HONOR CODE FAQS

The effective functioning of the Oberlin College Honor system is the responsibility of the entire college community. As we enter a new semester, the Faculty Honor Committee would like to anticipate questions that may arise. This is not an exhaustive list of questions, and specific questions can be directed to SHC at ohonor@oberlin.edu.

WHAT SORTS OF BEHAVIOR/ACTIVITY CONSTITUTE HONOR CODE VIOLATIONS?

Honor Code violations include cheating, plagiarism (failure to acknowledge via appropriate citation the sources for written, visual, online, and other sorts of material), fabrication, multiple submissions (e.g., submitting the same or substantially the same assignment for two or more courses without prior approval of all instructors), and falsifying, forging, or destroying, hiding, improperly removing, or retaining library and other materials with the intent or denying access to others. The charter includes co-curricular work and exercises, as well as documents that affect the educational experience.

ARE THERE WAYS THAT I CAN PROMOTE ACADEMIC HONESTY IN MY CLASSROOM?

An “ounce of prevention!” As you prepare your syllabi for the coming semester, explain how the Honor Code applies to specific kinds of assignments in each of your courses.

Remind students that they are expected to write and sign the Honor Pledge on all academic exercises. The pledge reads: “I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”

Most importantly, during the semester, as students seek to familiarize themselves with your expectations related to papers, exams, performances, and other projects, please take the time in class to educate students about the need for academic honesty and how the Honor Code applies to their upcoming assignments in your course. Specifically, review the Honor Code and Pledge statements prior to any quiz or examination, and regularly review how these statements apply to specific assignments.

WHAT IF A STUDENT DOES NOT WRITE AND SIGN THE PLEDGE ON AN ASSIGNMENT?

If a student does not follow this procedure, the instructor has the option of withholding the grade until the student writes the Honor Pledge correctly; however, faculty members may not penalize students for this oversight.

IS MY SUSPICION OF A STUDENT NECESSARY EQUIVATED TO “Guilt”?*

The authority to determine whether a violation of the Honor Code has occurred rests with the members of the Student Honor Committee, who gather information, investigate, hear cases, and determine whether or not a student is in violation of the Honor Code and, if so, what sanctions are appropriate.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT THAT A STUDENT HAS VIOLATED THE HONOR CODE?

Professors suspecting a violation may consult with the departmental chair or a member of the Faculty Honor Committee to test the validity of the suspicion. If the suspicion seems valid, the professor should contact the student in an effort to seek clarifying information. If, after the conversation, the faculty member continues to believe there is a potential violation, the faculty member is urged to ask the student to self-report within two business days. The faculty member should allow two business days for the student to self-report, then the faculty member must submit the online reporting form found at https://www.oberlin.edu/dean-of-students/student-conduct/academic-integrity.

SHOULD I WAIT TO GRADE THE ASSIGNMENT/STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN THE OVERALL COURSE UNTIL THE CASE IS RESOLVED?

The resolution of an honor code case and the faculty member’s evaluation of a student’s work are independent of one another. The faculty member is free to:

- Accept (or not) the assignment in question;
- Allow (or not) the possibility of resubmission of the assignment done in an appropriate manner; and
- Assign the grade for the assignment in question.

IF IT IS A MINOR INFRACTION, MAY I SETTLE IT WITHOUT REPORTING THE INCIDENT TO THE STUDENT HONOR COMMITTEE?

No, each suspected violation of the Honor Code must be reported to the Student Honor Committee; however there is an option to request an informal resolution. The request is subject to the review of the Student Honor Committee. For more detail, refer to https://www.oberlin.edu/dean-of-students/student-conduct/academic-integrity or contact the SHC at ohonor@oberlin.edu or the Honor System Liaison at tjulian@oberlin.edu

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RESOLVE A CASE?

Depending on the time of the semester or academic year that a case is reported, the complexity of the case, the number and availability of the people involved, and the caseload for SHC, cases may take up to a semester to be resolved. Some exceptional cases have taken longer. It is the aim of the SHC to handle cases as expeditiously as possible. If a professor requests the
informal resolution option and the option is granted by the Student Honor Committee, the time required to resolve the case is likely to be shorter than typical.

Once the case is resolved, both the professor and student will receive notice via e-mail.

For details about informal resolution, refer to https://www.oberlin.edu/dean-of-students/student-conduct/academic-integrity or contact the SHC at ohonor@oberlin.edu or contact the honor system liaison at tjulian@oberlin.edu.