

Dental College of Georgia at Augusta University
Dental Student Code of Professionalism and Ethics
Effective: August 1, 2024

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I. PREAMBLE

The Code of Professionalism and Ethics is a set of principles that has been developed to ensure that all students in the Dental College of Georgia (“DCG”) share a collective responsibility for maintaining the highest ethical standards and professional conduct in their relationship with each other, faculty, staff, and with patients.

Depending on the problem at hand, students may also seek advice from Faculty, Department Chairs, Offices of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Clinical Services, and Admissions. The final responsibility for adherence to this Code rests with each individual. Therefore, each student has the general obligation to:

1. Maintain high standards of academic and professional honesty and integrity
2. Respect the rights, privileges, and property of other members of the DCG community, refrain from actions that would interfere with AU or DCG functions or would endanger the health, safety, or welfare of other persons, or would expose AU or DCG to legal risk.
3. Know and comply with the rules and regulations of AU and DCG.
4. Seek advice and counsel when faced with an ethical dilemma.

The DCG, through its faculty and staff, will foster an environment that promotes adherence to the Code of Professionalism and Ethics. For example, the faculty and staff will work to clarify academic requirements, provide help to students in meeting expectations, and avoid situations that may lead anyone to violate the Code of Professionalism and Ethics.

II. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Although this Code does not cover every ethical situation that might develop, the following general expectations can provide guidance in three areas of conduct: academic, professional, and clinical. In addition, the Code lists other resources that students may consult.

A. Academic Misconduct

1. The giving or receiving of unauthorized assistance in the preparation of any assignment to be submitted for academic credit.
2. The unauthorized possession or use of any materials, procedures, practices on any examination, essay, report, assignment, graded pre-clinical or clinical laboratory project, or clinical activity for credit or remediation, or which is required for graduation.
3. Confidentiality of examination material should be maintained. Accessing examination content prior to testing, breaching the confidentiality of the examination content or any attempt to subvert the examination process. Reproduction or attempts to reproduce examination materials through memorization, recording or other means in any fashion, organized or individually, is strictly prohibited.
4. Original Work: Plagiarism: themes, essays, term papers, tests, electronic documents and other similar requirements must be the work of the student submitting the work for credit. There shall be no use of artificial intelligence (“AI”) to create assignments, unless specifically authorized and then credited.
5. Falsifying applications, forms, documents, reports, or records of any kind or providing false information to DCG personnel prior to admission, or while an active member of DCG’s academic programs. The falsifying, altering, counterfeiting, forging, destroying, or causing such falsifying, altering, counterfeiting, forging, or destroying of any DCG record, form, or document.
6. Unauthorized accessing or revealing confidential information about faculty, staff, residents, patients, or students of the DCG.
7. Theft, damaging, defacing, or unauthorized use of any academic materials and/or property of the DCG or training sites.

8. Computer usage that violates DCG/AU and/or clinical sites acceptable use policies.

B. Professional Misconduct

Professional misconduct may occur both within and outside of the classroom and has broader implications for the well-being of students, at the DCG. It is important for students, as dental professionals in training, to understand that while behavior may be legal, it may not be professional or fitting of the dental profession.

Professional misconduct may include:

1. Failure to abide by the ADEA Statement on Professionalism in Dental Education and the current ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct. (https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/about/ada_code_of_ethics.pdf?rev=86aeaa6fbodo467f8a380a3de35e8301&hash=89BAA88FB9305B8F134414E337CAE55A)
2. Failure to abide by the Georgia Dental Practice Act found in O.C.G.A. §§43-11-1, et. seq. (see <https://gbd.georgia.gov/laws-policies-rules>)
3. Failure to respect the rights, safety, and welfare of all others person in the DCG (patients, faculty, students, staff, volunteers and visitors).
4. Discrimination relating to sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, national origin, disability, or medical condition will be considered unethical.
5. Willful property loss or damage caused by a faculty, student, staff or volunteer will be considered violation of the Code of Professionalism and Ethics.
6. The integrity of all research data must be safeguarded; any violation should be reported to the alleged violator's supervisor.
7. Students are expected to arrive at the class and clinic on time and stay until preclinical and clinical instruction and clinical care and clinical duties are completed.
8. Any violation of a DCG rule or rule at a professional experience site.
9. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, unless prescribed by a clinician. All students are expected to comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations concerning

drug and alcohol use, including rules, policies and procedures of the University System of Georgia. Any student may be subject to a random drug screening.

10. Disrupting or obstructing the teaching, research, service, or outreach programs of the DCG, on campus or at affiliated training sites.
11. Dishonesty with respect to activities covered by the DCG Code of Professionalism and Ethics.
12. Retaliation against any person involved to inhibit or prevent the reporting, investigation, or hearing of any kind authorized by DCG/AU.
13. Withholding evidence pertinent to any case under investigation or being heard, or the giving of false evidence during an investigation or hearing.
14. Failure to meet the conditions of Disciplinary Probation (General or With Restrictions), including any violation of this Code of Professionalism and Ethics while on probation will result in a Formal Hearing.
15. Unprofessional dress (as outlined in the professional program, class and/or clinical agency policies) during classes, clinical experiences, or when representing the DCG (e.g. visiting regional campuses with fellow dental students). See DCG Dress Code.

C. Clinical Conduct

In the clinics, the primary professional obligation shall be to provide competent and timely delivery of quality care within the bounds of clinical circumstances presented by DCG and the patient, with due consideration being given to the needs and desires of the patient.

1. Clinical Expectations Generally

Students shall treat patients under the supervision of DCG faculty in approved locations, as defined by the State of Georgia and CODA as it relates to dental practice. A person's training or competence shall not be represented in any way that would be false or misleading. Students should seek consultation from another specialist or specialty clinic at the DCG whenever the welfare of the patient calls for it.

Patients should be informed, in language the patient could reasonably be expected

to understand, of the nature of the proposed treatment, any recognized alternatives, the possible risks, complications, and anticipated benefits involved in the treatment and recognized alternatives. Information should be provided to a patient in a manner that allows the patient to make informed decisions regarding his treatment.

Educational requirements shall take lower priority to the patient's welfare, in situations of conflict. Patients should be informed of their present oral health status without disparaging comments being made about prior services, whether or not provided at the DCG. Care being rendered to patients shall not be represented in a false or misleading manner.

Fees being charged for providing care shall not be represented in a false or misleading manner. Incorrect treatment dates may not be reported to a third-party payment agency in order to assist a patient in obtaining benefits that otherwise would be disallowed. A dental procedure on a third-party claim form may not be incorrectly described in order to allow a greater payment, or to make a non-covered procedure appear to be covered. Inserting false information in a patient record, altering or forging a signature, or misrepresenting any material fact regarding a diagnosis, treatment, or management of a patient shall not be tolerated.

2. Clinical Misconduct

1. Failure to abide by the ADEA Statement on Professionalism in Dental Education and the current ADA Principles of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct. (https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/about/ada_code_of_ethics.pdf?rev=86aeaa6fb0d0467f8a380a3de35e8301&hash=89BAA88FB9305B8F134414E337CAE55A)
2. Failure to abide by the Georgia Dental Practice Act found in [OCGA §§43-11-1, et. seq.](#)
3. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, national origin, disability, veteran status, or medical condition.
4. Failure to protect HIPAA and PII protected data in accordance with AU policy, DCG Policy and Federal and State law.
5. Failure to make reasonable arrangements shall be made for emergency care of patients of record.
6. Treating patients while under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances, or any medical treatment that may impair clinical judgment or psychomotor function. (See Fitness to Participate in Patient Care Policy; AU Fitness for Participation and AU Fitness for Duty).
7. Prescribing or distributing controlled substances in violation of the law or AU or DCG.

8. Failure to exercise approved infection control procedures is considered unethical behavior.
9. Performing unnecessary or unapproved procedures.
10. Failure to follow through with the approved signed plan of care in a timely manner, unless the patient is consulted and signed approval by a faculty member is obtained.
11. Failure to follow AU research guidelines, procedures, and policies.

III. RESPONSIBILITY IN REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Faculty, students, residents, and staff of the DCG have the responsibility to report violations of the Code of Professionalism and Ethics. Depending on the nature of the alleged offense, the individual has the option of communicating a violation informally or formally.

1. Informal Resolution:

Informal resolution should be used to resolve minor concerns such as lesser professionalism issues (i.e. language, attitude, dress code violations, etc.). The informal option may involve one or more of the following steps:

2. First, the faculty member should discuss the concern directly with the student. When the discussion with the student fails to resolve the issue, the faculty may discuss the situation confidentially with the Department Chair, Associate Dean for Student Affairs (for a professional conduct violation involving a student), with the Associate Dean for Clinical Services (for a clinical conduct violation), or with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (for an academic conduct violation).
 - a. Alternatively, any situation involving a faculty or staff member within a department may be discussed confidentially with the department chair. Situations involving staff may also be discussed confidentially with the staff member's immediate supervisor.
 - b. Offenses resolved at the faculty or department chair level do not need to be up channeled but should be documented with signed identical copies retained by both parties. These documents should be securely maintained
3. If the Complainant has reported the concern to the appropriate Associate Dean the Associate Dean will then meet with the Respondent to discuss the allegations. At this meeting the Associate Dean will present to the Respondent with a written copy of the allegations and information about the DCG Code of Professionalism and Ethics. The Respondent will have the opportunity to provide information about the allegations. The Respondent shall sign an acknowledgment stating they received a written copy of the allegation. **Note:** *any concern that is*

addressed should be recorded in the complaint log regardless of action taken and how the issue was resolved.

If the Associate Dean does not find sufficient evidence of a violation to move forward, then NO ACTION is needed. If the Associate Dean finds issue(s) addressed are still a concern and have not been sufficiently resolved, the Associate Dean may forward the matter to the Violation Review Committee (“VRC”) for determination in the formal resolution procedure. Appendix II outlines the policies and procedures for the formal resolution process.

B. Formal Resolution:

Formal resolution should be sought where there is a potentially egregious professionalism concern, where there is concern for serious potential impact to others (i.e. colleagues, the public, the profession, and patients). The formal option requires submitting a written complaint to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

C. Complaints Concerning Discrimination:

Human Resources (EEO) investigates complaints that an AU employee has violated AU’s nondiscrimination or non-retaliation policies. AU’s Title IX Coordinator is available to review individual concerns relating to compliance and to provide compliance support for programs, departments, schools, colleges, and campuses relating to discrimination based on sex. Any individual with a complaint can contact these offices directly.

IV. INTERIM SUSPENSION

In certain circumstances the Dean, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, or the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs may impose an interim suspension prior to a hearing. Interim suspension may be imposed:

1. to ensure the safety and well-being of members, patients, or guests of DCG community or preservation of DCG property;
2. to ensure the student’s own physical or emotional safety and well-being; or
3. if the student poses a definite threat of disruption of, or interference with, the normal operations at DCG.

An interim suspension *should only occur where necessary to maintain safety and should be limited to those situations where the accused student poses a serious and immediate danger or threat to persons or property.* In making such an assessment, DCG should consider the existence of a significant risk to the health or safety of the complainant or the campus community; the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability of potential injury; and whether less restrictive means can be used to significantly mitigate the risk.

Before an interim suspension is issued, DCG must make a reasonable effort to give the accused student the opportunity to be heard on whether their presence on campus poses a danger.

If an interim suspension is issued, the terms of the suspension take effect immediately. The accused student shall receive notice of the interim suspension and the opportunity to respond to the interim suspension. The accused student has three business days from receipt of the notice of interim suspension to challenge whether the interim suspension should continue.

An interim suspension may be provided at any point during the investigation.

Note: Both the Dean and the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs has the right to immediately suspend clinical privileges of any student should patient safety be a concern.

V. ACCESS TO ADVISORS

The Respondent and Complainant, as Parties to these proceedings, shall have the right to have an advisor (who may or may not be an attorney) of the party's choosing, and at their own expense, for the express purpose of providing advice and counsel. The advisor may be present during meetings and proceedings during the *investigatory and/or resolution process* at which their advisee is present. The advisor may advise their advisee in any manner, including providing questions, suggestions, and guidance on responses to any questions posed to the advisee, but shall not participate directly during the investigation or hearing process.

Note: there may be different policies pertaining to the role of advisors based upon the type of investigation (i.e. Title IX, employment, clinical). Advisors will be provided the appropriate policies from the office managing the complaint. Should an advisor, after being notified of non-compliance to related policies and

procedures set forth, DCG reserves the right to remove the advisor from the proceedings. A respondent may select a new advisor.

VI. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is recognized as an important tool of everyday communication and students maintain the same responsibilities listed in the Code of Professionalism and Ethics applied to their behavior on social media. Students must ensure that their social media use does not interfere with or delay completion of their professional responsibilities, violate federal, state, and local laws, and suggest that they are representing an official position of the DCG or AU. For further questions, students are referred to AU's social media and freedom of expression policies.

VII. HIERARCHY OF POLICIES

Academic medical centers are intrinsically complex with many policies that may govern certain individuals and not others. Moreover, separate entities with independent governance associated with an academic medical center may have similar policies that apply to the same individual. To ensure the appropriate policies are followed, the below lists the policies that apply to Dental Students in order of authority.

DCG Institution Policies supersede all other policies regarding Dental Students, unless they contradict current AU, USG, applicable CODA requirements and/or state or federal laws. If a contradiction is noted, in turn, AU, USG, CODA requirements and state/federal laws supersede DCG policies.

Departmental policies work within the boundaries of DCG policies. Whenever there is uncertainty about which policy to follow or the intent of a policy, the Course Director or Associate Dean for Student Affairs must contact the Office of Legal Affairs.

VIII. RECORDS

All records pertaining to the Code of Professionalism and Ethics and any violations will be stored by the Office of Student Affairs.

APPENDIX I

Relevant Sections of AU Policy Directory

Freedom of Expression:

<https://www.augusta.edu/services/legal/policyinfo/policy/freedom-expression.pdf>

Acceptable Use of Information Technology:

<https://www.augusta.edu/services/legal/policyinfo/policy/acceptable-use-of-information-technology.pdf>

Social Media:

<https://www.augusta.edu/services/legal/policyinfo/policy/social-media-policy.pdf>

Fitness for Participation

<https://www.augusta.edu/services/legal/policyinfo/policy/student-fitness-for-participation.pdf>

Fitness for Duty

<https://www.augusta.edu/services/legal/policyinfo/policy/fitness-duty-policy.pdf>

Anti-Harrassment and Non-Discrimination

<https://www.augusta.edu/services/legal/policyinfo/policy/anti-harassment-non-discrimination-policy.pdf>

American Dental Association Code of Ethics: https://www.ada.org/-/media/project/ada-organization/ada/ada-org/files/about/ada_code_of_ethics.pdf?rev=ba22edfdfla646be9249fe2d870d7d31&hash=CCD76FCDC56D6F2CCBC46F1751F51B96

Other Resources

Georgia Board of Dentistry: <https://gbd.georgia.gov/>

Georgia Dental Practice Act: <https://gbd.georgia.gov/laws-policies-rules>

APPENDIX II

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE FORMAL RESOLUTION PROCESS THROUGH THE VIOLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

1. Violation Review Committee (“VRC”) Membership

a. The VRC shall be composed of five faculty members and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs who shall be a non-voting member. The Dean will appoint the five faculty members and name the Chair of the VRC. The appointed members of the VRC, other than the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, will serve for at least three academic years. Responsibility for the enforcement of the DCG Student Code of Professionalism and Ethics lies with the Dean of The DCG.

b. A faculty member who is directly or indirectly involved in the particular case being heard shall be automatically excused from the Committee and replacement for the case at issue will be appointed by the Dean.

2. After the Chair of the VRC receives a copy of the written alleged violation, the chair will forward the alleged violation to the VRC and copy the appropriate associate dean. The VRC will meet and make a recommendation for resolution to either the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for academic/professionalism issues or the Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs for clinical issues. The assigned associate dean may accept or modify the recommendation of the VRC. The final decision of the appropriate associate dean must be personally delivered to the Respondent. Copies must be sent to the VRC and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

The written notice must inform the Respondent of the right to request a grievance hearing by a separate ad hoc committee (AHC) in cases of serious disciplinary action of non-promotion, probation, or higher within five business days of receipt of the written notice.

Prior to making a recommendation, the VRC may request the Respondent in question appear before the VRC to answer questions and provide additional information. Moreover, after receiving disciplinary action notification, the Respondent may ask to meet with the VRC.

Should the Respondent request an ad hoc committee hearing, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs shall appoint an AHC **within five business days** of receipt of

the request for a grievance hearing. This time may be extended if needed to allow for the identification of appropriate members.

The AHC will be composed of three individuals: one Faculty, one Dental Student, and one Department Chair. Note: No member of the three-person AHC shall have previously been substantially involved in any other decision or action directly involving the Respondent. Where possible, the committee shall not consist of members of the Respondent's Department/Course at issue or Training Program.

Parties, including the Program and Respondent, may request the removal of a member of the three person AHC for cause.

Respondent has the right to a single non-participating advisor. The Respondent and their advocate may confer during the grievance hearing but the advocate is not permitted to speak on the Respondent's behalf during the grievance hearing. The DCG may designate a person of their choice to represent the DCG.

AHC shall conduct a grievance hearing within **ten business days** of the appointment. This time may be extended if needed to allow for quorum of the AHC members.

All documents to be presented at the grievance hearing shall be submitted to the AHC chair no later than **four business days** prior to the designed grievance hearing. The AHC will have the opportunity to review these documents and additional documentation may be requested by the AHC prior to the designated grievance hearing. There shall be a tape or transcript of the grievance hearing.

AHC will make recommendation(s) to the Dean of the Dental College of Georgia. Recommendation will be in writing and will state facts and reasons for the recommendation. The recommendation will be delivered within **five business days** of the grievance hearing.

The Dean of the Dental College of Georgia shall make a decision based upon AHC's recommendation within **five business days** of receipt. This time may be extended as is reasonable. The Dean may either:

- Uphold the decision;
- Overturn the decision; or
- Modify the decision.

The decision shall be in writing. The decision will be delivered to the Respondent, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and AHC.

For cases regarding suspension or dismissal, the Respondent will be informed of the right to appeal to the President of Augusta University. The Respondent shall have **five business days** from receipt of the Dean's decision to submit an appeal to the President of the University.

The request for appeal shall be in writing. The request shall state the reason(s) for the request with a complete description of the basis for the appeal. The President or their designee (e.g., Provost) shall review the appeal **within fourteen business days**. This time may be extended if needed due to leave or illness or as reasonable. The President or their designee may either:

- Uphold the decision;
- Overturn the decision; or
- Modify the decision.

The President or their designee shall notify in writing the concerned parties (i.e., Dental Resident, Program Director, and the Dean). The decision must inform the Student of the right to apply to the University System of Georgia (USG) for a discretionary review. <https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section6/C2714/>

Review of the decision by the USG Office of Legal Affairs is not a matter of right but is within the sound discretion of the University System Office of Legal Affairs. The decision by the USG Office of Legal Affairs and the Committee shall be binding and final for all purposes.

3. Disciplinary Definitions: The following definitions of disciplinary sanctions have been established to provide consistency in the application of sanctions for students:

- a. Dismissal: Either temporary or permanent.
- b. Suspension: Suspension of student enrollment for a stated or an indefinite time period.
- c. Restitution: Compensation for damage or loss to the DCG or other property, and for injury to persons.
- d. Professional development: (such as community service, writing essays, giving presentations, research projects).
- e. Disciplinary Probation: Formal action placing conditions upon the student's continued attendance for violations of the Code of Professionalism and Ethics. Disciplinary probation warns a student that any further misconduct will automatically raise the question of dismissal

from the DCG. Disciplinary probation may be for a specific term, or for an indefinite period which may extend to graduation or other termination of the student's enrollment in the DCG.

- f. Reprimand: Written reprimand issued when the violation of the Code of Professionalism and Ethics is not sufficient to call for Disciplinary Probation.
- g. Dismissal of charges: Formal clearance of charges alleged.

Appendix III

Guidelines for Conducting an Ad Hoc Committee Hearing

A. Open meeting with instructions to the Committee by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs

1. Explain process to be undertaken.
2. Explain rules of conduct
 - a) recognition by the Chair to speak.
 - b) appropriate questions (use of "alleged," etc.).
 - c) warning to members that the hearing process shall not be punitive.
3. Explain rights of both parties
4. Provide reference documents (i.e. policy documents.) when appropriate.
5. Describe confidentiality warning, retention of all notes and related documents by the Chair between sessions. (Warning not to discuss case with parties outside of hearing.)
6. Acknowledge that the hearing will be recorded.

B. AHC begins formal proceedings and invite plaintiff and defendant with appropriate advisor(s) and attorney(s).

C. Instructions to all parties present at hearing

1. Explain process to be used.
2. Explain rights of individuals attending (i.e., right to question witnesses, request recognition to speak, warning regarding confidentiality, acknowledge tape recording of hearing).
3. Authority of Chair (rules of order, witnesses, contempt/dismissal from room, recess, adjournment, etc.).
4. Describe sequence of hearing (i.e., opening questions, summary, deliberations, decision of Dean, Dean's notice to defendant, possible sanction, right of appeal).

D. Standard language for Chair

1. Opening: "The purpose of this hearing is to respond to a charge of _____ submitted by _____ against _____. The Committee has the following roles: 1) to determine the guilt or innocence of the defendant; 2) if found innocent, officially exonerate the person; 3) if found guilty, to recommend the appropriate action to the Dean."
2. Introduction of plaintiff
 - a) "Plaintiff, please state your name and position in the School of Dentistry."
 - b) "State your relationship to the matter to be heard."

c) "Have you discussed this matter with any of the Committee members prior to this hearing?" (If yes, dismiss Committee member, or let Committee decide after hearing what was discussed.)

d) "Proceed with your case presentation. Include the charge, a brief explanation of the charge, followed by presentation of evidence and any witnesses you wish to call."

3. Introduction of defendant

a) "Defendant, please state your name and position in the School of Dentistry."

b) "State your relationship to the matter to be heard."

c) "Have you discussed this matter with any of the Committee members prior to this hearing?" (If yes, dismiss Committee member, or let Committee decide after hearing what was discussed.)

d) "Proceed with your case presentation. Include all evidence and any witnesses you wish to call for your defense."

4. Summary

a) Both the plaintiff and the defendant have five minutes to summarize their respective cases; the plaintiff shall present first.

b) After the summary all but Committee members must leave the room and are dismissed for the day.

5. Deliberations

a) Instructions to Committee on process of deliberation.

b) Instruction on disciplinary actions.