

## Honor Code Charter

*Passed by General Faculty on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019*

### **I. Purpose**

---

The Honor System establishes high standards for student academic performance at Oberlin College and student governance of those standards through the Student Honor Committee (SHC). The SHC promotes an honor system in which students are recognized as responsible contributors to the Oberlin College community of scholars and artists. As peers, the SHC requires that the student body be accountable to each other for maintaining an ethical community of diverse scholars and artists. The SHC ensures that academic integrity and academic freedom are maintained in the scholarly pursuits of the Oberlin College Community.

With the privilege of pursuing an Oberlin education comes the responsibility to comply with the standards and the spirit of the Honor Code.

- Respectful engagement with others.
- Respect for the protected nature of intellectual property.
- A strong commitment to open and thoughtful intellectual exchange.
- Submission of original work utilizing only approved resources and appropriate attributions.

Students bear the responsibility of ensuring the maintenance of academic freedom in the community and reporting possible infractions. Students are required to utilize principled and sound judgment regarding all interactions within the academic enterprise and to abide by the regulations set forth below. Based on these foundational principles, professors do not proctor exams but instead support student agency and peer accountability for adherence to the Honor Code.

**The Honor Code:** Oberlin College students are on their honor to uphold a high degree of academic integrity. All work that students submit is expected to be of their own creation and give proper credit to the ideas and work of others. When students write and sign the Honor Pledge, they are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information; nor assisted others in these actions.

**The Honor Pledge:** At the end of each academic project, students should write in full and sign the Honor Pledge: "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." Faculty members and administrators may withhold grades or decline to verify completion of the assignment to encourage student compliance with the Honor Code.

### **II. Roles and Terms**

---

#### **A. Roles**

1. *Advisor:* a member of the Oberlin College community (restricted to staff, faculty, or other student) who agrees to provide guidance and support for a respondent or complainant throughout the investigation and hearing process. Because this process centers on student agency and

learning, advisors are not permitted to have an active role in the process and may not directly advocate on behalf of their advisees.

- 2. *Complainant:*** a member of the Oberlin College community who reports a violation of the Honor Code.
- 3. *Student Honor Committee Hearing Coordinator:*** the student responsible for receiving reports of violations, assigning case managers, keeping a record of cases under investigation and scheduled for hearings, and managing correspondence with the honor system liaison and the relevant deans.
- 4. *Student Honor Committee Membership Coordinator:*** the student responsible for managing SHC membership including applications, interviews, selection, standards, and training.
- 5. *Student Honor Committee Education Coordinator:*** the student responsible for the creation of educational initiatives for the honor code including Orientation and community outreach.
- 6. *Honor System Liaison:*** the person designated by the Dean of Students to provide guidance and administrative support to the Student Honor Committee. The Honor System Liaison maintains a set of tracking files containing both names and case numbers, is an ex-officio member of the Faculty Honor Committee, facilitates communications with other administrative offices, and answers questions when classes are not in session or when the SHC coordinator is not available. The Honor System Liaison coordinates events to bring the constituents of the system together when necessary. In addition, the Honor System Liaison works collaboratively with the SHC to recruit and train members, to sponsor the fall orientation program for new students, plan a new faculty orientation, and to ensure that a panel is available to hear all cases.
- 6. *Respondent:*** the student who is charged with a violation of the Honor Code.
- 7. *Relevant Dean:*** the dean of the college or the conservatory depending on where the respondent is enrolled or in the case of a double-degree student, the dean of the division in which the violation is alleged to have occurred.
- 8. *Witness:*** an individual who participates in a hearing to provide information related to the charge(s).
- 9. *Student Honor Committee (SHC):*** a group of appointed students responsible for managing the Oberlin College Honor System
- 10. *Faculty Honor Committee (FHC):*** a group of appointed faculty members responsible for reviewing and upholding SHC decisions, educating faculty on academic integrity, and recommending policy and procedural changes.

## **B. Terms**

- 1. *Charge:*** a written notice to a student of an alleged violation of the Honor Code.

**2. Cheating:** occurs when students do not do their own work in an academic exercise or assignment. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:

- (i) Copying from another student's examination.
- (ii) Allowing a student to copy from another student's examination.
- (iii) Using outside materials on an examination that are not authorized for use during the examination.
- (iv) Preparing or obtaining notes to take into a closed-book examination, for example writing on the hand or desk, preparing a crib sheet, or storing information in any other format for use and retrieval during the examination.
- (v) Collaborating on a project that was to be completed individually.
- (vi) Using written notes or information, or electronic devices, such as personal data devices, laptop computers, cellular phones, or calculators in an unauthorized manner to store, share, or retrieve information during the examination.

**3. Plagiarism:** the appropriation of the work or ideas of another – whether written or not – without acknowledgement, or the failure to correctly identify the source, whether it is done consciously or inadvertently. A lack of knowledge of the standards of academic citation is not an excuse for inadequate or improper citation. Students should consult with a professor, librarian, or writing tutor if they are unsure about their citations or the proper format.

Plagiarism may take many forms. In its most blatant form, entire phrases, sentences or paragraphs are used verbatim, without quotation marks or the appropriate citation. It is also plagiarism to paraphrase the work of another without attribution or to take a written passage and alter a few words in an effort to make the writing one's own. Moreover, the use of another's idea that cannot reasonably be regarded as common knowledge is plagiarism. Non-textual images such as drawings, graphs, and maps are also subject to plagiarism as are the experiments, computer programs, musical compositions, and websites of others.

Because footnoting and bibliographical conventions differ significantly between disciplines, students should consult with their professors regarding the conventions of academic footnoting and bibliographical documentation expected in a particular course.

Oberlin College maintains a website with useful information concerning the appropriate use of sources as well as acceptable footnote and bibliographical style. This site is at: <http://www.oberlin.edu/library/citation-help.html>.

**4. Fabrication:** the manufacturing or manipulation of information of data that lacks standard scientific or academic rigor expected in the appropriate field of study or discipline. Some examples of fabrication include:

- (a) Falsifying citations, for example by citing information from a nonexistent reference.

- (b) Manipulating or manufacturing data to support research.
- (c) Taking another student's examination, completing another student's academic exercise, or writing another student's paper.
- (d) Listing sources in the bibliography that are not used in the academic exercise.
- (e) Engaging another individual (whether a part of the college community or from outside of the college community) to complete the student's examination, to complete the student's academic exercise, or to write the student's paper.
- (f) *Multiple Submissions*: The same work may not be submitted to more than one course without the prior approval of all instructors involved. Reasonable portions of a student's previous work on the topic may be used, but the extent of the work must be acknowledged. This includes content produced for courses at other institutions.
- (g) *Other Acts*: Students who misrepresent academic information to college officials, for example by falsifying grades, forging college documents, transcripts, records, recommendations, certificates, diplomas, degrees, or signatures, have violated the Honor Code. Destroying, hiding, and improperly removing or retaining library materials with the intent of denying others access to those materials also are violations of the Honor Code.

### III. Scope

---

The Honor Code applies to all academic work, including but not limited to examinations, quizzes, audiovisual works, presentations, projects (including winter term projects), papers, recitals, exercises, artistic works, theses, and laboratory assignment; and any co-curricular work, exercise, or project requiring the application of the Honor Code. The determination of whether a violation falls within the scope of the Honor Code Policy is made by the Student Honor Committee Hearing Coordinator, in consultation of the Honor System Liaison.

All Oberlin College community members are responsible for promoting student compliance with the Honor Code including but not to limited to the following:

1. Discouraging violations of the Honor Code.
2. Refusing to assist others in violated the Honor Code.
3. Seeking and providing clarification of how the Honor Code pertains to any assignment, exercise or project.
4. Timely reporting known or reasonable suspicions of an Honor Code violation including self-reporting.
5. Participating in the Honor System process as requested.
6. Instructors are expected to make explicit on their syllabi or by some other means of communication how the Honor System operates with respect to the particular work arrangements in their courses. Additionally, all instructors must:
  - a. Leave the room during examinations and quizzes after giving out the test and answering questions, except in cases when technical or specialized circumstances

require the instructor's presence (i.e. music samples, oral exams, etc.). The instructor may exercise discretion in deciding to remain or return for a short period of time as a resource, but under no conditions shall the instructor proctor an exam or quiz.

- b. Contact the SHC regarding suspected infractions of the Honor Code.
- c. Instructors are urged to review the Honor Code and pledge statements prior to any quiz or examination, and to regularly review how these statements apply to specific assignments.

At the end of each academic exercise students who believe they have adhered to the Honor Code shall write in full and sign the Honor Pledge: "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." If a student does not follow the appropriate procedure, faculty members have the option of withholding the grade until the student writes the Honor Pledge correctly. Once such an oversight has been corrected, within a reasonable time, the faculty members may not penalize the students for it. Students in certain situations may also be asked to write and sign the pledge in association with co-curricular exercises. (For example, completing a written sanction for an Honor Code or a code of conduct violation, completing applications for campus employments, and other forms that relate college business and activities that are not necessarily academic in nature.)

#### **IV. Authority within the Honor System**

---

The SHC and FHC are responsible for educating the Oberlin College community about the purpose, scope, and spirit of the Honor System. The SHC and FHC are also responsible for resolving a report of an Honor Code violation.

##### **1. Student Honor Committee (SHC) Membership**

- a. The SHC consists of a minimum of ten and maximum of fifteen students appointed by the SHC hearing coordinator, membership coordinator, and education coordinator.
- b. Members must be full-time students currently enrolled at Oberlin College in good standing as determined by the College Registrar. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that there is a diverse membership.
- c. Members may be removed from the SHC by a two-thirds majority vote of a quorum of SHC members.
- d. When active membership falls below ten members, the coordinators of SHC must notify the faculty honor committee and the Honor System Liaison.
- e. Newly appointed members are required to participate in training before serving on a hearing panel.
- f. The Coordinators (Hearing, Education, and Membership) are hired positions by the Dean of Students Office in consultation with the Faculty Honor Committee.

2. Quorum: A quorum is defined as the majority of appointed members.

## V. Procedures of the Honor System

---

**1. FILING A COMPLAINT:** All members of the Oberlin College community are required to timely report potential violations of the Honor Code when they suspect one has occurred. Community members should encourage suspected violators to self-report.

Students should report potential violations either to their professor or to the SHC. Professors are to report directly to the SHC.

The Honor Code violation complaint form is available [here](#).

**Faculty Informal Resolution Option:** Faculty may request permission from the SHC to resolve an incident informally when the faculty member believes that the suspected violation is minor, and if the alleged violator accepts responsibility for the violation. The SHC reserves the right to review each request to determine whether it views the potential violation as a minor one and to verify that the student being reported has no prior reports. The SHC has the sole discretion to determine whether an incident may be resolved informally by a majority vote of all SHC members. The request will be reviewed with consideration of the respondent's past case history, academic year, and the nature of the violation. The faculty must report to the resolution of the violation to the SHC within 10 College business days. When a faculty member reports that a student has not complied with the sanction reached through informal resolution, the SHC reserves the right to investigate the matter and hold a formal hearing regarding the initial report. Examples of possible educational outcomes of an informal process include: receiving failing grade for the assignment or having to resubmit the assignment. These are decided by the SHC members.

**Non-compliance:** Oberlin College community members who reasonably suspect that a faculty member is not fulfilling their obligations under the Honor System is responsible for reporting this information to the Faculty Honor Committee (FHC).

### 2. INVESTIGATION AND PRE-HEARING

- a. The SHC is responsible for gathering all information pertinent to the case. In the process of gathering information. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent reasonably possible.
- b. The SHC Hearing Coordinator will assign a case manager.
  - If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous, the case manager will reach out to the faculty member of the course and respondent. If the faculty member does not wish to pursue a complaint and there is not enough evidence for the SHC to act as the complainant, the case manager can dismiss charges prior to a hearing. This request to dismiss charges will be reviewed and upheld or declined by a majority vote of Faculty Honor Committee.
  - The Case Manager will interview the complainant and respondent prior to a hearing.
- c. All documents deemed relevant to the case will be made available to the panel, respondent, and complainant through the Office of the Dean of Students five College business days before the scheduled hearing. All panel members must review these documents prior to the hearing.

### 3. THE HEARING

- a.** The SHC is responsible for reviewing the hearing procedures outlined in Appendix A on a triennial basis.
- b.** The case manager is responsible for scheduling the hearing. The case manager is a non-voting member of the hearing and will leave prior to deliberations. They will only present the facts that have been discovered during their investigation.
- c.** The respondent maintains the right to request the complainant be present during the hearing, though not necessarily in the same room at the same time as the respondent is present. The respondent must declare to the case manager the desire to have the complainant present at least five business days prior to the hearing. Following that declaration, the case manager will determine the feasibility of the request and accept or deny the request.
- d.** A hearing panel will consist of three members of the SHC. Members of the committee who have conflicting interests in a case should withdraw from the process when the case is first brought to the attention of the committee. The respondent also maintains the right to object in writing to proposed members of the Honor Committee serving on the respondent's hearing panel. The respondent must provide an explanation for each objection. The written objection(s) must be submitted to the case manager(s) within one (1) business day of the respondent's initial meeting with the case manager(s). Case managers retain the discretion to decide whether to grant or deny the request.
- e.** Committee members shall maintain privacy to the extent reasonably possible. Under no circumstances shall any person with knowledge of the case (faculty, administrator, or student) reveal information that would identify the complainant or the respondent.
- f.** The respondent is expected to appear at the scheduled hearing. However, in the case of the respondent's absence, the hearing may proceed. In the case of a documented emergency, however, the hearing may be rescheduled at the discretion of the case manager. In such cases, and where possible, the respondent must notify the panel in advance. In addition, a failure by the respondent to appear at the hearing without documented emergency may result in a failure to comply charge filed through the Student Conduct system.
- g.** All information upon which a decision may be based must be introduced at the formal hearing. The committee sometimes must review material that involves plagiarism or copying. The committee recognizes that in some instances the material may be too technical or in other ways too difficult for the committee to judge whether a violation of the Honor Code has occurred. The committee reserves the right to bring in consultants or present written statements from consultants from the college community who might be experts in the field or who have some training in determining the original author of a work. The committee also reserves the right to pause a hearing to consult an expert in the appropriate field. This may require another meeting to be scheduled to continue the hearing. This continuation of the hearing should be no more than five business days from the start of the original hearing.
- h.** The committee reserves the right to call other witnesses that it feels will help in the process of gathering information. The presence of a witness may take the form of a physical appearance or a

written statement, determined at the discretion of the case managers. Character witnesses are not permitted. The case managers may permit witnesses to withhold their identity from the respondent.

**i.** All hearings will be audio recorded.

**j.** The standard of proof is the preponderance of the evidence. A respondent will be found responsible when the information presented at the hearing convinces the panel that it is more likely than not that the alleged violation(s) occurred.

**k.** After a hearing panel reaches a finding and recommended sanctions, it is sent to the Faculty Honor Committee for review.

- 1) If the Faculty Honor Committee requests clarification or reconsideration of the decision, this process will normally occur within five business days of the request. The Faculty Honor Committee may request clarification or reconsideration based on but not limited to the following: sanctions that don't meet set precedent or to rectify procedural error.
- 2) Once the Faculty Honor Committee has approved and enforced the decision, the chair of the Faculty Honor Committee will inform the Dean of Students in writing. This notice will ordinarily be copied to the SHC. The SHC will then provide the Honor System Liaison with the respondent's and complainant's names and other necessary information. The Honor System Liaison will send a letter notifying the respondent of the decision. The letter will be copied to the complainant (if permitted by applicable law), the SHC, and the relevant dean.
- 3) If the FHC and SHC are unable to make a decision, the FHC holds the ability to make a determination off the SHC recommendation.

**i.** All records related to Honor Code violations will be maintained by the Honor Code Liaison for a minimum of seven (7) years after the student separates from the College.

#### **4. SANCTIONS FOR HONOR CODE VIOLATIONS**

**a.** Sanctions that may be considered include, but are not limited to:

- (i)** A formal reprimand and warning.
- (ii)** Honor probation which is an indication that the behavior is unacceptable and can be reportable to graduate schools. In addition, future violations are likely to result in suspension.
- (ii)** Reflective paper or revision of the work in question.
- (iii)** Educational sanctions include but are not limited to: research papers, studying academic resources, academic workshops, or visiting the reference desk at the library.
- (iv)** The loss, limitation, or restriction of certain nonessential rights in college, such as participation in extracurricular activities or representing the college off-campus.

(v) A recommendation that the instructor issue a failing grade, or no grade at all, for the assignment. Ultimately, the instructor maintains the right to assign a failing grade for the assignment or the course.

(vi) Withholding the diploma of a graduating senior until the completion of the sanctions.

(vii) Prohibiting participation by a graduating senior in the commencement ceremony.

(ix) Suspension. The rights and privileges of being a student at Oberlin College may be suspended for a specific period of time, the minimum of which will be to the end of the current semester. The student must leave the campus and may return at the end of the period of suspension without petitioning for readmission. However, the returning student must go through a reinstatement process that is initiated through the Office of the Registrar.

- Students who are suspended are expected to vacate their college residence within five business days of notification of suspension. It is the student's responsibility to consult with the Department of Residential Education to clarify any questions about its guidelines for properly vacating a housing unit.
- The sanction of suspension will be a part of a student's permanent disciplinary record, and a part of the student's academic record and transcript for the term of suspension. In the event a student withdraws from the College prior to the end of the term of suspension, the penalty will remain on both the permanent academic and disciplinary records.
- Normally, suspended students may not earn credits toward their Oberlin Degree until after they have been reinstated at Oberlin College. Under special circumstances, a suspended student may be permitted to transfer a maximum of six credits for academic work done at another school – during the period of suspension – toward their Oberlin degree. However, the student must receive permission in advance of taking coursework at another school and must make arrangements for the transfer of credit prior to enrolling in the courses to be transferred. Students seeking transfer credit must apply in writing to the Academic Advising Resource Center (AARC) providing the following information: title and description of each course; number of credit hours; name and location of institution; an explanation of how each course fits into the student's Oberlin program; why it is appropriate complete to the course(s) while suspended rather than upon return to Oberlin.

**b.** Multiple sanctions may be assigned at the discretion of the SHC and upheld by the FHC.

**c.** In the case of a first offense, the administrative notation of honor probation or warning will not appear on the Respondent's official transcript, held in the Office of the Registrar. However, both may be reportable on a disciplinary check by an employment agency, transfer undergraduate institution, or post-secondary education institution. In the case of a violation while a respondent is

on honor probation, the committee is urged to adopt a sanction of suspension, or dismissal. In the case of a graduating senior, suspension may be substituted by refusing to allow the Respondent to participate in commencement exercises or withholding a degree.

**d.** Failure to comply with sanctions will result disciplinary proceedings under the Oberlin College Student Conduct System.

**e.** In the case of a second violation, the committee is urged to adopt a sanction of suspension, or dismissal. In the case of a graduating senior, suspension may be substituted by refusing to allow the violator to participate in commencement exercises or withholding a degree.

**f.** If a degree is withheld or a student is suspended or dismissed as a result of being found responsible for an Honor Code violation, the sanction will be retained as part of the Honor System record held in the Office of the Dean of Students. In addition, the sanctions shall be recorded on the respondent's official transcript and reflect that the sanction is the result of an Honor Code violation for the term of the sanction. After the term of the sanction has been fulfilled, normally the suspension will be removed from the transcript; however, all suspensions will remain a part of the individual's Honor System record. As noted in 6.a. above, if a student who has been suspended withdraws from Oberlin College before the term of the suspension ends, then the notation of suspension shall remain on the individual's transcript permanently. The Office of the Dean of Students shall release this information with other academic or disciplinary information upon the violator's written request.

**g.** If, in response to a second offense, the Student Honor Committee imposes sanctions other than those urged in section 6.a. the sanctions will only be recorded on the individual's Honor System record. Such sanctions shall be released with other academic or disciplinary information upon the individual's written request for up to seven years following the notification of the findings of the original hearing panel.

## **VI. APPEAL**

---

**1.** Appeals may be granted for four reasons:

**a.** A mishandling of the case from a procedural standpoint

**b.** A sanction grossly disproportionate to the violation(s).

**c.** New information not reasonably available at the time of the hearing.

**d.** A decision made in the absence of a respondent who missed the original hearing because of a documented emergency that could not reasonably be reported prior to the scheduled hearing.

**2.** Only respondents have the right to appeal.

**3.** The respondent may appeal in writing to the Dean of the College or of the Conservatory within 5 (five) business days after the student has been notified of the decision via e-mail. The letter to the dean from the respondent must indicate which of the four reasons above is pertinent and give a clear rationale explaining

why the appeal should be granted. The letter must be submitted under the cover of the appeal request form mailed to the respondent with the final decision letter.

**NOTE:** The date that the letter is delivered to the student's e-mail will begin the 5 business-day appeal period. It is the responsibility of the respondent per college policy to check their personal e-mail on a regular basis during times when classes are in session. Recess periods do not delay the appeal submission deadline.

4. Upon receiving an appeal letter, the relevant dean has the authority to uphold, reduce, or increase the sanctions imposed. Prior to rendering a decision in response to an appeal, the relevant dean (or the relevant dean's designee) will review the case file and investigate to determine whether the appeal is substantive. The relevant dean shall give deference to the recommendations made by the Student Honor Committee and approved by the Faculty Honor Committee when responding to appeals. Deviations from prescribed procedures will not necessarily invalidate a decision or proceeding, unless the relevant dean determines that significant prejudice to the respondent may result from a decision to uphold the recommendation of the Student Honor Committee as approved by the Faculty Honor Committee. When the sanctions for an offense include suspension or dismissal, the sanctions may only be reduced when the relevant dean (following consultation with representatives of the hearing panel and the Faculty Honor Committee who recommended the original decision) determines the sanctions to be grossly disproportionate to the offense.

5. The relevant dean is urged to communicate the appeal decision to the respondent, complainant, the FHC, and the SHC within five business days, together with a brief rationale. Recess periods generally should not delay the response deadline.

6. The decision of the relevant dean is final.

## **VII. RECORDS**

---

Honor Code System records are maintained by the Dean of Students Office and consistent with the Oberlin College FERPA policy.

The Student Honor Committee Coordinator maintains a database including at least the names of respondents, charges, committee findings, and sanctions imposed that is accessible by the HS Liaison. The database will be used to help the Dean of Students (or the dean's designee) to complete dean certification forms and letters in response to a written request of a respondent. The database will also be used to help track academic integrity trends as well as the impact of preventive work by the SHC.

## **VIII. REVISIONS AND MODIFICATIONS**

---

1. The Honor System Charter may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the SHC and FHC, subject to the approval of the student governing body, the Student Life Committee, and the General Faculty (or the General Faculty Council).

2. The Honor System will be reviewed every year ending in 3, 6, and 9 using a process approved by the Dean of Students. The SHC is encouraged to do an informal review each year to determine whether minor amendments are needed.

## **APPENDIX A: SHC Hearing Procedures**

The hearing procedures are as following:

- (i)** At the start of the hearing, the case managers shall introduce the case and all people present shall state their names and roles.
- (ii)** All documents previously made available to the respondent, complainant, and panel members are brought before the entire group at this time.
- (iii)** If a complainant is present, they will present their position in the case. The case managers will introduce relevant information at their discretion.
- (iv)** The respondent will present their position in the case, and the case managers will introduce relevant information at their discretion.
- (v)** The panel will question the respondent, and then the complainant for further clarification as needed.
- (vi)** The respondent and complainant may ask questions of each other through the case managers. (If both are not present in the room together, questions may be presented for the panel to be asked when the other party is present. If the complainant is exempt from the hearing and the respondent has some questions prior to the hearing, then the respondent should contact the case managers with the questions at least three days prior to the hearing.)
- (vii)** Witnesses who have been approved by the case manager(s) are allowed to testify and to be questioned by the panel. The complainant and the respondent may question the witnesses through the case managers.
- (viii)** The case managers will inquire whether the respondent understands the events of the hearing that has just taken place and will allow the respondent a reasonable chance to voice any final questions, thoughts, or statements.

For good cause, any time limit in these procedures may be extended by the case manager.

### **DELIBERATIONS**

- a.** The panel will deliberate within two College business days after the hearing and render a decision.
- b.** Ideally, panelists will arrive at a decision by consensus. However, a majority of 2 of 3 voting SHC panel members are necessary to render a responsibility finding.