

## Honor Code

The complete Honor code is as follows:

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.*

### Extent of the Honor Code:

The Honor Code at George Mason University shall be specifically concerned with cheating or attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing in an academic setting. Examples of these include but are not limited the following:

- a. Use of unauthorized material
- b. Use of unauthorized assistance
- c. Duplicate use of student's prior work
- d. Violation of syllabus requirements regarding integrity
- e. Self-plagiarism
- f. Inadequate citation
- g. False citation
- h. Failure to adhere to citation forms set by the professor
- i. Failure to quote sources/material
- j. Submission of another individual's work
- k. Removing an exam from a classroom
- l. Posting or enabling of posting of homework assignments and/or exams or solutions on websites
- m. Taking photos of exams/academic work without authorization
- n. Taking someone else's work without knowledge
- o. Falsifying sources, data, or information
- p. Providing a false excuse for missing a test or class
- q. Providing false information, including identifying information
- r. Falsifying official correspondence

### The Honor System

The Honor System refers to the procedures by which the Honor Committee addresses alleged violations of the Honor Code. It includes information on procedural assurances for students, the composition of hearing boards, appeals procedures, and information on sanctioning.

#### I. The Honor Committee

- a. The Honor Committee is selected to promote academic integrity as a core value for our university community. Members of the committee serve on hearing panels established to investigate and resolve alleged violations of the Honor Code. Mason's School of Law has an Honor Committee that is independent from the rest of the University's Honor Committee
- b. Membership on the Honor Committee will be limited to 100 members who apply for membership. Undergraduate students who apply must have no Honor Code Violations or Code of Conduct Violations, maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.66, be in good academic standing, and successfully complete the training and orientation program. Graduate student members must meet all of the requirements above with the exception of maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.00.

- c. A chairperson and a vice chairperson will be elected in April of each year by the members of the committee. The term of the office will be one academic year. Staff in the Office of Academic Integrity will provide administrative oversight for the committee.
- II. Responsibility of the Student
- a. Students should request an explanation for any aspect of the professor's policies regarding the Honor Code that they do not fully understand.
  - b. Students have an obligation not only to follow the Code themselves, but also to encourage respect among their fellow students for the provisions of the Code. This includes an obligation to report violations by other students to the Honor Committee.
  - c. Upon notification, students should respond to requests to meet with the Office of Academic Integrity within the specified deadline. Failure to do so will result in a resolution option being selected for them (typically an expedited review) and the case proceeding in absentia. Mason policy states that all official notification will be conducted via the student's Mason email address.
  - d. Students referred to the office agree to abide by the following honesty statement in all steps of the process:
    - i. George Mason University students pledge to conduct themselves with integrity and honesty at all times. It is expected that all information presented in this process will be true and correct. George Mason University students who willfully and knowingly provide false information may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for violating the University's Code of Student Conduct. Furthermore, a pattern of lying or fabrication by the accused student may be considered when sanctions are decided upon in any case.
    - ii. Students sign this document at the prehearing meeting.
  - e. As indicated in the process as well as the notification letters and resolution forms the student signs, a student cannot withdraw from a course for which a referral has been submitted until the case is resolved and the student is found Not In Violation of the Honor Code.
- III. Responsibility of the Faculty
- a. At the beginning of each semester, faculty members have the responsibility of explaining to their classes their policy regarding the Honor Code. They should also explain the extent to which aid, if any, is permitted in academic work.
  - b. Faculty members are responsible for including in their syllabus an academic integrity statement as outlined by the Provost's office at the start of each academic semester. Additional language should include what constitutes acceptable behavior for the course they are teaching.
- IV. Procedures for Reporting Violations
- a. All suspected violations must be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity within a reasonable time frame.
  - b. The student will be notified in writing that an accusation has been made and meet with a staff member in the Office of Academic Integrity to review the case materials and decide the next course of action.
  - c. Students have an option of accepting responsibility and the faculty recommended sanction, accepting responsibility but contesting the sanction, or denying responsibility and requesting a means of resolving the issue.
- V. The Process and Resolution Options
- a. The referring party sends referral to the Office of Academic Integrity (OAI)
  - b. OAI contacts professor if necessary for additional clarifying information pertinent to the referral (missing syllabus, sanction recommendation form, etc)
  - c. Student is contacted to meet with a staff member in OAI by Mason email and given a seven day deadline to schedule the prehearing meeting
    - i. During the prehearing, information referred by the referring party is discussed with the student.
      1. Student accepting responsibility

- a. Student is given the option of a Sanctions only Hearing or Accepting responsibility and sanction recommendation of the professor
  - b. Students who request a sanctions only hearing will be directed to one of two options:
    - i. Expedited Review-referral party and referred student do not appear in person. Referred student submits a written statement explaining any extenuating factors that led to the violation. The referred student should include any supporting documentation. All materials must be received within 7 days of the prehearing meeting. The committee gathers to review the information from the professor and from the student to determine if extenuating circumstances exist to justify adjusting the sanction.
    - ii. In Person Sanctions Only Panel-Referred student appear before the Honor Committee to discuss the case. Witnesses are arranged by the referred student and referring party for the hearing. An advisor is chosen by the referred student and can be anyone with the exception of another student referred in the same case. The committee must then determine if extenuating circumstances exist to justify adjusting the sanction. This option is reserved for cases where the student is facing suspension, expulsion or program dismissal.
  - c. Students who accept responsibility and the sanction of the professor will not have an appeal avenue. Students who accept responsibility and choose a sanctions-only option can use the appeal avenue provided by the Office of Academic Integrity
2. Student denies responsibility
- a. Student informed of options available for resolution of case
    - i. Cases immediately referred for a full hearing include:
      1. Cases where suspension is a sanction
      2. Cases where expulsion is a sanction
      3. Cases where program dismissal is a sanction
      4. Cases involving information regarding a violation that is submitted by an eyewitness
    - ii. The Honor Committee panel convenes to meet with the referred student(s), the referred student(s) advisor, the referral party, and any witnesses
      1. Both parties present their case before the hearing panel.
      2. Using a standard of clear and convincing, the panel will determine if enough information is present to determine the student violated the Honor Code.
      3. If found responsible, referred students have the right of appeal according to OAI appeal guidelines.
    - iii. All other cases are referred to an expedited review panel
      1. Referred Students will be given 7 calendar days to submit information explaining their perspective of the referral, including any witness statements (notarized) or additional information

- that would provide an alternate explanation of the events.
  - 2. The Honor Committee panel convenes to review the information submitted by the referred student and by the referring party.
  - 3. Using a standard of clear and convincing, the panel will determine if enough information is present to determine the student violated the honor code.
  - 4. If a student is found responsible, they have the right of appeal according to the OAI appeal guidelines.
- d. The Director of the Office of Academic Integrity or designee, may assign a trained hearing officer (staff person in the office) as opposed to a panel to review the case in the following circumstances:
- i. Pending Graduation of the involved Student(s)
  - ii. Pending add/drop deadlines that impact tuition
  - iii. Any circumstance deemed extraordinary

#### VI. Procedural Assurances

- a. The hearing panel will have an advisor from the Office of Academic Integrity present during the hearing to offer assistance when requested by the chair of the panel. Students have the following procedural assurances in Honor Code cases:
- i. To receive written notice of alleged violations.
  - ii. To be provided access to information that may be used in an Honor Code hearing. Reasonable access will be provided to materials in advance of a meeting/hearing upon written request from the student to the Office of Academic Integrity. In cases where retaliation is a legitimate safety concern, the information may be redacted or presented in a manner as to prevent identification.
  - iii. To examine witnesses presented against the student at a hearing and to produce information on their behalf, including making a statement regarding alleged violations. In an expedited review case, if additional witness testimony is provided, the student will be given access to that in order to prepare their response.
  - iv. To not be compelled to be a witness against oneself or to have silence taken as an indication of responsibility for the violation.
  - v. To a decision based on clear and convincing information.
  - vi. To not be sanctioned and/or censured unless the Honor Committee, on the basis of the information, is persuaded that the student is responsible for the violation.
  - vii. To be accompanied in all formal proceedings by an advisor of the student's choosing and at the student's expense. Advisors may only consult with the respondent and are not permitted to speak on the respondent's behalf or address the Honor Committee. If advisors repeatedly fail to adhere to this requirement they will be asked to leave the hearing room and will not be allowed to participate in the hearing.
  - viii. To appeal decisions within the appellate structure provided by the George Mason University Honor System.

#### VII. Sanctions

- a. The hearing panel may impose nonacademic sanctions as it deems proportionate to the offense. Grade related sanctions are typically coordinated with the department based on the recommendation of the referring faculty member.
- b. The faculty member who makes the referral can recommend sanctions to the Honor Committee that involve reduced grades or course failure.
- c. Recommendations for nonacademic suspension or dismissal are typically made in situations where an individual has repeated behaviors of academic dishonesty, or has been involved in a case so egregious that such a recommendation is commensurate to the offense. This recommendation is forwarded to the Provost or the Provost's designee for approval.

- d. In determining sanctions, panel members will consider the non-punitive educational purpose of the Honor Code process. Please note that a failing grade or an inability to continue as a student at George Mason University is not considered a punitive measure.

#### VIII. Appeals

- a. Appeals of Honor Committee decisions must be submitted in writing within 5 business days of the hearing.
- b. Appeals can be granted on the basis of the following:
  - i. New information (this does not include an individual failing to show up for their hearing who wants to present evidence they would have presented had they appeared, or a restatement of the original case)
  - ii. Procedural irregularity
- c. Appeal requests must include the following information:
  - i. Name and G Number of the Student
  - ii. Sanction assigned by the honor committee
  - iii. Clearly stated grounds upon which the student is appealing
  - iv. A written statement detailing the appeal. Optional additional information, including witness statements in cases of new evidence, can be included
- d. The decision to accept or deny the appeal will be made by three (3) Honor Committee members who have no prior knowledge of the case. These individuals will review the information and, if necessary, the audio transcript of the original hearing. In cases where there is no committee available to hear the appeal and the result of the appeal may impact a student's graduation, tuition payment, or other extraordinary circumstance, an individual appeal officer may be assigned to the case.
- e. Faculty members do not have an appeal avenue. However, they may submit a new case against a student if they have new information that was not available at the time of the hearing.
- f. In the event that a faculty member chooses not to follow the Honor Committee's recommended sanction, or fails to file a case of suspected dishonesty with the Office of Academic Integrity, students may appeal the faculty member's action to the Academic Appeals Committee, via the Office of the Provost. The decision of this committee is the final step in the Academic Integrity process.

#### IX. Record Keeping

- a. Educational records will be maintained by the Office of Academic Integrity in accordance with the Library of Virginia record retention schedule and according to laws and statutes put forth by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Resolutions that result in altered grades do not have an Honor Code designation indicated on a student's transcript. However, a resolution that results in a suspension or permanent dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript with an Honor Code designation. A transcript notation will be made if a student withdraws from the university while under investigation for academic dishonesty. Suspension notations are removed from the transcript upon the completion of the suspension period.