

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND HONOR COUNCILS

The Faculty Plain-English Guide to the University of Richmond Honor System

Respected Faculty:

The University of Richmond's Honor Code is one of the oldest traditions at the University. It has been a constant symbol of our commitment to integrity and trust for over 175 years.

Since its inception, faculty members have played a significant part of the University of Richmond Honor System with respect to both preventing and reporting honor violations. As such, faculty members' understanding of the Honor System is essential to its proper functioning. While each faculty member learns about the Honor System upon their arrival to the university, the University of Richmond Honor Councils have created the Faculty Plain-English Guide as another reference to the Honor System. This resource answers frequently asked questions and outlines the procedures for reporting a violation.

While one of the main roles of the Honor Councils is to adjudicate cases, we are also strongly committed to educating students about the importance of academic integrity. We request your assistance and ask that you complete a few simple actions. First, require students to sign the Honor Pledge at the end of all assignments. It reminds them of their commitment to the University's community of trust. Second, emphasize your honor policies such as working with other students or your citing requirements. This will reinforce honor in their academic lives.

Please use this guide to gain a better understanding of the Honor Councils' procedures. If you have further questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

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University of Richmond Honor Councils

2007-2008

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Reasons for and How to Report Possible Violations

Reporting violations, as opposed to dealing with them personally, has several advantages for both students and professors. First, reporting a possible violation can save professors time.. Researching a possible honor violation is a time-consuming process. When reporting a case to the Honor Council, professors will be asked to write an affidavit and attend a short (typically about an hour) meeting to discuss his or her affidavit with a pre-hearing review board. Often, professors choose not to attend the student's hearing. In these circumstances, the professor's affidavit serves as his or her testimony.

Second, reporting violations ensures that the two-strike policy is enforced. Upon a Guilty finding in an Honor Council Hearing, a student is automatically placed on Honor Probation for the remainder of his or her career at the University of Richmond. If the student is found guilty of a second violation, he or she is automatically expelled from the University. Cases that have not been heard by the Honor Council are not counted as a strike against the student.

Third, professors release themselves of any potential liability by reporting the potential violation to the Honor Council. Students who are punished for academic violations may become resentful. Professors shift responsibility for the outcome of the case to the Honor Council by reporting potential violations.

Resources for Students

One of the most important tools in addressing academic dishonesty is education. International, exchange, and full-time students are given an Honor Council guidebook and attend a presentation highlighting the most important aspects of the Honor System when they first enter the university. Each student must pass the Honor Code Test. From time to time, specific questions regarding the Honor Code arise. If at any time a student has questions about any aspect of the honor system, the following resources are available:

- Kyle Storms, Richmond College Honor Council Chair
- Madeline Higgins, Westhampton Honor Council Chair
- Any other member of either Richmond or Westhampton College Honor Councils
- The Honor Council Website <http://www.student.richmond.edu/~urhc/>. This site includes the following:
 - *Plain-English Guide* <http://www.student.richmond.edu/~urhc/guides.html>
 - *Honor Council Statutes* <http://www.student.richmond.edu/~urhc/statutes.html>

The following resources are available to help students prevent plagiarism, the most common violation:

- Academic Skills Center: Writing fellows are skilled in helping students research
- Librarians
- NoodleBib: An online source citing tool
- The Honor Council members
- The Honor Council Website, which includes the "The Plain-English Guide"
<http://www.student.richmond.edu/~urhc/>

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

To whom are violations reported? Violations may be reported to any of the following four individuals:

- a. Madeline Higgins, Chair, WC Honor Council
- b. Kyle Storms, Chair, RC Honor Council
- c. Dr. Juliette Landphair, Dean, Westhampton College
- d. Dr. Joseph Boehman, Dean, Richmond College

What are the violations?

A) Cheating

- a. The submission or attempted submission of work that is not one's own (includes providing unauthorized aid, too).
- b. Example: A student sharing information regarding an exam between sections with another student.

B) Lying

- a. The making of a statement that one knows is false with the intent to deceive.
- b. Example: A student lying regarding why he or she missed a class, exam, or required event.

C) Plagiarism

- a. The use of words, facts, and ideas that are not one's own without proper acknowledgement.
- b. Example: A student writing a paper with the assistance of SparkNotes, websites, etc without providing proper citations.

D) Academic Theft

- a. The theft or destruction of academic materials, which results in unequal opportunities for students.
- b. Example: A student stealing a laptop or textbook from the library.

E) Registration Irregularity

- a. The violation of registration procedures (results in an advantage relative to other students).
- b. Example: A student asking an older student to register for a course they wish to take, only to drop it a few days later.

F) Disclosure of Honor Council Information

- a. Telling someone about an Honor Council hearing that was "closed."
- b. Example: A student telling another student that "Joe" was suspended because he cheated on his final.

G) Failure to Report an Honor Code Violation (Toleration)

- a. Witnessing someone commit a possible Honor Code violation and not reporting it.

Is lying in a non-academic context a violation of the Honor Code? Non-academic lying is referred to the appropriate Dean's Office as a violation of the policy statement.

What is the jurisdiction of the Honor Councils? All undergraduates in the School of Arts and Sciences, the E. Claiborne Robins School of Business, and the Jepson School of Leadership Studies

What happens after a violation is reported? The Chair assigned to the case assembles a Pre-Hearing Review Board, comprised of the Chair, the Marshal, and two to four Honor Council members. The Chair then contacts the Accuser and the Accused to set up individual meetings with the Pre-Hearing Review Board.

What happens during the Pre-Hearing? A Pre-Hearing is an informal meeting where the Accuser provides his or her explanation of the events leading to the report of the alleged violation. The Accuser

usually brings evidence such as the course syllabus, the paper (if the accusation is a charge of plagiarism), and a written statement of the events (an affidavit). This meeting usually takes approximately one hour.

How is the Accused student involved? After meeting with the Accuser, the Chair notifies the Accused that he or she has been accused of an Honor Code violation. The same Pre-Hearing Review Board then meets with the Accused student. Honor Council members strive to give the Accused student ample notice of the meeting, while also ensuring that the process moves along in a timely fashion. The Accused student will discuss the potential violation with the Pre-Hearing Review Board and write a personal affidavit.

What happens after the Pre-Hearing Review Board meets with the Accused student? The Pre-Hearing Review Board reviews all of the evidence to make a decision as to whether or not there is enough evidence to move forward to a full investigation and Hearing.

What standard does the Pre-Hearing Review Board use to make a decision? The standard the Pre-Hearing Review Board uses to make their decision is “more likely than not.” In percentage terms, the Pre-Hearing Review Board moves forward if the members feel that there is at least a 51 % chance that an Honor Code violation did occur. If the Pre-Hearing Review Board agrees that the chance an Honor Violation occurred is less than 51 %, it votes to dismiss the case. Should the Pre-Hearing Review Board decide not to move forward, all of the evidence is destroyed. The Chair contacts the Accuser and the Accused student to let them know the outcome of the meeting.

What happens if the Pre-Hearing Board decides to move forward to a Hearing? The Chair schedules the Hearing at a mutually agreeable time, usually on a weekday evening. The Hearing must occur within fifteen days of the Pre-Hearing Review Board’s decision, but no less than 72 hours after the decision. The Accused student is assigned Honor Advocates (or may elect to choose any undergraduate student to assist with the process). The Advocates gather together to go over evidence and to assemble questions for the Accused student to answer during the hearing.

Who attends the Hearing? At the Hearing, there are three officers who sit at the front of the room: the Chair, who presides over the case; the Secretary, who types a transcript of the hearing and makes an audio recording of the Hearing; and the Marshal, who is responsible for maintaining the Accused student’s rights. The Advocates and the Accused are also in the room throughout the hearing. In addition, six to eight Hearing Board members sit to the side.

Who is on the Hearing Board? The Hearing Board is comprised of an even number of men and women; usually four men and four women. At least seventy-two hours before a Hearing takes place, the Secretary brings a list of potential Hearing Board members to the Accused student so that the Accused may request that any familiar students do not serve on their Hearing. These requests, when reasonable, are honored. In addition, the Accused student is asked if he or she believes that any member of the Hearing Board would not be able to make an objective decision. If the answer is yes, that Hearing Board member is removed. Only Honor Council members whom the Accused student did not remove from consideration will be asked to serve.

What happens during the Hearing? Advocates present opening statements that summarize the University and Accused sides of the event in question. Please note that in this non-adversarial system, all Advocates work together in an effort to present the evidence clearly and fairly. Next, the Accuser is called to the stand. When the Accuser is not present, his or her affidavit is read into evidence. Afterward, the Advocates for the University call the rest of their witnesses and present the rest of their evidence. Once the University Advocates have presented their evidence,, the Advocates for the Accused student call the Accused to the stand to read his or her affidavit and testify. The Advocates for the Accused then present any other evidence, such as a character witness. Finally, an Advocate for the University and an Advocate

for the Accused read their closing statements. The Hearing is then recessed for the Hearing Board to begin deliberations.

As an Accuser, what is my involvement during the Hearing itself? The Accuser may be present at the hearing if he or she chooses to do so. If the Accuser chooses not to attend the Hearing, the Advocates for the University will read the Accuser's affidavit aloud.

How long does this part of the Hearing usually take? The first part of the Hearing usually ranges from one to two hours, though it may take longer if there is a substantial amount of evidence.

What is the standard of evidence for Guilt / Non-Guilt? For an Accused Student to be found Guilty of an Honor Code violation, the evidence against the student must be "clear and convincing." Using a numerical system, this suggests that the Hearing Board should be between 70 % and 80 % certain that the student committed the Honor Code violation. *Note: Though we bear very few similarities to the United States law system, we think it is notable that civil cases in our country are decided using a "more likely than not (51 %)" standard, and criminal cases are decided using a "beyond a shadow of a doubt (99%)" standard.*

What happens during the sanctioning phase of deliberations? Once the Accused has been found guilty of violating the Honor Code, the Hearing Board considers sanctions. Among these are the following:

- a. A letter of reprimand (written by the Dean of the appropriate residential college and placed in the student's file) is automatically included as a sanction upon a finding of Guilt.
- b. Honor Probation (meaning that the student will be expelled if he or she is found guilty of a second, unrelated violation) is also automatically included as a sanction upon a finding of guilt.
- c. Loss of academic credit (may be seen in the form of a grade cap on the assignment or in the course)
- d. Suspension
- e. Expulsion
- f. Creative Sanctions (may include mandatory trips to the Academic Skills Center or a written letter of apology to the professor)

The voting standard for sanctioning is a majority of the Hearing Board members.

How long does the written letter of reprimand remain in a student's file? This depends on the other sanctions selected by the Hearing Board:

- a. Expulsion: The letter of reprimand remains in the file indefinitely.
- b. Suspension: The letter of reprimand remains on file for four year following the student's graduation
- c. All others: The letter of reprimand remains on file for two years following the student's graduation.

Is there any way to appeal a decision of the Hearing Board? A student may appeal on the following grounds:

- a. New evidence that was not available at the first Hearing (e.g. a new witness comes forward). This cannot be evidence that was available but not presented in the first case.
- b. That there was a perjured witness at the first Hearing.
- c. The Hearing Board acted unfairly in light of the evidence presented.

A student may not appeal on the same ground more than once, unless there are multiple instances of new evidence and perjured witnesses. In addition, a student must present a written appeal within 72 hours of

the decision in the case. The Chair of the Honor Council that did *not* hear the original case will assemble a small committee of Honor Council members who will decide whether the appeal has merit. If the appeal has merit, a full Appellate Hearing will be held in a fashion much similar to the original Hearing, but with all new Hearing Board members and officers (Secretary, Marshal).

Does any University administrator review the Honor Councils' decisions? After a decision is made, a full transcript of the Hearing is typed by the Secretary. This transcript, all evidence (originals and photocopies), and an audio tape of the proceedings are delivered to the Dean of the Accused student's residential college. The Dean listens to portions of the Hearing and reads the transcript to ensure that the Hearing Board acted fairly. If the Dean disagrees with the Hearing Board's decision, he or she can remand the decision back to the Hearing Board for additional review. The Hearing Board can change any part of their decisions based upon the Dean's recommendation. If the Hearing Board wishes to uphold the original decision, the University is bound by it.

Important Information

Most of the material in this guide has been adapted (for understanding) from the Statute of the Honor Code of the University of Richmond. This more than seventy-page document is the official delineation of the Honor Councils' guiding regulations. If this document conflicts with the Statutes, the Statutes override this document. You may view the complete statutes at <http://www.student.richmond.edu/~urhc/>.