

# The Medical Student Honor Code for the University of Washington School of Medicine

## For Student Review

### Preamble

We, the students of the University of Washington School of Medicine, believe that high ethical standards are essential to the practice of medicine. As we aspire to cultivate and maintain a community of professionalism and academic integrity, we place at the foundation of our endeavors and in all of our interactions the ideals of excellence, integrity, respect, compassion, accountability and a commitment to altruism. Through this Honor Code, we attempt to articulate the most basic principles that should guide our professional behavior throughout our education.<sup>1</sup>

### I. Professional Conduct

#### *I.A. Respect for Patients*

##### *I.A.1 Care at the Bedside*

We will take the utmost care to ensure respect and confidentiality for patients. As medical students, we will demonstrate this respect and confidentiality through appropriate language and behavior, including using language and behavior that are non-threatening and non-judgmental. We will be truthful and will not intentionally mislead or give false information to any patient or to individuals involved in the patient's care and well-being.

Throughout our training, we will enter into professional relationships whose integrity rests on strict confidentiality. Except in situations where we are obligated by law to do otherwise, we will hold all matters we discuss with any patient confidential within the medical team responsible for that patient's care.<sup>2</sup>

##### *I.A.2. Communication*

As medical students, we are obligated to comply with laws regarding patient privacy. In addition, the written medical record is important in communications between healthcare providers and in effective patient care; it is also a formal document and is available for patient review. As such, it is crucial that we maintain the integrity of patients' medical care through accurate reporting of all appropriate and relevant information about which we have direct knowledge.

##### *I.A.3. Safe Clinical Practice*

If we recognize ourselves or other healthcare providers to be impaired in any way that may impact patient safety, we will address the issue promptly and appropriately. We will consult more experienced members of the medical team concerning decisions about which we are uncertain of the appropriate standard of care in relation to the patient. In cases where we are concerned about potential harm to self or others, we commit to reporting the issue through appropriate medical staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Nothing in the Medical Student Honor Code for the UW School of Medicine is intended to supersede the University of Washington Student Conduct Code.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of mandatory reporting include, but are not limited to, patients reporting that they are planning to harm themselves or someone else or that they were the perpetrator of an act of child abuse.

### *I.B. Respect for Faculty, Staff, Colleagues and Hospital Personnel*

Our behavior and our oral and written communications should demonstrate respect for the diversity of our colleagues. We will avoid disparaging remarks or actions with regard to a person's race, age, gender, gender identity, disability, national or regional origin, medical specialty, religion or sexual orientation. We will strive to create an environment that fosters mutual learning, dialogue and respect, while avoiding verbal or written communications or physical contact that could create a hostile or intimidating environment for learning or for patient care.

Upon encountering actions or values of peers that we find degrading to ourselves or to others, we will strive to respectfully address our concerns with the individual(s) involved. While we strive for common understanding through respectful communication, we understand that achieving a common understanding does not necessarily mean reaching agreement.

### *I.C. Respect for Self*

In addition to the ethical standards set forth in this Code, we realize and appreciate the diversity of personal beliefs that exist in our medical student body and believe that diversity serves to enrich the medical profession. Therefore we encourage the upholding of personal ethics, beliefs and morals in both our daily conduct and in our practice of this Code.

### *I.D. Respect for Community*

We will consider how our words and actions may affect the sense of acceptance that is essential to an individual's or group's participation in the community.

Since our actions reflect on us as medical students of the University of Washington and as future physicians, we will strive to adhere to our standards of professional conduct both within and outside the classroom and clinical settings. We recognize that physicians are viewed as leaders within their communities and that we are expected to behave with civility and a deep regard for the honor of the profession.

## **II. Academic Standards**

As medical students, we are obligated to develop and advance our medical knowledge and skills to the best of our abilities, realizing that the health and lives of the persons committed to our care could depend on our competence. We are responsible for proper conduct and integrity in all scholastic and clinical work.

### *II.A. Examinations*

We understand that examinations and many assignments within the UW School of Medicine are meant to reflect our individual knowledge and skills. Whereas cheating is unethical, cheating (defined in the UW School of Medicine *Student Handbook*) during, or in procurement of information prior to, examinations will not be tolerated by our student peers.

We will not communicate any specific information regarding an examination to a classmate in any UW educational site who has not yet completed that examination during that academic year or in subsequent years. This specific information includes any details that would result in an inequitable testing situation.

Students have an obligation to respect their peers and thus maintain a non-disruptive atmosphere during examinations.

## *II.B. Other Academic Work*

As members of the academic community, and pursuant to University and School rules, we have an obligation to not plagiarize or intentionally misrepresent the work of others nor claim it as our own. During medical training we will be provided with communal instructional material that will greatly aid our learning. In respecting the scientists, doctors and patients who have shared their knowledge and experience for the betterment of medical learning, we will make every effort to protect and preserve these resources for the use of future peers and classmates.

## **III. Mistreatment of Students**

The UWSOM recognizes professionalism to be a vital part of medical education and patient care. Mistreatment of students by trainees, faculty or staff compromises the learning environment, impairs the well-being and emotional development of students, and perpetuates poor modeling of the professional role. Each of these is likely to translate into impaired physicians and impaired patient care. Recognizing that addressing mistreatment of students plays a major role in ensuring that professionalism standards are upheld, we commit to bringing concerns of mistreatment to each other as peers, and/or our counselors, formal or informal mentors, and School of Medicine administration.

## **IV. The Honor Council and Violations of the Honor Code**

Pursuant to the terms of this Honor Code, an Honor Council will be formed by the UWSOM students from the elected representatives from all current classes. The role of the Honor Council will be to educate the student body about the Honor Code, confidentially mediate conflicts that arise due to student misconduct or mistreatment, and offer a safe environment for students to confidentially share their concerns about Honor Code violations. In the event that concerns arise due to student misconduct or mistreatment, the Honor Council may consult with the UWSOM administration or other appropriate bodies. The Honor Council will operate according to Honor Council Procedures which will be openly shared with the student body. In every Honor Council activity, confidentiality will be maintained to the maximum possible under the law and University policy.<sup>3</sup>

## **V. Amending the Code**

The Honor Code may be amended at any time by the UWSOM student body. The Honor Council will accept proposals for amendment at any time and will have procedures for bringing compelling proposals to the student body for consideration. The Honor Council will establish procedures for hearing discussions about a proposed amendment and for conducting a school-wide vote about adopting it. Alternatively, an amendment may be brought to an immediate vote if it is signed by one-third or more of the students in a class or by one-third or more of the students at a first-year regional site. An amendment agreed upon by a simple majority of the student body with one-half of students voting will be adopted and incorporated into the Honor Code.

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<sup>3</sup> In keeping with mandatory reporting laws, we recognize that there are some situations in which the Honor Council would inform local authorities and/or members of the University Administration about a matter of which they have been informed. These situations have been outlined in the Honor Council Procedures.

# The Honor Code for Medical Students in the University of Washington School of Medicine

Admission to the University of Washington School of Medicine is contingent on signing the following:

As a medical student at the University of Washington School of Medicine, I believe that high ethical standards are essential to the practice of medicine. I agree to cultivate and maintain a community of professionalism and academic integrity through upholding the principles set forth in the University of Washington School of Medicine Honor Code. As I enter the profession of medicine, I will hold my colleagues and myself accountable to the standards of the Honor Code. I commit to the ideals of excellence, integrity, respect, compassion, accountability and commitment to altruism in all my interactions and will uphold these as the ideals to which I aspire throughout my career in medicine.

I hereby accept the University of Washington School of Medicine Honor Code.

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Name

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Date

A copy of this code will be kept in your academic file. You will keep the original document.