

Honor Code Adjudication Guidelines for Faculty

Reporting a Suspected Violation

Faculty members who suspect an Honor Code violation has occurred should contact the Office of Academic Advising and Student Support Services by emailing honorcode@gettysburg.edu. One of the Deans will discuss the case with you and explain the subsequent steps to take.

You will be asked to provide a written summary of your concern and any relevant documents. This information will be shared with the suspected student when the Dean contacts a student about scheduling a Preliminary Conference and provides information about this process. **If you do not wish for the documents you send to be shared electronically prior to the conference, please make it known to the Dean when you send them.**

Faculty are asked to contact the student and explain you suspect an Honor Code violation may have occurred and you are bringing the case to the Honor Commission. It is important that professors write directly to students about their concern, so students are aware of the concern and expect to hear from a Dean from the Office of Academic Advising and Student Success.

The Office of Academic Advising and Student Success will then contact the student to schedule a Preliminary Conference. The office endeavors to hold the Preliminary Conference as soon as possible.

Many students will approach you or respond directly to you about the concern you raised. If you feel comfortable doing so, you may engage the student in conversation and review the evidence together. The Preliminary Conference must still be convened even if you think it is possible for you to resolve the case on your own. Involving the Honor Commission allows you to maintain your role as teacher rather than adjudicator. It also helps to better ensure cases are treated equitably.

What if a student reports a suspected Honor Code violation to you?

Ask the student to submit a statement in writing. In this statement, a Dean is looking for sufficient detail to understand what happened within the context of relevant circumstances. One of the Deans will review the statement prior to sharing it with any accused student to protect the identity of the reporter.

The Honor Code empowers students to interrupt, and report suspected violations. To support acting with integrity, the Honor Commission will investigate reports of "any threats, harassment, retaliation, or intimidation" leveled at persons who bring forward complaints (HC 8.2j).

The faculty member will be asked to review the relevant assignment/test and provide any further information to address at the Preliminary Conference.

The course instructor attends and participates in the Preliminary Conference.

Preliminary Conferences

Article III of the Honor Code, Breaches of the College's Standards of Academic Honesty, and Integrity, provides instruction for preliminary conferences. At its core, a Preliminary Conference is designed to "support expeditious investigation of complaints; to afford students who have been wrongly accused an opportunity to be vindicated; and to afford students who have acted dishonestly an opportunity to examine their behavior, learn from their mistakes, and begin the process of repairing their breach of our community's trust and academic values." (3.3).

In practice, the Preliminary Conference is a conversation between the professor and the student, facilitated by one of the Deans of the Office of Academic Advising and Student Support Services and one of the Co-Chairs of the Honor Commission. A student may invite an advisor to the conference, but if the student chooses not to do so, the Dean and the Co-Chair will assist the student in addressing the concerns in the way an advisor might.

Faculty should bring any relevant evidence and materials to the Preliminary Conference. A course syllabus and your grade book are often useful during conference discussions as well.

A conference typically begins with the professor describing how the concern arose. Together, the group examines all the evidence and attempts to understand the situation. We strive for transparency about the facts in all cases. When we have a mutual understanding of the facts of the case and relevant broader circumstances, we attempt to come to consensus about whether a violation of the Honor Code has occurred.

In cases that involve more than one student, we may use one Preliminary Conference, but students will have the opportunity to respond individually. Students may appear individually or jointly, but all decisions are rendered independently.

If consensus is reached that a violation has occurred, then the Co-Chair of the Honor Commission makes a recommendation about an appropriate penalty based on the Honor Commission's guidelines about penalty and concerns about equity. Also of significant concern is the restorative framework of the Honor Code: given the nature of the breach of the Honor Code and what the student has come to understand about his or her behavior, should the student appropriately remain in the course? The penalty must be agreed upon by all parties as well. If consensus about penalty is reached, the case is resolved.

When Honor Code cases are resolved at this stage, the student who violated the Honor Code is asked to write a statement "to explain what happened and to formulate a plan addressing whatever deficiencies in the development or application of academic skills or in the management of other personal circumstances culminated in the act of dishonesty, and to clarify what preferable options could be pursued in the future should similar circumstances arise" (3.6). The statement is submitted to the Office of Academic Advising and Student Support Services to be kept on file and shared with the instructor.

Within 48 hours of the conclusion of a Preliminary Conference, if any of the parties involved has second thoughts about the outcome, they may request the case be sent to a Hearing Board. After 48 hours, the resolution stands.

If consensus is not reached at any point in the discussion (whether a violation occurred or about penalty), the case will be sent to a Hearing Board for resolution.

If a report is made about a student who has violated the Honor Code previously, then a Preliminary Conference will be held for investigation only—to discuss the facts of the case and the evidence. The case must be sent to a hearing board for resolution.

In a Preliminary Conference, the most severe penalty that can be assigned is failure in the course. During the conference, if the Dean is concerned that a particular case is egregious and a more severe penalty may be more suitable about maintaining equitable penalties, she can refer the case to a hearing board for resolution.

For more details about the preliminary conference process, see Honor Code Article III.

Hearing Boards

When a case is referred to a hearing board for resolution, the consensus model that guides Preliminary Conferences no longer stands. A board comprised of 6 voting Honor Commission members, one or two faculty advisors (non-voting), one of the Co-Chairs of the Honor Commission (non-voting), and a Dean of Academic Advising (non-voting) will adjudicate the case.

The Dean in the Office of Academic Advising and Student Support Services who facilitated the Preliminary Conference co-chair of the Honor Commission will compile a report summarizing the conference and all relevant materials for the Hearing Board, and the faculty, and student(s) involved will be invited to speak to the Hearing Board

Hearing Board proceedings often last several hours. Member of the board may question the professor and the student(s) individually and/or together. A Hearing Board will typically dismiss the reporting professor once questioning has concluded, but the student(s) must remain for the duration of the hearing.

After a Hearing Board has decided, the Honor Commission Chair who presided over the board will contact the professor by email with the results of the hearing.

The student, if found in violation, may appeal the decision to the Provost within three (3) business days. If the Provost grants the appeal, a new Hearing Board will be convened to hear the case. The determination of the appeal Hearing Board stands.

For more details about hearing boards, see Honor Code Article V.

Witnesses

If deemed appropriate, written statements from others who may have witnessed events surrounding the suspected violation may be requested. We do not, however, ask for character witnesses. Absence of witnesses to events surrounding the violation is not exculpatory.

Standard of Evidence

An accused student is innocent until found in violation of the Honor Code. The Honor Code relies on a high standard of evidence, “clear and convincing,” which falls in between “beyond a reasonable doubt” and “preponderance of evidence.” Therefore, it is possible that if a professor brings a case forward, the co-chair of the Honor Commission and Dean could determine there was not sufficient evidence to find a student in violation of the Honor Code. We still use the conference process to address issues surrounding the accusation and formulate plans for avoiding future suspicion and violations.

End of Semester

At the end of each semester, the Deans of Academic Advising and Student Support Services attempt to address Honor Code cases expeditiously so Preliminary Conferences are held before students leave campus. We require our student Honor Commission members to stay on campus through finals week or be available virtually in case we need to convene Hearing Boards during that time. In May, we try to address any suspected violations involving seniors as quickly as possible because their plans for graduation might be in jeopardy. Occasionally, we are unable to resolve a case before the end of semester break; when this happens, we collect as much evidence as possible, including written statements from those involved, and postpone convening the Preliminary Conference until the start of the new semester or a time when we can bring all parties together. The Honor Code allows us to hold Preliminary Conferences in the absence of the professor or Co-Chair of the Honor Commission, but we rarely do so.

Advisors to Students Responding to Honor Code Complaints

The Honor Code (3.4 and 5.4) encourages students who are accused of violating the Honor Code to engage an advisor for support during the adjudication process. Advisors must be current members of the college community (except for employees who are parents of the students involved). Students often reach out to professors, academic advisors, coaches, administrators, and fellow students to serve in this role. Parents, trustees, or lawyers may not appear as advisors in Honor Code processes.

The purpose of the advisor is to assist the student in preparing for the adjudication process and offer support throughout. The role of the advisor is not to help the student construct a defense; rather, the advisor should discuss the accusation and look at the evidence with the student prior to the conference and/or the hearing. The advisor should encourage students to be completely honest and help confront students' apprehensions. Advisors can also help students to think through the consequences of an Honor Code violation and the impact that it has on the campus community. The advisor may accompany the student to the Preliminary Conference or the Hearing, but the advisor does not have a say in any matters requiring consensus, nor should the advisor play the role of "defense attorney." The advisor should avoid making statements that attest only to the student's character or reputation.

Record Keeping and Reporting

Files for students who have violated the Honor Code are maintained for five years. These files are confidential. The Office of Academic Advising and Student Support Services only discloses information about a student's Honor Code violation when asked to do so by the student. This happens when students transfer to other institutions, apply to some graduate/medical programs or jobs, prepare for student teaching, etc.

When a student violates the Honor Code, the student is encouraged to share this information with the parent(s)/caregiver(s). Honor Code violations are not indicated on students' official transcripts unless the penalty is expulsion by the Honor Commission. Honor Code violation data is collected and reported in summary by the Honor Commission.

Confidentiality

In a small community such as Gettysburg College, confidentiality is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the Honor Code processes and protecting relationships. The Honor Code requires confidentiality: *"All parties involved will maintain the confidentiality of all proceedings, matters under consideration, and individuals involved in them."* (HC 3.11).