



The Educator's Code of Conduct

The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State University College of Medicine is dedicated to developing and maintaining a strong commitment to ethical teaching practices at all levels of the education process. The foundation for this Educator's Code of Conduct is provided by the Penn State University Graduate School Statement on Teaching Ethics (1). The development of this Graduate School statement was based on a special issue of the journal, *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*. In this special issue, entitled *Ethical Dimensions of College and University Teaching: Understanding and Honoring the Special Relationship between Teachers and Students* (2), several authors provided theoretical and practical guidelines for honing ethical college teaching skills. Some of the authors' recommendations have been used to formulate the Educator's Code of Conduct provided herein. Some of these recommendations were modified to specifically fit the needs of both educators and students at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and the Penn State University College of Medicine. Both the Unified Campus Commitment to Excellence of the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and College of Medicine (3) and the Code of Ethical Behavior of the Hershey Medical Center, Policy A-20 HAM (4) were also consulted in preparing this Educator's Code of Conduct.

Four Norms to Govern Teaching

Honesty

Honesty and integrity must be practiced during all aspects of the education process.

Promise-Keeping

Promise keeping requires the educator to fulfill the "promises" made at the beginning of the semester or any other learning activity. Syllabi, assignments, grading principles, and class and office hour schedules each involve promises that are made to students and that must be adhered to under normal circumstances.

Respect for Persons

The educator must approach the learner with personal respect. In addition, the educator ought to encourage mutual respect among students. In particular, respect for race, religion, sexual orientation, disability gender, age, marital status, cultural differences, and political conviction should be supported and encouraged in all aspects of the educational process. Additionally, educators ought to show respect and common courtesy for students both during interpersonal interactions and in responding promptly to students' need for guidance and feedback. An environment free from harassment and discrimination, verbal abuse, physical violence, and intimidation in any form must also be provided for all learning activities.

Fairness

Recognizing the inherent subjectivity involved in grading, an educator ought to ensure that their grading practices are as objective as possible by creating and adhering to unambiguous criteria.

Principles of Ethical College and University Teaching

Content Competence

An educator maintains a high level of subject matter knowledge and ensures that the content of the educational experience is current, accurate, representative, and appropriate to the position of the learning experience within the students' program of study. The educator must be capable of approaching each learner with a commitment to meeting his or her educational needs.

Pedagogical Competence

A pedagogically competent educator communicates the objectives of the educational experience to students, is aware of alternative instructional methods or strategies, and selects methods of instruction that are effective in helping students to achieve the course objectives.

Dealing with Sensitive Topics

Topics that students are likely to find sensitive or discomfoting are dealt with in an open, honest, and positive way.

Student Development

The overriding responsibility of the educator is to contribute to the intellectual development of the student, at least in the context of the educator's own area of expertise, and to avoid actions such as exploitation and discrimination that detract from student development.

Dual Relationship with Students

To avoid conflict of interest, an educator does not enter into dual-role relationships with students that are likely to detract from student development or lead to actual or perceived favoritism on the part of the educator. The establishment of a romantic/sexual relationship between an educator and a student should be reported to the immediate supervisor of the educator. Such relationships should be dealt with consistent with Penn State Administrative Policy AD41 — Sexual Harassment (5).

Student Confidentiality

Student grades, letters of evaluation, attendance records, and private communications are treated as confidential materials and are released only with student consent, for legitimate academic purposes, or if there are reasonable grounds for believing that releasing such information will be beneficial to the student or will prevent harm to the student or to others.

Patient Privacy and Confidentiality

Educators who utilize patient information as part of any educational experience must follow patient privacy and confidentiality guidelines as outlined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

Respect for Colleagues

An educator respects the dignity of his or her colleagues and works cooperatively with colleagues in the interest of fostering student development.

Valid Assessment of Students

An educator is responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure that the assessment of a student's performance is valid, open, fair, and congruent with the course/educational experience objectives. An educator must be aware that such assessments are important in students' lives and in the development of their careers.

Respect for Institution and Profession

In the interest of student development, an educator is aware of and respects the educational goals, policies, and standards of the institution in which he or she teaches and the profession which he or she represents.

Citing Sources of Educational Material

An educator acknowledges and documents, as appropriate, the sources of information and other materials used for teaching.

References:

- (1) <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/research/ethics.html#teaching>
- (2) <http://cte.uncwil.edu/et/br030697.htm>
- (3) Unified Campus Commitment to Excellence of the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and College of Medicine; 05/11/01
- (4) Code of Ethical Behavior of the Hershey Medical Center, Policy A-20 HAM; Effective Date October, 2001
- (5) <http://guru.psu.edu/POLICIES/Ad41.html>

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