

## Policy of Academic Integrity:

### **Policy on Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct**

#### **Preamble**

The Faculty of Medicine is committed to helping its students, medical and graduate, to develop in knowledge, expertise and professional skills to the point of culmination, when they are considered worthy of receiving the appropriate University degree, a testimony to the outside world of their uncontested educational and professional achievement. While the Faculty of Medicine is devoted to its educational mission and commitment to its students, it is not oblivious of an equally serious responsibility of nurturing in its students the highest standards of moral and ethical principles, and “only those who give promise of being a credit to themselves, the Faculty and the medical profession will be advanced”<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, no breach in moral and ethical standards will be tolerated and this policy is promulgated with the intent of safeguarding these standards.

#### Dissemination of the principles of academic integrity and professional conduct

To sensitize the Faculty constituency to the detection and reporting of breaches of academic integrity can at best be a negative approach to addressing this sensitive issue. To repeatedly disseminate the principles of academic integrity, whenever the occasion arises, is more positive and effective, so that when breaches occur the Faculty is fully justified in dealing with them with all the seriousness they deserve and to administer commensurate penalties. Accordingly, the issue of academic integrity must be addressed when the students convene for the first time in an academic year, when they start a new course and when they rotate in each department. In addition, the Policy on Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct must be an integral component of the file the students receive on admission and it must be distributed to the departments with the directive to make it available to individual members of the faculty.

#### Principles of academic integrity and professional conduct

The inventory of issues that appropriately fall under this label is too vast to be fully presented. In summary, the students must learn to conduct themselves in every respect with distinction congruent with the noble mission of the Faculty and the University. It takes good judgment, honesty and seriousness to achieve this goal. Some issues are specifically outlined emanating from past experience in the Faculty:

1. Strict adherence to the rules and regulations as they are stipulated in the Faculty section of the University Catalogue and other Faculty documents and directives
2. Strict honesty in examinations in neither giving nor receiving help
3. Avoiding plagiarism

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<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Medicine section of the University Catalogue

4. Submitting a required assignment, like a term paper or review, that is strictly the outcome of personal effort
5. Providing strictly correct information to be included in official records
6. Observing the sanctity of official Faculty and University documents and refraining from any act of falsification
7. Observing the confidentiality of all patient-related information and refraining from discussing such information in public
8. Strictly attending to officially assigned academic tasks and refraining from any act of neglect or absenteeism
9. Providing truthful and factual statements about colleagues, teachers and Faculty personnel, avoiding any act of falsification
10. Behaving with the utmost degree of maturity and responsibility in teaching sessions and other activities that involve an audience, avoiding any act that may be distracting to others
11. Being strictly respectful of Faculty and University property and resources
12. Adherence to professional and ethical conduct with peers, faculty, staff, and patients

#### Procedures for handling breaches in academic integrity and professional conduct

The Student Affairs Committee at the Faculty of Medicine will be charged with investigating allegations of misconduct by medical students.

Any person who has reason to believe that a student has violated the University's code of conduct may initiate proceedings against said student by filing a complaint (a signed statement) with the Chairperson of the Student Affairs Committee (SAC). Anonymous accusations are not encouraged as they do not provide enough grounds to pursue an investigation. The complainant may be a student, house staff officer, faculty member, or university/medical center staff.

The SAC may recommend to the chairperson to empanel an ad-hoc committee of three members of the Faculty of Medicine to investigate the allegation.

If an ad-hoc review committee is empaneled, it shall review the complaint, conduct an investigation and present its report to the SAC within 10 days of officially receiving its charge. This may include interviewing the concerned individuals and obtaining other information relevant to the complaint. The ad-hoc committee will meet with all concerned parties to ensure all parties have a fair opportunity to argue their case.

The accused student can nominate a faculty member to act as his/her representative or advocate.

The SAC adjudicates the case and notifies the student, in writing, of its decision within 10 days of it being convened.

#### Sanctions when breaching the principles of academic integrity

It is important to note that the listed infractions are not an exhaustive list and the sanctions suggested are only guidelines for the committee but not binding. At the discretion of the committee, and depending on individual circumstances, the disciplinary action may be harsher or milder for any particular offense depending on frequency and severity.

#### Hierarchy of Sanctions:

1. Verbal warning (e.g. dress code violation, lack of punctuality, smoking in non-designated areas)
2. Written reprimand (e.g. breaching patient privacy, disrespectful language/behavior, repeated absenteeism, missing deadlines, cheating)
3. Dean's warning (e.g. harassment, physical assault, plagiarism, forgery, verbal assault, discrimination, cheating)
4. Suspension (e.g. robbery/theft, vandalism/destruction of property, cheating)
5. Expulsion (e.g. possession of weapons or firearms, possession or distribution of illicit substances)

#### Regulations governing sanctions:

- Sanctions are decided upon by the Student Affairs Committee
- Sanctions 4-5 should be concurred by the Academic Committee and the University Disciplinary Committee
- Sanctions 1-5 may be combined with counseling/referral for psychological or psychiatric assessment if deemed necessary
- Sanctions 1-2 will not appear on the student's official record
- Regarding sanction 3, according to the University Policy only two Dean's Warnings are allowed in a student's academic career at AUB. Any violation of university regulations after the second Dean's Warning results in consideration of suspension.
- A Dean's Warning is retained in the students' record for at least one calendar year before it is re-evaluated by the Student Affairs Committee, after which the warning might be removed from the students' record if the student shows an improvement in attitude and behavior.
- Even if a Dean's Warning is removed from the student's record, it will still be counted such that if the student receives another warning at any time during the four years of undergraduate medical training, then two warnings will be automatically and permanently recorded in his/her file. Any lapses henceforth might result in sanctions 4-5 depending on the seriousness of the offense.
- Sanctions 4-5 will automatically and permanently appear on the student's official record
- Repeated offenses may entail a disciplinary action of a higher order: for example, a student who receives two verbal warnings may automatically receive a written reprimand, two reprimands may result in a dean's warning, two dean's warnings may result in suspension, etc.

### Appeals

The accused has the right to appeal the decision of the committee within 7 days. The appeal has to be made in writing to the Office of the Associate Dean of Medical Education. If it is determined that additional information is provided which warrants a re-investigation, the Associate Dean for Medical Education may decide to re-open the case.