



HARVARD COLLEGE HONOR COUNCIL

PROCEDURES OF THE HONOR COUNCIL OF HARVARD COLLEGE

The Harvard College Honor Code is based on the recognition that advancing learning and knowledge depends on a commitment to truth and honesty. The shared work of Harvard College students, faculty, and administrators embodies our community's commitment to the truth, and our common concern for academic integrity signals to all members of the Harvard College community—students, faculty, staff, and administrators—that Harvard ultimately places honesty and trustworthiness above competing values. The Council commits to a fair and open exchange of information with the Harvard College community and the individual students who interact with it. Students and members of the community are expected to be honest and open in their interactions with the Honor Council.

Council Membership and Structure

The Council consists of twenty-four members, including an equal number of Harvard College undergraduates and of FAS Faculty members, administrators, and GSAS teaching fellows. The Danoff Dean of Harvard College is Chair of the Honor Council, and the Secretary of the Honor Council is a member as well. With respect to the day-to-day operations of the Council, outside of formal meetings, the Secretary functions as the Dean's designee. For more on the selection of members of the Council, please see the Council's website.

The twenty-four voting members of the Council are organized into three teams of eight (with the same balance of students, faculty, administrators, and teaching fellows as the Council). In order to promote informed and focused deliberations and to allow students to interact with the Council directly, each team meets every third week to deliberate on a set of cases.¹

For a schedule of meetings, please see the Honor Council website. For more description of the structure of Council meetings, please see [Meetings](#).

Reporting Concerns and Violations

As written in the Faculty Handbook, faculty should report all potential violations of the Honor Code or rules on academic dishonesty to the Secretary of the Council. Although faculty have the primary responsibility for reporting potential violations of the Honor Code or rules on academic integrity, any member of the community may report concerns. Any member of the Harvard College community with concerns or questions about academic integrity should contact the Secretary of the Honor Council (617-384-7239; honorcouncil@fas.harvard.edu; <http://www.honorcouncil.harvard.edu>).

Initial Meeting

Following the report of the concern, the Secretary of the Honor Council will contact the student and schedule an initial meeting. Ordinarily this meeting will include the Secretary of the Honor Council (or her/his designee) and a Student Academic Integrity Fellow (SAIF). The Secretary will provide the student a letter detailing the concerns that gave rise to the inquiry, materials related to the concern, and explanations of the Honor Council's procedures and confidentiality expectations. The initial case materials may be

¹ In periods of increased workload, teams may be scheduled for more frequent meetings.

supplemented as the inquiry proceeds, and any supplementary materials that are provided to the Council will also be provided to the student.

Support

Students will ordinarily be accompanied and advised throughout the process by their Allston Burr Assistant Dean or Resident Dean of Freshmen, and, following the initial meeting, the Council will communicate with the student through the student's ABAD/RDF. The ABAD/RDF is not an advocate; instead s/he serves as a liaison with the College. The role of the ABAD/RDF is to help a student understand how the Council works and to help the student decide how best to explain the issues the Council is considering. If a student believes that her/his ABAD or RDF is not the most appropriate support, a list of alternates will be provided.

At the initial meeting, the student will be provided the opportunity to select a SAIF. A SAIF is a Harvard College student trained in the procedures and policies of the Honor Council. A SAIF serves as a peer who does not sit in judgment but accompanies the student in her/his interactions with the Honor Council. If a student is found responsible for a violation of the Honor Code or rules on academic integrity, the SAIF may also serve as a point of contact during any periods of probation or withdrawal and following the student's return to campus. Although the SAIF can provide support, s/he cannot substitute for the advising and case management responsibilities of the ABAD/RDF.

Students who would prefer not to select a SAIF may be more comfortable with the support of a personal adviser. A personal adviser must be an officer of the University affiliated with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, such as a proctor or tutor, coach, teaching fellow, instructor, or faculty member. Undergraduate students, other than those designated as SAIFs, and family members may not serve as personal advisers for these purposes, even if they are affiliated with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

A personal adviser receives all case information, may attend any interviews with the student, and provides general advice and support similar to a SAIF, although personal advisers might not be trained in the Council's policies and procedures. Personal advisers or SAIFS participate in the discussion with the Council for two primary reasons: to suspend the Council proceedings briefly if the student needs a break; and, with permission of the Council, to explain relevant facts that the student discussed with her/his personal adviser or SAIF but that the student failed to raise in the interview.

Initial Statement

After the initial meeting, the student will have the opportunity to respond to the issues raised in the initial concern and to provide context and information to broaden the Council's understanding of the circumstances. This statement must ordinarily be submitted to the Council within three days of the initial meeting. A student may consult with her/his ABAD/RDF, SAIF or personal adviser, a licensed mental health professional, clergy, or legal counsel for advice on preparing this statement; the statement, however, must be written by the student.

If a student believes that there are other community members who have relevant information, s/he should indicate this in her/his initial statement. The Chair or Secretary has discretion to decide which, if any, community members should be contacted. A student may choose not to submit a response, and if a student does not wish to submit a response, the Honor Council will proceed without it.

Additional Information

The Honor Council, at the discretion of the Chair or Secretary, may invite faculty, students, administrators, or other members of the community who may have information that is relevant to the matter under review to share such information with the Council. Ordinarily, the names of such community members, and, if applicable, written statements from them, will be provided to the student in advance of the Honor Council meeting.

In the event that the allegations are, in the opinion of the Dean of the College, especially complex or complicated, the Dean may appoint members of the Honor Council as a Subcommittee to investigate and report back to one of the Council teams for resolution.

Honor Council Team Meeting

Students will be provided a chance to meet with a team of the Honor Council following submission of the response or, if a student elects not to submit a response, the time afforded for such submission. Each team acts with the full authority of the Council. If additional written materials have been provided to the Honor Council after the initial meeting, the student will ordinarily be provided with those materials in advance of her/his appearance with the Honor Council team. The Council team and student will have access to the same written materials.

Meeting with one of the Council teams is an opportunity for the student to explain the situation from her/his perspective and to amplify the initial statement. It will also be an opportunity for the members of the Honor Council team to ask questions and engage with the student on the concerns that have been raised.

Following its meeting with the student, the assigned Council team will deliberate and vote on whether the student is responsible for a violation of the Honor Code or rules on academic dishonesty. Council voters will first vote on whether or not they are sufficiently persuaded that the student is responsible for breaking the Honor Code or rules of the Faculty. A second vote will then be taken to determine the resolution or appropriate sanction. All votes will be taken on the basis of a simple majority of the members on the Council team present and eligible to vote, except for votes to require a student to withdraw, which require a two-thirds vote of the Council team present and eligible to vote. Students will ordinarily be notified of the Council's decision by their ABAD/ RDF and follow up with the Secretary of the Honor Council and a voting member of the Council for further questions and information on the Council's decision.

The Honor Council's first commitment is to truth and honesty, and students are expected to be honest in communicating with the Council. In making decisions, the Council may take into consideration a student's demonstrated commitment to honesty. Dishonesty may result in increased sanctions or an additional disciplinary charge. Students may choose not to answer questions or to participate in the meetings, and refusal to respond or participate will not be taken by the Honor Council to imply responsibility. In all cases, the Honor Council will deliberate and make a decision based on the information available to it.

If the Honor Council desires additional assistance, the Secretary or Chair may request it, for example, in analyzing case documents or in providing assistance with deliberations, from faculty or staff who are not members of the Council. Any written reports provided to the Council by these individuals will be shared with the student, and students will be apprised of the identities of the individuals asked to assist the Council with its work.

Possible Outcomes

Votes by the Honor Council can result in a range of possible outcomes. Some of these outcomes change a student's status at the College, meaning that the student would not be "in good standing," and others do not. Outcomes of "scratch," "take no action," and "admonish" do not change a student's status. For cases of academic dishonesty, there are two additional sanctions that do not change a student's status at the College: Referral for Local Sanctions and Exclusion from a Course. The other possible actions of the Council, including "disciplinary probation" and "requirement to withdraw," *do* change a student's status in the College, meaning that s/he is no longer considered to be in good standing. Generally, a student who is not in good standing is not eligible for certain fellowship opportunities or certain programs offered at the College, such as study abroad, cross-registration, or independent study. Before applying, a student should check to see if the opportunity requires a student to be in good standing. Similarly, a student must be in good standing to receive a degree from the College. Outcomes that change a student's status are disclosed to parents or guardians, as well as to graduate or professional schools under certain circumstances. See below for more details.

The Council's decisions are governed by the rules and regulations contained in the *Handbook for Students*, and are guided by considerations of equity. The Council is careful to treat each student fairly, and in reaching its decisions ensures that the outcome is consistent with its treatment of other students. To take action, the Council must be sufficiently persuaded that the student has violated the rules of the Faculty. In the event the Council finds the student responsible for a violation, the outcomes generally depend on two criteria: 1) the seriousness of the infraction; and 2) extenuating circumstances, including the extent to which a student has had similar trouble before. Any disciplinary action requires a majority vote of the members on the Council team present and eligible to vote or, in the case of a requirement to withdraw, at least two-thirds of the Council team members present and eligible to vote.

Bracket: A case is bracketed when a decision is postponed pending receipt of additional information or documentation.

Scratch: A finding by the Council that nothing wrong occurred, or that there are no grounds for action. A decision of scratch is recorded in a student's file to signal that the Council found no fault.

Take No Action. This response indicates that a serious accusation was made but was not or could not be substantiated.

Admonish. Admonition is a warning from the Council that a student has violated the rules or standards of conduct in the College, and it begins a state of jeopardy (i.e., it signals to the student that the Council may respond to future misconduct with formal disciplinary action).

Exclusion from a Course. Noted as EXLD on the transcript, exclusion is an indication that the student was not permitted to continue in the course and received no credit. Exclusion from a course is equivalent in all respects to failing it, and in and of itself makes the student's record for the term unsatisfactory and therefore subject to academic review. Exclusion in a disciplinary case is ordinarily an action taken in conjunction with another outcome, such as Warn or Admonish, Probation, or Require to Withdraw. Though exclusion does not affect a student's standing at the College, an accompanying action on the unsatisfactory record as a consequence of the academic review may result in a change in a student's status.

Referral for Local Sanctions. A referral to the faculty member teaching the course in which the finding of academic dishonesty was made, with a recommendation that "local sanctions" (for example, mandatory

tutoring, a course warning, an ungraded rework of the assignment in question, a grade penalty, or a failure for the assignment) are appropriate. Such sanctions will be imposed at the discretion of the faculty member, in consultation with the Council.

Probation. Disciplinary probation puts a student on notice that her or his conduct gives considerable cause for concern. A student on disciplinary probation is expected to pay very close attention to her/his conduct, both during the period of probation and after. The Council will likely respond more seriously (e.g., Requirement to Withdraw) to further infractions.

Requirement to Withdraw. Action taken when a student's conduct is unacceptable and the Council has determined that the student needs to be separated from the College in order to gain perspective on her/his actions, or to address and resolve her/his difficulties. In all cases, the Council requires the student to leave the Harvard community completely and to hold a full-time, paid, non-academic job in a non-family situation for at least six consecutive months before petitioning for readmission to the College. The length of withdrawal normally ranges from two to four terms. Readmission to the College after a requirement to withdraw is not automatic, and requires a vote of the full Administrative Board. A student readmitted after a requirement to withdraw for disciplinary reasons is readmitted in good standing (unless the misconduct also resulted in an unsatisfactory academic record). Ordinarily, a second requirement to withdraw (whether for a disciplinary case or academic review) is final.

Recommendation to Dismiss/Expel. In the most serious cases of misconduct, the Honor Council may require a student to withdraw and make a recommendation to the Faculty Council that s/he be dismissed or expelled from the College. Dismissal severs a student's connection with the University, and s/he can be readmitted only in the rare instance of another vote by the Council; expulsion severs the student's connection with the University permanently.

During probation or Requirement to Withdraw students should be in regular contact with their ABAD/RDF and, where appropriate, their SAIF. Students required to withdraw are expected to remain away from campus, but they should remain in regular contact with their RDF/ABAD and SAIF during their period of withdrawal.

Return/ Relief from Probation

Students required to withdraw by the Council will need to petition to return at least twelve weeks prior to the start of the semester in which they hope to return. Returning students should review and follow the return procedures published on the Honor Council website.

Students placed on disciplinary probation by the Council will need to petition to return to good standing at the end of a probationary period. For a description of the process for relief from probation, please see the Honor Council website.

Reconsideration and Appeal

A student found responsible for a violation of the Honor Code or rules on academic integrity may request that the Council reconsider its decision if:

- New materially relevant information becomes available; or
- There is reasonable evidence of a procedural error. For more information on making requests for reconsideration, please see the Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct website.

Students required to withdraw or placed on probation by the Honor Council for more than one semester may appeal to the Faculty Council the decisions of the Honor Council. Students may appeal because:

- the Honor Council made a procedural error that may change the outcome of the decision; or
- based upon a review of the Honor Council's annual disciplinary statistics, the sanction imposed by the Council was inconsistent with the Council's usual practices and is inappropriate.

All reconsiderations of a disciplinary decision must be filed with the Secretary of the Honor Council, as appropriate, within one week of the decision, unless, within that week, the Secretary grants an extension of time. Ordinarily, students will have only one opportunity to request a reconsideration. For cases in which a student requests reconsideration, appeals must be filed with the Secretary of the Faculty within one week of the decision regarding reconsideration. In cases in which a student does not request a reconsideration, appeals must be filed within one week of the disciplinary decision of the Honor Council. A student may not seek reconsideration following the filing of an appeal.

Such appeals are first screened by the Docket Committee, a group of three elected representatives of the Faculty Council. Once a student has been awarded a degree from Harvard College, the option to have the Council reconsider a decision or to appeal to the Faculty Council is closed. Further information about the appeals process can be obtained from the Secretary of the Faculty at secfas@fas.harvard.edu or by calling 617-495-3613.

In keeping with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a student with a disability who believes that the Honor Council did not properly consider any claims pertaining to her/his disability may seek further review from the Office of the University Disability Coordinator, including in disciplinary case decisions. For information on grievance procedures, visit the Harvard Accessibility Office website.

Transparency and Confidentiality

The Honor Council will regularly publish aggregate statistics and hold community meetings to explain its work and describe matters that have given rise to inquiry by the Honor Council. In those publications and meetings, the Council will anonymize the data. The meetings will also provide an opportunity for the community to define its commitment to the Honor Code.

Recusal/Conflicts

Council members are expected to be mature and responsible representatives of the community and adhere to high standards of equity and impartiality. If any member of the Honor Council believes that s/he has a conflict in participating in the deliberations and vote, the Chair of the Honor Council will select another member as her/his replacement. Similarly, if the Chair of the Honor Council believes a member has a conflict, the Chair will excuse that member from the inquiry. A student who believes that a member has a conflict should contact the Secretary of the Council. A team must be comprised of at least six members.

Multiple Charges

In the event that a student is thought to have violated rules of the College that would be handled by both the Honor Council and Administrative Board, the Dean of the College has discretion to designate one of these bodies to consolidate the case. If a student has been charged with or found responsible for violations that are heard by more than one student conduct board or offices (Honor Council, Administrative Board, Office of Dispute Resolution), the Dean of the College (or her/his designee) may direct the boards or offices to share

information with the others so they have a complete and accurate picture of the disciplinary status or record of the student.

Serious Criminal Conduct

Potential violations of the Honor Code or rules on academic dishonesty are rarely criminal matters, but in the unusual instance that a concern involves allegations of serious criminal conduct, we advise students to seek legal counsel before making any written or oral statements to the College. (A separate letter explaining this issue will be given to students, if applicable.) The College's disciplinary process is pedagogical rather than judicial, and attorneys for students are not permitted to participate. However, students are advised to seek legal advice about how the College's disciplinary process could affect any criminal case in which they may be involved. Ordinarily, if a complaint is being pursued through the criminal justice system, the Council may assess the timing of the investigation so that it does not compromise the criminal investigation or the rights of the complainant or respondent. In some cases the Council may choose to postpone or suspend its own review of the matter until the criminal case has been concluded.