



## Policy Title

Honor and Professionalism System

## Identifier

USCSOMG – STAF – 5.03

<b>Prepared by:</b> Office for Student Affairs	
<b>Reviewed by:</b> Honor and Professionalism Council	<b>Review Date:</b> 04/16/2024
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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 – Assessment System  
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 and Professionalism System which students must abide by:

- [USC Policy STAF 6.25: Academic Responsibility - The Honor Code](#)
- [USC Policy STAF 6.26: Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [USC School of Medicine Greenville STAF 5.01 Expectation of Personal and Professional Conduct](#), which includes the USC School of Medicine Greenville Statement of Professionalism



The Honor and 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 and 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, partner health system campus, 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 will adversely affect the USC School of Medicine Greenville community or which will 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 are considered with regard to the context in which they occur, the alleged infraction, and the magnitude of the alleged offense. Unprofessional behavior, including repeated inappropriate behavior and one-off incidents that are disruptive is contrary to the professional standards or ethics of the profession of medicine.

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

#### **Academic Integrity**

- 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 - Use of work or ideas without proper acknowledgment of source.

#### **Student Conduct**

- Stealing
- Bullying, intimidation, harassment, or discrimination based on immutable characteristics/chosen identities
- Intentional unsolicited physical contact (shoving, kicking, unwanted touching, etc.)
- Verbal threats of physical harm
- Retaliation by an accused student in response to an accusation is considered a breach of professionalism. Retaliation is any conduct causing interference, coercion, restraint, or



reprisal against a person making a complaint or against a person assisting in any way in an investigation and resolution of the complaint

- Violations of the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\) policy](#)

### **Professionalism**

- Repeated written communications, verbal, or nonverbal insensitivity or rudeness towards others including faculty, staff, visitors, and classmates, which present as disruptive, demanding, aggressive (including passive aggressive), offensive, degrading and/or overly critical comments or behavior
- Inappropriate communication (in-person, email or via social media) e.g., consistent unhelpful and off-topic contributions, sharing of sexually explicit language and/or images
- Refusal to meaningfully participate and/or work collaboratively with others or to follow best practice
- Violating expectations set forth in the [Guidelines for Conduct in Medical Educator/Learner Relationship](#) or in the [Demeanor and Attire policy](#)
- Violating expectations set forth in the [Professionalism in Student Research](#)
- Repeated tardiness, or violations of absence policies, or exam procedures based on the following policies: [Exam Tardiness and Unscheduled Absence policy](#), [M1 and M2 Student Attendance](#), [M3 and M4 Student Attendance](#), [IPM Attendance](#), [Clinical Skills Examination](#), [Proctored Environment for Multiple Choice Assessments](#)
- Inappropriate conduct on campus or in the community

### **Course/Faculty Evaluation (see Sanction section)**

- Failure to complete Course/Faculty Evaluation as described in [Course and Faculty/Resident Evaluation Completion policy](#)

## **Reason for Policy**

This policy provides USC School of Medicine students clarity on the Honor and Professionalism System.

## **Procedures**

### **Honor and Professionalism Council (HPC)**

- The Honor and Professionalism Council (HPC) is charged with investigating reports of Honor and Professionalism violations. For students found responsible for the violation, HPC recommends a sanction to Student Evaluation and Promotions Committee (SEPC), who determines the case's outcome.
- HPC is composed of four elected student representatives from each M2-M4 class, for a total of twelve students. M1 students are elected by their class during 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 begins on May 1 of the M1 year and ends on April 30 of the M4 year. Each student elected to

the HPC serves until graduation if they meet the criteria below. The HPC annually elects a chair (or chairs) from the M4 class and an alternate chair to lead the committee.

- At least two faculty advisors are appointed by the Dean to the HPC, one representing the pre-clerkship phase and the other the clerkship/post-clerkship phase. Additional faculty advisors will be appointed at the Dean's discretion as needed to meet the needs of the HPC. Faculty advisors are appointed by the Dean to serve a three-year term and are eligible for one renewal term. Faculty advisors are non-voting members of the HPC but are present to advise and guide student members in meetings.
- HPC students and faculty advisors have access to training materials generated by the USC Office of Student Conduct
- Faculty advisors must recuse themselves from participation in cases involving potential academic infractions in modules/clerkships directed by that faculty member as they are at liberty to levy academic penalties and therefore will not be involved in both academic and HPC disciplinary actions. Faculty advisors must also follow the recusal policy outlined in the [Conflict of Interest for Student Assessment](#) policy.

Upon resignation of a student member, the HPC works with the Office for Student Affairs to fill the vacant position. Any of the following constitute grounds for request of resignation from the HPC:

- Does not meet criteria in the [Good Standing](#) policy.
- Honor code violation
- Pattern of absence from meetings or functions without professional excuse
- Request to be removed from the committee

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 an Infraction**

Any student, faculty or staff member are strongly encouraged to report infractions. Infractions are to be reported using this [webform link](#).

Infraction reports must include the name of the accused student, a narrative description of the infraction, location, date of the incident, and any evidence or support speaking to the offense. Reports can be made anonymously, but this will limit the ability to investigate. Students observing suspected Honor Code violations have an obligation to report, and failure to do so is considered a breach of professionalism. Self-reports of Honor Code violations may be favorably considered for reduced sanctions. Frivolous accusations are considered to be a breach of professionalism.

The Chair of HPC and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs receive copies of the infraction report. The HPC Chair notifies the accused student, and describes the next steps in the investigation process, usually within 24-48 hours of receiving the report.



In rare cases, an Honor Code violation will be directly referred to SEPC or a member of the administration for matters too sensitive or egregious for the HPC's purview, as determined by the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Associate Dean for Medical Education, or Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

### **Investigative Subcommittee**

- The HPC Chair appoints two student HPC representatives to serve on the investigative subcommittee, which must consist of at least one M3 or M4 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 the accused student, interviewing witnesses and presenting findings to the HPC at the preliminary hearing.
  - Confidentiality is important during this investigative process, and representatives remind each witness that discussions are confidential.
  - The identity of the accused student is anonymous to members of the HPC, excluding the chair and two members of the investigative subcommittee.
  - The identity of the individual reporting an Honor Code violation is to remain anonymous to the accused during the investigation and HPC informal hearing.
  - The investigative subcommittee screens the reported infractions within a 7-day period from when the report was received unless an extenuating circumstance requires more time.

### **Preliminary Hearing**

The HPC holds a preliminary hearing to determine whether the charges of the accused student have reasonable factual support, fall within the scope of HPC, and represent misconduct sufficient for a formal hearing.

- Neither the accused student nor the reporting individual(s) can attend the preliminary hearing.
- Investigating council members present relevant evidence to be evaluated by HPC
- Voting - if a simple majority of HPC voting 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 accused student and the reporting individual (if identified).
- The accused student is notified of the outcome of the preliminary hearing within a 14-day period unless an extenuating circumstance requires more time.
- If the decision is made to convene the HPC for a formal hearing, the accused student is notified that they have been formally accused of a violation of the Honor Code.

- A written notification is delivered to the accused students official school e-mail to the accused from the Chair of HPC.
- 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 and Professionalism System rule(s) that the student is accused of violating.
  - A description of the Formal Hearing process is provided.
  - The accused student is allowed to bring their Success Coach, Career Counselor or a faculty mentor with them to the HPC formal hearing for support, but the support person cannot represent the student during the meeting. A student cannot bring legal representation, a family member, or individual who does not serve as an official Success Coach, Career Counselor or faculty mentor to HPC meetings or any subsequent meetings.
- The accused student must confirm whether or not they will attend the Formal Hearing.
- The accused student is allowed to 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.
- The accused student cannot harass or impugn the reporting individual or witnesses

### **Formal Hearing**

- The Formal Hearing is to be closed.
- The Formal Hearing is not anonymous. All individuals presenting at the formal hearing must be truthful throughout the proceedings and maintain confidentiality.
- A member of the Investigative Subcommittee summarizes the alleged Honor and Professionalism System infractions and presents the evidence collected by the investigative subcommittee including witnesses and documents.
- The reporting individual(s) are only present while providing their testimony and are not be permitted to stay for the entirety of the formal hearing.
- Witnesses identified by the accused student are only present while providing their testimony and are not be permitted to stay for the entirety of the formal hearing.
- Once all reporting individuals and witnesses have been presented, the accused student will enter the formal hearing. A member of the investigative subcommittee will summarize statements made about the case. The accused student is allowed to present documentation and respond to prior statements made by reporting individuals and witnesses.



- If the accused student has brought one faculty representative as described above, the representative's role is limited to giving advice to the student and does not include questioning witnesses or addressing the hearing.
- After the accused student is dismissed from the hearing, the HPC and faculty advisors discuss the charge and evidence presented. The HPC votes 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 recommended sanctions.
- A motion for recommended sanctions will be agreed by a simple majority through a secret ballot.
- The accused student is able to request a redacted copy of notes from the hearing proceedings as it relates to their case.

### **Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (SEPC)**

If a student is found responsible by HPC for the infraction, the chair of HPC provides a summary of the case and a recommended sanction to the SEPC. The final decision on responsibility and the sanction rests with the SEPC. Please refer to the Student Evaluation, Remediation, Requirements for Promotion, and Appeal policy for details. The accused student receives a formal letter from SEPC delivered to their school email address.

### **Appeal Process**

Students have the ability to appeal the sanction from SEPC using the process outlined in the [Student Evaluation, Remediation, Requirements for Promotion, and Appeal Process Policy](#).

### **Sanctions**

If the HPC finds the student to be responsible for an Honor and Professionalism System infraction, the HPC will make a recommendation to the SEPC, for its consideration and review, as to the level and kind of sanction. Recommendations consider (i) the severity and flagrancy of the violation; (ii) premeditation and intent, or lack thereof; (iii) whether the student was previously determined to have violated the Honor and Professionalism standards; (iv) the student's truthfulness and contrition; (v) the student's ability to abide by the Honor and Professionalism standards and succeed in the future; (vi) other mitigating circumstances.

The final decision on responsibility and the sanction rests with the SEPC. Where possible, sanctions provide a process for remediation rather than punishment.

The following sanctions are able to be imposed upon a student found to have violated the Honor and Professionalism System:

- **Written Warning** is an official entry in a student's academic file that chronicles the misconduct. These are destroyed after the student's graduation if there are no further honor code violations. Often a written warning includes:

- Recommended counseling by the by the USC Ombudsperson or Prisma Health Office for Personal and Professional Development and/or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Educational sanctions- seminar style educational sessions, essay assignments
- Recommended meetings with members of school administration
- **Monitoring** will include, unless otherwise specified but is not limited to:
  - A 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 USC School of Medicine Greenville
  - There is no notation on MSPE
  - Loss of Good Standing
  - Recommended counseling by the by the USC Ombudsperson or Prisma Health Office for Personal and Professional Development and/or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
  - Educational sanctions- seminar style educational sessions, essay assignments
  - Recommended meetings with members of school administration
- **Probation** will include, unless otherwise specified but is not limited to:
  - A Probation 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 suspension or expulsion from USC School of Medicine Greenville
  - Mandatory counseling by the USC Ombudsperson or Prisma Health Office for 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 will result in an extension of the Probation period or be referred to the SEPC for consideration of additional sanctions.
  - Loss of Good Standing
  - 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 USC School of Medicine Greenville files and the misconduct and probationary period will be included in the student's MSPE letter.
- **Addendum to MSPE and/or Letter to Residency Program Director** will be issued for professionalism violations that occur after the MSPE is released or after the MATCH if determined as part of the sanction by HPC
- **Suspension** is denial of enrollment, attendance and other privileges at the University for a specified period of time. The length of suspension will be decided by SEPC and up to an academic year.
  - 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.



- **In-Kind Restitution** is issued requiring a student to make restitution when the student has engaged in conduct, including, but not limited to damage to or destruction of School of Medicine and/or clinical property or property of any person, the theft or misappropriation of property, or fraudulent behavior.
- **No Contact Requirement** is a requirement of no contact with any individuals who are Complainants, victims, or witnesses in the student conduct process. This includes, but is not limited to, verbal, written, electronic, cellular, physical or social contact, contact with second or third parties, or allowing others to make any contact on the Respondent's behalf. This can also be issued as an interim sanction prior to the completion of the sanctioning process or as a sanction in and of itself.
- **Disciplinary Removal** is removal from the learning environment pending investigation
- **Emergency Removal** of a student from an educational program or activity will occur if, after an individualized safety and risk analysis, the University determines that the student presents an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or individual arising from the alleged conduct.
  - During emergency removal, a student will be denied access to the campus (including classes) and/or all other University activities or privileges for which the student might otherwise be eligible. Emergency removals become effective on the date and time specified in the notice of emergency removal. A student will be notified in writing of an emergency removal, its restrictions, and the reasons for it, and will also be notified of the time, date, and place of a subsequent meeting with the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or designee at which the student will contest the grounds for the emergency removal, including the reliability of the information concerning the alleged actions and the identification of the student.
  - Except in the case of exigent circumstances or other good cause, this meeting will occur no more than 3 business days following the notice of emergency removal and may occur prior to the effective date of the emergency removal. Following such a meeting, the SEPC will lift, modify, or continue the interim suspension while the disciplinary process continues. A student has the ability to, upon any grounds, appeal the decision of the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or designee regarding the emergency removal to the Dean. The appeal must be submitted in writing to SEPC within 5 business days.
- **Expulsion** is permanent dismissal from the University
- Any student suspended or expelled for disciplinary reasons must vacate the campus and return all provided electronic devices and ID badges to the Office for Student Affairs. A suspended student cannot 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 this policy will 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.

### **Missed Course/Faculty Evaluation**

For students where the only professionalism violation is missed course evaluations (as described in ACAF 3.01), HPC implements the following sanctions. If there are other professionalism reports, the accused student receives a full investigation and sanction process described above.

- First report of missed course/faculty evaluation: email notification from HPC Chair
- Second report of missed course/faculty evaluation: written warning from SEPC
- Third report of missed course/faculty evaluation: full investigation process described above

### **Additional Contacts**

Office for Student Affairs  
Honor and Professionalism Council (HPC)  
Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (SEPC)  
Ombudsperson

### **Related Information**

USC School of Medicine Greenville Student Handbook

[Carolinian Creed](#)

[USCSOMG – STAF – 5.01 Expectation of Personal and Professional Conduct](#)

[USCSOMG – STAF – 5.04 Social Media and Social Networking](#)

[USCSOMG – ACAF – 4.00 Student Evaluation, Remediation, Requirements for Promotion, and Appeal Process Policy](#)

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

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

### **History**

<b>Date of Change</b>	<b>Change</b>
March 2025	Strengthened language in response to policy audit. Strengthened language for monitoring/probation violations.
July 2024	Streamlined investigation process for missed course/faculty evaluations, clarified definitions of professionalism and linked to applicable policies, clarified timing and investigation process, expanded sanctions to include letter to Program Director or adding an addendum to MSPE.
May 2023	Clarifications made in the Appeals section to align with SEPC
April 2023	Editorial changes made due to branding updates and titles; clarity on where to return security badge and electronic devices

December 2022	Based on feedback from HPC, the options for sanctions have been expanded and expectations for behavior has been more clearly defined
April 2022	Based on feedback from HPC, voting timelines for student representatives have been clarified. Removed COVID-19 requirements due to change in university policy.
December 2021	HPC will make a decision on whether a student is responsible or not for reported HPC violations. HPC will make recommendations to SEPC regarding the sanctions. SEPC will make the final decision and communication regarding the sanctions.
April 2021	Updated link to Carolinian Creed and COVID guidance; formal approval not required
June 2020	Added requirement for COVID-19 adherence to physical distancing and face covering requirements, updated links.
July 2019	Editorial changes made due to branding updates and titles; formal approval not required.
Nov 2018	Policy formalized into standardized template, LCME CQI