

CODE OF ETHICS & BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES

School of Dentistry

University of Southern California

Introduction

Our health professions (dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, nursing, dental hygiene and allied health professions) are based upon profoundly important themes of trust, honor and responsibility. These themes are deeply imbedded in our profession of dentistry and the University of Southern California School of Dentistry.

Ours is a scholarly and professional community, and all members are reminded that there is no tolerance for stealing, cheating or misrepresentation in our School of Dentistry and our profession of dentistry. We are a community that is built upon trust and honor for and between ALL students, staff, faculty and administration.

In support of the trust and honor necessary to support our community, it is expected that all members will embrace and uphold the standards articulated in the following Code of Ethics. Any violation of these conduct standards will not be tolerated and will result in severe consequences as outlined in the Code of Ethics. Thank you for your complete cooperation, your respect for one another, and concerns for the many publics to which we serve as health professionals.

Harold C. Slavkin, DDS
Dean, School of Dentistry

I. Code of Ethics

A. General Statement

The University, as an instrument of learning, is predicated upon the existence of an environment of integrity. As members of the academic community, faculty, students and administrative officials share the responsibility for maintaining this environment. Faculty have the primary responsibility for establishing and maintaining an atmosphere and attitude of academic integrity such that enterprise may flourish in an open and honest way. Students share the responsibility for maintaining standards of academic performance and classroom behavior conducive to the learning process. Administrative officials are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of procedures to support and enforce those academic standards. The entire University community bears the responsibility for maintaining an environment of integrity and for taking appropriate action to sanction the individuals violating established standards. Where there is a clear indication that individuals are unwilling or unable to support these standards they should not be allowed to remain in the University.

A code of ethics is a part of a profession. It serves as a guideline for conduct and

actions. While it is expressed in written form, the letter of the code is not nearly as important as the spirit it strives to engender.

As a profession, dentistry is characterized by education beyond the usual level, duty of service to the public without selfish motivations, and the right and responsibility of self-government. Honesty and integrity are intrinsic to the character of a dental professional.

B. The Code

This code recognizes the Principles of Ethics of the American Dental Association and Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the Student Conduct Code of the University of Southern California as guidelines for ethical behavior. The following additional principles are presented as guidelines for the School of Dentistry.

Jurisdiction of this code extends to conduct occurring within the School of Dentistry, at programs and activities sponsored by the school, or in activities which adversely affect the school and/or the pursuit of its objectives.

1. Education While In School

Professional status comes with knowledge and skill developed at the School of Dentistry. It is the obligation of each student to pursue educational objectives consistent with continuous self-improvement.

2. Treatment of Patients

The primary objective of any doctor/patient relationship should be the general welfare of the patient. It is the obligation of a student to treat patients in this manner. Care and quality of treatment must come before expediency.

3. Requirements, Projects, Examinations

In order to fairly evaluate a student, it is essential that all students abide by the same rules during all phases of study, including examinations.

4. Procedures and Rules

Orderliness and harmony result from organized, reasonable guidelines. The student has the obligation to follow established guidelines, procedures and rules. Proper authorization and signatures are necessary in order to facilitate teaching and learning, and to protect the health of patients.

5. Equipment and Supplies

Personal responsibility and accountability are important. Willful damage, abuse, theft or misplacement of another person's or School property constitutes a breach of the School's Code of Ethics.

6. Role of Faculty

Faculty must be primarily concerned with teaching and keeping current with developments related to their discipline. Faculty are also responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that models integrity and encourages students to

demonstrate behavior in keeping with these guidelines.

II. Violations or Misconduct

The Student Conduct Code provides guidelines for dealing with violations that are most common and readily identifiable. Violations not specifically mentioned may still be subject to disciplinary action.

- A. Plagiarism -- the submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's work. This includes improper acknowledgement of sources in essays or papers.
- B. Acquisition of term papers, laboratory work or other assignments from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student's own work. This includes providing term papers, projects or assignments that another student submits as his/her own, and collaboration or assistance on assignments without the knowledge and expressed consent of the instructor.
- C. Any use of external assistance during an examination unless expressly permitted by the instructor. The following are considered to be academically dishonest behaviors:
 - 1. cheating on an examination such as communicating with a fellow student during the examination.
 - 2. copying material from another student's examination.
 - 3. knowingly allowing another student to copy from an examination.
 - 4. taking an examination for another student.
 - 5. possession or use of unauthorized notes during an examination.
 - 6. changing answers after an examination has been returned.
 - 7. any behavior that defeats the intent of an examination or other class-work.
- D. Obtaining a copy of an examination in advance without the knowledge and consent of the instructor, or any unauthorized possession of an examination.
- E. Using a paper, project or laboratory work in more than one course without the permission of the instructors.
- F. Falsifying writings or signatures of another person on grade forms or clinic documents, or changing the content of a document after it has been authorized by signatures.
- G. Using University computers and word processing systems to gain access, alter and/or use unauthorized information.
- H. Behavior that might jeopardize the health or well-being of a patient. Included in this category of Clinic Violations are unsupervised treatment of a patient, treating patients while under the influence of alcohol or of a controlled substance, using harmful drugs

or materials in treatment, or any activity in relationship to patient care identified as being unethical or harmful.

- I Verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against persons or property.
- J Willful damage to University property.
- K Acts of dishonesty including lying, falsification of official records or documents, or evasion of legitimate financial obligations.
- L Any act chargeable as a violation of law whether or not charges are brought by authorities including but not limited to theft, forgery, vandalism, assault, mob action or illegal demonstrations.
- M Any attempt to buy or sell assigned educational experiences.
- N Misuse of fire and/or safety equipment, possession of fireworks and/or firearms, defiance of University Security or law enforcement officers, unauthorized presence in or use of University premises, facilities or property.
- O Other violations in this category defined by the University Student Conduct Code.

III. Responsibilities

A. Student Responsibilities

All students have an inherent responsibility to uphold the principles of academic integrity and to support each other and the faculty and staff in maintaining a classroom atmosphere conducive to orderly and honest conduct.

1. Students must understand and uphold the rules applicable to examination behavior and academic honesty in all environs associated with the School of Dentistry. It is imperative that students accept their role as part of the University community and the dental profession and uphold exemplary standards of academic performance and classroom behavior.
2. An effective policy to control dishonesty must begin in the classroom and clinics. Any student concerned with maintenance of academic standards should talk with classmates or appropriate faculty members. If anonymity is desired for any reason, contact should be made with the chair of the involved division.

B. Faculty Responsibilities

Each faculty member has the responsibility to ensure the academic integrity of his or her course. This includes a determined effort to establish and maintain an atmosphere conducive to orderly and honest conduct. In meeting this responsibility the following guidelines are helpful.

1. At the beginning of each trimester, instructors are encouraged to discuss with the class, in a positive manner, the issues of academic integrity. At a minimum,

students should be reminded of University and School policies and procedures, and that these are designed to enhance the credibility of the University, its faculty and its students.

2. An effort must be made to prevent and detect violations. Careful attention to examinations, papers, documents, projects, and clinical records is essential. Clear, unequivocal instructions, preferably in writing, should be given prior to all student assignments, which might be susceptible to ethical transgressions.
3. Faculty must be present during all examinations.
4. The examination environment should be designed not only to prevent cheating, but also the appearance of cheating. Preventive measures should include cautions about talking during examinations, care in the examination room seating arrangements, use of different question sets and the presence of adequate proctors. In addition, care must be taken in writing and handling of test materials prior and subsequent to the examination itself.

IV. The Process

A. Violations

The appropriate action is initiated by the course instructor or a School official. Students who have reported alleged violations to course instructors and have not received satisfactory resolution may initiate action directly with the Ethics Committee.

1. When an instructor believes that a violation of academic integrity has occurred, he/she should notify the appropriate school official in writing. (Division and/or Faculty, Course Director, Dean, Supervisor, etc.)
2. As soon as possible after discovery of the suspected violation (preferably within 15 days but not later than one year, the school official must take the following action(s):

If the school official deems that further research is necessary, such investigation should be undertaken and concluded within a reasonable period of time (not to exceed 15 days). Three actions are possible:

- a. A warning may be issued if the official determines that a violation of the Code of Ethics has occurred. A brief written report must be submitted to the Ethics Committee. The report will be placed within the student's Ethics Committee file.
- b. An academic and/or punitive sanction (Section VI. A.) may be assigned. The school official may assign a lower grade or an "F" to the test or project, or in the case of a more serious violation, assign a lower grade or an "F" for the course without requesting an Ethics Committee hearing and review. In either case, the school official must keep a record of all communications with the student regarding the incident and must maintain possession of all relevant documents, and

file a report on the **Academic Integrity/Violation Report** form to the Ethics Committee. This includes dates and times of discussions and a written record of such discussions. The student must be informed that he/she has the right to appeal the action(s) taken to the Ethics Committee and must be given the opportunity on the Academic Integrity Violation Report to certify in writing that he/she either:

- (i). *accepts the sanction assigned as described in the report, or,
- (ii). wishes to appeal the sanction and requests a hearing by the Ethics Committee.

**The Ethics Committee will not automatically hear a case reported unless the student or school official requests that the matter be reviewed by the Committee. However, the committee has the discretion to hear any report filed, if the sanction assigned appears to be inconsistent with the severity of the violation, and, in either instance i or ii, if the committee finds a warning or previous record of dishonesty in the Ethics Committee files upon receipt of a new report, the committee will automatically consider the new case for appropriate action, including sanctions up to and including expulsion.*

- c. The matter may be referred directly to the Ethics Committee for a hearing, a decision, and if applicable, a sanction. In this instance the school official has the responsibility to recommend what he/she believes is the minimum academic or punitive sanction for the alleged behavior. As in the previous action, if there is a previous record of academic dishonesty in the Ethics Committee files, the committee will consider a sanction based upon a repeat offense that will generally be more severe. In **all** cases reported to the Ethics Committee, the reporting official must provide a thorough report with all details of the incident on the **Academic Integrity/Violation Report** form, including evidence, date, time, place and witnesses. The official must meet with the accused student to review the charge(s) of the violation, and the proposed action(s), and should also document these meetings and communications with the student.

B. Conduct Violations

When a school official has reason to believe that a conduct violation has occurred, refer to section IV. A. for the appropriate process and action.

V. **Procedure for Hearing by the Ethics Committee**

A. Notification

- 1. When the hearing is scheduled, the student will receive written notification of the

charges, all documents to be considered at the hearing, and date, time and place of the hearing at least 10 business days in advance of the meeting.

2. Failure of the student charged with a violation to appear at the hearing shall not be interpreted as an admission of guilt nor shall it preclude the Ethics Committee from hearing the case and, if warranted, imposing sanctions. By his/her absence the accused does not lose the right to appeal the decision nor does absence of the accused constitute grounds for an appeal.

B. Advisor at the Hearing

1. The person charged may have an advisor of his/her choice present at the hearing. The advisor's role shall be to consult with the student; however, the advisor may be permitted to make brief statements to the Committee.
2. If the advisor is an attorney, the Ethics Committee must be informed in writing of this fact at least five days prior to the hearing date. When an attorney is present as the student's advisor, the University will also have an attorney present.
3. If the student designates an attorney as advisor, the attorney shall keep the following in mind: the Committee is an educational agency, not a court. It does not follow the formal rules of evidence and procedure. Academic decorum requires that the attorney play a different and more limited role than in the courtroom.

C. Structure of the Hearing

1. All hearings shall be private unless both parties request and agree that a public hearing be held. The Ethics Committee reserves the right to deny such requests when it deems that a public hearing would be detrimental to the educational interest of the process.
2. The number of persons attending a hearing may be limited by the Ethics Committee.
3. At the opening of the hearing, the accused individual shall be reminded of the right to present evidence, to question witnesses and to appeal.
4. An audiotape recording will be made as the single verbatim record of the hearing. This record shall be the sole property of the School of Dentistry. The recording may be requested for review by the appellant or by the Dean, and will be erased after the appeal deadline has expired or after an appellate decision has been released.

D. Procedure for Receiving Evidence

1. The evidence against the person charged with a violation shall be presented before the accused makes any statement. The individual charged shall have the right to question any witnesses. Any properly acquired evidence the Ethics Committee believes to be relevant and significant shall be admissible.
2. All witnesses may be questioned by members of the Committee and by all

involved parties.

3. The accused person shall have the right to object when he/she believes evidence has been obtained in violation of University rules regarding the obtaining of evidence. The Ethics Committee Chair shall rule on admissibility of the evidence in question.
4. After the evidence against the person charged is presented, the accused is entitled to present witnesses and other evidence on his/her behalf.
5. After all evidence has been presented, both parties have the right to make a brief closing statement.
6. The burden of proof shall at all times rest upon the party bringing the charges.
7. The standard of proof for deciding against the accused person shall be such evidence that when weighed with that opposed to it, has more convincing force and greater probability of truth.

E. Conduct During the Hearing

All persons attending the hearing shall conduct themselves in an orderly manner. Any person whose behavior is deemed disruptive to the hearing may be barred from further proceedings at the discretion of the Ethics Committee.

F. Decision

Within five days, the Ethics Committee shall provide a written statement of the decision and imposed sanctions to the Dean, to the individual charged and to the initiator of the request for the review.

VI. Sanctions

- A. Sanctions for academic integrity and conduct violations are based on the general principle of equal and fair treatment and take into account the student's remedial needs and prospects for improvement. Sanctions will be designed to hold students accountable for both their conduct and resulting consequences, and will be considered in light of the values and standards necessary to the professional practice of dentistry. Failure to comply with the terms of imposed sanctions will lead to further and more severe disciplinary action. Sanctions for second offenses will be more severe.
- B. One or more of the following sanctions may be imposed.
 1. **EXPULSION:** Permanent termination of the student's right to enroll or participate in the classes, seminars, laboratories and clinical programs at the School of Dentistry
 2. **SUSPENSION:** Termination of a student's right to participate in classes, seminars, laboratories and/or clinical programs at the School of Dentistry for a specified period of time. After suspension, the student's status will be probationary for the remainder of the academic program at the School of Dentistry.

3. **GRADE SANCTIONS:** For any violation occurring in the context of a course or graded assignment, a grade sanction will be assigned either by the reporting school official or by the Ethics Committee. Grade sanctions of F for a course are appropriate for any academic violation. If a lesser grade sanction is assigned, that sanction should be more severe than the academic evaluation that would have resulted had the student not completed the violated assignment in a timely manner or at all.
4. **OTHER SANCTIONS:** Other sanctions may be imposed or deferred at the discretion of the Ethics Committee instead of, or in addition to, those specified above. These include creative sanctions such as community service or special projects designed as learning experiences, as well as denial of privileges such as restriction or denial of participation in specific activities at the School or in activities sponsored by the School.

C. Guidelines for assignment of sanctions:

Violation Section	Violation	Recommended Sanction (assuming first offense)
II A	Plagiarism.	Suspension or expulsion from School of Dentistry; F for course.
II B	Submission of papers or lab assignments that have been acquired, purchased or done by others.	Expulsion from School of Dentistry; F for course.
II B	Unauthorized collaboration on an assignment.	Suspension or expulsion from School of Dentistry; F for the course for both students.
II C1, 3	Communicating with a fellow student during an exam, or one person allowing another to cheat from his/her exam or assignment.	Suspension from School of Dentistry; F for course for both persons.
II C2	Copying answers from other students on exam	Suspension from School of Dentistry; F for course.
II C4	Having someone else take an exam for oneself.	Expulsion from School of Dentistry for both students; F for course.
II C5	Possessing or using material during exam (crib sheets, notes, books, etc.) which is not expressly permitted by the instructor.	Suspension or expulsion from School of Dentistry; F for course.
II C6	Changing answers after exam has been returned.	Expulsion from School of Dentistry; F for course.
II D	Fraudulent possession of exam or answer key prior to administration.	Expulsion from School of Dentistry; F for course.
II E	Using a paper, project or lab work in more than one course without the prior, explicit approval of both instructors.	Suspension from School of Dentistry; F for courses.
II F, K	Acts of dishonesty including lying and falsification of information or signatures on academic or other documents.	Suspension or expulsion from the School of Dentistry

II F, H	Behavior that might jeopardize the health or well-being of a patient, such as falsification of information or signatures on clinical documents.	Expulsion from School of Dentistry.
II G,J ,L	Damage to or theft of equipment or other property.	Suspension or expulsion from School of Dentistry. The severity of the sanction will be at the discretion of the Ethics Committee and will be based on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the dollar value of the stolen or damaged property; and 2. the Committee's assessment of the individual's intent to steal or damage the property in question.
II I	Verbal or written abuse or harassment.	Expulsion from the School of Dentistry.
II M, N	Miscellaneous violations of Section II of the Code of Ethics.	Expulsion or suspension from the School of Dentistry.

VII. Appeals Process

A. Appellant

The student found responsible or the individual who initiated the request for hearing, may choose to accept the decision and/or sanctions or may file a written appeal to the Dean or designee of the Dean. The appeal must be filed within ten business days from the date of written notification or the original decision will become final. The written appeal should be to the Dean's Office, School of Dentistry, DEN 203, 740-2811.

B. Letter of Appeal

A letter of appeal must state one or more of the following criteria as the basis for the appeal.

1. That the facts cited as evidence in the alleged violation were in error or that new evidence has become available since the hearing.
2. That the sanction imposed is excessive or inappropriate to the violation.
3. That the Ethics Committee failed to follow University rules or School guidelines while considering the case.

C. Consequences of Filing an Appeal

1. The Dean or a designee will hear the case and issue a final decision within ten school days. The Dean may uphold, eliminate, increase, decrease or modify the sanction(s) imposed by the Ethics Committee.
2. In cases resulting in expulsion after appeal to the Dean, a further appeal may be submitted to the University Office for Student Conduct.
 - a) Either the accused student or the complainant may file a written appeal within 10 business days from receipt of the Dean's decision. The written appeal

should be submitted to the Office for Student Conduct, and should include the Appeal Request Cover Sheet provided by that office.

- b) Once the written appeal is received in the Office for Student Conduct, a copy of the original written decision in the matter and of the Dean's appellate decision will be requested from the Ethics Committee. In addition, the Dean will be provided an opportunity to provide a response to the written appeal submitted to the Office of Student Conduct.
- c) The above documents will be forwarded by the Office for Student Conduct to the Student Behavior Appeals Panel for its next regularly scheduled meeting. That panel may uphold the original decision in its entirety, increase or decrease sanctions of the initial decision, or dismiss the case.
- d) Once the written decision of the Student Behavior Appeals Panel is released, that decision is final and binding on all parties. No further appeal is available.

VIII. Disciplinary Records

1. Records of student disciplinary actions are maintained by the School of Dentistry for a period of seven years after the most recent disciplinary incident, except for a student expelled from the school, in which case the record is permanently retained. Records of appeals to the university's Student Behavior Appeals Panel are maintained by the university's Office for Student Conduct according to disciplinary records policies published in the Student Conduct Code (see current *SCampus*).
2. All records are maintained confidentially as provided in the university's policy concerning student education records (see Student Education Records in current *SCampus*).

(Please note that the University of Southern California School of Dentistry "Code of Ethics & Behavioral Guidelines" is in adherence with the Policies and Procedures of the University Governance. The Policies and Procedures are located in the "SCAMPUS.")

ETHICS CERTIFICATION FORM

This certifies that I have received, read, understand, and agree to uphold the principles of the official "Code of Ethics and Behavioral Guidelines" of the USC School of Dentistry.

PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE