

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

## Preamble

We, the students of The University of Washington School of Medicine, believe that high ethical standards are essential to the practice of medicine. Through this Honor Code, we intend to cultivate and maintain a community of professionalism and academic integrity. Excellence, integrity, respect, compassion, accountability, and a commitment to altruism in all our interactions are the foundation of the Code and are ideals to which we will aspire as students and throughout our professional careers.

## I. Professional Conduct

Upon matriculation into medical school, individuals may have varying levels of understanding about the expectations of professional students. We believe professional conduct centers around respect.

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

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

We will take the utmost care to ensure patient respect and confidentiality. As medical students, we will demonstrate this through appropriate language and behavior, including that which is non-threatening and non-judgmental. We will be truthful and will not intentionally mislead or give false information to the patient or to individuals responsible for patient care.

#### *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 communication between health care providers and in effective patient care; it is also a legal document and available for patient review. As such, it is crucial that we maintain the integrity of patients' medical care through accurate reporting of all pertinent information about which we have direct knowledge.

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

If we recognize ourselves or other care providers to be impaired in any way that may impact patient safety, we will address the issue appropriately. We should consult more experienced members of the medical team with decisions where there is uncertainty beyond the standard of care. In cases of intentional or unintentional harm to self or others, we commit to reporting the issue through appropriate medical staff.

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

Our behavior and speech should demonstrate respect for the diversity of our colleagues. We should avoid disparaging remarks or actions with regard to a person's race, age, gender, gender identity, disability, national or regional origin, religion, or sexual orientation. We will strive to create an

environment that fosters mutual learning, dialogue, and respect, while avoiding verbal, written or physical contact that could create a hostile or intimidating environment for learning or for patient care.

Upon encountering actions or values that we find degrading to ourselves or to others, we should be willing to respectfully confront our peers. We agree on a goal of reaching common understanding via respectful communication, though achieving a common understanding does not necessarily mean reaching agreement. We should express our views in a calm and respectful manner when in disagreement with another individual.

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

We realize that a diversity of personal beliefs serves to enrich the medical profession, and therefore we encourage the upholding of personal ethics, beliefs and morals in both daily conduct and in our practice of this Code.

#### *I.D. Respect for Community (Social Behavior)*

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

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

### **II. Student Mistreatment**

The UWSOM recognizes professionalism to be a vital part of medical education and patient care. Student mistreatment compromises the learning environment, impairs the well-being and emotional development of students, and establishes poor modeling of the professional role. Each of these is likely to translate into impaired physicians and impaired patient care. Addressing student mistreatment plays a major role in ensuring professionalism standards are upheld.

Students can address issues of mistreatment by using channels outlined in the UWSOM student handbook, or by contacting the Honor Council as outlined in the Honor Code Grievance Procedures. The Honor Council, on its part, will report incidents to the UWSOM administration and will work to ensure incidents are appropriately addressed. In addition, the Honor Council can make every effort to maintain a reporting student's anonymity if desired by that student. The specific roles and operations of the Honor Council in addressing mistreatment are described in the Honor Code Grievance Procedures.

### **III. Academic Standards**

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

#### *II.A. Examinations*

We understand that examinations and many assignments are meant to reflect our individual knowledge and skills. Cheating (defined in the UWSOM student handbook) during, or in procurement of information prior to, examinations is unethical and will not be tolerated by our student peers.

We will take care not to communicate specific information regarding an examination to a classmate in any WWAMI site who has not yet completed that examination during that academic year or in subsequent years. Specific information includes precise exam content, focused study guides or hints, and other details resulting in an inequitable testing situation.

Students have an obligation to maintain a non-disruptive atmosphere during examinations.

### *II.B. Other Academic Work*

In respecting the scientists, doctors, and patients who have shared their knowledge and experience for the betterment of medical learning, we have an obligation not to 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. We will therefore make every effort to protect and preserve these resources for the use of future peers and classmates.

## **IV. Honor Code Violations**

The Honor Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Honor Code. Potential Honor Code violations should be reported to the Honor Council as outlined in the Honor Code Grievance Procedures. The specific roles and operations of the Honor Council in addressing potential violations are described in the Honor Council Grievance Procedures. The Honor Council will make every effort to maintain confidentiality, but may refer individuals to the student counseling center, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Hall Health, Washington Physicians Health Program, or other appropriate entity if they feel unequipped to adequately address the violation.

## **V. Amending the Code**

Any student who is governed by the Code may propose an amendment at any time. An amendment may be brought to an immediate vote if it is signed by one-third or more students in a class or at a first year regional site who are governed by the Code. Amendments to the Code will be accepted by a simple majority vote of all classes governed under the Code, with a quorum of one-half of the UWSOM student body. If an amendment is brought to a vote, it will be discussed in an open forum and voted on within two weeks of the closure of public comments.

## **VII. Honor Pledge**

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

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.