Our Honor Code: Grey Areas, Best Practices, and Clarification for Quizzes and Exams

Developed by Alex and Nithya (M1 Honor Council Representatives), with guidance from Tim and Lakshmi (M2 Honor Council Representatives)

What we believe: The underlying goal behind our Honor Code is to maintain “a system of self-regulation which includes education, support, and, when necessary, investigation by the student Honor Council to assure that the conduct of all students meets appropriate professional standards.” The Honor Code is a set of principles that we, as students, elect to follow and take ownership for. In turn, the Honor Code builds an academic and professional culture that supports us as we move towards a profession that necessitates the utmost degree of professionalism and integrity.

What does that even mean? The Honor Code is student-driven. It’s not intended to be punitive or paternalistic. It’s a collective effort to optimize our learning, and its success depends upon our collective buy-in.

Student-driven? The Honor Code is an agreement between ourselves and the administration, but we’re held responsible for upholding it. The administration intends for the ball to stay in our court as much as possible, because we are responsible professionals and can regulate our own actions.

That’s where we come in. We - your Honor Council Representatives - are here to clarify the murkier Honor Code details; act as your resource and advocate; serve as liaisons between you and our administration; and help us, as a class, to maintain this unique degree of autonomy.

We know the Honor Code isn’t entirely clear; it’s designed that way. Instead of dictating that we blindly adhere to a do/don’t list of requirements, it asks us to take a moment to carefully consider our actions and interactions. In this sense, the Honor Code reflects what will be expected of us as we progress in our careers: to find the capacity and language to self-regulate, and to hold ourselves and each other to the highest standards of integrity, excellence, and professionalism.

With that, we thought we’d outline 1) the ‘Guiding Principles’ that we can all keep in mind for situations where the Honor Code comes into play, and 2) some specific pointers for upholding the Honor Code, specifically as it applies to our quizzes and exams.

Guiding Principles (the general idea):
1. Act professionally and responsibly.
2. Simulate a standardized testing experience, and operate under the assumption that everyone in our class is walking in to take the same exam at the same time. What would or would not be appropriate in this situation?
3. Don’t put yourself in ‘grey area’ situations that could be construed as Honor Code violations. Follow our suggested ‘best practices’ instead.

### Testing Pointers (the details):

**During the quiz/exam:**

1. Before beginning your quiz or exam, make sure that any notes or test material is away, under your desk or in your bag.
2. Make sure that your headphone jack is unplugged and that you aren’t listening to anything.
3. Personal calculators/phones or tablets are not allowed.
4. During the exam, take as many breaks as you need. Time is *not* meant to be a limiting factor. Just make sure you turn your scratch paper over and minimize your testing window if you get up from your seat.
5. Avoid entering or passing by rooms where groups may be studying, or whiteboard material may be easily visible. (This is a ‘best practice,’ but we know that this isn’t always realistic. But do your best to act with integrity and avoid that grey area.)
6. If an error message pops up or something comes up in your testing window, or if there’s a problem with a specific question, don’t take a screenshot or photo. Instead, email MedExams about the issue.
7. If you walk into a testing room or a classmate walks in while you’re testing, act neutral and try not to pre-empt your classmate’s testing process. Avoid any grey areas of communication about the test - be conscious about your communication and facial expressions while you’re in the testing room.
8. Answer the Honor Code questions truthfully. If you do answer “no” or forget to answer either question, your Honor Council reps (Alex and Nithya) will follow up with you, and discuss any concerns. Because the Honor Code is self-regulating, we usually try to resolve any concerns amongst ourselves as students first. Only if an issue cannot be resolved will we escalate, in which case we will maintain your anonymity, seek out information from you, and advocate for you to the administration.
9. If you pass someone walking out of the test on your way in, avoid discussing the exam with them. Practice your poker face.

**After the quiz/exam:**

1. Be careful about disposing of any scratch paper that has explicit exam questions or content written on it before you leave the exam room. Your best practice is to simply recycle all your scratch paper. If you do take paper with you, make sure that it doesn’t have parts of questions written down, and don’t share it with anyone.
2. Do not download, screenshot, or reproduce the quiz/exam feedback form. This information will be available on your Dashboard after everyone has taken the quiz/exam.
3. Avoid grey areas as much as you can when communicating with your classmates about the test. Don’t ask people who have taken the exam before you whether it was hard or easy, or about specific questions, or to elicit guidance - this gets you into muddy waters very quickly. If you’re in a classroom or at a bar following an exam, a best practice would be to ask the group at large whether everyone has already tested; then you’ll have the green light and know that you’re able to speak freely and openly.

   *Bottom line:* do not discuss the exam until you have taken the exam and you are sure that the person with whom you are speaking has also taken it. Your best practice here is to avoid discussing in places where others could hear you.
4. Be aware that deferrals on quizzes/exams happen every single weekend. Be extra aware of this on Mondays and Tuesdays! Avoid referencing any part of the exam length, difficulty, content, etc until you are absolutely sure that you are in a room or space where every other individual has also
completed the quiz or exam in question. Avoid discussing the need to query or discuss issues/complications with the exam with your class until you are sure that everyone has completed that quiz/exam.

5. Queries: Keep in mind that these should be worded with the highest professional standards. Best practice suggestion: know that the professor reads them, so read them back to yourself, imagining that your name is attached to your sentences.

Again - we’re here to help! Email us at any time - we’re more than happy to discuss any of this further, and continue the conversation.

Alex: ahighet@med.umich.edu
Nithya: nithyav@med.umich.edu