

Student Code of Professionalism

I. PREAMBLE

As students of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, we recognize that personal and professional integrity are vital both to the practice of medicine and to the conduct of our daily lives. We also understand that personal and professional issues may challenge our integrity at various times throughout our careers. To help confront these challenges, we have created the **Student Code of Professionalism** that makes explicit the values of this community and our responsibilities within it. These core values are simple: trust, integrity and respect. We accept the responsibility of upholding the standards and ideals of the Code of Professionalism, which seeks to support and reflect our respect for each other and for our patients.

In order to maintain an atmosphere of trust, integrity and respect, we must be willing to face situations which may be uncomfortable. Part of our training must be to learn to confront those who violate our principles and compromise the integrity of our community. Even if difficult, we must embrace this responsibility, or be ourselves in violation of the Code of Professionalism because of our failure to act.

We realize that as part of the community of the School of Medicine, our actions affect those around us and influence the quality of this institution. We understand that membership in this community is contingent upon our commitment to the Code of Professionalism and its principles of professional behavior and academic integrity. We illustrate this by signing the Code of Professionalism pledge card.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Our professional relationships should be based on mutual respect and concern. We must strive to maintain, to the greatest degree possible, an atmosphere of intellectual openness, honesty, and sincerity, recognizing that differences will exist. Everyone we encounter, whether that person be a fellow student, faculty member, staff, or patient must be treated with the same level of respect regardless of belief, practices, or identity. We must consider how our words and actions affect both our patients and peers.

The spirit of cooperation is integral to the medical profession and the foundation of our educational experience. We must promote an atmosphere of cooperation that reflects our core values in the classroom and on the wards in order to optimize both our collective learning and the delivery of patient care. As medical professionals in training, we must strive to uphold the highest standards of the medical profession. These standards of behavior are articulated in the statement of the Organization of Student Representatives (AAMC), which is published in the University of Pittsburgh medical student handbook. These include but are not limited to student responsibilities in the areas of honesty, cooperative and respectful collegial relationships, non-discrimination, confidentiality, appropriate consultation and representation, proper sexual conduct, recognition and appropriate handling of issues of impairment, research integrity, and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

III. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As medical students of the University of Pittsburgh, we are responsible for proper conduct and integrity in all of our scholastic work. We have the obligation to uphold the ethical standards of the medical profession in carrying out our academic assignments. Any violation of the principles listed below would compromise the fairness of the educational process and would erode the level of trust necessary to support our community. We are therefore honor-bound to uphold the following self-imposed principles:

1. We will not give, receive or obtain unauthorized assistance during an examination. This includes, but is not limited to copying from the exam of another student, allowing another student to copy from one's exam and reading a copy of the exam prior to the date of the exam without the consent of the instructor.
2. If we take an exam early, we shall not share the form, content, or degree of difficulty of the exam with any medical student. Similarly, if we take an exam late, we shall not receive information on the form, content, or the degree of difficulty of the exam. This is also true for exams that are re-used, as so designated by the course director.
3. We shall not falsify, misrepresent, or misuse data, reports, clinical records or research findings.
4. We shall properly cite sources and not present work for evaluation which is not our own unless properly cited as such.
5. We shall not destroy or conceal any educational materials meant for use by others.
6. We shall address any witnessed violation of the principles of academic integrity.

The faculty has the obligation of providing an environment conducive to independent work during an examination. As a measure of trust, examinations will not be monitored by the faculty except in order to answer questions or to give authorized aid. During each examination, we may be asked to sign the following pledge as a reminder of the commitment we made upon matriculation: "I have neither given nor received aid during this examination."

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF PROFESSIONALISM

If we violate the principles of the Student Code of Professionalism, we must report ourselves to an Honor Council member (as defined in Section V), course or clerkship director, or dean and conscientiously attempt to rectify the situation.

If we witness any violation of the general principles of professional conduct or academic integrity, we have an obligation to address the situation. We may initiate dialogue with the offending party in order to resolve the conflict and restore mutual respect. If we are uncomfortable or uncertain whether or not to initiate dialogue, or if this dialogue fails, we should contact an Honor Council member, Course or Clerkship Director, or Dean and ask for help. Together with these individuals, we will resolve issues at the lowest level possible, with the emphasis on mediation wherever possible. We understand, however, that certain actions may warrant a formal hearing by the Honor Council Hearing Board and that we are obligated to cooperate in the investigation or disposition of such allegations.

V. THE HONOR COUNCIL

The Honor Council is composed of nine students, (two elected from each of the four classes within the School of Medicine and one from the MD/PhD program) and three faculty members. The faculty members will be nominated by the student members of the Honor Council and appointed by the Dean. They will serve for three years on a rotating basis and may be reappointed. The selection will take place within one month after the first year Student Honor Council members are elected. The names and phone numbers of the student and faculty members of the Student Honor Council, will be posted in the student lounge and printed in the student directory.

Responsibilities of the student Honor Council members include:

1. To effectively model and communicate the principles of the Code of Professionalism
2. To foster an environment in accordance with the Code of Professionalism.
3. To serve as a resource, when requested, to help address individual Code of Professionalism concerns in an informal and confidential manner.

4. To participate in disciplinary procedures of the Honor Council Hearing Board.
5. To maintain confidentiality.

VI. INFORMAL RESOLUTION OF A CODE OF PROFESSIONALISM VIOLATION

Any student or faculty member is encouraged to bring any concern regarding his/her own actions or the actions of another student to an Honor Council member, faculty member (including but not limited to course and clerkship directors) or Dean.

Resolution utilizing outside help. Any of these individuals may provide support, counseling and information about appropriate options for informal or formal resolution of the issue. In addition, they can often help to sort out whether the concern brought forward represents a serious breach of academic integrity or professional conduct or falls into a gray area that is less clear cut. Students are assured that all such discussion will be held in confidence unless there is a potential of immediate harm to the student or to others. If the complaint brought forward is deemed to be a significant breach of the Code of Student Professionalism, it is expected that the complainant, with the support of the Honor Council members, faculty or Dean, will cooperate in pursuing the matter. If the complainant so chooses, and if appropriate, the individual consulted may aid in the process of arriving at an informal resolution. This may be attempted directly with the accused or with the aid of other Honor Council faculty or students (a maximum of 2 student members may be involved in a particular incident). Alternatively and where appropriate the complaint may be referred for a formal hearing. (See the Disciplinary Procedure of the Honor Council Integrity Hearing Board of the School of Medicine.)

Informal Resolution. Any Honor Council member(s), Course or Clerkship Director or Dean may attempt to reach an informal resolution, which would be acceptable to both parties. Measures which could be taken and recommendations which could be considered include the following:

1. Mediation or facilitated discussion between the confronting and confronted parties.
2. Letter to the community to expand awareness or to clarify misunderstandings.
3. Town Meeting or open forum to discuss issues which may concern the community as a whole.
4. Invitation of speakers to discuss social and/or academic concerns.
5. Communication with faculty or administration to raise awareness of potential problems.
6. Referral to School of Medicine resources (course director, clerkship director, Dean of Student Affairs, Office of Faculty Affairs, Director of Minority Programs, SHARP Committee, etc).
7. Referral to University of Pittsburgh resources (Office of Affirmative Action, Sexual Assault Services, Campus Police, etc).
8. Referral to a formal disciplinary process.

Records

The Honor Council will elect a secretary from among its members to keep a record of its proceedings. No names, times, dates, locations, or other information which may reveal the identity of the parties involved may be specified in these records. Upon the resolution or termination of the complaint, the secretary will summarize these records into a brief written abstract. The abstracts will be kept solely by an appointed faculty member of the Honor Council and used only to assist the Honor Council by providing guidance and establishing precedent for resolution of future conflicts. In the event that the faculty curator's term on the Honor Council ends, the abstracts will be transferred to an active member.

VII. REFERRAL TO FORMAL DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, then referral to a formal disciplinary procedure may be deemed necessary. Violations of the Student Code of Professionalism of the Medical School may be referred to the Honor Council Hearing Board. Certain violations of the Student Code of Professionalism of the Medical School that also violate the University Code of Conduct may alternatively be referred to the University Judicial Board for adjudication. Violations of the University Sexual Harassment Policy may alternatively be referred to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The referral process is described in the respective policies of the University of Pittsburgh or the Medical School.

VIII. ADMISSIONS CONCERNS

The Honor Council Chairperson is responsible for providing the Office of Admissions with the latest version of the Student Code of Professionalism for distribution to all candidates presenting for an interview at the School of Medicine.