



## Monteverde Institute Student Code of Conduct

Our goal at the Monteverde Institute is to provide you with a quality educational experience. To make the most of your time here, we take every precaution to guarantee your health, safety and general well-being.

At the same time, you play the greatest role in determining the quality of your experience in Costa Rica. Your individual actions and behavior can have an enormous positive (or negative) impact on your and the entire group's experience.

As international students, you are highly visible guests in this small community and your actions are noticed and remembered. As you talk with residents, they will remark about the pleasure of hosting a certain student or remember the help of students in the construction of the meeting house. We invite you to continue this legacy of mutually beneficial interactions between students and the Monteverde community.

Due to the intensive nature and unique environment of our courses, full participation, cooperation, and teamwork are necessary requirements. Help your fellow students, watch out for each other, and promote positive relationships and collaboration within the team of which you are a participant.

As a MVI student, you are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, and participate in all program activities, field trips, and excursions. You are expected to be respectful of all persons including other students, professors, MVI staff, homestay families, and people you meet while you are here. We expect you to conduct yourself in a manner appropriate to your status as a guest of Costa Rica and as a representative of your home university, home country, and MVI.

### Violations of Costa Rican Law

Any violation of Costa Rican law is automatically considered misconduct and grounds for immediate suspension from the MVI program. In the specific example of illegal drug possession and/or use, including marijuana, drug laws and penalties are strict in Costa Rica. A single conviction could carry a 6 to 12-year prison sentence. Guilt by association may also be hard to disprove. MVI cannot and will not protect you from being prosecuted. Anyone found using or in possession of illegal drugs will be sent home immediately at his or her own expense.

Other illegal actions include sexual assault, sexual contact with minors, physical assault, alcohol consumption by minors, theft, vandalism, public nudity, and extraction of natural materials (animals, plants, shells, rocks, etc.). Smoking in public is very restricted; please be aware that smoking is only allowed in designated areas. It is your responsibility to understand the laws of Costa Rica (<http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/nations/costarica.php>, <http://www.anywherecostarica.com/sustainable/important-laws>, <http://www.costaricalaw.com/>).

Please respect Costa Rican standards and norms. Public nudity, public displays of affection, drunken or boisterous behavior, rudeness, and dirty appearance are frowned upon. Nudity on beaches, no matter how apparently deserted, is not permissible. Courteous behavior, appropriate dress, and personal hygiene are appreciated.

Finally, please note MVI's policy on vehicle use. For safety and liability reasons (and in some cases Costa Rican law) students are not allowed to drive or ride on a motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle, regardless of age. In addition, students may not drive a vehicle for the duration of a course.

### Misconduct

Students must abide by both Monteverde Institute policies and Costa Rican law. Please remember that you are in a foreign country. In addition to suspension from the Monteverde Institute program, legal violations are handled by Costa Rican authorities and the Monteverde Institute does not have the obligation nor means to protect you from being prosecuted.

The following are considered misconduct and are subject to appropriate action.

1. **Violation of Costa Rican law**, including:
  - a) Consumption and/or possession of illegal drugs.
  - b) Alcohol consumption by persons under 18 years old.
  - c) Providing alcohol to minors
  - d) Sexual harassment, abuse, or assault of any type, and sexual contact with a minor. Sexual assault is a felony in Costa Rica and is defined as physical contact of a sexual nature without one's will or consent. This includes rape and unacceptable physical contact. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct or written communication of an intimidating, hostile, or offensive sexual nature. Certain forms of harassment are considered assault and are, therefore, a felony.
  - e) Theft and vandalism.
  - f) Carrying firearms without permit
  - g) Failure to comply with government health regulations, including but not limited to wearing a mask, practicing social

distancing, observing quarantine or isolation orders, and providing information to health officials for contact tracing purposes.

## 2. Violations of Monteverde Institute policies:

- a) Smoking or alcohol consumption on the MVI premises at any time. MVI is a smoke- and alcohol-free environment.
- b) Excessive drinking by students over age 18. Excessive drinking is defined as having a negative impact on student academic performance, on group dynamics, or on the community.
- c) Driving a motorized vehicle at any time during the course.
- d) Riding on a motorcycle or ATV.
- e) Willful obstruction or disruption of any MVI course teaching, organized activity, study, research, examination, meeting, or ceremony.
- f) Willful damage, misuse, theft, or misappropriation of private or public property.
- g) Abusive, threatening, lewd, or obscene behavior.
- h) Bringing anyone to your place of lodging who is not staying there without permission from your professor, the course coordinator, and the lodging administration.
- i) Abusive, threatening, lewd, or obscene behavior.
- j) Repeated tardiness to and/or unexcused absences from classes and activities.
- k) Travel outside of the program's designated location (and/or leaving the program) without the proper approval and fulfillment of the program sign out requirements.
- l) Failure to abide by the homestay rules including repeated late night returns and/or not returning to your homestay without notification, disrespectful behavior, and providing inappropriate items to family members.
- m) Discrimination or harassment against any person based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, political conviction, religious belief, disability, or physical or medical condition.
- n) Failure to comply with COVID-19 protocols or related directives from MVI staff, on the MVI campus or during any part of the MVI itinerary at any site.

### Discipline

In the case of minor infractions, or in the event that any individual's behavior is creating difficulties for other individuals, the group, MVI, the host family, or the community, the person(s) involved will be asked to meet with the MVI course coordinator, homestay coordinator (if involving homestay), and the course leader(s) or academic director to discuss the situation. Generally, a mutually agreed-upon resolution can be reached in this way.

If the misconduct is more serious in nature, or if a formal complaint is received from another student, course leader, professor, the MVI course coordinator, host family, or a community member, MVI reserves the right to convene a Board of Discipline. The Board will be made up of the following persons:

1. MVI Executive Director,
2. A professor / teacher / leader of the home institution,
3. MVI course coordinator or professor, and
4. The MVI homestay coordinator, if applicable.

The Board will review the complaint, discuss the situation, and verify whether there is misconduct. If proven, the Board may take any of the following actions:

1. Warning,
2. Suspension of the student's participation in planned activities, or
3. Limited suspension of the student's participation from the course and notification to the sending institution, or
4. Expulsion from the program, notification of home university and return to home country at student's own expense.

Should the resolution require removal from a homestay and placement with a different host family or alternative lodging, the student or home institution will be responsible for paying the remaining balance of homestay to the family, plus the additional cost of new accommodations. Many families depend on the income generated by hosting students, and it is unfair that they lose income due to student's behavior.

In the case of illegal actions, the student will be immediately suspended from the program and is personally responsible for their actions and return travel costs.

By being respectful, using good judgment, and being a thoughtful member of your group, your time here will be fulfilling and rewarding. This code of conduct is designed to ensure your safety and enhance your experience. Most of this is common sense and we have found that most students follow these rules naturally. We have had many years of successful programs due to this attitude of international study students. **We wish you an exciting, educational, and safe experience!**