

## University of Michigan Medical School The Honor Code

### I. Purpose

The students of the University of Michigan Medical School recognize the importance of their own professional development and understand that physicians must have a high degree of personal and professional integrity. The Honor Code and Pledge serve to communicate which behaviors represent professional behavior and outline procedures for when a violation of those behaviors is committed.

### II. Policy

The Honor Code is a system of self-regulation which includes education, support, and, when necessary, investigation by the student Honor Council to assure that the conduct of all students meets appropriate professional standards. The Honor Code allows for a mechanism whereby formal disciplinary actions will generally take place only after students, represented by their Honor Council representatives, have reviewed the issue(s) of concern.

### III. Procedures

#### A. The Honor Code Pledge

The Honor Code Pledge, which all students are expected to sign before beginning classes, outlines professional obligations and standards for student conduct at the University of Michigan Medical School. In making this pledge, students agree to take responsibility for their own actions. They also accept the responsibility of helping their classmates and colleagues develop as professionals.

The Honor Code Pledge reads:

“The Medical School’s Honor Code was developed by students and faculty. This current version is based on the belief that accountability, altruism, compassion, duty, excellence, honesty, and respect for others are traits that are essential to professionalism.

As a member of the University of Michigan Medical School community I will strive to:

1. Demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and personal integrity, as these attributes are fundamental and essential to the medical profession;
2. Demonstrate altruism and compassion in my interactions with patients, colleagues, and others;

3. Behave in a responsible and respectful manner toward patients, faculty, colleagues, health care workers, and all others;
4. Be accountable for all my actions and understand my duty and commitment to my professional responsibilities and - above all - to patient care;
5. Demonstrate excellence in all my professional endeavors, including the development of medical knowledge and skills to the best of my ability;
6. Address actions or practices on the part of a colleague that significantly breach the principles of honor and integrity. If I believe that another student's behavior violates the Honor Code, I am bound by this Code to contact the Honor Council or the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education.

I understand and pledge to adhere to the above.”

#### B. Honor Code Violations

Honor Code violations include both academic misconduct and unprofessional behavior.

All aspects of a medical student's behavior reflect on his or her potential to develop the professional attributes essential to practice medicine. While academic misconduct such as cheating, plagiarism, and misrepresentation in research are all clearly violations of the Honor Code, other unprofessional behaviors are also unacceptable.

Any dishonest, unethical, irresponsible or criminal behavior, whether it takes place on or off campus, will be viewed as unprofessional and is within the jurisdiction of this Code. Abuse of power, as evidenced by discrimination, sexual harassment, or breach of confidentiality, is unacceptable. Impairment from whatever cause (e.g. chemical dependency or substance abuse) could constitute unprofessional behavior if it impacts a student's ability to function in school or impacts patient care. Lack of professionalism in any aspect of the curriculum or in patient care will not be tolerated.

#### C. The Honor Council

The Honor Council is composed of two elected student representatives from each of the four classes. Elections are held at the beginning of the first year to choose M1 representatives for a one-year term and at the end of the first year to choose rising M2s who serve three-year terms. Representatives act as Co-Presidents their fourth year. Re-elections are held to maintain a total of eight students, should existing members discontinue their terms.

The Honor Council's main role is to support an anonymous peer review of

alleged violations of the Honor Code. Honor Council representatives advise classmates on interpretation of the Honor Code and serve as student representatives on the Academic Review Boards.

The Associate Dean for Medical Student Education is advisor to the Honor Council and serves as a liaison between the Honor Council and the Medical School Administration.

#### D. Process for Handling Honor Code Violation

Allegations of academic misconduct and unprofessional behavior may be handled using several processes depending on the circumstances. This section outlines the procedures used by the Honor Council when investigating allegations of Honor Code violation.

##### 1. Reporting Alleged Honor Code Violations

If a student believes that he/she has witnessed an Honor Code violation, he/she may speak with the student in question directly, maintaining an objective, mature, and professional tone and manner. A simple discussion might show that no violation has taken place, obviating the need for Honor Council action. Both parties should keep such interactions confidential.

Alternatively, or if after the discussion the student believes that a violation of the Honor Code has occurred, in accord with paragraph 6 of the Honor Code Pledge, the student must report the incident to an Honor Council Representative or to the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education as soon as possible.

Examples of recently investigated Honor Code violations include:

- a. Taking an exam with open/easily visible books;
- b. Giving hints or answers to classmates who are yet to take an exam or quiz;
- c. Signing into a required lecture/activity and then leaving; and
- d. Accessing hospital records of classmates.

Faculty and staff who witness concerning behavior are encouraged to speak to the involved student(s) directly. If a discussion does not resolve the issue, a report to either the Honor Council or the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education is appropriate.

##### 3. Handling Alleged Honor Code Violations

- a. Once an alleged incident is reported to an Honor Council Representative, he/she will report the case to one of the Honor Council Co-Presidents. Other than finding out the initial facts of the incident (as reported by the complainant), no other fact finding/investigating will be undertaken by the Honor Council

Representative at this stage.

- b. An Honor Council Co-President will contact all individuals involved in the case, as well as the person who reported the incident, for the purpose of obtaining additional facts about the incident. Individuals who are interviewed will be told if they are a witness or if they are being investigated. For expediency, most of these contacts will occur by telephone or email; however, face-to-face meetings may be requested. Once the Co-President has obtained all information and spoken with all parties involved, he/she will prepare a report of the incident. This report will maintain the anonymity of all individuals involved.
- c. The Co-President will schedule an Honor Council meeting to discuss the case. During this meeting all parties involved will be kept anonymous and students will be referred to as Student A, Student B, etc. One Honor Council representative will be excluded from this meeting so that he/she will be eligible to serve on a Hearing Committee, should the incident reach this level of investigation.
- d. After the Honor Council meets, the Co-President will submit a report with Honor Council findings and recommendations to the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education. This report will continue to maintain the anonymity of all involved parties, who will be referred to as Student A, Student B, etc.
- e. After reviewing the report, the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education will contact the Honor Council Co-President to discuss the findings and recommendations. The Associate Dean for Medical Student Education may agree, or disagree, with the Honor Council's recommendations. If necessary, the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education may elect to speak to any of the students involved in the incident. Only at this time will the names of the students involved be provided to the Associate Dean.
- f. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout all stages of the investigation.
- g. Possible findings and recommendations include, but are not limited to:
  1. No Honor Code violation has taken place and the Honor Council recommends no further action. The Honor Council report will be kept in the office of the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education. No student names are revealed in this report, and the identities of the students involved are not revealed to the Associate Dean.

2. An Honor Code violation has taken place, but the student(s) involved understand and accept responsibility for his/her/their behavior, have not had other offenses, and the behavior in question is not so grievous that further action is warranted. In these cases the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education may meet with the student(s) involved to reinforce the importance of professional behavior. Again, a confidential report will be kept on file in the office of the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education. Notations may be made in the student's office file, but will not be recorded in a student's official docket/permanent file.
3. An Honor Code violation has taken place and the student(s) involved do not accept responsibility for the behavior, have had prior offenses, or the behavior in question is so grievous that further action is warranted. In these cases, the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education will determine if the case should be referred to an Academic Review Board or to a hearing Committee (See *Policies and Procedures for Medical Student Evaluation, Advancement and Graduation* for description of the Academic Review Boards and the Hearing Committee process.)
4. It is unclear if a violation has taken place and more facts must be gathered. The Honor Council will ask the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education to request that a Hearing Committee be convened for further fact-finding.

#### D. Report Retention

Honor Council reports will be kept on file in the office of the Associate Dean for Medical Student Education. These files are separate from individual student files. If a student is disciplined for an Honor Code violation, a formal disciplinary letter will describe how information on the disciplinary action will be maintained [e.g. whether it will be kept after the student graduates, and/or whether it will be included in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (Dean's) letter that is sent to residency programs].

#### E. Appeal Process

Students have the right to appeal decisions of the Academic Review Boards or Hearing Committees to the Medical Executive Committee as outlined in the *Policies and Procedures for Medical Student Evaluation, Advancement and Graduation* document. Decisions of the Medical School Executive Committee are final.

## IV. References

*Policies and Procedures for Medical Student Evaluation, Advancement and Graduation* [http://www.med.umich.edu/medstudents/policies/Grading\\_Policies.pdf](http://www.med.umich.edu/medstudents/policies/Grading_Policies.pdf)

## V. History of Policy

The Honor Council will review the Honor Code document on a yearly basis. Major revisions will be brought to the student body for endorsement and for approval by the Medical School's Curriculum Policy Committee and the Executive Committee.

- Original Approval:
  - Curriculum Policy Committee on June 27, 2003
  - Executive Committee on July 17, 2003
  - The Honor Council on May 18, 2011
  - Curriculum Policy Committee on May 27, 2011
- Revision:
  - Revised and reformatted in July 2013
  - Revised in October 2014

## VI. Approval:

The Honor Council  
Date: October 14, 2014

University of Michigan Medical School Curriculum Policy Committee  
Date: October 24, 2014