

George Mason University Honor Code

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Introduction

At George Mason University, Academic Integrity is demonstrated in our work, community, classrooms, and research. We maintain this commitment to high academic standards through Mason's Honor Code. It is an agreement made by all members of our community to not "cheat, steal, plagiarize, or lie in matters related to academic work." Students sign an agreement to adhere to the Honor Code on their application for admission to Mason and are responsible for being aware of the most current version of the code. Having an Honor Code allows us to ensure that every student does their part to ensure integrity at Mason.

The Honor Committee exists to affirm academic integrity as a core value for our university community. Members of the committee serve on hearing panels established to review alleged violations of the Honor Code. The Scalia School of Law has an Honor Committee that is independent from the University's Honor Committee. Questions about cases brought by the Scalia School of Law should be referred to that committee. All undergraduate and graduate students (in both degree and non-degree status) are subject to the University Honor Code.

In addition, Mason has an office that addresses issues related to research misconduct. Those incidents are investigated through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. As it states in University Policy 4007, "Allegations of academic misconduct against graduate students are governed solely by the university's honor code, except for 1) research activities as defined above regardless of sponsorship; and 2) master's theses and doctoral dissertations, both of which are governed by this policy. Allegations of academic misconduct against undergraduate students are governed solely by the university honor code, except for sponsored research activities which are governed by this policy." For more information, contact the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance via their website at <https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/research-misconduct/>.

Honor Code Statement

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 forth 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.

Definitions

Cheating

Cheating encompasses the unauthorized use of, access to, or provision of academic work in an attempt to misrepresent a student's actual efforts. This includes, but is not limited to, submitting another individual's work as one's own, soliciting solutions/assignments from online websites, unauthorized collaboration, or failing to adhere to requirements (verbal and written) established by the professor of the course. Subcategories of cheating include:

- Providing, using, or attempting to benefit from unauthorized academic material and/or assistance: This includes but is not limited to the posting or enabling of posting of homework assignments and/or exams or solutions on websites or allowing someone to complete material in your name.
- Duplicate use of a student's work, without prior authorization from the instructor
- Submission of another individual's work
- Violation of college, departmental, program, or course requirements regarding integrity: This includes syllabus violations as well as violations of instructions related to integrity that appear in the course.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as using another individual's ideas or words without attribution or credit. It also includes using one's own prior work that has been submitted for credit or published in another venue as a new submission

without citation. Using the ideas of others without proper attribution or citation is unethical and a violation of the Honor Code. Subcategories of plagiarism include:

- Self-plagiarism: Intentionally or unintentionally using portions of one's old work for new assignments without attribution
- Failure to adequately quote and/or cite sources or material
- False citation: This includes but is not limited to referencing work that does not appear in the indicated source.

Plagiarism does not include mistakes in the format of a citation as long as the student has indicated the materials quoted or relied upon and the source of the materials.

Stealing

Stealing from an academic perspective means obtaining unauthorized access to educational materials. These materials might be tests or quizzes from faculty members, or they may be the work product of another student. Subcategories of stealing include but are not limited to:

- Removing an exam or other academic work from a classroom without authorization
- Taking photos of exams/academic work without authorization or permission
- Taking someone else's work without their knowledge

Lying

Lying in an academic context refers to providing information known to be false as a way to bypass classroom expectations or gain an unfair advantage in completing academic work. Subcategories of lying include but are not limited to:

- Fabricating or providing false sources, data, information, documents, and/or official correspondence
- Providing a false excuse for missing a test or class

Notification and Obligations

All suspected violations must be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity within a reasonable time period of discovery of the misconduct. Professors are encouraged to check for code violations regularly during the semester and to report in a timely manner. **It is the professor's responsibility to provide all the material necessary to support the referral. The Office of Academic Integrity does not investigate cases. The Office of Academic Integrity reserves the right to dismiss cases without a hearing when (1) the allegations do not rise to the level of an Honor Code violation, (2) there is insufficient material to support the allegation, or (3) the referral is not made in a timely manner.** Information on how to refer a student can be found on our website oai.gmu.edu.

If the Office of Academic Integrity proceeds with a referral, the student who is referred will be notified in writing via their Mason email (Mason's official form of communication) that a referral has been received. The student will have an opportunity to schedule a pre-hearing meeting with a staff member in the Office of Academic Integrity within seven days of the letter to review the case materials provided by the referring party and decide on the next course of action. Failure of a student to schedule, attend a meeting, or select a resolution option will result in a hold being placed on the student's account and the case being forwarded to the Honor Committee for review in absentia (without a student present or without a student's statement). Students and referring parties will receive decision notices via their Mason email account.

Students referred to the office are subject to the following honesty statement throughout the process:

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.

A student who is referred for an Honor Code violation is not allowed to drop or withdraw from the course in question until the case is resolved and the student has been found not in violation. If a student drops or withdraws from the course in question, they will be re-enrolled, charged tuition and fees for the course, and have a hold placed on their account until the matter is concluded. If a student is found in violation, they will not be allowed to withdraw from or drop the course in question.

Upon resolution of the case, the referring professor(s) are responsible for updating grades with the Registrar. To do so, faculty members must access a grade change form and obtain the required signatures and submit it to the Registrar. The Office of Academic Integrity processes educational sanction materials as well as suspension and permanent dismissal sanctions with the Registrar.

The Honor Committee

Membership on the Honor Committee is limited to 100 members who apply for membership. Undergraduate student applicants must have and maintain a minimum cumulative G.P.A. of 2.66, be in good academic and conduct standing, and successfully complete the training and orientation program. Graduate student members must have and maintain a cumulative G.P.A. of 3.00 and must be in good academic and conduct standing as well as successfully complete the training and orientation program.

Faculty members, administrative faculty members, and classified staff members who join the Committee must have a minimum of a Master's degree from an accredited program. Faculty members cannot participate in resolving cases they have referred. Faculty members, administrative faculty members, and classified staff members who join the Committee must successfully complete the training and orientation program.

Honor Committee panels consist of three Honor Committee members. In cases where a graduate student has been referred, at least one member of the Honor Committee must be either a graduate student, a classified staff member, an administrative faculty member, or a faculty member.

The Process and Resolution Options

Students have three resolution options: a prehearing resolution, a full case review, or a sanctions case review.

Students can access all submitted information for a case in which they are referred by submitting a request in writing via email. In cases where retaliation is a legitimate safety concern, the information may be redacted or presented in a manner to prevent identification.

All hearings are attended by an Honor Committee advisor, who is a staff member of Academic Integrity. The role of the Honor Committee advisor 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 information provided when needed. The advisor does not have decision making authority in the cases or hearings.

The student may have one advisor present during any meeting or in-person hearing related to the honor code process. The advisor does not represent or speak on the student's behalf or address the Honor Committee. The advisor can be present to advise the student through the process as long as such presence and/or advice is not disruptive to the hearing and does not unreasonably lengthen the time of the hearing. If an advisor repeatedly fails to adhere to this requirement, they will be asked to leave the hearing room and will not be allowed to be present or advise the student during the hearing. Any behavior that violates the rules of the proceedings will result in removal from the hearing room. If the advisor repeatedly violates the rules and procedures for the Honor Committee proceedings, such violation may result in the immediate and permanent removal of the advisor from the current and any future proceedings. If a student needs an interpreter in the process, they may select or arrange for one and have that individual present in addition to the advisor. Students who require a disability accommodation in the hearing will need to contact the Office of Disability Services for assistance.

Prehearing Resolution

During the prehearing meeting, the student is presented with all information submitted by the referring party. At the prehearing, the student may choose to accept responsibility and the faculty recommended sanction(s). If a student accepts responsibility and the sanction(s) during this meeting, the matter is concluded and the student does not have the option of appealing the outcome. Prehearings are not recorded.

Full Case Review

A full review is a resolution option in which a student indicates they are not in violation of the alleged honor code policies and wants the Honor Committee to review their case. The Honor Committee will review the submitted information and make a decision regarding the student's violation.

Students are held responsible if the Committee finds clear and convincing information to hold them responsible based on the facts presented. Two of the three panel members must vote to find the student in violation of the honor code for a student to be held responsible.

Students can appeal a finding of responsibility based on the appeal criteria set out in this document. Faculty cannot appeal a finding in a case, but can refile a case if new evidence arises that was not available at the time of the original hearing. There are two types of full review, and which review a student is eligible for depends on the circumstances of the case.

Full Case Review: In-Person Hearing

An in-person hearing is a resolution whereby the student appears with the professor and any witnesses or advisors before the Honor Committee. Students are permitted to bring a single advisor to the hearing with them, an interpreter if necessary, and any relevant witnesses. This hearing is the time to present all information for the committee to consider when deciding the case. Failure to share material, which was available during the original review will not be grounds for an appeal.

If a student disputes responsibility and qualifies for an in-person hearing, the Office of Academic Integrity shall schedule an in-person hearing and email the student and the referring party a notice with the date, time, and location of the hearing. The hearing will be scheduled at least 7 calendar days from the date of the notice. Once set, the date and time of the hearing will not be changed. The unavailability of a witness or advisor is not a basis to reschedule a hearing; parties are responsible for ensuring their witnesses are present.

No later than 3 business days before the scheduled hearing, each party must submit any documents and the statements of any witnesses the party wishes to present at the hearing. The referred student must also submit the name of any advisor that will accompany the referred student at the hearing. Witness statements should be sent directly by the witness to the Office of Academic Integrity account at oai@gmu.edu, or a notarized copy can be included with their submission. If the committee determines a witness' statement contains relevant information, the committee shall consider the witness statement as the witness' testimony. Character witnesses are not allowed and will not be taken into consideration when determining responsibility or sanction(s).

Upon receipt of the documents and witness statements, the Office of Academic Integrity shall distribute the documents and statements to all parties. No later than one business day before the hearing, the parties may submit any rebuttal documents and/or names of any rebuttal witnesses along with statements from the rebuttal witnesses. A rebuttal document or witness must provide information that responds to or refutes information contained in a previously submitted document or witness statement. A party offering rebuttal submission must provide an explanation as to what the document or witness will be rebutting. The Office of Academic Integrity has the discretion of whether to accept the submission of rebuttal information. **Failure to submit witness statements and/or evidence and the names of advisors and witnesses by either party by the applicable deadline will result in the additional evidence/individuals being barred from the hearing proceedings.**

All in-person hearings are audio recorded by the Office of Academic Integrity with the exception of the Honor Committee's deliberation process. The audio recording is kept as a part of the student's record unless the student is found to be not in violation. The referring party is provided 20 minutes to present their case (including any witnesses), followed by a period of questioning of the referred party and any witnesses by both the Committee

and the referred student. The referred student is then allowed 20 minutes to present their case (including any witnesses and/or documents), followed by a period of questioning of the referred student and any witnesses by both the Committee and the referring party. The Honor Committee may extend these time limits, if necessary. The student will receive a decision letter within 3 calendar days of the hearing unless a longer period of time is deemed necessary.

The Honor Committee shall have the discretion to decide whether to hear from witnesses or admit additional evidence submitted by the parties provided said evidence is submitted by the deadlines indicated. The Honor Committee may decide not to hear from a witness or accept additional evidence if it determines that a witness's testimony or the additional evidence is not relevant. Testimony or evidence is relevant if it makes a fact in question more or less likely to be true.

In-person hearings are reserved for students whose cases meet one of the following criteria:

- The incident reported is **only** supported by eyewitness testimony
- The student is facing suspension or permanent dismissal from Mason.

A case where a student receives a grade related sanction that triggers an academic suspension or program dismissal is not eligible for an in-person hearing unless the only evidence is based on eyewitness testimony. If a case does not meet the above-mentioned criteria, a student is referred to the expedited review process.

Full Case Review: Expedited Review

An expedited review is a resolution option where neither the student nor the faculty member appears in-person before the Honor Committee. The student submits a written statement with any documentation (including statements from witnesses) they feel supports their case within 7 calendar days after their pre-hearing meeting. Witness statements should be sent directly by the witness to the Office of Academic Integrity account at oai@gmu.edu, or a notarized copy can be included with the submission. Documents and statements shared by the student will be provided to the referring party who will have an opportunity to draft a written response and provide any additional supporting documentation within 3 calendar days of receipt. This response will be shared with the student, who will be given 3 calendar days to provide a final response, including any rebuttal documents or witness statements. The Committee will meet, review the materials from the referring party and the referred student, and use the standard of clear and convincing to determine if enough information is present to find the student in violation. If so, the Committee will assign the grade related sanction issued by the professor and other additional sanctions as deemed appropriate. If the Committee determines the student is not in violation, no sanctions are assigned and the professor will be instructed to grade the assignment accordingly. . This hearing is the time to present all information the parties want the committee to consider when deciding the case. Failure to share material or information available to the student during the original review will not be grounds for a successful appeal if the student chooses to share it during the appeal process.

A letter with the outcome will be emailed to the student's Mason email address. Expedited reviews are not audio recorded

Sanctions Only Case Review

A Sanctions Only Review takes place when a student accepts responsibility for the honor code violation but wants to plead a case to amend/adjust the recommended faculty sanction. Please note, the Honor Committee does not have the ability to amend or change a grade related sanction unless:

- The professor agrees to an amended grade related sanction, and;
- The referred student demonstrates that extenuating circumstances exist that would justify the sanction being amended.

The committee will only review a grade change request if the faculty member agrees to an amended change. The committee can make amendments to sanctions involving educational activities or dismissal from the University. If the referred student demonstrates extenuating circumstances exist which influenced the incident in such a way

that no other option was available to the student, or that the sanction as indicated is too severe for the violation such as in cases of suspension or permanent dismissal.

Additionally, the resulting consequences of a sanction do not constitute an extenuating circumstance that would indicate the need for an adjusted sanction. A student must provide information that external factors influenced the incident in such a way that no other option was available for the student, or that the sanction as indicated is too harsh for the violation for which the student was referred. If a student's request to amend the sanction is denied, they can appeal under the appellate criteria set forth in this document. There are two types of Sanctions Only reviews and which review a student is eligible for depends on the circumstances of the case.

Sanctions Only Case Review: In-Person Hearing

A Sanctions Only, In-Person hearing is a resolution whereby the student appears before the Honor Committee with any witnesses or advisors.

In-person sanctions only hearings are reserved for students whose cases meet the following criteria:

- The student is facing suspension or permanent dismissal from Mason.

If a student requests a Sanctions Only Review and qualifies for an in-person hearing, the Office of Academic Integrity shall schedule an in-person hearing and send the student a notice with the date, time, and location of the hearing. The hearing will be scheduled at least 7 calendar days from the date of the notice. Once set, the date and time of the hearing will not be changed. The unavailability of a witness or advisor is not a basis to reschedule a hearing; the referred student is responsible for ensuring their witnesses are present. This hearing is the time to present all information the referred student wants the committee to consider when deciding the case. Failure to share material during the original review will not be grounds for a successful appeal if the student chooses to share it during the appeal process.

All in-person hearings are audio recorded by the Office of Academic Integrity with the exception of the deliberation process. The referring party may provide a written statement indicating their opinion on why the recommended sanction is appropriate and whether it would be proper to impose a different sanction. The statement will be shared with the student prior to the hearing via email/secure document sharing. During the hearing, the referred student presents their case (including any witnesses and/or documents), followed by a period of questioning by the Committee. The student will receive the outcome within 3 calendar days of the hearing unless a longer period of time is deemed necessary.

A case where a student receives a grade related sanction (such as an F in the course) which results in an academic suspension or program dismissal, does not apply to this process and does not result in an in-person hearing being granted. If a case does not meet the above-mentioned criteria, a student is referred to the expedited review process.

Sanctions Only Case Review: Expedited Review

An expedited review is a resolution option where neither the student nor the professor appear in-person before the Honor Committee. The student submits a written statement with any documentation they feel supports their case within 7 calendar days of their pre-hearing meeting. Witness statements should be sent directly by the witness to the Office of Academic Integrity account at oai@gmu.edu, or a notarized copy can be included with the submission. Documents and statements shared by the student will be provided to the faculty member who will have an opportunity to draft a written response within three calendar days. The Office of Academic Integrity will request the referring party to provide a written statement indicating their opinion on why the recommended sanction is appropriate and whether they agree to impose a different sanction. This response will be shared with the student, who will be given three calendar days to provide a final response. The Committee will meet, review the materials from the referring party and the referred student, and determine if the sanction should be adjusted. This hearing is the time to present all information the parties want the committee to consider when deciding the case. Failure to share material or information available to the student during the original review will not be grounds for a successful appeal if the student chooses to share it during the appeal process.

If the only sanction modification being requested by the referred student is a grade sanction modification, and the faculty does not agree to such modification, the case will not qualify for a sanction only review hearing and will

not be reviewed by the Honor Committee. If the student fails to provide a statement for a sanctions-only expedited review by the deadline they are provided, the student will forfeit their opportunity for a sanctions-only review and the faculty recommended sanctions will be assigned.

A letter with the outcome will be emailed to the student's Mason email address. Expedited reviews are not audio recorded.

Sanctioning

The hearing panel may impose non-academic sanctions as it deems proportionate to the offense. Failure to complete non-academic sanctions will result in a registration hold being placed on the student's account until the sanction is completed. Grade-related and program-related sanctions are coordinated between the referring party and the department based on the recommendation of the referring faculty member.

Sanctions include but are not limited to the following:

- Assignment rewrite
- Grade Reduction on Assignment
- Zero for the Assignment
- Grade Reduction for the Course
- Grade of F in the course
- Educational Seminars
- Non-Academic Suspension
- Permanent Dismissal

Recommendations for non-academic suspension or permanent dismissal are typically made in situations where an individual has repeatedly engaged in academic dishonesty or has been involved in a case so egregious that such a recommendation is commensurate to the offense. Recommendations of non-academic suspension or dismissal are forwarded to the Provost or the Provost's office designee for approval. If a student is referred for a second violation of the honor code, the student's recommended sanctions will include suspension regardless of the faculty's recommendation. If a student is referred for a third violation of the honor code, the student's recommended sanctions will include permanent dismissal. If a student is found in violation for a second or third violation, it will be the decision of the Honor Committee on whether to issue a sanction of suspension or permanent dismissal.

In determining sanctions, panel members will consider the non-punitive educational purpose of the Honor Code process as well as any previous Honor Code cases resulting in a finding of responsibility. Please note that a failing grade or an inability to continue as a student of George Mason University is not considered a punitive measure. Students are encouraged to consider potential outcomes of Honor Code violations when submitting academic work.

Appeals Process

Students have the opportunity for one appeal per review. The decision made in the appeal process is final and the case will be closed upon completion of the appeal process. There are no further grounds of appeal beyond this process. Appeals of Honor Committee decisions must be submitted in writing within 5 calendar days of the date of the decision letter. The decision letter will list the deadline for the appeal. All appeal requests must be submitted through the OAI appeal submission form. The link as well as instructions for this form will be provided in the outcome letter. Appeals submitted without an appeal submission form, submitted with an incomplete form, do not meet the outlined criteria for an appeal, or do not follow the instructions stated in the outcome letter will not be accepted nor reviewed by the Honor Committee. Requests must include the following information:

- Name and G number of the student
- Sanction assigned by the Honor Committee
- Clearly stated grounds upon which the student is appealing

- A written statement detailing the appeal. Optional additional information, including witness statements in cases asserting new information, can be included

Students can appeal the decision of the Honor Committee based on one or more of the following criteria:

- New information that was not available at the time of the original hearing that would have materially impacted the original outcome. This does not include an individual failing to show up for or provide a statement for their hearing who wants to present evidence they would have presented had they appeared, or information that was available at the time of the original hearing/review that the student failed to present.
- Substantive Error or Procedural Irregularity. Please note this is an allegation that the Honor Code process was not adhered to, and the result of which would have had a material effect on the outcome, not an allegation of a violation of academic department policy.
- Severity of sanction only when suspension or permanent dismissal is assigned. If an appeal is received by the Office of Academic Integrity on the grounds of severity of the sanction, and the student is not facing a sanction of suspension or permanent dismissal, the appeal will not be accepted by OAI and an Honor Committee will not review the appeal.

The appeal process is a written review, so it is important to include any and all information under consideration by the Committee in the appeal submission packet. Appeal reviews are not audio recorded. The decision to grant or deny the appeal will be made by three Honor Committee members who have no prior involvement with the case. Two of the three members must support any decision on an appeal. These individuals will review the information and, if necessary, the audio transcript of the original hearing. In cases where a full Committee is not 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 review the appeal. Students will be given the option to proceed with an individual appeal officer or wait until a Committee is available to review the appeal. The appeal committee will determine if the referred student has grounds for appeal and has provided evidence to substantiate those grounds, the appeal committee may do one of the following:

- Affirm the original decision;
- Remand the case for a new hearing with guidance for the new committee to consider;
- Modify the findings;
- Modify the sanctions; or
- Modify both the findings and sanctions.

In the event that a faculty member chooses not to follow the Honor Committee's recommended sanction or refuses to acknowledge a finding of not in violation and grade the student's assignment accordingly, students may appeal the faculty member's action via the grade appeals procedure. Students must check with the corresponding academic department for information about how to file a grade appeal. The decision of this Committee is the final step in the Academic Integrity Process. Conversely, a student cannot appeal a finding of in violation which results in a grade related sanction through the Academic Appeals Committee. Appeals can be submitted online via the website at oai.gmu.edu.

Record Keeping and Reporting

An honor code referral is part of a student's educational record and as such, is subject to guidelines put forth by the Library of Virginia as well as laws and statutes put forth by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Educational records are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). As such, only the student has the right to access them. A student may sign a waiver allowing access to a third party for a specified period of time. Without a waiver, our office does not share the information with anyone who does not have an educational need to know.

A student who is found to have not violated the Honor Code or whose case is dismissed can be assured that no record is maintained and that the OAI office shares no information about their involvement in this process.

Resolutions that result in altered grades and/or educational sanctions do not have an Honor Code designation on the 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.

On occasion, a student may apply for a graduate program, internship, or job that asks about involvement in an Academic Integrity case. Information is not shared from our office without a signed waiver from the student.