

Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

# Harvard College Honor Council Annual Report 2016-2017



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## **The Harvard College Honor Code**

Harvard College is an academic and residential community devoted to learning and the creation of knowledge. We – the academic community of Harvard College, including the faculty and students – view integrity as the basis for intellectual discovery, artistic creation, independent scholarship, and meaningful collaboration. We thus hold honesty – in the representation of our work and in our interactions with teachers, advisers, peers, and students – as the foundation of our community.

Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

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# 1 Introduction

The Honor Code is an integral part of the academic experience at Harvard College and emphasizes a centuries-old commitment to truth and the belief that we “hold honesty – in the representation of our work and in our interactions with teachers, advisers, peers, and students – as the foundation of our community.” The second annual report of the Harvard College Honor Council provides a chance to reflect on that commitment to honesty and the developments that have taken place since the faculty approved the Honor Code in spring 2014.

The Honor Code itself has been integrated into Harvard College life, as the vast majority of Harvard College students do not remember a time when the College did not have an Honor Code. Incoming students regularly and repeatedly engage with the Honor Code as they prepare to come to campus, during Opening Days, and as part of their academic life each semester.

At the same time, the Honor Code itself represents a broader development in the academic life of the College. The cultural impact of the Code will, we hope, be realized in the years to come. Research into academic integrity and honor codes shows that academic culture, rather than honor codes themselves, influences academic integrity on campus. The Harvard College Honor Code demonstrates our commitment to academic integrity in our classrooms, labs, libraries, and residences.

The Harvard College Honor Council, where students, faculty, and staff share equal responsibility for upholding the Honor Code, is the most visible expression of our collective commitment to academic integrity. Throughout 2016-2017, the student members of the Honor Council worked across the campus, presenting on academic integrity to all Expository writing classes, working with student groups to publicize the resources available during times of academic stress, and supporting students through study breaks and other activities. Council members led the way toward a more vibrant academic culture and contributed to a larger vision of community development.

The Honor Council also responds to potential violations of the Honor Code, and in responding, it emphasizes educational development and a pedagogical response to student action. Our mission is to help students understand the rules and consequences of their actions so that they can learn greater responsibility both within Harvard College and beyond its gates.

Open communication with the entire community is central to creating and maintaining the shared commitment to academic integrity inherent in the Honor Code. While the Honor Council is charged with informing the community about its decisions, we also work to maintain strict confidentiality regarding individual students. The statistics presented here are reported in aggregate so as to maintain the privacy of the individual students concerned.

## 2 Role of the Honor Council

The Honor Council is composed of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and administrators working together to uphold the Honor Code, to review possible violations, and to raise awareness about the importance of academic integrity within the Harvard College community.

### 2.1 Explanation of Roles and Membership List

The Honor Council comprises voting members who respond to potential violations of the Honor Code and rules on academic integrity, and Student Academic Integrity Fellows who provide support to students throughout the Honor Council process.

#### 2.1.1 Voting Members

The voting body of the Honor Council consists of 24 members<sup>1</sup>, including an equal number of Harvard College undergraduates and of Faculty of Arts and Sciences faculty members, administrators, and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences teaching fellows. Voting members are organized into three teams of eight; each team has the same balance of individual roles as the entirety of the Honor Council. Voting members investigate, deliberate, and decide on responses for cases in which students may have violated the Honor Code and/or rules on academic integrity. The Council is committed to reviewing every case thoroughly and fairly and to providing the involved students multiple opportunities to share their perspective and engage with the Council. In considering a case, voting members determine appropriate responses aligned with the Council's educational, community-centered mission.

The 2016-2017 voting members are listed below.

Nate Bernstein '17

James Bollinger '17

Grace Carney '19

Caitlin Casey, Allston Burr Assistant Dean of Harvard College, Lowell House

CJ Christian '17

Maria Devlin, GSAS PhD Candidate in English

Grace Ferris, Preceptor in Chemistry

Ahmed Gondal '18

David Haig, George Putnam Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology

Jay Harris, Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Education

Karen Heath, Senior Preceptor in Expository Writing

Collin Johnson, Preceptor in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology

Jack Jue '18

Kate LaHorgue '17

Lien Le '17

Steven Levitsky, David Rockefeller Professor of Latin American Studies

Amanda Lobell, Allston Burr Assistant Dean of Harvard College, Currier House

Meg Panetta '17

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<sup>1</sup> The list of voting members includes more than 24 names, as a few members served for one semester only.

Mike Ranen, Resident Dean of Freshmen, Ivy Yard  
Gevin Reynolds '19  
Subir Sachdev, Herchel Smith Professor of Physics  
Samantha Singal '18  
Nina Srivastava '18  
Tiffanie Ting, Allston Burr Assistant Dean of Harvard College, Cabot House  
Nina Vendan '19  
Cheryl Welch, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Senior Lecturer on Government

### **2.1.2 Student Academic Integrity Fellows (SAIFs)**

A Student Academic Integrity Fellow (SAIF) is an undergraduate student trained in the procedures and policies of the Honor Council. SAIFs provide support to students going through an Honor Council process by explaining procedures, helping students understand their options, offering feedback on draft personal statements, connecting students to resources outside of the Honor Council, and remaining a point of contact for the student following the conclusion of the review. While SAIFs may accompany students in their interactions with the Honor Council, they do not deliberate or vote on cases.

When a student is going through the Honor Council process, he or she has the choice of whether to work with a SAIF, as well as the choice of which SAIF to work with. Selecting a SAIF, or choosing not to work with one, does not affect any proceedings or how the Honor Council reviews a case. SAIFs are representatives of the Honor Council and do not serve as advocates for the students they support.

The 2016-2017 SAIFs are listed below.

Danny Banks '17  
Beau Bayh '18  
Jake Hummer '17  
Kyle Lerch '19  
Christabel Narh '18  
Lethu Ntshinga '18  
Maggie Schell '17  
Margery Tong '17  
Angela Yi '19

### **2.1.3 Additional Members**

#### **Chair**

The Danoff Dean of Harvard College, Rakesh Khurana, is Chair of the Honor Council. Before the first meeting of each term, the Dean establishes three teams of eight voting members each; each team has the same balance of individual roles as the entirety of the Honor Council. One member of each team is designated as chair and functions as chair for that team's meetings. Members serve at the discretion of the Dean.

## **Secretary**

The Secretary of the Honor Council functions as the Dean's designee in daily operations. The Secretary is the recipient of reported concerns and conducts most initial and follow-up student meetings. While the Secretary is present at meetings of the Council, he or she only votes in the instance of a tie. Brett Flehinger is the Secretary of the Honor Council and Lauren Brandt is the Associate Secretary.

## **Case Manager**

The Case Manager is responsible for managing Honor Council cases. He or she organizes investigations by collecting relevant case materials, analyzing material for relevance, and preparing case materials for meetings. The Case Manager is also responsible for scheduling initial and follow-up student meetings, preparing Honor Council meetings and SAIF schedules, and conducting initial meetings in the absence of the Secretary. The Case Manager for 2016-2017 was Elizabeth Truitt and Lauren Mulcahy is the backup Case Manager.

## **Guests**

The Honor Council may, at its discretion, invite guests to provide assistance and expertise in its deliberations. Guests do not vote on the case.

## **2.2 Honor Council Process**

The primary role of the Honor Council is to respond to potential violations of the Honor Code and rules on academic integrity. The Council evaluates cases by gathering information through a multi-step process and determining appropriate responses on behalf of the College community. The Council process is grounded in a commitment to transparency and a balance of student agency and support.

### **2.2.1 Report and Notification of a Concern**

An Honor Council review begins when a member of the Harvard community raises a concern over the academic work of one or more students. Any member of the community may submit a report to the Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct (OAISC), which houses the Honor Council.<sup>2</sup> OAISC staff gather materials related to the concern and then contact the student(s) involved to schedule an initial meeting. Any materials OAISC receives that will be reviewed by the Honor Council are provided to the student(s) involved.<sup>3</sup> The Secretary, or another member of OAISC staff, conducts the initial meeting, ordinarily accompanied by a SAIF. At the initial meeting, the College's rules on confidentiality are explained to the student, as well as the steps of the Honor Council process. The student receives a copy of the Honor Council procedures, the letter of concern, and supporting materials received from the course.

### **2.2.2 Student Support and Agency**

All students involved in an Honor Council review are supported by an Allston Burr Assistant Dean (ABAD) or Resident Dean of Freshmen (RDF). While typically students work with the Dean in

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<sup>2</sup> For information on how to report an academic integrity concern, please visit: <http://honorcouncil.fas.harvard.edu/how-report>

<sup>3</sup> When multiple students are involved in the same review, names of other students are redacted from case materials.

their House or Yard, students may elect to work with a different ABAD or RDF. The role of the ABAD or RDF is to help the student understand the Honor Council process and to explain the issues the Council is considering.

In addition to their Dean, students are presented with the opportunity to work with either a SAIF or a Personal Adviser for extra support. At the initial meeting, the student receives information on the roles of the SAIF and Personal Adviser. Students are provided a list of all current SAIFs, with information on their class years and concentrations. Students who prefer not to select a SAIF may choose instead to be supported by a Personal Adviser. A Personal Adviser is an officer of Harvard University affiliated with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, such as a faculty member, teaching fellow, varsity head coach, tutor, or proctor. Both SAIFs and Personal Advisers have access to the material being reviewed and can offer feedback on written statements, help a student prepare for an Honor Council meeting, and accompany the student to the meeting.

Of the 128 cases reviewed by the Honor Council in 2016-2017, 79 students (62%) chose to work with a SAIF or Personal Adviser in addition to their ABAD or RDF, while 49 students (38%) chose to work solely with their ABAD or RDF.

### **2.2.3 Resolving a Review**

The next step is for the student to decide whether to write an initial statement. The initial statement is an opportunity for the student to respond to the issues raised in the concern and to provide context and information to broaden the Honor Council's understanding of the circumstances. If the student chooses not to submit an initial statement, the Honor Council will proceed without it.

After a student has the opportunity to submit a written statement, OAISC staff review the case and determine if more information is needed. The Secretary may invite other members of the community who may have relevant information to share that information. Any additional materials gathered are shared with the student(s) involved, including the name(s) of the person(s) submitting information.

When a case is ready to move forward, the student is provided a chance to meet with a team of Honor Council voting members. This meeting, also referred to as an appearance, is an opportunity for the student to explain the situation from his or her perspective, to expand on the initial statement if desired, and to take questions from members of the Honor Council team. The student may choose whether to attend the appearance. If the student chooses to attend, he or she can decide which questions to answer. The Honor Council team does not draw any conclusions from a student's decision not to attend an appearance or not to answer questions. If the student decides not to attend the meeting, the Honor Council team evaluates and votes on the issue based on existing materials.

Honor Council voting members consider two questions when reviewing a student's case. After a period of deliberation, Honor Council members vote first on whether they are sufficiently persuaded that the student is responsible for violating the Honor Code and/or rules on academic integrity.<sup>4</sup> A second vote is then taken to determine the appropriate response. All votes are taken based on a

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<sup>4</sup> To review the rules on academic integrity, please refer to the *Harvard College Handbook for Students*: <http://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/book/academic-integrity>

simple majority of the members of the Honor Council team present and eligible to vote, except for votes to require a student to withdraw, which require a two-thirds majority of the members of the Honor Council team present and eligible to vote. In deciding on an individual response, Council members reflect the values of the shared academic community. As members of the Council review matters together, they articulate shared norms for handling violations of the Honor Code and rules on academic integrity.

In cases in which the concern does not seem serious enough to warrant review by an Honor Council team, the Secretary may refer the matter back to a course for a “local sanction” (e.g., mandatory tutoring, a grade penalty, a course warning, etc.). Such sanctions are imposed at the discretion of the faculty member in consultation with the Secretary. Ordinarily, the decision to refer a matter back to the course for a local sanction is made after the receipt of a student’s initial statement and eliminates the need for a meeting with an Honor Council team.

The full range of Honor Council responses are described below in Section 3.

#### **2.2.4 Closing Stages**

The student is ordinarily notified of the Honor Council’s decision by his or her ABAD or RDF following the conclusion of the Honor Council meeting. The student has the option to request a follow-up meeting with the Secretary and a voting member of the Honor Council as an opportunity to ask further questions about the decision and how it fits into the student’s educational career at the College. The follow-up meeting is highly encouraged but optional.

### 3 Honor Council Activity

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the Honor Council reviewed 128 individual cases. Of those 128 cases, 14 included two types of violations within the same case (for example, inappropriate collaboration and plagiarism).

#### 3.1 Responses by Type

The Honor 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, considers whether the outcomes are consistent with its treatment of other students. To take action, the Council must be sufficiently persuaded that the student has violated the Honor Code and/or the rules on academic integrity.

The Honor Council has a specific range of responses, set by the Faculty, with which to respond to violations of the Honor Code and other violations of academic integrity. These can be organized into two separate categories. First is a response indicating that there was no finding of a violation, either because no violation occurred or there was insufficient evidence of a violation. This type of response means that there is no finding of responsibility on the part of the student.

The second main category of responses indicates that the Council believes a violation of the rules did occur. This category encompasses a range of actions reflecting the severity of the violation. The Council takes into account any mitigating circumstances, including the extent to which a student has had similar issues prior and the severity of the matter, when determining the appropriate response.

Within this second category, there are two subsets. The first subset includes responses that address less severe violations and indicates that the Council considers the matter to be an opportunity for pedagogical intervention. These matters may result in warnings or referrals back to the course instructor (see Section 2.2.3).

The second subset reflects more serious concerns. These responses result in what is known as a change of status. Normally, students at the College are considered to be "in good standing." With these types of responses, a student's status can change from being "in good standing" to either "on probation" or "required to withdraw." In practical terms, this change of status means that a student "on probation" or "required to withdraw" may not be eligible for certain opportunities or programs at the College, such as independent study, cross-registration, and study abroad, until the student's status is restored to "in good standing." A student's status changes only for a specific length of time, outlined in the Council's response.

#### 3.2 Explanation of Responses

The basic range of responses is as follows, in order of increasing severity. The first group indicates that the Honor Council did not find a violation.

*Scratch* - A finding that nothing wrong occurred, or that there are no grounds for action. A decision of scratch is recorded in the 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.

The following responses indicate that the Honor Council found that a violation did occur but do not involve a change of status. They signal different levels of responsibility and severity.

*Referral for a Local Sanction* - 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 are imposed at the discretion of the faculty member, in consultation with the Secretary.

*Exclusion from a Course* - Exclusion is an indication that the student was not permitted to continue in the course and received no credit. Exclusion is ordinarily an action taken in conjunction with another outcome, such as Admonish, Probation, or Requirement to Withdraw.

*Admonish* - Admonition is a warning that a student has violated rules or standards of conduct, 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).

The following responses cause a change of a student’s status (see Section 3.1 for further details).

*Probation* - Disciplinary probation puts a student on notice that his or her conduct gives considerable cause for concern. The Council will likely respond more seriously (e.g., Requirement to Withdraw) to further violations. The length of disciplinary probation can vary.

*Requirement to Withdraw* - This action is 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 his or her actions, or to address and resolve his or her difficulties. In these cases, the Council ordinarily 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.

*Recommendation for Dismissal or Expulsion* - 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 the student be dismissed or expelled from the College. Dismissal severs a student’s connection with the University, and he or she can be readmitted only in the rare instance of another vote by the Faculty Council; expulsion severs the student’s connection with the University permanently.

The Honor Council can also choose to “bracket” a case when a decision is postponed pending receipt of additional information or documentation.

The Honor Council reviewed 128 cases in 2016-2017. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of responses by type. Twenty-seven percent of cases resulted in a finding of Not Responsible. Nineteen percent of cases resulted in a student being asked to take time away from the College due to the severity of the violation.

**Figure 1**

<b>Responses by Type<sup>5</sup></b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Scratch	12	9.4%
Take No Action	22	17.2%
Referral for a Local Sanction	11	8.6%
Exclusion from a Course	0	0%
Admonish	23	18.0%
Probation	36	28.1%
Requirement to Withdraw	24	18.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100%</b>

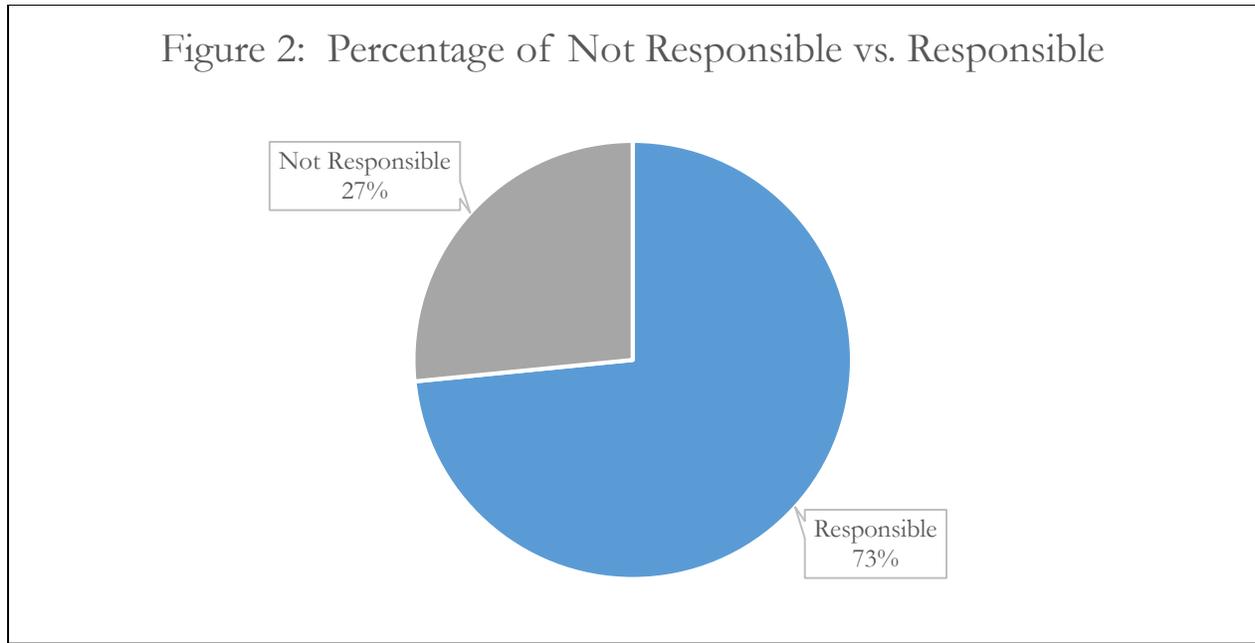
In 2015-2016, the Honor Council was in its first year and started the academic year with no remaining cases from the 2014-2015 academic year. (In preparation for the start of the Honor Council, the Administrative Board resolved all cases reported in 2014-15 before the 2015 summer break.) In 2016-2017, the Honor Council started the year with a moderate number of cases that had been reported during the previous academic year but were unresolved before the summer. Because these cases stemmed from final exams and reading period, they were disproportionately serious cases and more likely to result in a significant response, including a requirement to withdraw. In part for this reason, the number of cases that resulted in a requirement to withdraw in 2016-2017 is higher than in the previous year. Moving forward, the number of cases held over from the previous academic year should be relatively constant and thus the impact on responses by the Honor Council should balance out.

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<sup>5</sup> Due to rounding, charts may not add up to 100% and may show slightly different values.

### 3.3 Findings of Responsibility

Of the 128 cases reviewed, 34 (27%) were cases in which the student was found not responsible for any violation, while 94 (73%) were cases in which the student was found responsible. Figure 2 shows the percentage breakdown.

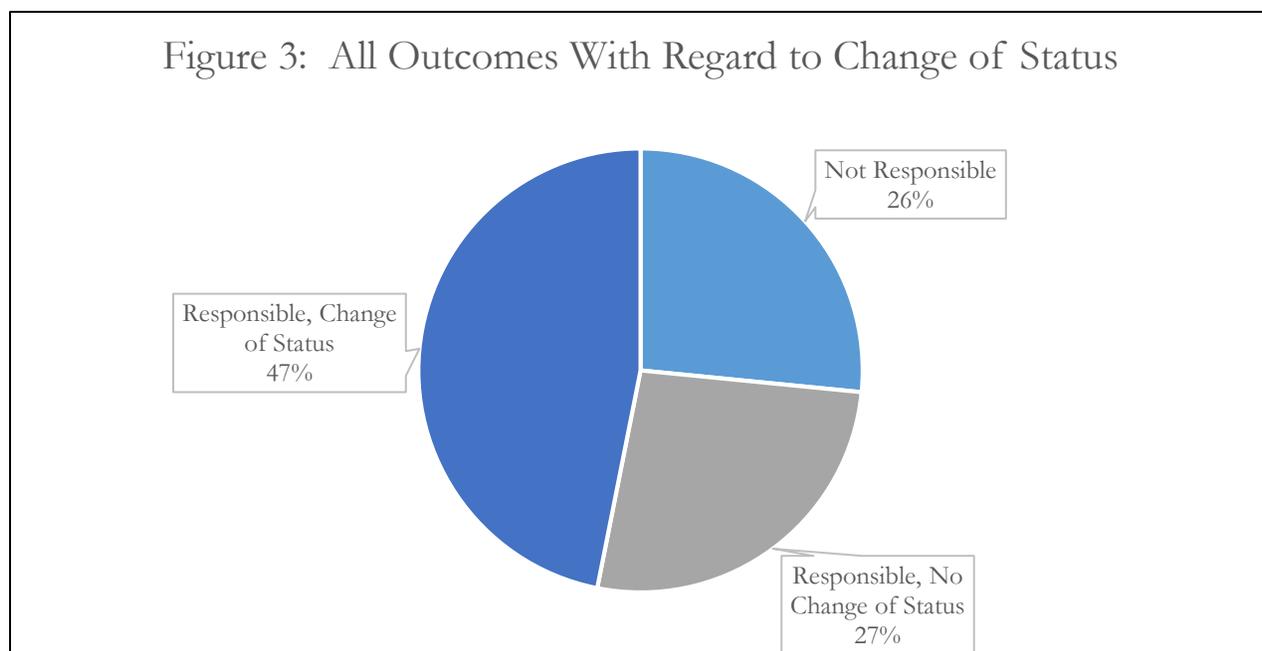


Here, the term Not Responsible refers to cases in which the decision was Scratch or Take No Action. Responsible includes cases with the following decisions: Referral for a Local Sanction, Exclusion from a Course, Admonish, Probation, or Requirement to Withdraw.

### 3.4 Case Outcomes Resulting in a Change of Status

Normally, students at the College are considered to be “in good standing.” Some responses by the Honor Council change a student’s status from being “in good standing” to “on probation” or “required to withdraw.” In practical terms, this means that the student may not be eligible for certain opportunities or programs at the College, such as independent study, cross-registration, and study abroad, until his or her status is restored to “in good standing.” A student’s status changes only for a specific length of time, outlined in the Council’s response. The Council’s decision to respond with an outcome that affects a student’s status reflects its understanding of the gravity of the violation and the extent of a student’s responsibility for it.

Of the 128 cases reviewed by the Honor Council, 94 resulted in a finding of responsibility. Of those 94 cases, 60 (47%) resulted in outcomes that changed a student’s status. Thirty-four (27%) resulted in decisions that did not change a student’s status (see Figure 3).

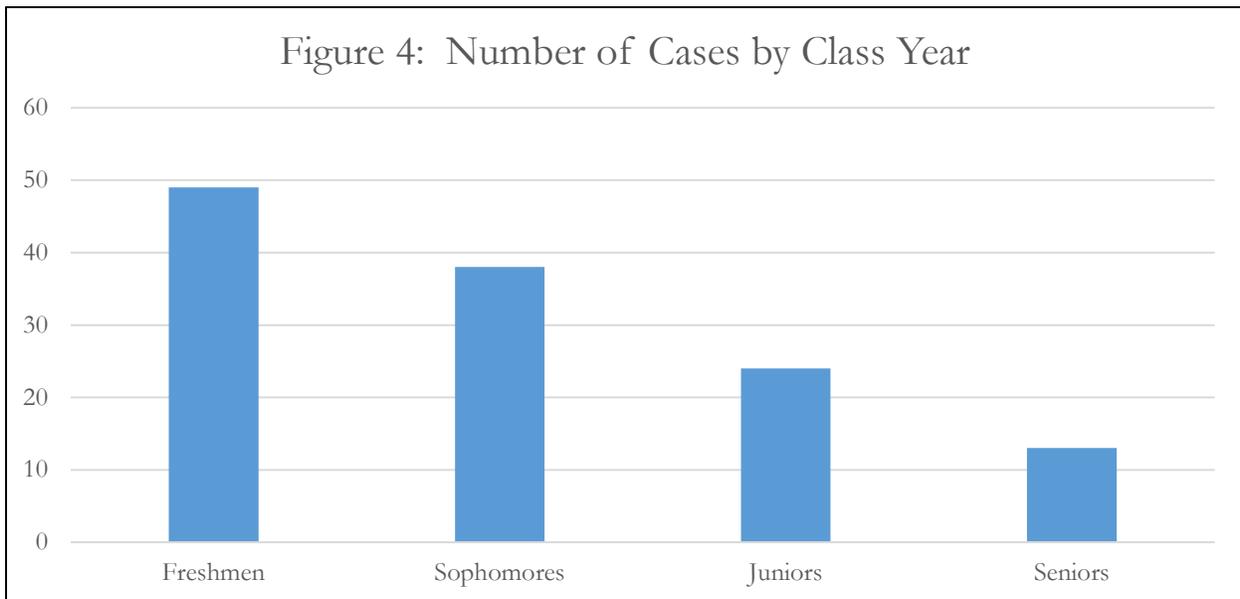


In Figure 3, the categories are defined as follows:

- Not Responsible: Scratch or Take No Action
- Responsible, No Change of Status: Referral for a Local Sanction, Exclusion from a Course, or Admonish
- Responsible, Change of Status: Probation or Requirement to Withdraw

### 3.5 Reports by Class Year<sup>6</sup>

Of the 128 cases reviewed, the largest number involved students in their first year of study, followed by those in their sophomore year (see Figure 4). The reports for freshmen represent an increase from 2015-2016, while reports for sophomores decreased over the same period. For further thoughts on reports by year, please see the tables in Section 4, which present data in the aggregate. Please note that sample sizes of five or fewer cases are not included here.

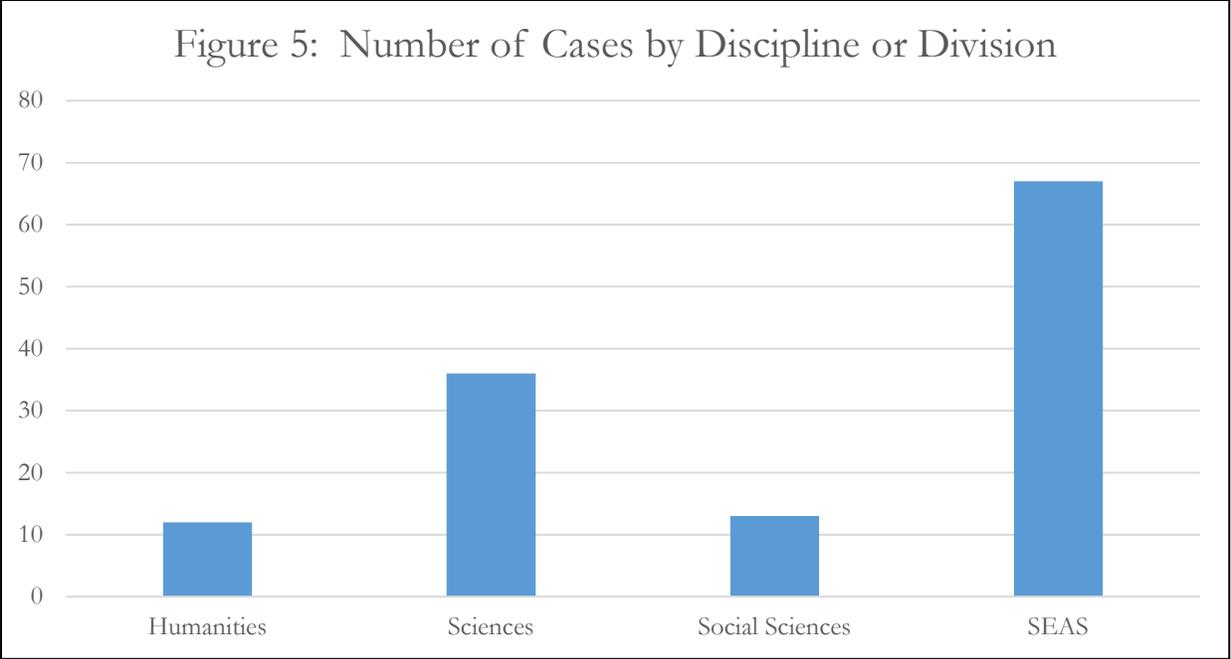


### 3.6 Reports by Division and SEAS

Of the 128 cases reviewed, the majority was referred to the Honor Council by courses in the science division and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS) (see Figure 5). As we noted in the 2015-2016 Honor Council Annual Report, this pattern of reporting is a consistent pattern in undergraduate education. Although two years of data are too little from which to draw conclusions, the differences in reports by division should be a focus of further study.

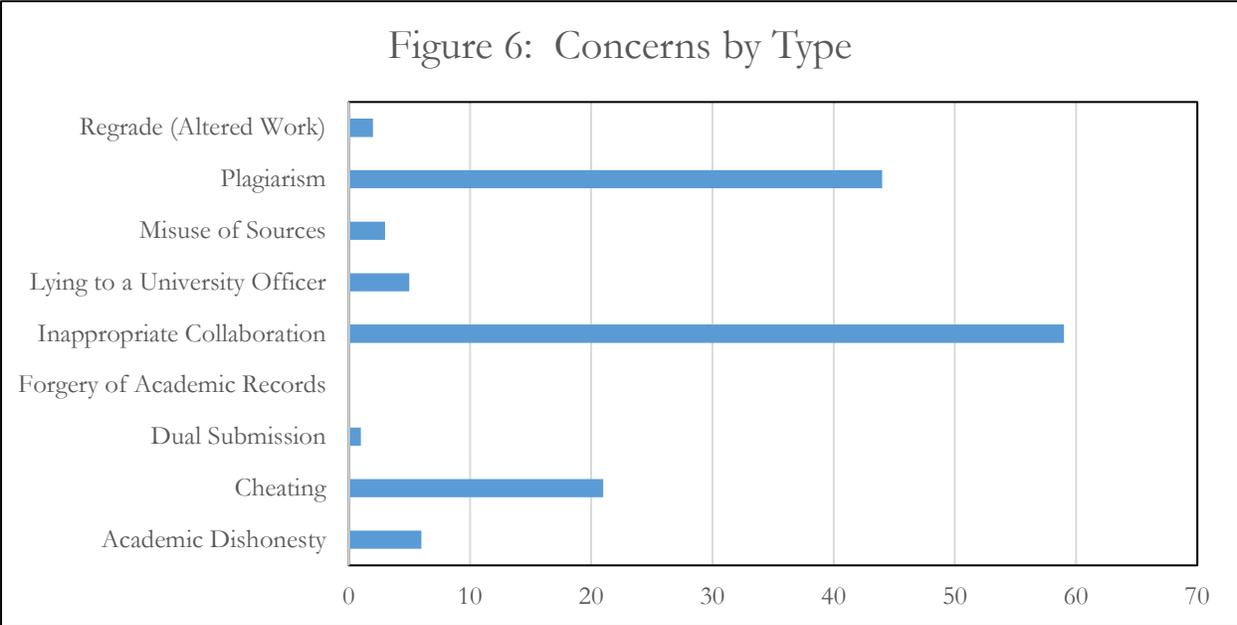
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<sup>6</sup> In 2016-2017, the Honor Council received a significant number of reports from one large introductory course. The Council works to protect the privacy of students and does not report on cases by individual courses, but the impact of the reports from this one course is evident in the statistics that follow. Reports of potential violations of the Honor Code by Class Year and Division were the two areas of measurement most significantly impacted.



**3.7 Types of Concerns**

The Honor Code and the *Handbook for Students* illuminate the types of concerns that the Honor Council investigates. Figure 6 shows these concerns by type. A report to the Council can include multiple concerns. For example, one assignment might raise concerns about a misuse of sources or improper citation, as well as text that is cut and pasted from another source (i.e., plagiarism). Because of this factor, the number of concerns exceeds the number of individual cases.



The most common concerns reported to the Honor Council in 2016-2017 remain plagiarism and inappropriate collaboration. Of the 128 cases, 44 included concerns about plagiarism and 59 included concerns about inappropriate collaboration. Reports of plagiarism remained consistent with reports from 2015-2016, while concerns related to inappropriate collaboration increased. The Council also noted an increase in reports of cheating, usually on exams. These reports frequently focused on the use of mobile phones during exams. The College or individual instructors may want to consider changes to exam policies to address this issue. For further thoughts, please see Section 5.

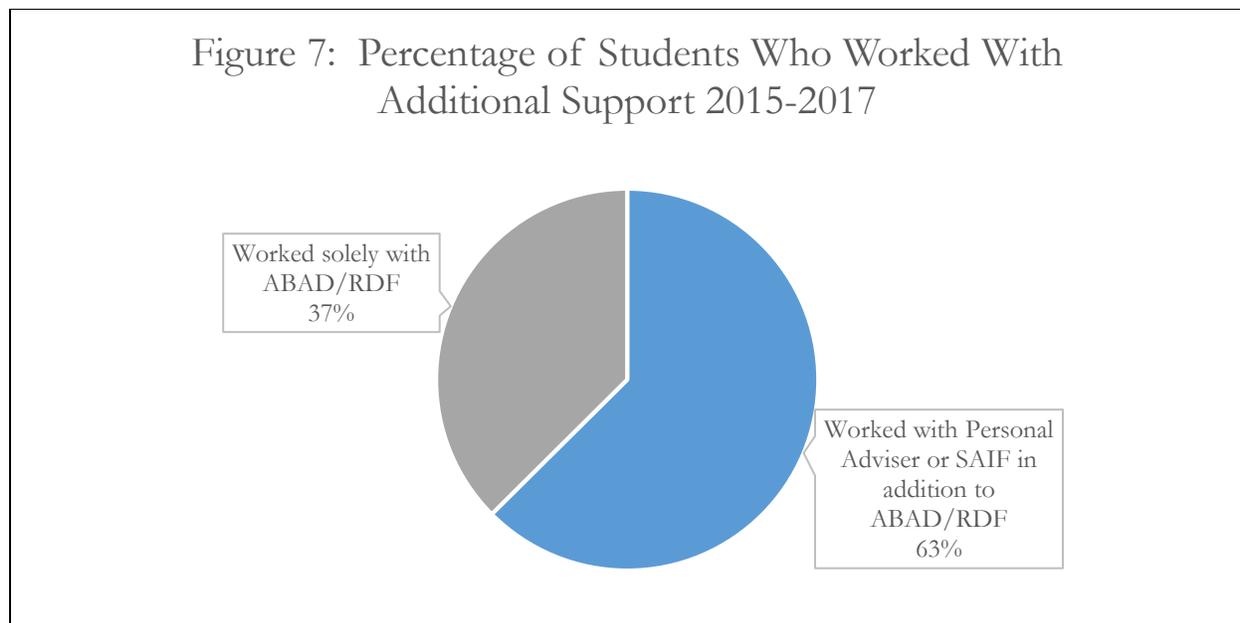
Please note that in some instances, a case included both concerns. The guiding principle is that all work submitted for academic credit “will be the student’s own” and that students should give proper credit to those whose work has influenced, shaped, or contributed to their own thinking. For these reasons, the definition of plagiarism is quite broad. The category of plagiarism encompasses instances in which work is submitted that is not the sole work of the student. For example, consider an instance in which Student A and Student B work together on a problem set. If Student B copies Student A’s work and submits it as his or her own, that could be a violation both in terms of inappropriate collaboration and plagiarism since the work submitted is not Student B’s own. Thus, plagiarism in this framework can encompass much more than the traditional “cut and paste” without attribution that is the more familiar definition.

## 4 Aggregate Data

The Honor Council commits to providing the Harvard College community with five years of aggregate data with which to assess the state of our academic community. In the early years of the Honor Council, we recognize that the statistics may have limited value and the impact of outliers or exceptions may skew the data. Nonetheless, we offer this initial aggregate data for consideration.

### 4.1 Additional Support for Students

Students' desire for additional support, largely from their peers in the form of SAIFs, has been consistent in the two years that the Honor Council has been in place. In 2015-2016, 63% of students chose to work with additional support from either a SAIF or a Personal Adviser; in 2016-2017, the figure was nearly equal, with 62% of students choosing to do so (see Figure 7). For more thoughts on the significance of student involvement in the Honor Council, please see Section 5.



### 4.2 Explanation of Responses

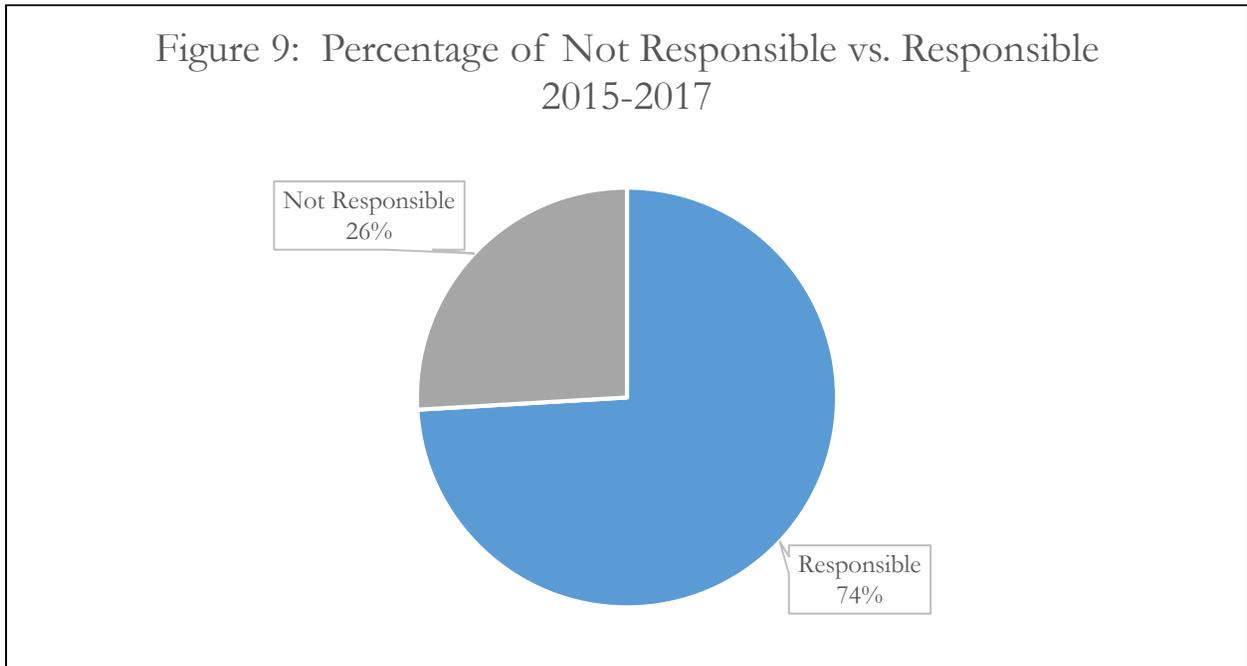
Over the past two years, the different types of Honor Council responses have been distributed relatively evenly with the exception of a larger number of students being placed on disciplinary probation (see Figure 8). While this response results in a change of status and thus limits some student opportunities, disciplinary probation means that the Honor Council has determined that the student can remain enrolled. Although Faculty rules allow the Honor Council the option to exclude a student from a course (the equivalent of a failing grade), the Council has not voted for that option up to this point. Community feedback on the efficacy and appropriateness of Council voters to exclude students from courses is welcome.

**Figure 8**

<b>Responses by Type 2015-2017</b>		
<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Scratch	27	11%
Take No Action	36	15%
Referral for a Local Sanction	31	13%
Exclusion from a Course	0	0%
Admonish	38	16%
Probation	73	30%
Requirement to Withdraw	38	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100%</b>

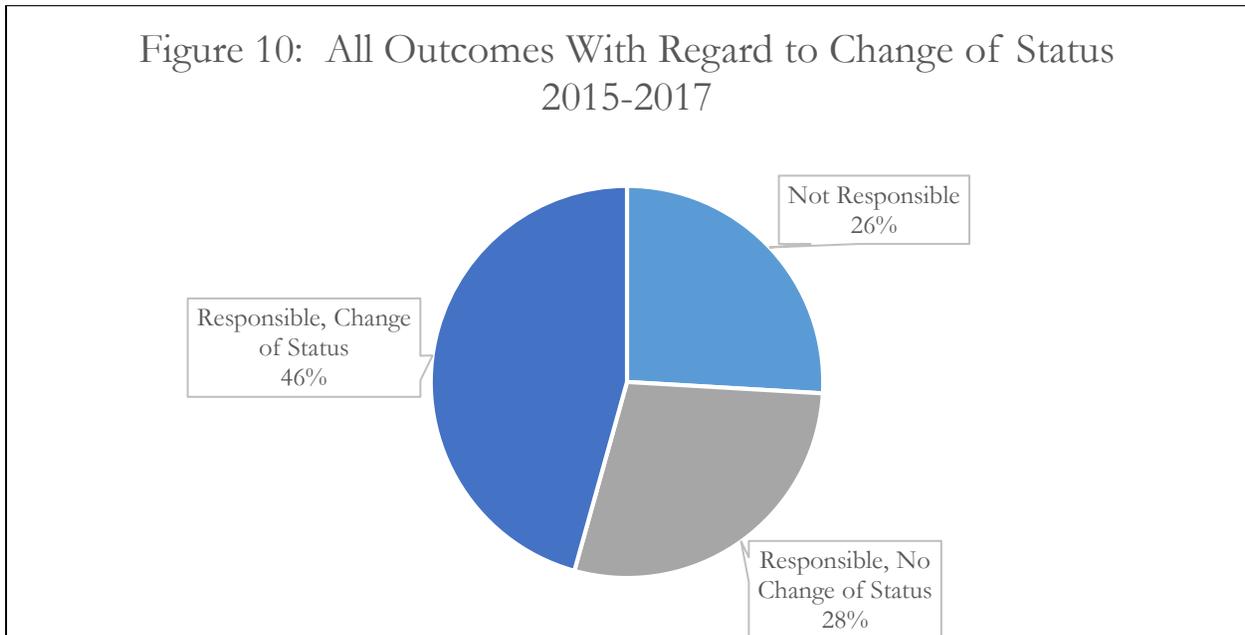
### **4.3 Findings of Responsibility**

Over the past two years, the Honor Council has had a finding of Responsible in nearly three-fourths of the cases it has reviewed (see Figure 9). Across universities, faculty reporting of academic integrity violations is low, and the Honor Council’s findings of responsibility may reflect that our faculty are more likely to report when they are confident that the Honor Code has been violated.



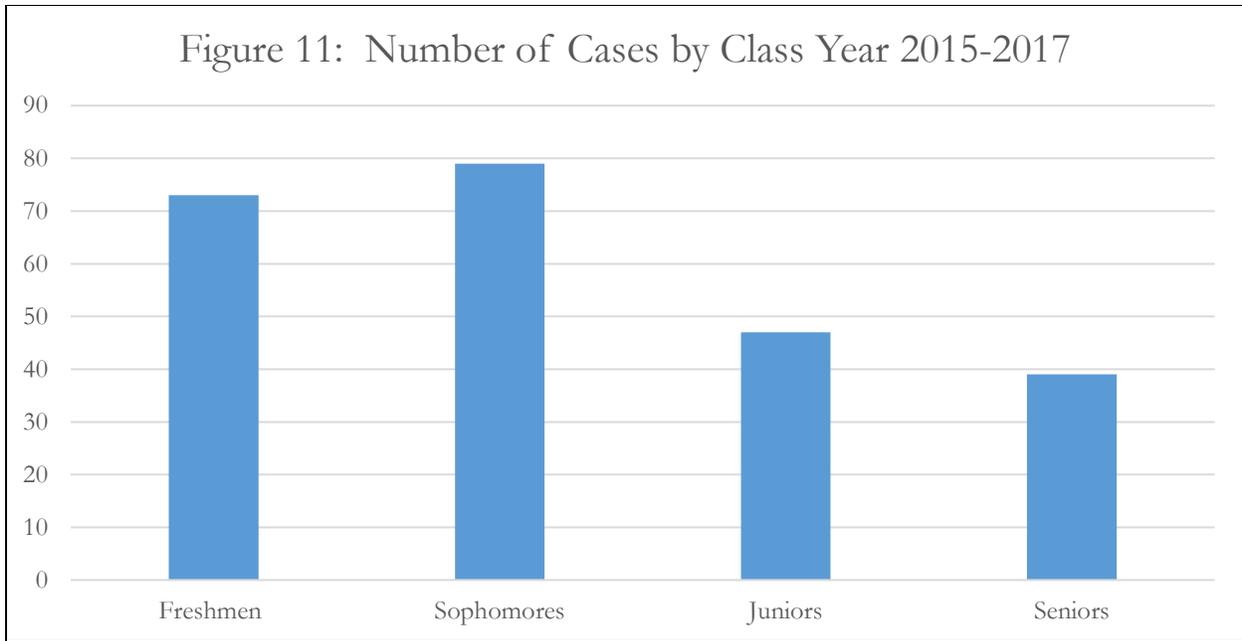
#### 4.4 Case Outcomes Resulting in a Change of Status

More than half of cases reviewed by the Honor Council in 2015-2017 resulted in either a finding of Not Responsible or a finding that did not change the student's status (see Figure 10). Early data suggest that the Honor Council makes use of the range of responses available to it under the Faculty's rules and that the actions reported by the community range from relatively minor issues that can be approached pedagogically to more significant violations.



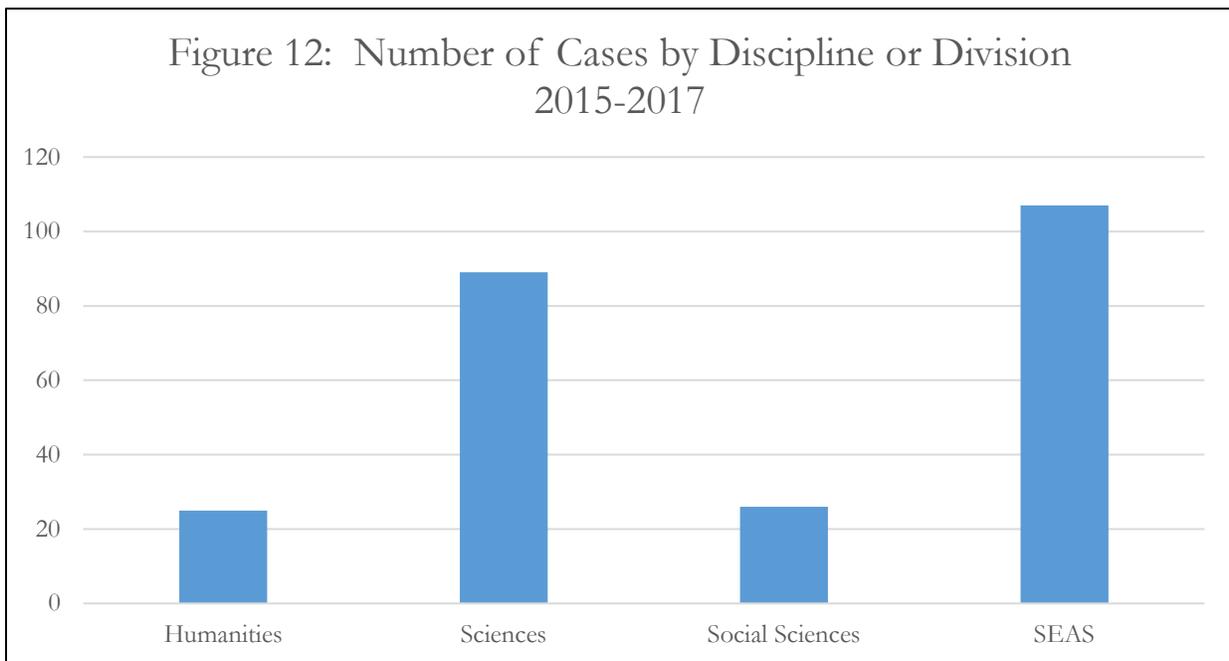
#### 4.5 Reports by Class Year

In 2015-2016, sophomores had the largest number of cases; in 2016-2017, freshmen did (see Figure 11). Taken across the past two years, a broader pattern may be emerging, in which students early in their academic careers are overrepresented and juniors and seniors are underrepresented. For additional thoughts on this potential pattern and recommendations, please see Section 5.



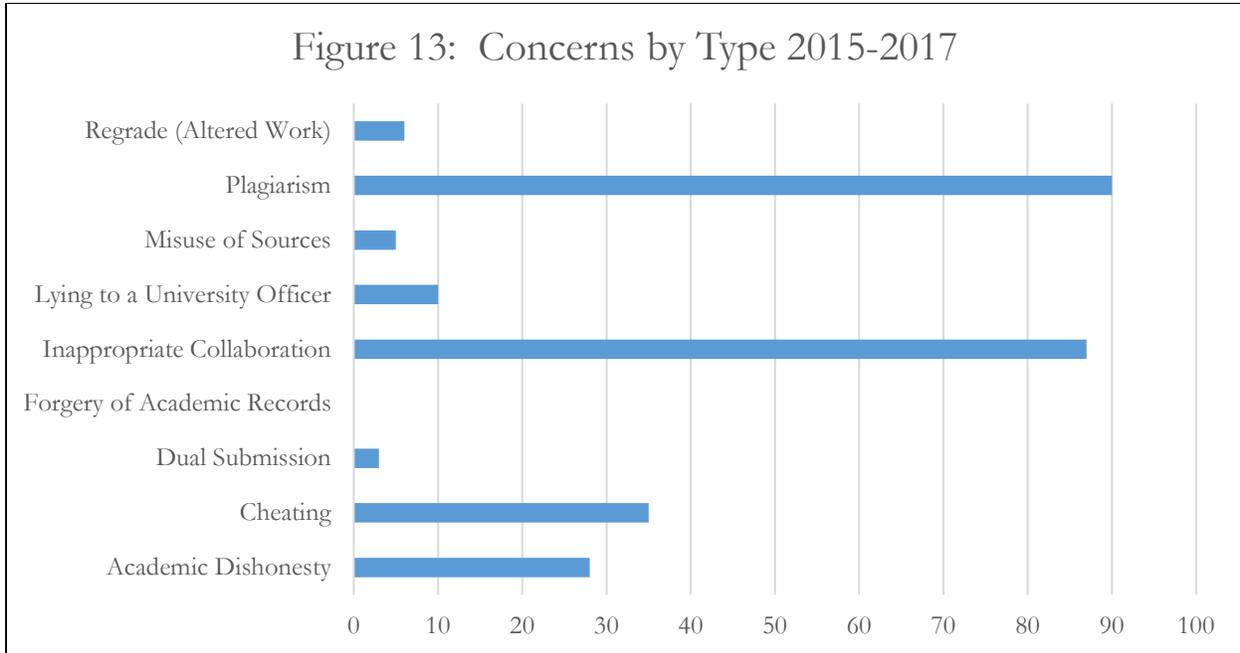
#### 4.6 Reports by Division and SEAS

In 2015-2017, SEAS and the Sciences reported the largest number of potential violations of the Honor Code, while Humanities and Social Sciences reported fewer potential violations (see Figure 12). This is a pattern that is consistent across colleges and universities. Moving forward, the community may want to consider the significance of this pattern, if it continues.



## 4.7 Types of Concerns

Concerns about plagiarism and inappropriate collaboration accounted for the majority of Honor Council cases in 2015-2017 (see Figure 13). As noted, plagiarism includes all instances where a student submits written work that is not his or her own. This designation applies to more types of assignments than papers; it includes copying on problem sets and other written work. Although smaller in number, cheating on exams is the third largest potential infraction. Because exam cheating is one of the most significant violations of the Honor Code and because of an increased number of reports of potential exam cheating in 2016-2017, this issue bears watching.



## 5 Observations at Year Two

The purpose of this report is to help shape the Harvard College community's conversation about academic integrity. Our intent is to continue to encourage students and faculty to consider the kind of academic community and culture they want at the College. As noted last year, we have limited data on which to comment. While we do not yet have the material from which to draw firm conclusions, we hope the observations below will lead to further dialogue. Comments and interpretations may be offered anonymously [here](#) or by email at [honorcouncil@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:honorcouncil@fas.harvard.edu). We welcome the community's engagement and conversation.

### 5.1 Problem Sets and Collaboration

Problem sets and collaboration issues continue to lead to a large number of potential violations of the Honor Code. In 2016-2017, the number of potential violations of collaboration policies nearly doubled. The Honor Council considers course collaboration policies as part of any review of improper collaboration, and while the reasons for collaboration concerns vary, we offer three recommendations:

- 1) The College should consider an educational campaign to remind students that collaboration policies vary from course to course and to emphasize student responsibility in reviewing and adhering to existing collaboration policies;
- 2) Faculty should be encouraged to revise and improve the clarity of collaboration policies, as well as how teaching staff describe and teach appropriate collaboration practices;
- 3) The College may want to refine standard language offered to faculty on collaboration in order to increase specificity and effectiveness.

### 5.2 Class Year

Last year, we noted that sophomores (Class of 2018) were overrepresented in reports to the Honor Council. In 2016-2017, freshmen were overrepresented. A few factors may account for this overrepresentation of newer students, including specific coursework. Freshmen and sophomores are likely to be taking classes in disciplines with which they are unfamiliar, are more likely to be in larger classes, and may take courses with a larger number of problem sets and more graded assignments. At the same time, the first and second years of college are times of adjustment and transition—to living independently, to entering House life, and to declaring concentrations. As the College considers how best to help students in their first two years, a closer connection between the Honor Code and freshman and sophomore advising may address the overrepresentation of newer students. Similarly, a greater emphasis on the Honor Code and academic integrity might be considered for introductory courses in the College.

### 5.3 Exam Rules

The number of cheating cases reviewed by the Honor Council increased significantly in 2016-2017. This rise was due in large part to the use of phones and mobile devices during exams. The College may want to strengthen rules and language around exams and state directly that phones must be left in the classroom whenever students leave the room during an exam. In the interim, faculty are

strongly encouraged to take individual initiative and to ask students to leave phones with exam proctors or course staff whenever they leave the classroom during an exam.

## **5.4 Peer Support**

Although it is too early to measure the impact of the Honor Code on the academic culture of Harvard College, the influence of peer mentoring is clear. Over the past two years, more than 60% of students involved in Honor Council cases have chosen to work with additional support, and the vast majority have chosen to work with a SAIF. Moving forward, the College may want to consider ways to expand the reach and impact of SAIFs.

## 6 Conclusion

Change can come quickly to Harvard College. In two short years, the Honor Code has become a settled institution. From Opening Days through final exams, students engage with the Honor Code because their lives, both inside and outside the classroom, constantly involve complex and important questions of academic integrity. The Honor Code's purpose is to provide a language and framework for these conversations and to encourage the community to see academic integrity both as an individual question and a shared issue. This report aims to provide all members of the College community with information, to encourage conversations, and to enable us to work together to build a stronger culture of academic integrity.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, we can be reached at:

Harvard College Honor Council  
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[honorcouncil.fas.harvard.edu](http://honorcouncil.fas.harvard.edu)

## Appendix A: Sample of Community Outreach Events

Below is a sample of the events organized by or participated in by members of the Honor Council and OAISC during the 2016-2017 academic year.

- Bureau of Freshmen Advisers Training
- Presentation during Pre-Orientation Program Training (Freshmen International Program and Freshmen Urban Program)
- Bok Center Teaching Fellows Training
- Visits to departmental meetings across all three Divisions and SEAS
- Outreach to large (75 and above students enrolled) courses and General Education courses
- Presentations to Tutors and Proctors
- Honor Code Faculty Speakers, Student Speakers, and Discussion Event at Opening Days for the Class of 2020
- Faculty sessions on Honor Code
- Presentations to graduate student teaching colloquia
- Panels discussing the Honor Code and Honor Council during Freshmen and Junior Parents Weekend
- Presentation to the Visiting Undergraduate Students
- Peer-to-peer outreach via Science Center Plaza stand
- Community events around the release of the 2015-2016 Honor Council Annual Report
- Joint study breaks with Peer Advising Fellows