

# Child Health Associate/Physician Assistant Program

## Student Honor Code

Student created and approved by UCDHSC legal council 1989



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## **INTRODUCTION**

As early as 1908 a student honor code was in existence at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. From these very early beginnings the Honor Code and its interpretation have evolved to the present highly successful system. It is a system which strives to create an atmosphere of trust on campus and confers many freedoms as well as responsibilities on students and faculty alike.

The Honor Council of the University of Colorado School of Medicine has prepared this booklet to help the students of this institution understand the spirit of the present Honor Code and the means by which it is upheld. The Honor Code and its administrative arm, the Honor Council, are creations of the student body and the authority of the Honor Council springs from the majority of the students' definition of honorable behavior. This document presents that consensus and should serve as a resource and forum for discussion concerning what is honorable behavior. Since all medical students have pledged to uphold the Honor Code it is important they review this booklet and become familiar with it.

## **ABBREVIATED RULES OF PROCEDURE**

This section will present an overview of the procedures students and faculty should know about when dealing with an alleged Honor Code violation. The section following this one contains the formal Rules of Procedure, which define the specific processes followed when dealing with an alleged violation. Suspected violations of the Honor Code can be reported by students, faculty, and individuals who wish to report themselves. If one observes questionable activity one is bound by the Honor Code to take action. The student in question must be confronted and asked to explain his or her actions. If the explanation given does not satisfy the conscience of the observer or if the individual refuses an explanation, the matter must be reported to the Honor Council class representative or the Honor Council Chairperson. This step of confrontation is the most important part of the process as it promotes a sense of community responsibility for upholding the Honor Code and defuses frivolous accusations. Under no circumstances shall the office of the Dean of the School of Medicine (SOM) or any faculty or administrative person be contacted about a suspected violation. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the administration has no authority to investigate or decide upon Honor Code violations. These are the duties of the Honor Council. Second, the student's confidentiality will be maintained until a violation has been substantiated.

After an alleged violation has been reported, the Honor Council Chairperson will weigh the preliminary evidence in order to determine whether an investigation is warranted. If warranted, the Chairperson will notify all involved parties in writing and a formal investigation will commence. The Honor Council can ask witnesses to appear at a hearing but will not act as prosecutor. The Honor Council will weigh the facts and testimony presented by the witnesses and the accused and decide whether or not the individual violated the Honor Code. If the individual is found in violation or admits guilt, the Honor Council will then make recommendations concerning any disciplinary action to the Dean of the School of Medicine. The Dean (SOM) will review the recommendations and make the final Decision. If the individual is found not to have violated the Honor Code no record of the accusation or investigation is made in the student's academic record. During all phases of an investigation or hearing all names and matters related to the case must be kept confidential by all parties and Honor Council members involved.

## **PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING THE HONOR CODE**

The Honor Code and Honor Council are the means by which the students at this university take responsibility for their actions and those of their peers. The honor system holds as its fundamental standards that a student shall maintain academic honesty and never allow their behavior to compromise patient care. It is significant that the responsibility for upholding the Honor Code is not imposed by the administration or the faculty, but is assumed by the students. Furthermore, the Honor Code depends for its effectiveness primarily on the individual and collective desire for all members of the academic community to prevent and deter violations rather than on proceedings to impose penalties after violations have occurred. When transgressions do occur, however, the honor system is obligated to uphold the fundamental standards of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code was written with the assumption that all students have an intrinsic understanding of what actions would be deemed unethical or unprofessional. Since the Honor Code cannot be an exhaustive description of dishonest behavior, a goal of the Honor Council is to stimulate thinking and discussion among student about what is ethical and honest. Not only does this help define the standards to which the students feel they should adhere, but also reinforces actions which are expected of them. When purported violations of the Honor Code do occur, the Honor Council decides whether such activity is a violation based on convention, precedence, and prevailing standards.

When an infraction has occurred, recommendations are made to the Dean of the School of Medicine that attempts to remedy any predisposing factors, whether at the institutional or personal level, which might have led to the infraction. These recommendations might take the form of advice to the student body, the faculty, or the administration on ways that future violations of the Honor Code can be avoided. In all but the most extreme cases, any discipline will attempt to reintegrate the student back into the academic system and to rectify any personal problems that might have contributed to the violation. The Honor Council serves as judge only and cannot initiate cases nor does it act in any policing manner.

It bears repeating that the Honor Code is a creation of the students, is for the benefit of the students, and is upheld by the students. The ultimate goal of the Honor Code is to make this institution one where honesty and hard work are rewarded and unethical and dishonest behavior does not exist.

#### **SELECTION AND TERM OF HONOR COUNCIL**

1. Students will be elected to a one-year term on the honor council by vote of each respective class. One student each will be elected by the first year, second year, and internship classes. An alternate will be elected from the internship class to serve in the absence of the internship class representative.
2. The three student representatives to the Honor Council will elect one of their group as the Chairperson.
3. A faculty advisor shall be appointed to the honor council by the CHA/PA Program Program Director. The student honor code representatives invite two non-faculty practicing CHA/PA Program graduates to serve as Honor Council representatives. The faculty and CHA/PA Program graduates will serve three-year terms. The faculty advisor is a non-voting member of the honor council and shall assist in an advisory capacity.

#### **RULES OF PROCEDURE OF HONOR COUNCIL**

1. If a student is observed to be engaged in conduct which violates standards of academic honesty or which may compromise patient care, s/he must be informed by the observer that s/he has been observed. If adequate explanation for the behavior is not offered, the observed student should be given the opportunity of reporting his/her own conduct to his/her Honor Council class representative. The observer should also report the matter to his/her own Honor Council class representative or to the Honor Council Chairperson, and not to the faculty.
2. Upon receiving such a report, the Honor Council representative will discuss the matter with at least two other members of the Honor Council to determine whether a hearing concerning the conduct is necessary. The decision to proceed with a formal investigation will be made if the offense is one that is arguably prohibited by the Honor Code and if the respondent student can not provide sufficient justification for the act.
3. When a formal hearing is deemed necessary by the Honor Council Chairperson, the Chairperson shall notify the Director, CHA/PA Program by letter within five days that the respondent is under investigation for violation of the Honor Code. At that time the Council will have made the determination of potential danger to patients or other students and, if deemed necessary, will suggest that the respondent be placed on "Conduct Probation." If placed on probation for

prudence sake, the respondent will be removed from all situations involving patient contact pending the outcome of the formal investigation. The Director will notify the respondent of his/her status under "Conduct Probation."

4. If it is determined that a formal investigation is necessary, the respondent shall be given written notice of the charges, a copy of the letter to the CHA/PA Director and a copy of the Rules of Procedures. The Chairman of the Honor Council shall convene a formal hearing expeditiously and certainly within thirty days, after notifying the respondent. The respondent shall be given written notice of the time and place of the hearing, the acts or omissions with which s/he is charged, and of his/her right to be represented by a faculty advisor or a student advocate of the respondent's choice. The respondent will be deemed innocent of any violation under determined otherwise by the Council.
5. No one who is personally involved in the case shall sit on the Honor Council. If a Council member doubts their capability to render an unbiased judgment in a particular case, that Council member shall disqualify him/herself. A quorum shall be considered three members and a Chairperson. In the event a quorum cannot be reached for a scheduled hearing, the class president of an absent representative's class, or his/her designee, shall appoint a substitute to represent that class at the hearing.
6. The Honor Council may not be the initiator of charges of an Honor Code violation unless, by chance, a Council member happens to be the observer of a violation.
7. Under no circumstances will a hearing be conducted without the personal presence of the respondent, unless the respondent fails to appear without good cause. Failure without good cause of the respondent to appear will not preclude the Council's continued investigation and formulation of recommendations.
8. Prior to the scheduled hearing, both the observer and the respondent will be asked to provide a written report of the event to the Chairperson. After all reports are in, the respondent will be provided with all documentary evidence in the case at least two business days prior to the hearing.
9. No names of those involved in the hearing, nor any evidence in connection with it, shall be divulged by witnesses or members of the Honor Council or other participants in the hearing, except the Director as noted in Section 3, and the Dean (SOM) as noted in 17.
10. All hearings before the Honor Council shall be closed to all persons other than those participating in the investigation, unless the respondent requests that the formal investigation be opened to observation by interested parties. However, legal counsel is not allowed for the proceedings. Under no circumstances will the observers be allowed to participate in the proceedings. The Honor Council Chairperson shall have final discretion as to the number and type of observers in order to keep decorum during the hearing.
11. A tape recording will be made of the hearing. The respondent may bring his/her own tape recorder or may arrange, at his/her own expense, for a certified shorthand reporter to record the proceedings.
12. The Chairperson of the Honor Council shall act to insure that all participants have reasonable opportunity to be heard, to present relevant oral and documentary evidence, and that decorum is maintained. S/he shall be entitled to determine the order of procedure during the hearing. S/he shall have the authority and discretion, in accordance with these procedures, to make all rulings on questions which pertain to matters of procedure and to the reception of evidence.
13. Counsel for the University of Colorado School of Medicine may be available in an advisory capacity during any such hearing, solely for the purpose of giving advice to the Chairperson on procedural matters but shall not participate directly in the proceedings.

14. The Chairperson of the Honor Council will not apply technical exclusionary rules of evidence followed in judicial proceedings, nor entertain technical legal motions. Only testimony based on personal observation will be heard. Reasonable rules of relevance will guide the Chairperson in ruling on the introduction of evidence.
15. All hearings shall be conducted in an orderly fashion. At the hearing both sides and the Honor Council shall have the right to call and examine any witness, to introduce exhibits, to question any witness and to rebut any evidence. The respondent has the option to testify in his/her own behalf.
16. The Honor Council may adjourn to review relevant data, testimony or evidence in private. The Chairperson is a non-voting member. Honor Council members may abstain from voting, if they so choose. In the case of a deadlock, the case will be decided in favor of the respondent.
17. If a violation has been found by a majority of the Honor Council the Council shall submit a written report to the Dean (SOM) and to the respondent and the observer, within five days from the decision of the Honor Council.
18. The time from the hearing until the submission of the report of the Honor Council's findings to the Dean (SOM) shall not exceed seven days. Therefore, the time from the hearing until the decision by the Honor Council will not exceed two days.
19. The entire record of the hearing before the Honor Council shall be available to the Dean (SOM) if a violation has been found.
20. If the decision of the Honor Council is one of no violation, the Chairperson of the Council shall notify the respondent and the CHA/PA Director orally within two days, and by letter within five days from the decision of the Honor Council that the student has been cleared of all charges. If applicable, the CHA/PA Director shall notify the student of his/her removal from probation. No record of the charge or investigation shall be communicated to the Dean (SOM) or shall be retained in the student's academic record.
21. Prior to presentation of the case, the respondent may submit a written statement to the Dean (SOM), setting forth the student's position.
22. The Dean (SOM) shall review the recommendations of the Honor Council, the record of the proceedings before the Council, and the statement of the respondent, and shall affirm, set aside, or modify the Honor Council's recommendations. If, in the opinion of the Dean (SOM), further proceedings are necessary, the Dean (SOM) may remand the matter to the Honor Council for such further proceedings.
23. The decision of the Dean (SOM) shall be final.
24. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the Dean (SOM) to the Office of the Chancellor.

#### **INTERPRETATION OF THE HONOR CODE**

The Honor Code each student pledged to support during matriculation simply states "that students will behave in an ethical and honest way at all times." This applies to examinations, homework, research, and patient care. While the Honor Code does not attempt to govern lifestyles like the code at West Point, it is intended to keep all students honest and ethical, and guide them toward being responsible, competent professionals. These very positive goals of the Honor Code will hopefully be supported by student and faculty alike.

In light of the philosophy and goals of the Honor Code it may be helpful to see a few examples of situations that might violate the Honor Code. It is not possible, nor should it be necessary, to describe every type of behavior which might be dishonorable. Consequently, the following list is not comprehensive.

During all years of the Child Health Associate Program, violations include:

1. Cheating and plagiarism. These are the most obvious Honor Code violations. They apply to exams, homework assignments, research, and any other PA School related assignments.
2. Collaborating on assignments, lab reports, etc., when specifically forbidden by faculty.
3. Taking more than the designated time on exams.
4. Signing absent peoples' names to attendance sheets.
5. Keeping test booklets that were to be turned in.
6. Studying from any prior years' exams that have not been released for review.
7. Providing a false excuse to a faculty member for not being able to take a test or do an assignment on time.
9. Destroying or removing from circulation study materials made available to all students.
10. Failure to attend off campus clinical rotations without prior approval of the appropriate clinical coordinator.
11. Falsifying orally or in written case reports, work or tests performed on patients.
12. Alcohol or drug use resulting in compromised patient care.
13. Willful disregard of a patient's emotional and physical well being.
14. Taking advantage of the physician assistant-patient relationship.

As explained in the Rules of Procedure, anyone observing a possible violation must confront the alleged violator for an explanation. If the explanation is not satisfactory, the Honor Council representative should be notified. Not reporting an observed violation is also a violation.

### **FACULTY RESPONSIBILITY**

As stated previously, the Honor Code and Honor Council have been created for and by the Child Health Associate/Physician Assistant Program student body. It is only with the support, however, of the University of Colorado School of Medicine faculty that the Honor Code can be properly implemented. It is therefore expected that all faculty members will strive to help carry out the ideals set forth in the Honor Code. These responsibilities are minimal, but yet a key link in the Code. It is further expected that each faculty member will understand the way in which the Honor Code and Honor Council function.

When reporting a suspected violation, student confidentiality must be maintained. The proper channel for reporting a suspected violation is to contact the Honor Council Chairperson or the Honor Council representative of the appropriate class. The faculty person suspecting a violation may then discuss details with the Honor Council representative directly. From this point forward, the Rules of Procedure will be implemented. Lastly, it is expected that faculty members will issue concise guidelines in any student evaluation process, test, or assignment. This will help avoid inadvertent Honor Code violations. Examples of guidelines would be:

1. Clearly stating and noting time limits and instructions on all examinations.
2. Clearly noting other restrictions (e.g., Closed Book Examination, etc.) on all examinations.
3. Avoiding the reuse of examinations which are neither kept secure from public exposure nor made available to all students.
4. Clearly stating and discussing with the students guidelines for clinical case write-ups and clinical work.
5. Clearly explaining in writing to students pertinent course objectives, requirements, and grading criteria.

The above are meant to serve only as examples and are by no means a complete listing of the many possible guidelines for which it is hoped that the School of Medicine/ CHA/PA Faculty will strive for clarity in the evaluation process. With full faculty cooperation the principles of the Honor Code will be achieved.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Honor Council prepared this booklet in order to provide answers to the most commonly asked questions regarding the Honor Code. It should serve to make the goals and activities of the Honor Council clear to those who elect its members. With the active cooperation of both students and faculty, the Honor Code will remain a vital force in the education of future Child Health Associates/Physician Assistants for many years to come.