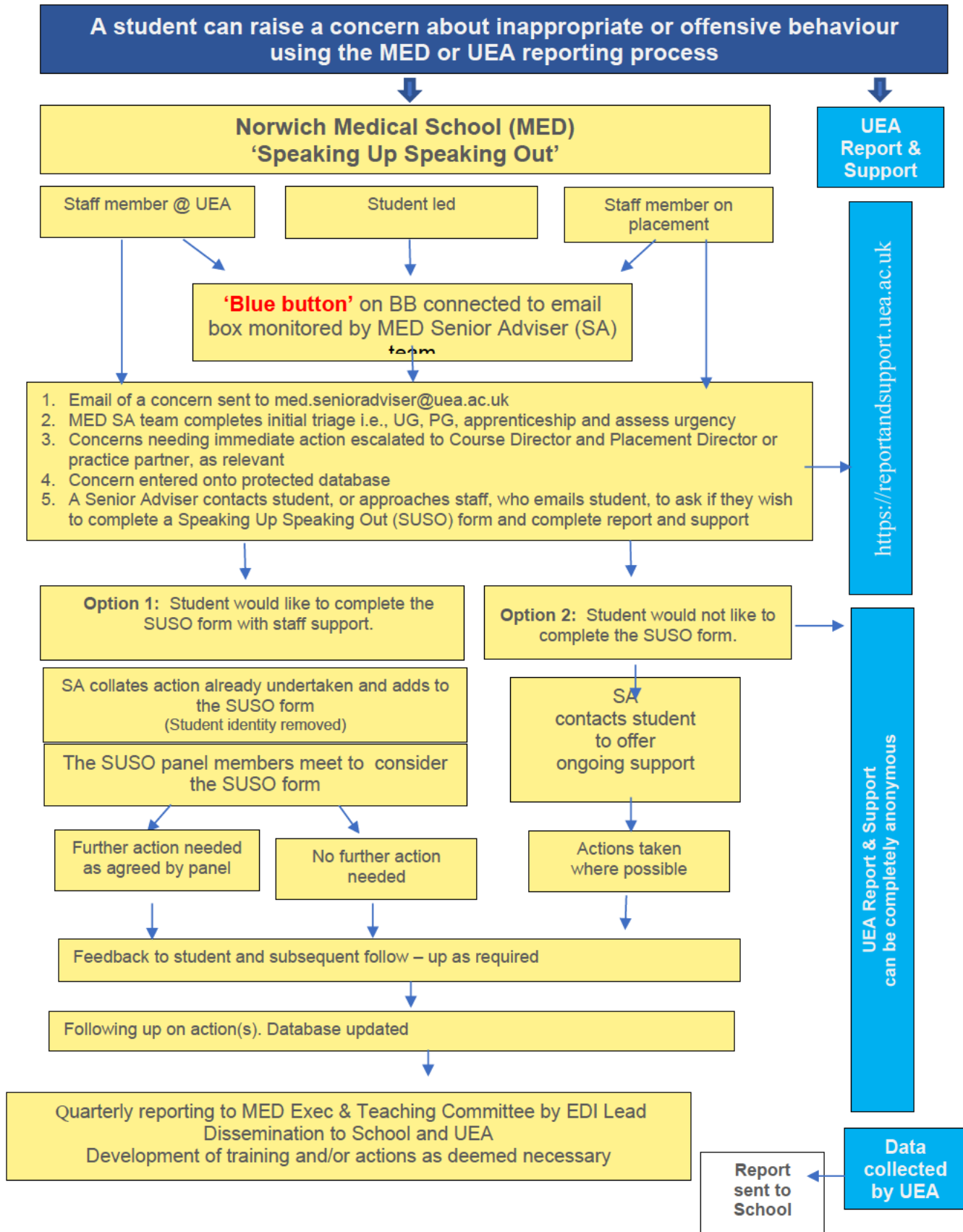
Norwich Medical School (NMS) introduced a policy to support students to raise concerns about patient safety in 2014. In 2017, the School collected information from MB BS students regarding what type of concerns they would report, and where, and students also provided feedback that they needed a safe route in which to raise concerns about the learning environment. From this information a 'Speaking Up' policy was revised to include guidance on raising concerns about attitudes, language and behaviors in the learning environment that may be unprofessional, offensive and/or are potentially threatening, discriminatory, or unlawful. In response to work around differential attainment and research with students around racism, in 2022-23, NMS worked together with staff and students to create a 'Speaking Up Speaking Out' (SUSO) policy, form and process. We hope that this new policy will allow us to not only respond quickly and effectively, but also understand more fully the type of concerns students raise and how we deal with them as a School. As mentioned above, it aims to complement the UEA 'Report and Support' reporting process, and students will continue to be encouraged to report through the university level reporting system and receive support. The school, through SUSO, will be responding to issues raised at individual student level, consider the care to other students who may also be impacted and consider the school actions that may need to be considered.

C. Flowchart outlining the process

Recognizing that raising a concern can be difficult and sensitive, a flowchart has been developed for transparency and clarity, as shown below. Students can opt to report concerns using the UEA 'Report and Support' process or the School 'Speaking Up Speaking Out' (SUSO) process, outlined here. Students can express a concern via:

- pressing the '**Blue button**' on Blackboard, which sends an email to the senior adviser team
- a staff member at UEA, who can then report this on behalf of the student using the '**Blue button**'
- staff member on placement, which can be anyone, but there is a named person on each placement.

* This policy is aimed at all students completing a course at Norwich Medical School: under-graduates, post-graduates, apprentices, and trainees at all levels



The Blue Button



During the pilot phase the button was originally red and had the word 'help' on it. This has been changed to blue as a response to the feedback received. The **'Blue button'** will feature on course and module sites so that it is easily accessible for students. Clicking on the Blue button will link to the MED senior adviser mailbox, med.senioradviser@uea.ac.uk. This team will involve staff who support both undergraduate, postgraduate and apprenticeship students. This mailbox is monitored every weekday to ensure a timely response.

Once the email is received, the senior adviser team will triage accordingly to assess the urgency, and whether it relates to an under- or post-graduate student and if it concerns campus, placement, or the workplace, as applicable. If the concern requires immediate action e.g., a safeguarding issue, or where students may need to be moved from the environment, it will immediately be referred to the Course Director and/or Placement Director/Site manager to ensure a rapid response and appropriate action.

Regular reminders of the Blue Button will be provided throughout the year/course.

Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) form

Once the senior adviser team has received and triaged the concern, they will contact the student, or approach their chosen advocate to contact the student, to ask if they wish to complete Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) form with the student. A student raising concern can opt to complete the SUSO, or not. If they like to complete the SUSO form, they can either do it on their own, or together with a nominated staff member (advocate) who has the required skillset to support them, and who can support the student in sharing their concern in a non-judgmental and safe environment. If a SUSO form is completed together with a staff member, the staff member will return the SUSO form to the student for checking. Once completed, the SUSO form will be returned to the MED senior adviser mailbox. It is the norm for the student's ID to be removed from the form from this point onwards in the process. Their identity will hence be protected and further contact with the student will always be via the senior adviser. The SUSO form is available in Appendix 2.

Panel

The panel will meet on a regular monthly schedule. The panel will be chaired by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Associate Dean, and usually consist of the Head of School (HoS) or their representative, Head of Department, Senior Adviser Lead (PG or UG) or their representative, Course Director (CD) and administrator. The HoS representative may be the HoS, Deputy HoS, or another senior member of staff relevant to the concern e.g., Teaching Director, yet somewhat removed from the specific course. If a concern relates to placement/workplace, the School Placement Director/site senior manager will also be involved. Panel quorate is 3.

The panel will review the concern and consider whether there is a need for further action and if so, what further action is required.

Database

The School has a responsibility to collect intelligence about concerns that are reported to allow an oversight of numbers and types of incidents of harassment or discrimination that our students are experiencing. Under the Equality Act (2010) public sector duty, the School has a collective duty to

ensure that a safe learning environment is created for all students. The Act protects students from harassment and discrimination based on protected characteristics.

Each concern reported will be collated into a 'Concerns' database. This database is kept in a secure online format and can only be accessed by staff deemed directly relevant to this process. The information kept and individual names are protected according to the General Data Protection Act (2018)¹ regulations.

The database is updated, and anonymized data reviewed every quarter by the Medical School Executive Team and EDI lead on behalf of the Teaching Committee to consider possible themes and patterns, which may require additional action. This is to ensure NMS concerns are collated, that appropriate actions are taken to address to mitigate future risk, individuals are supported, and that students receive feedback/and are updated on the actions taken - as agreed.

Feedback and follow-up

The person who raised a concern will receive feedback and subsequent follow-up will be agreed as applicable. If a student did not proceed to complete a SUSO form, a senior adviser will continue to send a follow-up email to enquire how the student is doing.

The database will be appropriately updated with action items as appropriate. The Lead Senior Adviser will have responsibility to keep the database updated.

Dissemination and learning

The School EDI lead will collate data reported in the database and present to relevant committees including the Teaching Committee and MED Executive on a quarterly basis. Data will be disseminated within the School and UEA so that we can develop training and critically inform how we deal with concerns.

Individuals who raised concerns will not be named beyond the SUSO form. Where possible, data collated by UEA, through Report and Support, will be merged with School data to enable wider understanding of concerns raised and how we deal with them, be it in relation to any form of harassment experienced, patient safety or the learning environment.

Guidance for students and staff will be provided for each of these areas of concern.

D. Raising concerns about patient/client/service user safety

Prevention of harm, or abuse, to patients/clients/service users is a primary goal for all healthcare professionals and from time-to-time students may experience, or witness incidents in practice that cause them some concern that will require them to act in a way that ensures they meet their professional responsibilities. Equally, when taking a history/examining/consulting with patients/clients/service users, or talking to relatives etc., they may identify potential abuse. If a student considers there has been inadequate delivery of care and consequent perceived harm and/or abuse of patients, there is a professional duty for to give careful consideration to acting on their concerns, even if this raises concerns about negative consequences for those involved.

Harm, or abuse, to patients/clients/service users can be psychological, physical, financial, discriminatory, sexual, or neglectful and could involve a single incident, or be part of widespread organizational behavior. Abuse or harm can take place in any setting, such as the home, or a more traditional practice setting. The cause can be intentional, or unintentional.

Guidance for students on raising concerns about patient/client/service user safety

If a student is concerned about patient/client/service user safety, or need support with anything they have witnessed or experienced directly, we recommend that they escalate to their supervisor or the clinical team within the placement/workplace and contact someone in the clinical team who can help the

person in question. Students will be specifically advised at induction to placement of a named person who they can contact to raise concerns. A direct approach with their placement/workplace provider is likely to lead to more immediate action. The placement/workplace provider will also inform NMS so that appropriate contact and support can be made with the student, as well as agreed actions with the provider.

A student can also raise their concern about patient/client/service user safety through the SUSO process. They can use the 'Blue button' to trigger the process outlined above. If a student needs immediate support, they should contact a member of the Medical School staff who they trust and who can assist them with their concern, for example their personal adviser, or someone in the senior advising team.

E. Raising Concerns about the learning environment on campus/placement/workplace

NMS and the UEA have a zero tolerance of language, or behavior in any setting that cause offence, harm, or distress to any student. NHS placement providers also have their own zero tolerance policies. We are a diverse community and within that, every individual has the right to a positive and safe experience, both educationally and socially. To the same end, therefore, we expect all students and staff to take responsibility for their actions and ensure nothing they say, or do, causes any concerns such as those regarding harassment, sexual harassment, discriminative behavior, bullying, assault, hate, or racial abuse.

We need students to come forward if they witness, or experience, unacceptable language, or behavior from a patient, a fellow student, a tutor, or any staff. It is not always easy to come forward, or challenge others, but students need to feel confident that, if they do come forward, that they will be supported. We will investigate concerns that are raised, and we will ensure that the confidentiality of those raising a concern is appropriately protected.

Guidance for Students

A student can raise their concern about the learning environment, or inappropriate behaviours through the process described on pages 3-5. They can use the 'Blue button' to trigger the process outlined.

If a student needs immediate support, they can contact a member of the Medical School staff who they trust and who can assist them with their concern, for example their personal adviser, or the senior advising team. Where a student reports to a student representative (rep), then the student rep can appropriately signpost to the best route e.g., SSLC, or SUSO etc.

Guidance for staff

The role of staff in dealing with concerns is crucial to ensuring that we create a transparent, open, safe and professional culture, which encourages students to learn to express concerns freely and objectively. This is a key issue in relation to the quality assurance of the learning environment.

When a student comes to a member of staff to raise a concern, the staff member should allow the student an opportunity to talk informally through the situation and their concerns. All concerns raised by the student should be taken seriously, even if the student has no plans to take the matter any further. Once the student has explored the situation, we recommend that the staff member, or the student, press the 'Blue button' to report the concern. The reporting using the '**Blue Button**' will identify the individual reporting the concern (as it reveals the email address), however at that stage if undertaken by a staff member, for example, it does not need to identify the student nor contain any personal details.

All concerns should be reported as soon as reasonably possible by pressing the '**Blue button**' so that this can be escalated in a timely fashion to the Course Director and/or Placement Director/site manager, if immediate action is required, for example, if there is a patient/service user safeguarding issue.

Staff who support students or who are mentioned as part of the concern raised may also need support. The panel will make recommendations, as appropriate.

On submission of the SUSO form, the process detailed above will be followed. If required, the panel review may lead to further informal, or formal, processes being followed with the University or placement/workplace provider. The panel will receive a student ID redacted form unless the student has given explicit consent for their ID to be disclosed beyond reporting and completing the initial SUSO form. The student will be advised that the school will protect their identity.

F. Raising Concerns: follow-up and investigation

On submission of the SUSO form the process detailed above will be followed. If required, the panel review may lead to further informal, or formal, processes being followed with the University or placement/workplace provider. The student's identity will not be disclosed without their consent and the student will be advised that the School will protect their identity by keeping their confidence, where possible.

If the student does not like to provide the identity of person/people involved (if known) then this prevents the medical school from involving specific individual(s) within any action items. However, we still encourage students to come forward so we can help prevent similar incidents from happening again.

If a situation arises however where the school was not able to resolve the concern without revealing the student's identity (for instance because their evidence is needed in court and/or for a police investigation), a member of the panel will discuss with the student how best to proceed.

If the view of the panel is that information should be passed back to the University or a placement provider, or employer. The student concerned may be invited to put their views on paper or be interviewed as part of a formal investigation. This will be done with a choice of anonymized or 'owned' information, and the student will be offered support by the School. If this takes place at NMS/UEA, the panel will proceed to resolve as required.

If the follow-up relates to a placement/workplace provider:

1. The information passed to the placement provider will include the redacted SUSO form and a covering email by the Course Director, or their Deputy.
2. This will go to a relevant person representing the placement provider in primary, community or secondary care e.g., the Medical Director, Undergraduate/Postgraduate lead, site senior manager.
3. The name of the student will not be disclosed to the professionals concerned, as it is only needed if there is any further enquiry as deemed necessary.
4. Should further enquiry be deemed necessary, in accordance with NHS procedures, the student will again be approached to check their willingness to explore the issues of concern in a more formal setting, and the panel will ensure support is provided to the student. As these procedures are routine for the NHS, and as the Course director and Trust colleagues are taking shared responsibility for raising the issues at Trust level, no student needs to fear personal adverse consequences.
5. Where possible, in relation to any enquiry passed back to a placement, the panel will take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate information about outcomes reaches relevant students.
6. The database will be updated, as described above.

G. Anonymity

Students can have their identity removed at any point within the process. They will be allocated a code to allow the student to stay connected to the complaint with their identity protected. The code will be provided by the MED Senior Adviser team.

Should a student wish to report a complaint, but not engage with this process and press the 'Red button' then they can report anonymously using the UEA Report and Support process. This will mean that we

cannot offer support to the individual within the School, but we recognize the importance to offer different routes to individuals.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Definitions and key principles

Definition of Unsafe Practice

Practice that is reasonably expected to result in physical or psychological harm to a patient; may not be of benefit to a patient; is not in accordance with evidence-based practice or is not in accordance with recognized practice by the employer. This may be as a result of an action, or an omission by the practitioner. It may also comprise all categories of abuse of patients, or clients; abuse of relatives, visitors, carers, be it physical, sexual, mental, emotional, or misappropriation of effects.

Safeguarding of vulnerable people

Where abusive behavior, as categorized above, is suspected on children or for adults at risk (whereby their mental or physical health means they are unable to protect themselves) all relevant Safeguarding Legislation and Regulations must be invoked. The School is able to seek guidance and advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who deals with safeguarding allegations against staff, including students on professional training courses.

Bullying or Harassment

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Non-verbal conduct includes postings on social media platforms. Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which may (intentionally or unintentionally) violate a person's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, which interferes with an individual's learning, working or social environment.

The Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

We are responsible to our PSRBs and our PSRBs are invaluable support for discussion regarding the seriousness of unsafe practice and the nature of the actions that should be followed. On occasion, it may be considered to be serious enough that the individual case should be brought to their attention, ideally jointly with the relevant NHS Trust or practice placement. In addition, NMS should consider carefully whether it would ignore the express wishes of a Trust, or employer if it considers that the seriousness of the unsafe practice deems such a course of action to be appropriate.

Appendix 2

The Speaking Up Speaking Out Form

The Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) form

Norwich Medical School is committed to providing a safe and positive experience for all students. It has zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviours and/or language that has been discriminatory, abusive, or harassing, including sexual harassment.

If a student has experienced seen or heard something they wish to raise a concern about then we would like to hear about it so that we can help.

Concerns may relate to patient/client/service user safety, or the learning environment on campus or practice/placement. This 'Speaking Up Speaking Out' (SUSO) form is to be completed when a student has encountered such a situation. The form will be completed by a nominated staff member together with the student to offer support and help make sure everything is captured. This form allows students/staff to document the incident, which may include information regarding members of staff (UEA campus or placement), patients, another student, or any other person the student encounters. Hence, the importance of confidentiality and sensitivity as to where it is shared and kept safe.

At the beginning of the meeting, the student can be informed that they have the option, once speaking up, to remain anonymous. Their decision can be revisited at the end of the meeting as appropriate. Similarly, the student may wish to initially discuss the incident without naming the person involved. Again, the student may later feel able to name the person.

The student may therefore choose to describe the situation/incident without naming the person(s) involved. This can be helpful in identifying recurrent themes, such as sexist language, or references to specific departments or organization, and the School can act to prevent similar situations from happening again. However, it should be noted to the student reporting, that not identifying the person involved prevents the medical school from acting against individual(s).

Once completed, the form should be used to inform the SUSO panel of the incident who will decide further action. The panel will be convened by the senior adviser and involve the relevant senior staff members. A decision will be taken as to appropriate action. The student should be asked for their consent to be contacted for follow up information and to share information about the incident if further action is taken. The student will receive feedback.

Date of meeting:

Name of person completing the form:

Position within the Norwich Medical School:

Name of student reporting the incident:

Student's course/year of study:

Name/s of any person being referred to in this report:

Please make a note of the student's experience with a summary of the issue/s:

Use the student's own words as much as possible to describe their perception and their feelings. Include date/s of the incident and where it took place (such as name of Trust, ward, primary care, lecture, seminar, online forum).

Please provide details of anyone else who is aware of this issue who could be contacted to corroborate the account.

What action has already been undertaken to resolve the issues and who was involved?

What is the student's understanding and agreement of what happens next:

Ascertain what the student wants to happen next. Ensure that the student is aware and in agreement that the information on this form will be shared with a panel of senior persons within the Norwich Medical School – this is likely to include the Head of School (or representative), a Senior Adviser, the Course Director, the Equality Inclusion, and Diversity Lead and the Placement Director if the concern is linked to the placement setting.

Please note, if there is a named person on this form, the completed form could be considered for release by the Strategy, Policy and Compliance team of the University if requested by that person under a Subject Access Request.

Action by the SUSO panel informed of this incident:

Please include: a) who has been informed; and b) whether they checked for any historical information regarding the person/place being referred to within this report.

**This report should be filed by the Senior Adviser appropriate for the professional course.
It should not be filed in the student's record unless they have given permission for a copy to be filed in their records.**