

Honor System

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

THE HONOR SYSTEM

I. Introduction

All communities exist by virtue of some consensus on values, even though that consensus may be imprecise and unspoken. In a university, it is essential that there be universal acceptance of certain enduring and specific standards of academic conduct. These standards of academic conduct are distinct from the other values and expectations of the community. Because of their unique importance, they are set forth as the Honor Code, enforced by the Honor Board.

The Honor System depends upon adherence of all members of the University to the standards of academic behavior articulated in the Honor Code. This community embraces a great variety of individuals whose diversity of thought and lifestyle are wellsprings of the intellectual and creative life of the University. In this diverse group there are, properly, a few basic tenets. These include a willingness to adhere to the Honor Code. Any student wishing to enroll at Wesleyan should understand and accept this responsibility as a condition of enrollment. This substantial responsibility is one aspect of the education offered at Wesleyan.

There is an inevitable tension between the concept of individual creativity, effort, and achievement, and the notion that in a University community, learning is a collective, collaborative process. Both are valid. That we live under an Honor Code bearing on the individual conduct of students in academic matters is not to minimize the importance of collective learning. Nor does it deny the debt we owe to our colleagues and to those who have contributed to the body of knowledge upon which we build. The existence of the Honor Code is simply a reflection of the fact that in certain types of academic exercises, where the goal is to elicit and assess the intellectual and creative work of individuals, standards of conduct are essential.

It is not the aim of the Honor System to impose rigid forms and definitions where flexibility is required. Consequently, the application of the Honor Code in a particular course is left in part to the discretion of the instructor and his/her students. The instructor will announce to the class any unusual conditions that may have an impact on the application of the code. Whenever there is any question as to the application of the code, the student must be sure to clarify the matter with the instructor. Likewise, the members of the Honor Board and

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faculty should play an active role in helping students come to a better understanding of the philosophy and mechanics of the system. The Honor Board, to which violations of the Honor Code are referred, exists for several related reasons: to afford the protection of fair process to students alleged to have violated the Honor Code, to ensure that sanctions are commensurate with violations, and to promote uniformity in the handling of cases. Furthermore, the Honor Board serves as a constant reminder of institutional values. Initial adjudication of alleged violations of the Honor Code must issue from the Honor Board.

The success of the Honor System depends upon the cooperation of the entire community; in matters of academic integrity, students and faculty are equally involved.

II. History

The Honor System was initiated at Wesleyan in 1893, through the efforts of a group of students who had worked to gain acceptance for their idea among the faculty and administration as well as their fellow students. At first the Honor System applied only to final examinations. In 1910, it was extended to essays and laboratory work. By this time the administration of the Honor System had come into the hands of an undergraduate Honor Board, which judged all cases of violation, both those arising in examinations and those involving essay and laboratory exercises. This control by the students continued until 1929, when, at the suggestion of the Honor Board, it was decided that the board should handle only examination violations while the faculty should deal with violations in essays and laboratory exercises. In 1950, full responsibility to judge all cases was again assumed by the undergraduate board.

III. The Honor Code

A. Acts Constituting a Violation of the Honor Code

1. The attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise without due acknowledgment.
2. Plagiarism.
3. The submission of the same work for academic credit more than once without permission.

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4. Willful falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise.
5. Deception concerning adherence to the conditions set by the instructor for the formal academic exercise.
6. The failure to take constructive action in the event of committing or observing a violation or an apparent violation.

B. Constructive Action

It is the responsibility of members of the University to take constructive action in the case of committing or observing an apparent violation of the Honor Code, though this does not imply that constructive action requires the observer of an apparent violation to report to a third party, e.g., a person other than the alleged violator. The following procedures constitute means of taking constructive action:

1. A student who believes his/her actions may conflict with the principles of responsibility and integrity in the Honor Code must discuss the matter with a member of the Honor Board as soon as possible.
2. If a person believes that the actions of a student might conflict with the Honor Code, the person may discuss the matter as soon as possible with the student concerned. If, after discussion, either person remains concerned about a possible conflict with the code the student whose actions are in question must bring the matter to a member of the Honor Board.
3. The observer of an apparent violation may report the matter directly to the Honor Board without consulting the alleged violator.
4. The observer of an apparent violation may make a report to a resident advisor, a faculty member, or other University official. The person to whom the report is made shall discuss the matter as soon as possible with the alleged violator or shall report the matter to the Honor Board.

C. The Pledge

A student must sign a pledge on any formal academic exercise if so requested by the instructor concerned. The pledge reads, "Pledge, no aid, no violations."

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IV. The Honor Board

A. The Honor System shall be directed and guided by the Honor Board.

No punitive action may be taken by a faculty member or University official with respect to an alleged violation of the code unless fair process is followed. In a particular case, a faculty member or University official may make a confidential recommendation to the Honor Board as to what he/she considers an appropriate penalty to be levied by the board, but primary responsibility for implementation of the Honor Code resides with the Honor Board.

B. The Honor Board shall consist of four student members, all with vote.

1. Of these four student members, two shall be juniors and two shall be seniors. New members shall be selected by a panel of students composed of the current members of the Honor Board and at least three members of the Wesleyan Student Assembly. Normally, both juniors shall be reappointed for a second year. One of these juniors shall become chair in his/her senior year, although both may serve as co-chairs during their second year.
2. The dean of the college shall serve as an ex officio member of the Honor Board.

V. Fair Process

A. The Honor Board shall extend fair process as defined in the Guidelines for University Disciplinary proceedings. (See Joint Statement on Rights and Freedom of Students.)

B. An individual shall receive notice, in writing, of the specific charges brought against him/her. Such charges must be presented within a time adequate to allow for the preparation of his/her defense. At the time of receiving such notice, the person shall also be informed of his/her rights and of the procedure of the board before which he/she will appear.

C. An individual shall have the right to a hearing scheduled without unnecessary delay and shall be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

D. An individual has the right to an advisor of his/her choice from within the University.

E. An individual has the right to summon witnesses in reasonable number and to question them personally or through an advisor. Similarly, the individual

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shall have the right to know the identity of his/her accuser(s) and witnesses to the alleged violation. At the summons of either the board or the accused, any member of the University, unless exempted by this section, has the obligation to testify as extensively as the board may require.

F. An individual shall have the right to an open or closed hearing at his/her discretion. A hearing is confined to the taking of evidence and the hearing of witnesses. The Honor Board reserves the right to a closed session for its deliberations.

G. At the hearing, all evidence and testimony bearing upon the alleged violation shall be introduced in the presence of the individual, who shall have the right to challenge any evidence and question any witness. No member of the University staff with whom an accused has entered into a confidential relationship shall be called upon by the Honor Board to give evidence or information arising from that relationship without the permission of the person appearing before the judicial body. This shall not prevent an accused from calling persons with whom he/she has entered into confidential relationships to give evidence arising from that relationship. Through the permission of the accused, the witness who imparts confidential information must testify with regard to this specific information in response to questions from the board, except that nothing in these provisions is to be construed to require any person to violate the ethics of his/her profession.

H. A written summary of the decision shall be available for inspection by members of the University. The summation shall include a general statement of the charges, the judgment, and the rationale for the decision where necessary. The summation shall not name the accused or any witnesses nor include any information unnecessary to apprise members of the community of the charges or the judgment.

I. A finding of violation shall require the unanimous vote of the board.

J. In cases of violation, the board shall invoke such penalties as it sees fit. All decisions of the Honor Board shall be reported to the dean of the college, who is responsible for the implementation of the decision.

K. Appeal of Honor Board decisions may be taken to the president.

L. Except as explained herein and required by the procedures of the Honor Board, or as permitted by the written consent of the accused, all members of

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the Honor Board have an obligation to treat as confidential the proceedings of any case.

M. For cases that are filed after the Honor Board has left campus after the end of the spring semester, students have the option of requesting a hearing before the dean of the college along with one Honor Board member, provided that the faculty member bringing the case is also available. This option can be exercised only when the aforementioned parties are present. The single Honor Board member may either be one of the two current senior members prior to graduation, or one of the two rising seniors on the board. This policy is designed for situations in which (1) the student opts to proceed with the case over the summer instead of waiting for a hearing before the full Honor Board during the following fall semester, or (2) the student needs to have the case adjudicated in order to take part in a University-approved study-abroad program during the fall semester to determine class standing.

N. An individual who fails to appear for a duly scheduled Honor Board hearing must present documentation to the dean of the college and Honor Board verifying an emergency, such as family or medical, that prevented attendance. The dean of the college and the Honor Board will decide together whether the excuse warrants a rescheduled hearing. Failure to appear without a valid excuse constitutes a forfeiture of the privilege of a formal Honor Board Hearing, as it is defined under Joint Statement on Rights and Freedom of Students, Section VI, Procedural Standards in Disciplinary Proceedings, Section D. Hearing Committee Procedures. If the dean of the college and the Honor Board determine that the individual has forfeited the privilege, the individual will not be entitled to reschedule an Honor Board Hearing, and the case will be adjudicated by the Honor Board without the student being given an opportunity to appear before the Honor Board.

VI. Records

The decision of the Honor Board shall be reported to the dean of the college. The dean of the college shall receive written reports from the Honor Board, and a copy, together with the paper or papers involved in the violation of the Honor Code, shall be preserved in the records of the Honor Board.

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VII. Penalties

Violations of the Honor Code are among the most serious offenses an individual may commit at Wesleyan. The Honor Board shall invoke penalties at its discretion, up to and including, dismissal from the University.

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