

# University of Massachusetts Medical School

School of Medicine Honor Code – Doc. EPC 15-6-1

(approved June 1, 2015)

## I. DEFINITION AND OVERVIEW

### Statement of Honor Code:

**In embarking on my career in medicine, I will safeguard the reputation and uphold the standards of the profession by promoting honesty in academic and professional activities.**

**This Honor Code embodies the level of integrity we expect of ourselves and of our peers. The Code binds us together by common principles that transcend personal interest and prepares us to shoulder our future responsibilities.**

The School of Medicine's (SOM) Honor Code's commitment to professionalism is described in both this Honor Code and in Technical Standard Five (Behavioral and Social Attributes, (<http://www.umassmed.edu/studentaffairs/handbook.aspx>))

As a community of scholars and future physicians, the Honor Code carries with it a responsibility to mutually assure the integrity of the community. This reflects the obligation of licensed physicians to maintain the ethics of the profession  
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/borim/physicians/mandated-reporting/peer-rpts/peer-reports.html>

It is expected that each student will make a personal commitment to abide by the Honor Code, which includes both self-monitoring and reporting violations. The Honor Code applies to students at the SOM and is enforced by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA) and an Honor Board. All students who are enrolled in a degree-granting program from the SOM will be held to the Honor Code until they receive their final degree(s). The Honor Board consists of faculty and students, with a faculty Chair named by the Dean. Violations include actions that fall into behavioral, academic, legal and safety categories. Consequences of all violations include self-assessment and remediation. Some violations may require course repeat, service work, or dismissal. Categories of violations are tiered and cumulative such that repetitive violations, even of a lower tier, may lead to increased consequences.

## II. HONOR CODE VIOLATIONS

An Honor Code violation can occur in a variety of circumstances. In an attempt to develop a clear, fair, and meaningful process, the Honor Code provides examples of such violations (Tiers 1 – 4 listed below) (see Appendix 1 attached hereto). Potential consequences resulting from an Honor Code violation may be impacted by the Tier in which the conduct falls, and repeat violations (even of a lower Tier), may lead to increased consequences. **Please note the**

examples provided below and in Appendix A are not in any way intended to be comprehensive.

Tier 1: A single Honor Code violation with little to no impact on others. This includes but is not limited to: communications such as sending of emails with inappropriate language or tone, or missing required curricular activities without permission of the responsible faculty member/activity leader.

Tier 2: Repeat Tier 1 Honor Code violations, or an Honor Code violation targeted to specifically impact others. This includes but is not limited to: disrespectful behavior towards faculty, peers, staff, or patients; communications intended to injure a specific party/ies; intentional disruption of academic or clinical activities.

Tier 3: Disregard for clear guidelines regarding assignments and assessments such as collaboration on individual work, plagiarism, use of resources when not permitted, duplication and/or sharing of protected curricular materials such as previous years' exam questions or answers, exercises, quizzes.

Tier 4: Potential criminal activity, willful disregard for established patient safety practices, intentional provision of patient care outside of level of training, any intentional regulatory transgressions whether criminal in nature or not (including but not limited to tampering with official records, intentional access to PHI for personal gain, willful disregard of a conflict of interest).

### III. VIOLATIONS REPORTING

Honor Code violations may be self-reported, reported by peers, or by faculty, staff or other members of the community.

1. **Self-report**: If a student violates, or has a concern about a possible violation of, the Honor Code, either intentionally or unintentionally, that student must inform the ADSA about this matter as soon as possible
2. **Peer report**: In order to promote the principle that students are mutually invested in the community and as such are responsible for each other, if a student has concerns that another student has violated the Honor Code they are required to<sup>1</sup> report the violation as soon as possible to the ADSA.
3. **Faculty report**: If a member of the faculty believes a student has violated the Honor Code they must speak directly with the student, and if the violation is a repeated Tier 1 offense, or involves conduct in Tiers 2-4, or if concern remains about the student's conduct after discussion with the student, the faculty member shall report same to the

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<sup>1</sup> The Honor Code obligates all students to report a suspected Honor Code violation. Failure to report a suspected Honor Code violation is itself considered a violation of the Honor Code. As such, the student who does not report a suspected violation may be subject to Honor Board review.

ADSA. Otherwise, the matter shall be resolved by and between the student and the faculty member, in which event all concerning same shall be forwarded to and retained confidentially by the ADSA and shall not become part of the student's academic file/record. A Learning Community Mentor may be consulted by a student in confidence, when the student has concerns regarding an Honor Code violation. Such consultation does not excuse the student's obligation to self-report or peer report. Mentors are required to report violations that fall under the Federal Clery and Title IX laws.

4. **Staff or other community member report:** If any other member of the SOM campus community believes that a student may have violated the Honor Code, they should report same to the ADSA.

#### **IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

1. Students are required to clarify any questions they may have regarding application of the Honor Code to their practice in advance of any activities that may be considered an Honor Code violation. For example, a student who would like to access information to prepare a report but is uncertain whether this would be permitted should obtain clarity on same before proceeding.
2. Students are required to report even an unintentional violation of the Honor Code. For example, an unintentional violation might include a student who leaves sensitive information with patient identifiers on it in a public space and only realizes it after the fact.
3. If a student has any questions or uncertainty concerning the application of this Honor Code, they must consult with the ADSA.
4. The Honor Board addresses any challenges to decisions up to but not including its own decisions, which are managed through the appeal process. Such challenges might include Tier-identification or successful completion of self-assessment or remediation.
5. The School of Medicine is required to determine, publish, and uphold Technical Standards for admission and retention in the School. The Honor Code must not conflict with and does not replace these Technical Standards.
6. Students are expected to adhere to all federal, state, and local laws. Activities in violation of these laws will be grounds for review by the Honor Board and potentially other SOM committees, including but not limited to the Committee To Review Criminal Background Checks, and such activities may be grounds for dismissal.

#### **V. HONOR BOARD PROCESS**

If an alleged Honor Code violation is forwarded to the ADSA, the ADSA shall meet with the involved student to discuss the allegation and any documents/materials that relate to the allegation. Following this meeting, the ADSA shall determine the Tier in which the conduct

falls. If the conduct is deemed a Tier 1 violation, the ADSA shall determine if an Honor Board needs to be convened to consider same. If the ADSA determines that no Honor Board needs to be convened, the matter shall be resolved by and between the student and the ADSA, in which event all records concerning same shall be retained confidentially by the ADSA and shall not become part of the student's academic file/record.

If the conduct is deemed a Tier 2 – 4 violation, or a Tier 1 violation for which the ADSA decides an Honor Board must be convened, the student shall be notified in writing of the allegation at issue and that an Honor Board is being convened to consider and rule on same.

Once the ADSA determines an Honor Board must be convened, if the student admits to the Honor Code violation the student shall prepare a written self-assessment before meeting with the Honor Board. This "self-assessment" report must describe in detail the events relating to the allegation and explain her/his misunderstanding or reason for violating the Honor Code, describe how s/he will remediate the violation, and outline what s/he will do to avoid such a future transgression. This self-assessment will be submitted to the ADSA for delivery of same to the Honor Board Chair. The Honor Board shall then convene to vote on any discipline to the student. The Honor Board shall consider the student's self-assessment in making such a vote. If the Honor Board votes to impose some disciplinary action, the Honor Board process commences at Step 16 (below).

Excepting the above, the Honor Board "Process" is as follows:

1. A specific Honor Board shall consist of the following seven (7) individuals:
  - a. the Chair
  - b. four (4) representatives from the SOM faculty selected by the ADSA from a panel of faculty previously appointed by the Dean of the SOM, and
  - c. two (2) representatives of the SOM student body, selected by the Chair from a panel of eligible students (as defined below).
2. The Chair of the Honor Board shall have been selected by the Dean of the School of Medicine and shall serve on all Honor Boards until replaced by a new Chair selected by the Dean.
3. Selection of Faculty Members to the Honor Board Panel:
  - a. For any given Honor Board, at least one (1) faculty member will be from a Basic Science department, and one (1) faculty member will be from a Clinical Science department.
  - b. On any given Honor Board, attempts will be made to have an even distribution of selected faculty members from Basic Science and Clinical Science departments.
  - c. Faculty selected to a given Honor Board will receive the appropriate training on ethics and applicable SOM policies.
  - d. Faculty members who are Learning Community Mentors or who serve on the Progress Board are not eligible to serve on any Honor Board.

- e. Faculty members may not be from the department in which a violation is alleged to have occurred.
4. Selection of Eligible Students for the Honor Board Panel:
- a. At the beginning of each academic year, the Office of Student Affairs shall have randomly selected two (2) students from each Learning Community House in each class year (40 students) to serve as Student Members of the Honor Board Panel. Once selected to serve, Student Members of the Honor Board Panel remain on the panel for the duration of their tenure at the School of Medicine.
  - b. Students selected to serve on the Honor Board Panel must not have any open/unresolved professionalism concerns.
  - c. MD-PhD candidates may serve on the SOM Honor Board Panel only while actively enrolled in the SOM (i.e. not during their PhD years).
  - d. Student members on the Honor Board Panel will receive the appropriate training on ethics and applicable SOM policies at the start of the academic year.
  - e. Student members of the Honor Board Panel will also be available to fellow SOM students for consultation about the Honor Code.
  - f. Any student selected to serve on the Honor Board Panel may request to be removed from the Panel after consultation with the ADSA.
  - g. The ADSA shall be responsible for asking a student member who develops a professionalism concern to step down from the Honor Board Panel.
  - h. Student representatives to a given Honor Board Panel may not be from the Learning Community House or academic class of the identified student.
5. All members of a given Honor Board will be required to sign non-disclosure agreements, which will be kept in the Office of Student Affairs. In order to maintain consistency between decisions, all members of a given Honor Board may review past Honor Board decisions or illustrative examples, provided that no identifying information is revealed. All members of a given Honor Board have the responsibility to recuse themselves if they feel prior interactions with the student under discussion would inappropriately impact their ability to participate on the Board objectively. Members may also decline to serve on a given Honor Board for scheduling reasons.
6. The identified student will have the opportunity to review the Honor Board voting membership and bring forward for the Chair's consideration any concerns about particular members appointed to serve on the board. The Chair in the exercise of their sole and exclusive discretion shall determine whether the Honor Board shall stand as is or if a member shall be replaced.
7. Once the Honor Board has been established, the ADSA shall schedule and convene the initial meeting. Additional meetings shall be convened by the Chair. All meetings shall be conducted by the Chair.

8. The involved student has the following rights:
  - a. The opportunity to be accompanied by one (1) non-attorney advisor or support person. However, in a case in which criminal charges have been or reasonably may be filed, the student may use an attorney as his/her advocate, in which case the Honor Board shall also have that option.
  - b. The opportunity to testify on one's own behalf.
  - c. The opportunity to present witnesses who can speak about the alleged conduct at issue.
  - d. The opportunity to present other documentary evidence on one's own behalf.
  - e. The opportunity to comment on any documentation submitted to the Honor Board relative to the allegation.
  - f. The right to be informed of the outcome of the hearing; and
  - g. The opportunity to file "appeals" as further described below.
9. The ADSA shall endeavor to ensure the student is fully aware of the above rights; they shall be available to the student to answer any questions about any aspect / step in this Process; and further, they shall deliver to the Honor Board any relevant documents / evidence in their possession, custody or control that relate to and/or have material bearing on the alleged honor code violation.
10. All seven (7) members of the Honor Board must be present in person at the meeting(s) to accept and consider all submitted evidence and vote on same. If an emergency arises (as found by the Chair) and a member of the Honor Board is unable to be so present and participate, a replacement member shall be selected in the manner proscribed above. If the full seven (7) member Honor Board is not able to be present in person at any meeting, said meeting shall be cancelled and rescheduled.
11. The Honor Board may ask questions of the involved student and any witnesses and shall review all submitted documentation related to the allegation.
12. Honor Board hearings are private and confidential. Witnesses shall testify singularly. The involved student shall only be present at the hearing during the time of their own testimony, and accordingly, the involved student may not question or cross-examine any other involved student or any witness.
13. Following the hearings, the Honor Board shall commence deliberations on (i) whether an Honor Code violation occurred; and/or (ii) whether any disciplinary action shall be taken. No one other than members of the Honor Board may be present during such deliberations. Such decisions shall be based on the Honor Board's review of the proffered evidence (testimonial and documentary) and shall also include consideration of all other professionalism incident reports and Honor Code violations by the student during his/her matriculation. Decisions of the Honor Board will be by majority vote – the standard to be used shall be a "preponderance of the evidence" – meaning the decision is "more likely than not" – and not "beyond a reasonable doubt." The Chair shall not vote except in the event of a tie.

14. If the Honor Board votes that an Honor Code violation occurred, it shall then vote on the disciplinary action to be taken – either remediation, internal oversight, or formal sanctions up to and including suspension or dismissal. These formal consequences will be applied in a tiered manner as described earlier in this Policy, depending on the severity, circumstances, and number of previous violations.
15. The Honor Board’s deliberations shall be summarized in a memo form, listing the evidence submitted, the identification of any witnesses who testified, any documents / materials that were submitted, and the Honor Board’s majority decision and recommendation(s) for disciplinary action, if any. This decision will be provided to the ADSA for delivery to the involved student.
16. A record of the involved allegation will be kept in the Office of Student Affairs but will not be placed in the student's permanent record unless that is part of the Honor Board’s decision. The record will be made available to any future Honor Board convened to consider any other allegation of Honor Code violation on the part of that student. Suspensions or formal sanction such as probation are required by AAMC policy to be noted on the student’s transcript and therefore become part of the student's permanent record.
17. If the Honor Board votes that no Honor Code violation occurred, no record will be kept in the student’s official file of the charge or of the proceeding and no mention of the charge or of the proceedings will be made to any SOM committee. The records of the proceeding, including the letter to the student informing him/her of the decision exonerating him/her, will be placed in a sealed file and will be destroyed when the student graduates.
18. Remediation, as determined by an Honor Board, is required for conduct violations in Tiers 2, 3, or 4, unless the consequence is dismissal. The remediation must include clear expectations for outcomes of the remediation and delineate the consequences of failed remediation and subsequent offenses. This information will be collected and monitored by the ADSA.
19. The student may appeal the Honor Board’s decision(s) regarding disciplinary action to the Dean of the School of Medicine by providing written notice to the Dean within ten (10) days following delivery of the Honor Board’s written decision. The Dean’s decision on any such appeal is final.
20. Any formal sanction that delays or terminates a student’s academic progress shall be reviewed by the Progress Board before implementation, according to the procedures noted in the SOM Student Handbook. The Progress Board will review the report and recommendations from the Honor Board to determine if, based on the severity of the violation, the Honor Board’s recommendations involving delay or termination of a student’s academic progress will be upheld. The SOM Student Handbook addresses the “Procedure for Review of an Appeal.”

21. If the student is aggrieved by the Progress Board's decision, they may appeal same to the Dean of the School of Medicine by providing written notice to the Dean within ten (10) days following delivery of the Progress Board's written decision. The Dean's decision on any such appeal is final.
22. The ADSA shall maintain a record confirming procedural compliance with this Honor Board Process and the outcome of same (the actual Decision / Appeal ruling).
23. Honor Board meetings will be supported through the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), under the oversight of the ADSA; however OSA members will not be present at any Honor Board meeting and the ADSA will not be a voting member of any Honor Board. The Honor Board is a Technical Standards Subcommittee addressing Technical Standard Five.

An Honor Board is not a criminal or civil trial and is not modeled after those more formal and adversarial proceedings. Instead, it is an internal review by members of an academic institution and follows the expectations of a community of scholars: that parties will discuss honestly, fully, and in good faith what they have observed.

In the case of an alleged violation that relies on witness accounts, the Chair may request that such witnesses appear in person before the Honor Board. Signed written statements will be accepted in lieu of a personal appearance only in extenuating circumstances, as found by the Chair. The involved student may either call witnesses or ask the Honor Board to request the presence of a witness. However, the Honor Board cannot compel any witness to testify against their will. As noted above, students who allege academic dishonesty on the part of another student must accept the responsibility of testifying before making such an allegation.

Examples of evidence that will be considered by the Honor Board include: written evidence, such as exams and papers; material previously reviewed by other groups or committees; and eyewitness reports. Evidence that has not been witnessed first-hand, however, will not be considered. The identified student is encouraged to bring an advocate into the hearing room with him or her. The role of the advocate is to assist the student in presenting his/her side of the case as effectively as possible, not to present that case for the student.

Honor Board hearings are private and confidential. Deliberations of the Honor Board will be private and restricted to members of the Honor Board. All information concerning allegations of misconduct is privileged and confidential and will not be discussed outside of the appropriate process. If the allegation originates from a faculty member, the faculty member must have discussed the matter directly with the identified student before making a decision to bring it to the attention of the ADSA. Honor Board hearings are student-specific and are designed to support personal and professional growth and behavioral change.

Decisions of all Honor Boards / Appeals will be kept, regardless of the outcome, until the student graduates. However, only the ADSA and members of an Honor Board can retroactively access the identifiable versions of that particular file if needed for reference with regard to a given

student. Otherwise, all Honor Board proceedings will be de-identified in order to be used for educational policy development, instruction, or the establishment of Honor Board precedent. The de-identified Honor Board proceedings will be made available for consultation only by subsequent Honor Board members and the ADSA.

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1:** Categories of Tiered Violations

**Appendix 2:** Guidelines for Professional Behavior

**Appendix 3:** Honor Code Report (Blank Copy)

**Appendix 1. Examples of Tiered Violations:**

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Examples: Foundational and Advanced Studies</b>	<b>Examples: Clinical</b>
<b>1</b>	Behavioral 1  single offense, no or little impact on others)	Inappropriate non- specific use of E-mail	Lateness
<b>2</b>	Behavioral 2  repetitive or clear adverse impact on others	Repeated Behavioral 1 violation  Disruptive small group participation	Repeated Behavioral 1 violation  HIPAA violation without malice or inappropriate use
<b>3</b>	Academic Dishonesty	Cheating on assignment or assessment	Cheating on assignment or assessment, including falsification of patient information on academic assignment (e.g. case report)
<b>4</b>	Dangerous or Illegal  dangerous, dishonest, or repetitive behavioral issues	Illegal activities	Action posing a risk to patient safety

## **Appendix 2. Guidelines for Professional Behavior**

The Faculty and Student Body of the University of Massachusetts Medical School regard the following as guidelines for professional conduct. These areas are derived from the school's Technical Standards (see Student Handbook). We are proud that the vast majority of our students exemplified these behaviors naturally. All members of the UMass Medical School community are expected to act professionally in the school, hospital and in the community, with or in front of patients, families, members of the healthcare team, and others in the professional environment (school, hospital, clinic, office) including members of the faculty and administration, other students, standardized patients, and staff.

### **Displaying Honesty and Integrity**

- Consistently displays ethical behavior
- Does not misrepresent or falsify information and/or actions e.g. does not cheat
- Takes credit only for own work/contributions and impartially gives credit to others for their work

### **Maintaining a professional demeanor**

- Treats peers, faculty, staff and patients with respect in individual settings; e.g. not arrogant or insolent
- Treats peers, faculty, staff and patients with respect in lecture and conference settings; e.g. turning cell phone and pager to vibrate, refraining from disturbing others via text messaging, talking, activities not related to class, etc.
- Maintains professional demeanor even when stressed; e.g. not verbally hostile, abusive, dismissive or inappropriately angry with peers, faculty, staff or patients
- Never expresses anger physically
- Abides by professionally accepted boundaries for interpersonal relationships; e.g. never uses his or her position for personal gain or to engage in romantic or sexual relationships with patients or members of their families
- Conforms to policies governing behavior; e.g. confidentiality, sexual harassment, consensual amorous relationship, hazing, use of alcohol and any other existing policy of the medical school or clinical system
- Appearance, dress, professional behavior follow generally accepted professional norms

### **Showing respect for patients' dignity and rights**

- Makes appropriate attempts to establish rapport with patients or families
- Shows sensitivity to the patients' or families' feelings, needs, wishes and diversity
- Demonstrates appropriate empathy
- Shows respect for patient autonomy
- Maintains confidentiality of patient information

### **Accurate self-reflection**

- Correctly estimates own abilities or knowledge
- Recognizes own limits and appropriately seeks help; e.g. from peers, faculty, tutoring services

### **Responding to supervision**

- Accepts and incorporates reasonable feedback in a non-resistant and non-defensive manner
- Accepts responsibility for own errors

**Demonstrating dependability and appropriate initiative**

- Completes tasks in a timely fashion without needing reminders; e.g. papers, reports, examinations, appointments, patient notes, patient care tasks
- Assists and facilitates learning among peers
- Appropriately available for professional responsibilities; e.g. attends required classes and activities, is available when on clinical service, responds to email and pager
- Takes on appropriate responsibilities willingly; e.g. not resistant or defensive
- Takes on appropriate patient care activities; e.g. does not “turf” patients or responsibilities

**Interacting with other members of the team**

- Shows sensitivity to the needs, feelings, wishes of team members; e.g. lab, small groups, projects, other members of the health care team
- Relates and cooperates well with members of the team
- Communicates with other members of the team in a timely manner

(revised 1/30/07 from policy approved by the Educational Policy Committee 11/2001)

