Faculty Guide to Presenting Honor Code Violations at a Hearing

When you refer a suspected violation of the Honor Code to the Office of Academic Integrity, the referred student has the right to contest the charges and request that the case be decided in a full Honor Code hearing. As the faculty member who referred the case, you will be responsible for presenting the case to the Honor Committee members. The information in this document will assist you in preparing for your role in the hearing.

General information

- You will be contacted via email by the Office of Academic Integrity with the date and time of the hearing. Hearings are scheduled around the student’s academic schedule provided by Banner.
- Hearings are held in room 4100 of SUB I unless otherwise specified. Please check your letter to confirm the location of your hearing.
- Full Honor Code hearings are heard by 4 members of the Honor Committee.
- Full Hearings typically last about an hour and a half, but they can last longer if the case involves several students, has several witnesses, or contains complex evidence.
- The hearings are formal in nature, but they are not legal proceedings.
- All hearings are audio recorded. Deliberations are not recorded.
- Results of the hearing will be presented within the hearing. All parties must wait in the Office of Academic Integrity until the deliberation is over and the Honor Committee calls both parties back into the hearing room to read the outcome of the case. Sanctions from the hearing are not imposed until the appeal process is complete.

Role of Honor Committee advisor in the hearings:

- The role of the HC advisor (typically the Director of Academic Integrity) is to ensure that the hearing proceedings follow the stated guidelines, to answer procedural questions, to provide Honor Committee members with background information when necessary, to ensure the proceedings and deliberations are free of bias, and to assist the Honor Committee members in thinking through the evidence of the case when needed.
- The advisor does not have a voice or vote.
- The advisor does not offer an opinion with regard to students’ responsibility for the charges.

Standard of Evidence in Honor Committee Hearings:

- There is no presumption of guilt on the part of the accused student(s).
- The responsibility of “proving” the student committed the violation rests with the accusing party – to be accomplished through providing sufficient evidence to meet the standard of evidence.
- The standard of evidence used in HC hearings is “clear and convincing.”
  - “Clear and convincing” is a higher standard than preponderance of the evidence (i.e., more likely than not) but a lower standard than beyond a reasonable doubt.
  - The Honor Committee members will ask themselves, “Are the facts clear?” “Is the evidence strong?” “Am I convinced?”
- This standard allows for some ambiguity to be present and for Honor Committee members to make determinations about credibility of the parties involved if there is contradictory information.
- The majority of the Honor Committee must agree that a student committed the violation for the student to be found In Violation of the Honor Code.

Types of Evidence

- Documentary evidence
  - You likely submitted all of the documents indicating information around the alleged violation when you submitted the referral packet. However, if you feel that additional
evidence will help prove that the violation occurred, you will need to send it to the Office of Academic Integrity as soon as it comes to light so that the student may review it in preparation for their hearing.

- **Documents that may be useful to you in a hearing:**
  - Syllabus or other document containing a statement about the Honor Code and policies for the course (i.e., what specifically constitutes academic dishonesty in your course)
  - Instructions for the assignment/exam in question
  - Electronic examples of exams/assignments from students not referred, if seeing how other students responded to the questions/assignment will be helpful (all documents should have names and information of the students redacted)
  - Electronic copies of the material in question. If plagiarism, you should have highlighted copies of the student’s work and the work that has been plagiarized. If cheating on an exam, copies of the student’s exam and those from whom he cheated. If collaboration, copies of the collaborated material, highlighted if the entire text is not in consideration. If you have questions about what is needed, please contact the Office of Academic Integrity.
  - Timestamps of document submission if this is pertinent to your referral
  - A copy of a quiz regarding classroom/departmental expectations around academic integrity if one is given to students.

- **Verbal Testimony**
  - Each party will be given 15-20 minutes to present his/her case.
  - Many cases can be determined by the documentary evidence alone, but some cases are less clear or contain complex and technical information. In these cases, your verbal testimony may be the most important piece of evidence at the hearing.
  - The Honor Committee members will have reviewed the documents and narrative you submitted, but your testimony will bring that evidence to life. It is very important that you use your testimony to “connect the dots” for the Honor Committee members. If the violation is not completely clear by the documentary evidence, this is your opportunity to help the Honor Committee members understand how you came to the conclusion that the student(s) violated the Honor Code.
  - Your testimony also is your opportunity to convince the Honor Committee members that your conclusions about the situation clearly indicate the accused student committed a violation.
  - Your testimony may reiterate much of what you stated in referral form, but it also allows you the opportunity to expand on that information. Please remember that not all of our committee members are content experts and will need your assistance to make sense of the information.

- **Witness Testimony**
  - In cases in which the violation was witnessed by another person or reported to you, it is best if the witness can attend the hearing to provide testimony.
  - When the Honor Committee members and the referred student have the ability to hear and question the witness(es), the Honor Committee members are better able to determine the credibility of the evidence.
  - If a witness cannot be present, you should submit a written statement to be reviewed by the Honor Committee members and the referred student as part of the hearing process.
  - If witnesses insist on remaining anonymous, the witness account can be heard by the Honor Committee members, but it may not be given much weight during the deliberation process.
Other experts in your field may serve as witnesses regarding the nature of the work submitted by the student(s).

**Order of the Hearing**

- Introductory remarks by the Hearing Chairperson
- Signing of the Honesty Statement by all parties
- Referring party presents case (15-20 minutes)
- Questions are asked of the referring party (by the referring party and Honor Committee members)
- Witnesses for the referring party present testimony and are questioned
- Referred student presents case (if more than one referred student, each student will present separately) (15-20 minutes)
- Questions are asked of the referred student by accusing party and Honor Committee members
- Witnesses for the referred student present testimony and are questioned
- Closing remarks/responses to student testimony are given by the referring party
- Closing remarks are given by the student
- Deliberation by the Honor Committee members (all parties leave the hearing room)
- The decision is announced by the Honor Committee members

- Notice of the result of the hearing is typically sent within one week of the hearing date.
- Students have the right to appeal the decision and sanctions, within a specified timeframe.
- All grade-related sanctions are recommendations to the course professor.
- All suspension and expulsion sanction recommendations must be approved by the Dean of Students.

**If a grade has been submitted for the course**

- Once faculty received the notice that the sanction has been recommended:
  - If it is confirmation that said the student accepted the responsibility and sanction
    - Submit a grade change to your department. Please record that the change is for the honor code on the grade-change form.
  - If the notice says the student(s) has the right to appeal
    - Do not send any grade change until the Office of Academic Integrity notifies you if the student has or has not appealed (appeal window is seven (7) business days once the hearing resolution is sent to the accusing party and accused student(s)).
    - If the student(s) submits an appeal the Office of Academic Integrity will notify you
      - All faculty will need to wait until you get notification of the results of the appeal to submit the grade-change.
      - If the appeal is not granted, all faculty will need to submit the grade change to your department and record the reason for change is for the honor code.
  - The Office of Academic Integrity does not have the ability to change or update a student’s grade. It will be important once the faculty member receives notification of the final decision that they make the appropriate grade change with the Registrar. Students who contact our office will be directed back to the faculty member who initiated the Honor Committee process.
  - If a faculty member is not returning to Mason for the following semester, please make sure the the department chair has the documentation to answer questions and/or change the grade.