



## **Policy Title**

Honor & Professionalism System

## **Identifier**

USCSOMG – STAF – 5.3

**Prepared by:** Office of Student Affairs

**Approved by:** Student Affairs Policy Committee

**Reviewed by:** USCSOMG Policy Review Committee

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## **LCME Standards**

3.5 – Learning Environment / Professionalism

3.6 – Student Mistreatment

7.7 – Medical Ethics

7.9 – Interprofessional Collaborative Skills

9.4 – Variety of Measures of Student Achievement / Direct Observation of Core Clinical Skills

10.6 – Content of Information Materials

## **Scope**

University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine Greenville students

## **Policy Statement**

The purpose of the Honor and Professionalism System of USC School of Medicine Greenville is to promote and maintain the basic ethical and professional principles paramount to the success of a student preparing for the profession of Medicine. The Honor and Professionalism System obligates medical students, as future physicians and representatives of the USC School of Medicine Greenville, to conduct themselves with honor and integrity in all aspects of their lives.

There are three aspects of the Honor & Professionalism System:

- USC Honor Code
- USC School of Medicine Greenville Statement of Professionalism
- USC School of Medicine Greenville Policy on Personal and Professional Conduct

These three components are described in the USC School of Medicine Greenville Student Handbook, [USC Policy STAF 6.25: Academic Responsibility - The Honor Code](#) and [USC Policy STAF 6.26: Student Code of Conduct](#).

The Honor & Professionalism System is introduced to new medical classes each year at M1 Orientation, and each student is asked to sign a statement acknowledging that they have been informed of the Policies and Procedures of the Honor & Professionalism System. The acceptance of the Honor Code assures that the integrity of students is unquestioned and accepted by all in the academic, clinical and research communities.

The Honor and Professionalism Council (HPC) is a committee of medical students elected from the second,

third, and fourth year classes with endorsement by the Dean. It functions to ensure the upholding of the Honor and Professionalism System for all actions that directly bear upon students and their relationships with their colleagues, faculty, patients, the institution and the community.

Every student enrolled at USC School of Medicine Greenville is expected to abide by the Honor and Professionalism System at all times while on the campuses of USC School of Medicine Greenville, Greenville Health System (GHS), as well as off campus and in the community. The [USC Policy STAF 6.26: Student Code of Conduct](#) extends to incidents off campus which may adversely affect the USC School of Medicine Greenville community or which may affect the school's pursuit of its mission.

Any conduct within the USC School of Medicine Greenville community that undermines the spirit of the Honor and Professionalism System is a violation. Specific incidents will be considered with regard to the context in which they occur, the alleged infraction, and the magnitude of the alleged offense.

Violations of the Honor Code, Professionalism or Student Code of Conduct standards include, but are not limited to:

- Lying - including any form of dishonesty or misrepresentation, omission, fabrication or falsification of documents or clinical reports
- Cheating - using or attempting to use any unauthorized materials, devices or study aids in or prior to an examination, OSCE or any other academic work. Giving or receiving any unauthorized assistance in the completion of any examination, OSCE or other academic work as well as preventing or attempting to prevent others from using authorized materials
- Plagiarism or copyright violation
- Stealing
- Violations of the Chemical Dependency policy
- Unprofessional behavior, including but not limited to, any breach of patient confidentiality
- Inappropriate conduct on campus, in the community or via social media
- Repeated lack of accountability

## **Reason for Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to provide USC School of Medicine students clarity on the Honor and Professionalism System.

## **Procedures**

The HPC is composed of:

- Four elected student representatives from each M2-M4 class for a total of twelve students. M1 students will be elected by their class prior to the start of the first year spring semester and begin attending meetings as non-voting members throughout the spring to gain experience with HPC meeting policies and procedures. Formal voting service will begin after promotion to M2 year once the graduating class has "moved on".. Each student elected to the HPC will serve until graduation. The HPC will annually elect a chair and an alternate chair to lead the council.
- A minimum of two faculty advisers are appointed by the Dean to the HPC, one representing the M1 and M2 years and the other the M3 and M4 years. Additional faculty advisers may be appointed at the Dean's discretion as needed to meet the needs of the HPC. Faculty advisers / representatives are invited by the Dean to serve year-long terms; but are eligible for reappointment if recommended by the HPC. Faculty advisers / representatives are not voting members of the HPC but are present to advise and guide student members in meetings. Faculty representatives may be asked to abstain from participation in cases involving potential academic infractions in modules taught by that faculty member as they are at liberty to levy academic penalties and therefore should not be involved in both academic and HPC disciplinary actions.

Upon resignation of a student member, the HPC will promptly select a replacement from the same class. Any of the following constitute grounds for request of resignation from the HPC:

- Failure to maintain a 2.0 GPA
- Academic or professional probation
- Honor code violation
- Pattern of absence from meetings or functions without professional excuse

Meetings of the HPC to recommend changes to policies and procedures or for Formal Hearings require seven student representatives to constitute a quorum with at least one faculty advisor to attend.

### **Reporting:**

Any student, faculty or staff member may report infractions. Students observing suspected Honor Code violations have an obligation to report, and failure to do so may be considered a breach of professionalism. Self-reports of Honor Code violations may be favorably considered for reduced sanctions. Infractions should be reported online: [https://greenvillehealthsystem.formstack.com/forms/honor\\_system\\_violation](https://greenvillehealthsystem.formstack.com/forms/honor_system_violation). Infraction reports must include the name of purported offender, name of reporter, the purported offense and context in which it occurred and any evidence or support speaking to the offense.

Reported infractions will be screened by an investigative subcommittee of designated HPC members to determine whether they fall within the HPC's scope:

- If deemed within the Council's scope, all members of the Council will be notified of the existing potential infraction.
- All reports will receive an acknowledgement of receipt including a copy of their submission.
- Screening of reported infractions will occur within a 7 day period unless specified extenuating circumstances require more time.
- All parties involved will be notified of the subcommittee's decision on whether the infraction will be investigated by the full HPC no later than the end of the 7 day screening period.

### **Procedures:**

- Upon receipt of an initial infraction report, an HPC faculty advisor and the chair of the HPC will be notified at which time they will appoint two student representatives from the HPC as the investigative subcommittee. The investigative subcommittee will consist of a M3 or M4 council member and one other council member. If a council member feels they cannot remain impartial to the investigation they can recuse themselves from the investigative subcommittee at any time.
- The investigative subcommittee is responsible for collecting evidence, interviewing witnesses and presenting findings during a Notification Conference of the HPC.
  - Confidentiality is important during this investigative process, and representatives will remind each witness that discussions are confidential.
  - The identity of the individual reporting an Honor Code violation is to remain anonymous to the accused during the investigation and Notification Conference.
  - Frivolous accusations will be considered a breach of professionalism.
  - Sincere accusations not found to merit a formal hearing shall not result in retaliation to the reporter.
- The Notification Conference includes the investigative subcommittee members, faculty advisor and 2 additional HPC members appointed by the HPC chair.
  - The purpose is to determine whether the charges of the accused student have reasonable factual support and represents misconduct sufficient for a formal hearing.
  - Neither the accused student nor the reporting individual will be allowed to attend the notification conference.
  - Investigating council members will present relevant evidence to be assessed during the

- notification conference.
- Voting - if at least two council members conclude that the evidence provides reasonable factual support and represents a sufficient infraction of the honor code then the accused student will be informed that a formal hearing of the HPC will take place.
- Voting against proceeding with a formal hearing warrants notification of dismissal of the case to the accuser and accused.
- If the decision is made to convene the HPC for a formal hearing, the student in question and the Office of Student Affairs at USC School of Medicine Greenville will be notified that the student has been formally accused of a violation of the Honor Code.
  - A written notification will be delivered by USC e-mail to the accused by the Office of Student Affairs. If the accused does not respond to the notification within 2 business days, a second and final attempt at notification will include contact by phone, in person and via US mail.
  - The written notice will include the following information:
    - A formal hearing will be conducted into the alleged Honor Code violation
    - The location, date, and time of the hearing
    - A description of the specific act resulting in the alleged violation
    - The Honor & Professionalism System rule that the student is accused of violating.
  - The notice will disclose the identity of the accuser as well as possible witnesses and copies of any documents likely to be presented at the hearing.
  - The accused shall not harass or impugn the accuser or witnesses.
  - A description of the Formal Hearing process will be provided.
  - The student has two business days to respond to the notification of a hearing and confirm that they will attend the Formal Hearing. The student must provide a list of possible witnesses or documents they plan to present at the Formal Hearing. If the student fails to respond, the hearing will take place as scheduled in their absence.

### **Formal Hearing:**

- The Formal Hearing is to be closed unless the HPC and the student both agree in writing to an open meeting.
- A member of the Notification Conference will summarize the alleged Honor & Professionalism System infractions and present the evidence collected by the investigative subcommittee including witnesses and documents.
- The accused student will be given the opportunity to question or rebut witnesses and documents presented by the representative from the Notification Conference. The accused student may also present his/her side of the issue including presenting witnesses and documents germane to the alleged infraction. The accused student is allowed to have one representative present at the meeting. The representative's role is limited to giving advice to the student, and does not include questioning witnesses or addressing the hearing.
- A witness should only be present while providing their testimony and should not be permitted to stay for the entirety of the formal hearing. Witnesses must pledge to be truthful and maintain confidentiality.
- After the allegation, witnesses, and relevant documents have been presented by the HPC and charged student, the student is dismissed from the hearing. The HPC and faculty advisors will then discuss the charge and evidence presented. Next the HPC will vote by secret ballot to affirm the charges or dismiss them; the faculty advisors will not participate in the vote. If the charged student is found responsible by a majority plus one, the HPC will then discuss sanctions. A motion for specific sanctions will be agreed by a simple majority through a show of hands.
- The HPC will provide the accused student with a written decision regarding the hearing outcome including sanctions within two business days after the close of the hearing. Information regarding the appeal process will be provided if the student was found to be responsible for an Honor & Professionalism System violation. The student may request a copy of a record of the hearing proceedings as it relates to his/her appearance before the HPC.

- A report of the proceedings, the final decision of the HPC and any sanctions will be submitted to the Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (SEPC) within two business days after the close of the meeting.
- After a Formal Hearing by the HPC and resolution of all appeals, a public report to all students should be made by posting on the Canvas Med Students Greenville section on the HPC. This report should identify the nature of the charged violation of the Honor & Professionalism System, the outcome of the hearing, and for a finding of guilty the sanction (the accused should not be named). If the hearing results in a not guilty finding, the accused is given the option to be identified if wished.

### **Appeal Process:**

- An initial appeal of the HPC's decision and/or sanctions may be made to the SEPC chair by the charged student.
  - The appeal must be in writing specifying the basis of the appeal and must be submitted within five business days of the date on which the HPC's written decision was issued.
    - SEPC should consider the appeal within ten business days and report the outcome of the appeal to the charged student, the HPC and the Dean within three business days of its determination.
    - SEPC should not conduct a new hearing or call witnesses rather they should assess the hearing report.
    - SEPC may invite the charged student to appear and may request the appearance of an HPC member and a faculty advisor present at the formal hearing.
  - If the violation involves patient safety or physical violence of any nature, a student may be placed on administrative leave throughout the appeal process meaning they will not be allowed attendance at USC School of Medicine Greenville classes or activities.
  - In the event of a suspension, the student will continue enrollment at USC School of Medicine Greenville during the time period for the appeal, and if the student has provided written notice of appeal, pending the outcome of the appeals process.
  - In the event of an expulsion, the student will NOT continue enrollment at USC School of Medicine Greenville during the time period for the appeal, and if the student has provided written notice of appeal, pending the outcome of the appeals process.
  - Failure to appeal within the time limit renders the decision of the HPC final and binding to every issue that pertains to the student's infraction(s). In this case, SEPC will administratively implement the sanctions.
- Following an unsuccessful appeal to SEPC, a charged student may make a second appeal to the Dean of USC School of Medicine Greenville.
  - Within five business days after the date of the notice of the outcome of an appeal to SEPC, an appeal of SEPC's decision may be submitted to the Dean. The appeal must be in writing specifying the basis of the appeal.
  - The Dean may request all evidence collected by the HPC and materials considered by the HPC during the hearings.
  - The Dean will provide a written decision to the student's appeal within five business days after submission of the materials. The Dean's decision is final and binding. The HPC and SEPC will be copied on the Dean's decision; SEPC will administratively implement any sanctions.

### **Sanctions**

If the HPC finds the student to be guilty of an Honor & Professionalism System infraction, the HPC will make recommendation for sanctions. After the appeal process and any modification of sanctions, the sanctions will become final. Where possible, sanctions should provide a process for remediation rather than punishment.

The following sanctions may be imposed upon a student found to have violated the Honor & Professionalism System:

- **Written Warning** is an official reprimand that makes the misconduct a matter of report to SEPC. The written warning for a first offense will be maintained by SEPC. Any further misconduct could result in further disciplinary action which at a minimum will include probation and official entry into the student's record and notation in their Medical School Performance Evaluation (MSPE).
- **Monitoring Period** is a specified period of review and observation during which the student is under official notice that subsequent violations of the Honor Code are likely to result in a more severe sanction, including, but not limited to probation, suspension or expulsion from the University.
  - The decision on whether to include the misconduct and monitoring period in the student's MSPE will be at the discretion of SEPC and/or the Dean.
- **Probation** may include, but is not limited to:
  - A Monitoring Period (see above)
  - Mandatory counseling by the Office of Personal and Professional Development and/or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). A component of mandatory counseling may include a monitored Personal Improvement Plan (PIP) designed to remediate or improve the student's subsequent performance. Failure to successfully complete a PIP may result in an extension of the Probation period, or be referred to the HPC for consideration of additional sanctions.
  - Recommendation to the relevant module director that a grade penalty or score reduction of an assignment be given. Final decisions regarding academic penalties are at the discretion of the module director.
  - Termination of probation occurs at the end of the specified period of probation or at the discretion of SEPC and/or the Dean.
  - Probationary periods will become a matter of record in University files and the misconduct and probationary period will be included in the student's MSPE letter.
- **Suspension** is denial of enrollment, attendance and other privileges at the University for a specified period of time. The length of suspension will be recommended by the HPC and may cover a semester, academic year, elective period or clerkship.
  - SEPC will determine implications for a student graduating late vs. on-time.
  - The suspension will appear on the student's record permanently.
  - All suspensions will include the sanction options listed above for probation.
- Expulsion is official dismissal from the University; the HPC can recommend the student have the option to apply for re-admittance following 1 year or not be granted the ability to apply for re-admittance.

Any student suspended or expelled for disciplinary reasons must vacate the campus and return all provided electronic devices and ID badges. A suspended student may not return to the University or Partner Health System property for curricular or extracurricular reasons within the period of time noted in the notice of suspension.

A prior violation will be treated as a significant aggravating factor in determining the appropriate sanction for a subsequent offense.

The sanctions provided by the Honor & Professionalism System shall not be interpreted to limit the academic authority of a module director to determine an appropriate grade for a student who has violated the Honor Code.

### **Additional Contacts**

Office of Student Affairs

Honor & Professionalism Committee (HPC)

Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (SEPC)

Director of Professional Development

Ombudsperson

## **Related Information**

USC School of Medicine Greenville Student Handbook

USCSOMG-STAF-1.0-Carolinian Creed

USCSOMG-STAF-5.1-Expectation of Personal & Professional Conduct

USCSOMG-STAF-5.4-Social Media and Social Networking Policy

USCSOMG-STAF-8.2-Chemical Dependency Policy

[USC Policy STAF 6.25: Academic Responsibility - The Honor Code](#)

[USC Policy STAF 6.26: Student Code of Conduct](#)

## **History**

- Date of Change: 11/20/2018 (effective date)
- Change: Move to standardized template
- Reason for Change: LCME CQI