GSBS students are embarking on a career in a profession that requires high standards of ethical conduct and honesty of its members. Those standards are embodied in the Honor Code, which all members of the University community share. The Honor Code is designed to communicate the importance and meaning of the ethical standards and to provide a structure in order to deal with any violations.

In accepting admission to the Graduate School of Biomedical Science (GSBS), students make a personal commitment to abide by an Honor Code exemplifying a standard of behavior that will form a firm basis of future professional conduct as well as respecting the academic environment of the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS). Each student, upon admission to the University, shall sign a document attesting to the fact that he/she understands the Honor Code and shall abide by it.

The Honor Code applies to all aspects of the graduate student’s education, including coursework and research. All student behavior that shows a lack of intellectual honesty or integrity is a violation of the Honor Code. Violations of the Code are categorized, but are not limited, as follows, which are considered to be scientific misconduct:

- Cheating – the giving or receiving of any unauthorized aid, assistance, or unfair advantage in any form of academic work. Group work authorized by the professor is excluded from this definition.
- Plagiarism – the copying of the language, structure, data, idea, and/or thought of another and claiming that it is one’s own original work.
- Falsification – Students who falsify by written, oral, or electric media, any circumstance relevant to their academic work, such as a signature on an official document and especially research results.
- Academic sabotage – any purposeful vandalism directed against any academic endeavor or equipment. This shall include stealing reagents, tampering with experiments, and any other act that might be detrimental to another colleague’s work.
- Unprofessional conduct – any behavior that might be considered below the standards of the profession. The Honor Board shall make a determination to refer some violations, such as sexual harassment, to the appropriate UMMS disciplinary board as is outlined in the official UMMS policies and procedures.
- Misuse of computer resources – which shall include copyright violations, illegal downloading, etc., in relation to academic work.
- Forgery, fraud, falsification of or unauthorized access to an official document or form.
- Failure to report an Honor Code violation – failure to uphold the standards of the profession by an individual reflects poorly, not only on that individual, but also on the Graduate School, and the profession as a whole. It is, therefore, important that violations of the Honor Code be reported. Failure to report violations is in itself to be considered a violation of the Code.
Honor Code Violation Review Process

An Honor Code violation review process shall be established under this Honor Code in order to deal with violations in a fair, honest, confidential, and just way. These are not civil or criminal proceedings and are not modeled after them. Instead, it is a self-review by members of an academic institution and follows the expectations of a community of scholars; discussions by all parties involved shall be honest, full, confidential, and conducted in good faith.

Students Status during an Honor Code Violation Review

The GSBS operates under the policy that all students are entitled to due process. If a student is accused of an Honor Code violation, that student remains in good standing and should continue to attend and participate fully in all educational activities until a resolution to the allegation has been reached. If a student is accused of a research-related Honor Code violation involving plagiarism, data falsification or academic sabotage, the student’s note books, data records and reagents must be secured by the GSBS and the student’s access to the laboratory revoked until a resolution to the allegation(s) has been reached. The Dean may also deny student access to their laboratory in order to insure safety of personnel or to avoid any conflict of interest.

Potential Outcomes of an Honor Code Violation Review

If a student is found in violation of the honor code, he/she may receive one of the following penalties:

- Required to meet with the Dean, or his designee, to review the Honor Code policy and its purpose
- Required to retake the Responsible Conduct of Science course
- Receives an official reprimand written by the Dean of the Graduate School and is placed on Academic Probation for two semesters
- Suspended from the University for not more than two semesters
- Receives a failing grade in the exam/class in which the violation occurred
- Fails the course in which the violation occurred and is dismissed from the GSBS
- Dismissed for cause from the GSBS. If dismissed for cause, a student cannot be employed by UMMS. International students who have VISA requirements may be required to return to their country of origin
- If it is determined that there is insufficient evidence of a violation, the allegation against the student will be dismissed. Information regarding findings and documents pertaining to disciplinary action will not be kept in the student’s file following exoneration, but a sealed copy will be kept by the Dean until the student graduates.
Reporting or Responding to an Honor Code Violation

While there is not a statute of limitations regarding the reporting of Honor Code violations, reports of Honor Code violations should normally be made in writing to the GSBS Dean within two weeks of the alleged violation. It must be based on a reasonable good faith belief that a violation has occurred. The report should include the names of the student(s) involved, nature of the alleged violation, time, place, and date of the alleged violation, statement of the facts of the case, and names of others having knowledge of the allegation.

Upon receipt of the honor code violation report, the Dean will charge the Associate Dean or the Associate Dean’s designee to arrange a meeting with the reporter and a meeting with the accused to discuss the allegations. The accused will be informed in writing of the allegations made against him/her. The Associate Dean may meet with other relevant parties as warranted. The Associate Dean may also request access to relevant physical evidence. These meetings should take place within 5 academic days from the date the report was received by the Dean. The Associate Dean will issue a letter informing the accused of the findings of this primary investigation.

- If the accused admits to the violation, the student waives their right to an Honor Board hearing and the Associate Dean will make an assessment of the penalty or resolution for the primary findings.
- If the accused disagrees with the primary findings, the student may appeal the findings, which will be referred by the Dean to the Honor Board for review (see Standards – Honor Board). The Dean shall inform the accused of the Honor Board process by outlining a timetable for: Honor Board Hearing, Finding Review, Notification of Finding and Action and Final Appeal. The Honor Board should convene within two to four weeks of the Associate Dean’s meeting with the accused.
- The Honor Board must review allegations of misconduct by independently interviewing those making the allegations and the accused. The accused must be informed in writing of the allegations against him/her resulting from the primary investigation prior to the Honor Board interview. Should additional but related allegations against the accused emerge from the interview process, the accused must be informed in writing of additional allegations and will be subsequently interviewed to review these new allegations.
- The Honor Board must report its findings to the Dean within 2 to 4 weeks from the date initially convened. If additional allegations arise necessitating further time for processing and presentation to the accused, the Dean will be petitioned by the Honor Board chair for an extension. Honor Board extensions may not exceed 2 weeks.
- The Dean shall review the findings and then forward the findings with a suggested action to the Dean’s Advisory Committee for review. This committee will review the findings of the Honor Board for adherence to standards and procedures and shall recommend to the Dean a final course of action.
• The accused shall receive a letter from the Dean with the final outcome within 3 days of receiving the Dean’s Advisory Committee’s recommendation. The Honor Board Chair will receive a copy of the outcome. The Honor Code violation reporter may be told only that the matter has been concluded.

• At any point in the process prior to a hearing before the Honor Board, if the accused and accuser can come to a resolution and a means for correcting the situation which meets the Dean’s approval, and no finding of violation is indicated, the issue will be dismissed and any record of the incident will be removed from the student’s file.

Honor Code Violation Appeals

When a student is accused of an Honor Code violation the Associate Dean shall undertake an initial investigation of the allegations. The results of this review constitute primary findings.

The Dean will issue a letter informing the accused of the primary findings. The Dean or Associate Dean may seek resolution through discussion with involved parties.

1. If resolution is not possible, the Honor Board will be convened. This Honor Board hearing constitutes the first appeal.

2. If the student accepts the primary findings, the student waives their right to first appeal via an Honor Board.

3. If resolution is achieved and the allegations are withdrawn, the case against the accused is dismissed.

Findings and recommendations of the Honor Board will be reviewed by the Dean who will issue an Action for review by the Dean’s Advisory Committee. This committee shall advise the Dean:

1. Whether school policy and standards were followed during the case.

2. Whether the proposed disciplinary action is appropriate.

If policy and standards were not followed, the Dean will reconvene the Honor Board to re-evaluate the case.

If policy and standards were followed, the Honor Board findings against the student stands and results in a second letter from the Dean informing the student of the resulting disciplinary action (effective immediately). The Registrar receives a copy of this letter and adjusts the student’s academic record as necessary.

The student may make a final appeal to the Dean challenging the findings and/or disciplinary action. This appeal must be made in writing within 3 days of receipt of the Dean’s action letter. The Dean will then issue a final decision. This decision is not subject to appeal.
### Example Honor Board Proceedings Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Initiated</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Honor Code Violation reported.</td>
<td>01-Jan</td>
<td>01-Jan</td>
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</table>
| 2    | Dean or Associate Dean for Curriculum & Academic Affairs meets with the accuser(s) and accused to discuss the issue and to seek an understanding and/or resolution of the violation. If the violation is substantiated through these preliminary investigations, the accused may select a or b as shown below:   
  a. Admit to the charge and submit to Dean’s final decision (step 14)  
     Note: Admission of guilt does not preclude appeal of the Dean’s recommended action; the student will still be allowed a final appeal of the Dean’s decision.   
  b. Deny the charge(s) and appeal to the Dean who convenes an Honor Board informing the student and Honor Board of initial charges and procedures. | 06-Jan    | 08-Jan    |
| 3    | Honor Board sign confidentiality/conflict of interest documents.                                                                                                                                         |           |           |
| 4    | Accused reviews Honor Board composition for conflict of interest                                                                                                                                          | 10-Jan    | 12-Jan    |
| 5    | Honor Board Hearings normally begin within 10 days of step 4.                                                                                                                                          | 18-Jan    |           |
| 6    | Honor Board evaluates relevant materials and conducts interviews with accuser(s) and other relevant witnesses.                                                                                         | 18-Jan    | 19-Jan    |
| 7    | Honor Board summarizes their initial findings in writing. The initial findings are presented to the accused.                                                                                           | 20-Jan    | 21-Jan    |
| 8    | The accused is interviewed by the honor board and may be accompanied by an advocate. The advocate must be a UMMS employee/student but may not be a legal professional. The advocate may not participate in the hearing. | 24-Jan    | 26-Jan    |
| 9    | The Honor Board issues a letter outlining their findings and if evidence supports that a violation has been committed, recommended disciplinary action. This normally occurs within 20 days of step 5       | 28-Jan    |           |
| 10   | The Dean reviews the findings/recommendation and forwards the Honor Board letter to the Dean’s Academic Advancement Committee with a letter drafting the Dean’s intended action.                             | 28-Jan    |           |
| 11   | The Dean’s Academic Advancement Committee reviews the Honor Board findings/recommendations for adherence to GSBS policies and standards and communicates their recommendation to the Dean                        | 28-Jan    | 31-Jan    |
| 12   | The Dean issues letter (by e-mail and/or signed certified receipt) to the accused indicating the Honor Board findings, the Dean’s Recommended action and the process for appeal.                               | 01-Feb    |           |
| 13   | The student may submit a final appeal to the Dean within 3 days of receipt of finding/action letter (described in Step 12).                                                                             | 01-Feb    | 03-Feb    |
| 14   | The Dean will issue a final decision in writing (by e-mail and/or signed certified receipt and normally within 3 days of Step 13). This decision cannot be appealed.                                          | 04-Feb    | 07-Feb    |
**Honor Board**

The Honor Board shall consist of seven members and three alternates. Five of the six members and all three alternates are students appointed to a three-year term by the Graduate Student Body Committee (GSBC). The sixth member is the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Academic Affairs or his/her designee who shall act as the faculty advisor and serve ex officio. The seventh member is a Coordinator of the GSBS course “Professionalism and Responsible Conduct” or his/her designee.

Terms shall be renewable once if the student so wishes and it is approved by the GSBC. The members of the Honor Board shall appoint a chair, vice-chair, and secretary. The chair is responsible for calling the meetings and ensuring that proper procedures are followed. The vice-chair serves in the absence of the chair and the secretary is responsible for keeping records of all hearings. All formal motions shall be passed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board.

The accused may ask the chair of the Board to replace any member of the Board due to a possible bias or other conflict of interest against the accused. This must be done prior to any hearing and the request must be in writing to the chair with a reason for the removal. The chair’s decision to remove any Board member shall be final. An alternate will take the place of the removed individual. Any member of the Board who feels they might have a conflict of interest in any case presented to the Board must remove themselves.

It is the duty of the Honor Board to hear cases presented to it and render their findings to the Dean, based on a clear and convincing standard of proof as to the validity of the charge. The accused has the right to hear all evidence against him/her and to present evidence to refute the charges. The Dean shall examine the evidence and the Honor Board’s findings and render a decision. The Honor Board may, at their discretion, make a recommendation for an outcome to the Dean, but the final decision will be made by the Dean.

**Convening the Honor Board**

When an Honor Code violation has been reported the Honor Board is convened at the request of the student, the Graduate School Dean or the accused.

**Privacy and Honor Board Records**

All members of the GSBS Honor Board must sign an agreement stating that they will not disclose any information from hearings or investigations to persons who are not members of the Honor Board or individuals that are part of the accused appeal process. This includes information from any hearing, the identity of the accused, the reason for the investigation, and the outcome of the hearing. Any individual suspected of disclosing information may be dismissed from the GSBS Honor Board as determined by the remaining members of the Boards or Committee.
The Honor Board file will be kept secured in the Graduate School Office. Records from hearings will be accessible to the Dean, the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Academic Affairs, and the Honor Board chair only for official business. In the fall of each year, the Dean will review the files for the purpose of destroying outdated records and updating the files.

An outdated record is defined as one older than six years, or the record of a hearing in which only a reprimand was given and the accused has since left the University.

Information regarding findings and documents pertaining to disciplinary action will not be placed in the student’s file following exoneration, but a sealed copy must be kept by the Dean in the event of further honor code violations or future litigation. The Dean and the Honor Board Chair may only open records.

The Dean, the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Academic Affairs and the Honor Board chair may inform GSBS Assembly and the GSBC of all final decisions of the Honor Board, but not ongoing proceedings. The identities of the individuals involved must be protected during these reports.