

# Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is defined as a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage<sup>1</sup>. The Emory University School of Medicine seeks to involve every member of the community in cultivating a culture of academic integrity and promoting communal standards.

Pursuant to this goal, the students, faculty, and administration of the Emory University School of Medicine have created the Honor Code, which presents our standards of academic integrity and outlines the consequences for violations thereof.

This section of the student handbook outlines the School of Medicine Honor Code, along with academic regulations and procedures, promotional guidelines, graduation requirements, and the granting of awards and honors.

## Emory University School of Medicine Honor Code

### Preamble

The students, faculty, and administration of the Emory University School of Medicine join together in support of this MD Student Honor Code for the purposes of (a) providing an atmosphere of mutual trust, concern, and respect; (b) fostering honorable and ethical behavior; and c) cultivating lifelong professional conduct.

To promote this purpose, matters regarding academic misconduct shall fall under the jurisdiction of the Honor Code. Matters outside of those that fall within the jurisdiction of the Honor Code, such as violations of the Student Conduct Code, will be handled in accordance with the applicable policy.

Students who matriculate in the Emory University School of Medicine must agree to abide by and uphold the Honor Code.

### Statement of the MD Student Honor Code

Any action indicating lack of integrity and/or dishonesty in academic matters is considered a violation of academic ethics. Such offenses include, but are not limited to, engaging in or attempting to engage in cheating, plagiarism, sabotage, falsifying or manipulating data, misrepresenting attendance, or knowingly passing off work of another as one's own.

### Honor Code Violations Definitions and Policies Include:

**Cheating.** Cheating includes knowingly acquiring, receiving, or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration, provision or utilization of un-authorized aids, or impermissible collaboration.

**Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is the act of incorporating into one's own work, the work or expression of another without appropriately and adequately indicating the source.

**Sabotage.** Sabotage is defined as intentional and malicious actions that impair another student's academic performance.

**Falsifying or manipulating data.** Falsifying or manipulating data is the act of creating, enhancing, or otherwise changing actual results in academic, clinical, or research matters.

Acts observed that appear to be in violation of the Honor Code must be reported to the Honor Council as detailed below. Failure on the part of a student to report such apparent violation will itself be considered a violation of the Honor Code.

Students are expected to abide by the terms of the Honor Code and a lack of knowledge of the actions prohibited by the Honor Code is not a valid defense and does not excuse a violation of the Honor Code.

To uphold this Honor Code and its purpose, an instructor may ask students to sign the following pledge at the end of all final examinations, quizzes, and other important projects:

“On my honor, I have neither given nor received any aid on this (examination, quiz, or paper), nor am I aware of anyone who did.”

*The absence of this pledge does not exempt the student or the assignment from abiding by this Honor Code.*

Each student upon entering the School of Medicine must sign a matriculation pledge stating that the student has read, understands, and is aware of the student’s responsibilities under the Honor Code.

## **The Medical Student Council on Honor**

The Medical Student Council on Honor, hereafter, referred to as the Honor Council, will have jurisdiction over the supervision of the Honor Code as applies to medical students.

The Medical Student Honor Council will consist of 5 (five) elected student representatives (1 M1, 1 M2, 1 M3, and a Chair and Vice-Chair both elected from the M4 class), and two faculty members appointed by the EAD. Two alternate members from each class will be elected. In addition, the EAD will appoint two faculty member alternates in basic science and two in clinical education.

## **Student Representatives and Alternates**

In April of each academic year following implementation, the members and alternates of the rising M2, M3, and M4 classes will be elected by their own class members to serve on the Honor Council for a one-year term.

The elections will be open to any student, including previous members of the Honor Council, who wishes to run. In order to be eligible to serve as a Student Representative or Alternate Student Representative, a student must remain in good standing and cannot have previously been found to be in violation of the Honor Code.

M1 students will elect Honor Council members and alternates following the first two months of classes. Vacancies will be filled by special election of the respective student classes.

## **Faculty Representatives and Alternates**

To establish a pool of four faculty members, two of whom are replaced each year, the following process will be utilized:

- The EAD will appoint two faculty members (one from the pre-clinical faculty and the alternate from the clinical faculty) to serve a two-year term, and two faculty members (one clinical, one alternate pre-clinical) to serve a one-year term.
- After one year, two more faculty members (one clinical and one pre-clinical alternate) will be appointed by the EAD for full two-year terms. Members who served during the first year for a one-year term will be eligible for reappointment.
- From that time forward, each appointed member could serve no more than two years without reappointment by the EAD.
- Faculty members will be limited to three consecutive terms.
- Vacancies will be filled by appointments by the EAD.

## **Honor Council Liaison**

An Assistant or Associate Dean in the School of Medicine will function as an ad hoc advisor to the Honor Council indefinitely in order to provide guidance and continuity in the day to day operations of the Honor Council. The Honor Council Liaison (hereafter called the HC Liaison) will only be notified that an alleged violation of the Honor Council has occurred if the Honor Council requests assistance to ensure the investigation and hearing are conducted according to policies. The Assistant or Associate Dean will not be directly involved in investigations and/or hearings but will serve primarily in an administrative role facilitating contact between faculty advisors, students, and Honor Council members. The HC Liaison will:

- Work with the AED to ensure Faculty and Student Representatives are selected.
- Coordinate and lead the two training sessions described below.
- Provide guidance, as needed, to the Student Leadership, Investigators, and the Student and Faculty Representatives during the process of an investigation and hearing.
- Be notified that an accusation has been made only if the Student Leadership requests assistance to ensure the investigation and hearing are conducted according to policies.
- The HC Liaison will only be given the name of the student who is alleged to have violated the Honor Code if a hearing is deemed warranted.

## **Training**

The HC Liaison will coordinate a formal training session for all new Faculty and Student Representatives in the fall.

The session will be conducted by an official representative of the Office of Undergraduate Education Honor Council.

A second training session will follow to review in detail the investigation and hearing process.

All members of the Honor Council are required to complete the training prior to participating in an investigation or hearing. If an Honor Council member cannot attend either session, they must coordinate with the HC Liaison to find a date in which to make-up the training.

# Leadership of the Honor Council

The Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary will be chosen from the Student Representatives of the Honor Council. The HC Liaison will ask if any of the Student Representatives would like to volunteer to fill each position. If there are multiple Student Representatives who volunteer to fill a position, the Honor Council Liaison will coordinate an election where the positions will be voted on by the members of the Honor Council by majority vote. Any person who volunteers or is elected to fill one of the positions must ultimately be confirmed by a majority vote of the Honor Council.

- Chair: The Chair will be a M4 Council member selected to a one-year term by the rising M4 class.
- Vice-Chair: The Vice-Chair will be a M4 Council member elected to a one-year term by the rising M4 class in the spring.
- Secretary: The Secretary will be a M2 Council member elected to a one-year term by the rising M2 class.
- Rising M2, M3, and M4 class elections for the Honor Council will be held in April, and M1 class elections will be held in August at the beginning of the M1 year. The newly spring-elected Council will be in charge during the summer term.

# Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Honor Code Violations

1. If an individual believes that a violation of the Honor Code has or may have occurred, that individual must report the violation as soon as possible to any member of the Honor Council. Failure to report the violation will itself constitute a violation of the Honor Code.
2. Once an allegation has been made, the individual making that allegation must draft, sign, and submit a brief statement to the Honor Council Secretary.
3. Upon notification of a possible violation of the Honor Code, the following will occur:
  - The Honor Council Secretary will inform the Honor Council Chair that a possible violation of the Honor Code has been reported.
  - The Council Secretary will then choose two investigators from available student representatives whose responsibility will be to gather information about the case.
  - The Honor Council Chair will inform the Honor Council Faculty Representatives, the HC Liaison, and the EAD that the Honor Council has received a complaint of an alleged violation of the Honor Code and an investigation will be conducted. The name of the student and details of the incident will remain known only to the Chair, the Secretary, the investigators, and any individuals the Chair may deem necessary.
  - The student named in the allegation will be informed of the investigation prior to its onset by HC Secretary and an investigation will proceed.
  - After the investigators finish gathering information concerning the alleged violation, the investigators will submit that information to the Honor Council

Chair, who along with the two investigators, will determine whether sufficient evidence exists to warrant a formal hearing by a majority vote.

## **Prior to the Hearing**

1. If a hearing is deemed warranted, the accused student will be notified by the Secretary of the Honor Council in writing of the date, time, and place of the Hearing; the nature of the violation with which the student is charged; the evidence of the investigation, including the name of the individual making the initial allegation. Upon notification of the hearing, the student will be provided with a list of available faculty by the HC Liaison, with whom to consult, at the student's discretion or select a consulting member of the school of medicine themselves with the guidance of the HC Liaison.
2. The hearing will take place no more than 21 days after the determination is made to move forward with a hearing. In rare instances, the Honor Council, at their sole discretion, may extend that time period if the Honor Council feels that the circumstances dictate such an extension.
3. Any student who is alleged to have violated the Honor Code will be permitted to continue academic endeavors until a final decision is made.
4. The student who is alleged to have violated the Honor Code may review the evidence of a violation and gather evidence prior to the hearing.

## **The Hearing**

The Chair (or Vice-Chair) will preside over the hearing and participate in the discussion and

deliberation of the case but will not have a vote.

## **Order of Proceeding**

1. Call to order.
2. Reading of Parts I and II of the Honor Code (Preamble and Statement of the Honor Code).
3. Statement of the alleged Honor Code violation.
4. Presentation of evidence: The Investigators and the student alleged to have violated the Honor Code may present testimony and other evidence as appropriate and relevant to the case. The Chair and members of the Honor Council, and the student alleged to have violated the Honor Code, may ask questions of witnesses.
5. The chair will determine whether the hearing board can properly weigh or take into consideration any evidence offered by a party or witness based upon relevance. Rules of evidence applicable to criminal or civil court proceedings will not apply.
6. Discussion and deliberation by the Council is held in a private executive session.

After all admissible evidence has been reviewed, the hearing panel shall deliberate to decide the case.

## **Rules Governing Proceedings**

All hearings will be conducted in closed-door sessions and will remain confidential. Participants in the hearing will be limited to the following:

- Chair (or Vice-Chair) of the Honor Council.
- The other six members of the Honor Council (2 Faculty, 4 Students, not including the Chair)
- The Secretary or, if needed, a temporary secretary appointed by the permanent secretary.
- The student accused of the Honor Code violation.
- The two investigators assigned to the case.
- Relevant witnesses who may be present only while testifying.
- The faculty advisor selected by the accused. This individual is not permitted to testify, ask questions, or to make statements of any nature.

The Secretary or his/her appointee will take notes during the hearing and make them available to the Honor Council.

## **Decision and Penalties**

For a student to be found responsible of an Honor Code violation, the unanimous vote of the six voting members of the Honor Council is required [the Chair (or Vice-Chair) is not eligible to vote]. For all cases, the standard that shall be used to determine whether a violation was committed is “preponderance of the evidence”, i.e., it is more likely than not that a violation of the Honor Code occurred.

If a student is found to have violated the Honor Code, the hearing panel will make a recommendation to the EAD for a sanction. The hearing panel will make the decision on the sanction by majority vote of the voting members of the Honor Council. In case of a tie, the Chair (or Vice-Chair) will cast a vote.

The HC Liaison and EAD will be informed of the decision of the hearing panel and recommendation for sanction, where applicable, promptly following the decision of the hearing panel.

## **Recommendation for penalties regarding violations of the Statement of the Honor Code**

The standard sanction for violation of the Honor Code is (a) a mandatory leave of absence from Emory University School of Medicine for at least one academic term (semester); and (b) a grade of “Incomplete” for all courses in which the student is enrolled at the time of the infraction.

The Honor Council may recommend to the EAD a penalty more severe than a mandatory leave of absence (e.g., permanent expulsion) or may recommend a less severe penalty (e.g., disciplinary probation for Honor Code violation), dependent upon the circumstances of the case.

Upon receipt of a mandatory leave of absence, the student cannot advance to the next term until he/she has completed the term in which the “Incomplete” grades were given.

If the student is in the first or second year of medical school, he/she will return from a mandatory leave of absence to the beginning of the uncompleted term. If the student is in the third or fourth year of medical school, he/she will return from a mandatory leave of absence to the beginning of the uncompleted clerkship.

A student on a mandatory leave of absence may enroll on graduate resident status.

## **Decision of the Executive Associate Dean (EAD) of the School of Medicine**

The final decision on responsibility and the sanction rests with the EAD. The decision of the EAD will be effective immediately, unless there is an appeal to the dean. The appeal, including the basis for the appeal, must be submitted by the student in writing to the Dean within one week after the student is notified by the EAD of the decision. If a student files an appeal, the EAD will appoint an ad hoc committee consisting of three faculty members from the School of Medicine. The EAD will provide the committee with the information reviewed by the hearing panel, the minutes of the hearing, and the student's appeal. The committee will then make a recommendation to the Dean that the decision of the appeal committee be affirmed or remanded to a new hearing panel. The Dean will then review that recommendation and make the final decision in the matter.

## **Amendments to the Honor Code**

Amendments to the Honor Code may be proposed by the Honor Council at any point in the academic year; proposed amendments must be reviewed by Emory School of Medicine General Counsel and approved by the EAD before becoming effective. If an amendment is approved while a case is under active review that amendment will not apply to that case. Any new amendment, once approved, will become effective as soon as all medical students have been notified of the change via mail or email.

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