The Honor Council Process: A Quick Guide for Rhodes Faculty

The Honor Code

“As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge I will not lie, cheat, or steal, and that I will report any such violation that I may witness.”

Reporting a Violation

* If you encounter an Honor Code violation, email one of the following individuals with a brief description of the situation, including the name of the student and the course. (If you are unsure whether an incident should be handled by the Honor Council, feel free to contact me to discuss it.)
* Initial Contact Options

Courtney Collins, Honor Council Faculty Liaison (collinsc@rhodes.edu)

Christine Fox, Director of Community Standards (foxc@rhodes.edu)

Hamid Shirwany, Honor Council President (shiha-19@rhodes.edu)

Investigation

* A student investigator will contact you by email and then meet with you in person to discuss the specifics of the case and to collect any relevant evidence (e.g., copies of the assignment, syllabus, etc.). After the meeting, the investigator will email you with a detailed summary of your account of the incident. After making any edits or clarifications, you will approve the statement.
* The investigator will meet separately with the accused student to obtain a statement. He will also collect statements from witnesses, if there are any.
* The statements from you, the accused student, and any witnesses—as well as any evidence provided—will make up the case packet reviewed by the Honor Council.

Pre-Hearing

* The Honor Council will meet to discuss the case and determine whether there is enough evidence to take the case to a hearing.
* You will be notified of the outcome of the pre-hearing meeting by email.

Hearing

* If the case moves to a hearing, you will be asked to attend the hearing as the accuser. You and the accused student will be given copies of the case packet to review before the hearing. The purpose of the hearing is for the Honor Council to determine whether the student is “In Violation” or “Not in Violation” of the Honor Code. The standard of proof in Honor Council hearings is “clear and convincing evidence.”
* The individuals present at the hearing will be the members of the Honor Council, the accuser (you), and the accused student. Witnesses may be called, but they are typically only present during their own testimonies. No other individuals, including legal counsel, may attend the hearing. The hearing is audio recorded.
* Both you and the accused student will have an opportunity to give an opening statement. Because the Honor Council members will already be familiar with the case packet, many faculty members choose not to make an opening statement—but you do have this option, if you would like to make a statement.
* Honor Council members ask questions to you and the accused student. You will have the opportunity to ask questions to any witnesses. You will also have an opportunity to ask questions to the accused student, if you have any. The accused student may ask questions to you and to any witnesses.
* At the end of the hearing, both you and the accused student have an opportunity to make a closing statement.
* After closing statements, the hearing concludes. Honor Council members remain to deliberate privately. No recordings are made of deliberations.

Hearing Outcomes

* The Honor Council determines whether the student is “In Violation” or “Not in Violation” of the Honor Code. If the student is found “In Violation,” the Honor Council will also determine sanctions.
* You will be notified of the outcome and related sanctions by email, typically the day after the hearing. The student is notified by email at the same time.

Sanctions

* Academic sanctions from the Honor Council (e.g., failure of the assignment or failure of the course) are **recommendations**. As the professor of a course, you assign grades, and you have the right to follow the academic recommendations of the Council or to alter them, in either direction.
* If you are planning to increase the severity of the Honor Council’s recommendations, this policy should be clearly stated in your syllabus. For example, if you plan on assigning a failing grade to any student found responsible for an Honor Code violation, your syllabus should state this, and you should discuss the policy with your students on the first day of class. In addition, it will be helpful to discuss any specific sanction changes with your department chair. (If a student wants to appeal an academic sanction that has come from you, rather than from the Honor Council, he will appeal to your department chair.)
* Non-academic sanctions (e.g., probation, suspension, expulsion) are imposed at the discretion of the Honor Council. You do not have the ability to alter these sanctions.

Appeals

* A student found “In Violation” of the Honor Code may appeal the decision to the Faculty Appeals Committee. The President of the Honor Council and the accused student are present at the appeal hearing. The accuser does not attend this hearing.
* The Faculty Appeals Committee may sustain the findings of the original hearing or return the case to the Honor Council for reconsideration. If the case is returned to the Honor Council, the Council will deliberate again, in light of suggestions from the Faculty Appeals Committee. The outcome of this hearing is considered final.

Other Information

* A complete list of policies and procedures is detailed in the Honor Council Constitution, available in the student handbook (<https://handbook.rhodes.edu/rhodes-college-student-handbook/honor-council-constitution>).
* If your course has specific requirements about how students are allowed to work in groups or about what resources may be used on assignments, include statements detailing these instructions on your syllabus and/or on the assignments themselves. You should also discuss these policies in class.
* If you have questions about a specific case as it moves forward, or if you have more general Honor Council questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact me.