

Academic Honor Board

Statement of Policies and Procedures

Instructions for reporting an alleged violation of the Academic Honor Code

I. Academic Rights and Responsibilities

Mount Holyoke College is a community of students, faculty, staff, and administrators committed to free inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge in the tradition of the liberal arts. The decision to join this academic community requires acceptance of special rights and responsibilities that are essential for its effective functioning and the realization of its mission. All members of the community share the responsibility to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Failure to accept and act on this responsibility threatens the rights of the rest of the community by undermining the trust upon which the community is built.

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators assume a commitment to the academic community that supports teaching and learning in an open environment based on mutual trust, respect, and concern. All members of the community have the right to careful and constructive analysis of their work, and they have the responsibility to provide a serious response to the work of others.

Each member of the academic community has the right to benefit from its collective knowledge and resources as well as the responsibility to contribute to them. Plagiarism or other forms of scholarly misconduct can have no purpose or place in the academic life of the College. Each student is responsible for observing established procedures in the preparation of assignments, the writing of papers and examinations, and for submitting only original work.

Each instructor is responsible for making clear what procedures are acceptable when completing work for a course and for guiding students in those methods and standards of research relevant to the particular discipline. Instructors and students share the responsibility to observe the procedures established by the College and publicized in official announcements, such as the procedures for preparing and writing final examinations.

A carefully maintained library collection is central to any academic institution. The collection is built over a long period of time and must be preserved for the benefit of future students and faculty members as well as for those who currently use the collection. The open stacks and reserve book privileges of the library require that all members of the community accept responsibility for the correct use of library materials and for following the established borrowing procedures. Students should be aware that reserved and limited materials must be shared; instructors should allow for sufficient time and adequate copies when assigning work that relies on such materials.

II. The Honor Code

A. The Pledge

All new students take the Honor Code pledge during Orientation. Upon matriculation, students affirm their intention to abide by the Honor Code: “I will honor myself, my fellow students, and Mount Holyoke College by acting responsibly, honestly, and respectfully in both my words and deeds.” The Honor Code applies to both the academic and social aspects of student life. It forms the foundation of the Mount Holyoke community. [“The Proper Use of Sources Tutorial”](#) provides information on different forms of academic dishonesty and links to helpful websites for further information.

International students, or students who have attended schools abroad, may not be familiar with the concept of an Academic Honor Code as defined within a U.S. context. These students should also consult the special publication prepared by the McCulloch Center for Global Initiatives titled [“Academic Responsibility at Mount Holyoke College: What International Students Should Know.”](#)

B. Violations of the Honor Code

The expectation of students is to always conduct themselves with academic integrity:

- Course materials are part of the intellectual property of the faculty instructors and cannot be distributed, shared, or sold (for monetary gain or access to goods or services) without the expressed consent of the faculty instructor.
- Students may not purchase or acquire materials for use in a course or other academic function
- Students should not access course materials (online or in hard copy) associated with current or previous versions of a MHC course without explicit permission from the faculty instructor. If permission is not explicitly provided, accessing material from previous course offerings is prohibited.

Infractions of academic regulations include but are not limited to:

- all forms of plagiarism;
- the unauthorized or unacknowledged use of material that is not one’s own;
- cheating in any form in preparing assignments (including homework, essays, or take-home exams), in completing in-class work (including quizzes or tests), or in taking a final examination;
- theft, mutilation, and unlawful or improper use of library materials;
- unlawful or improper use of digital or online materials (e.g., Moodle).

Violations of academic responsibility in preparing coursework include, but are not limited to:

- using quotes without appropriate quotation marks and citation;
- paraphrasing from a source without appropriate citation;
- using unacknowledged or unauthorized outside sources including those of a fellow student or colleague;
- misrepresenting the actual source from which material is cited;

- failing to acknowledge a coauthor;
- using a purchased term paper to complete any portion of an assignment;
- submitting the same or substantially similar papers in two courses without prior permission and proper acknowledgment;
- submitting in whole or in part the work of another student or author as one's own;
- falsifying data.

Violations of academic responsibility related to final examinations include but are not limited to:

- using notes, books, or other sources during examinations without prior approval by the instructor;
- receiving help from or giving help to another student during an examination;
- revealing the content of an examination before all students have completed it;
- exceeding the allotted time for an examination without prior authorization;
- failing to follow examination procedures as published by the registrar and printed on the final examination envelopes.

Violations of academic responsibility in using the library include, but are not limited to:

- removing a book from the library without properly checking it out;
- keeping a reserve book or equipment beyond the specified time limit;
- marking, defacing, or destroying library materials.

Violations of academic responsibility in using digital or online resources include, but are not limited to:

- using unauthorized or unacknowledged software or online materials;
- plagiarizing in any of its forms.

III. The Academic Honor Board

A. Purpose

The Academic Honor Board (hereafter referred to as the AHB) reviews and adjudicates all alleged academic violations of the Honor Code. The AHB ensures consistent interpretation of the Honor Code, swift and impartial review of alleged infractions, and fair and equitable sanctions for confirmed violations. The AHB also serves as a resource for students, faculty, and administrators when questions concerning the interpretation of the Academic Honor Code arise, regardless of whether an infraction is believed to have occurred. The existence of the AHB serves as an ongoing reminder of Mount Holyoke College's commitment to academic integrity and the enforcement of its academic principles. The AHB is distinct in both composition and purpose from the Honor Code Council, which is a student disciplinary board tasked with reviewing alleged violations of the Honor Code relating to social conduct.

B. Membership and Tenure

1. The Dean of Studies *ex officio*, who shall serve as chair of the AHB.

2. Three additional faculty members appointed by the Dean of Faculty, one each from the three academic divisions of the College (humanities, science and mathematics, and social sciences).
3. One student recommended by the Honor Code Council and appointed by the Dean of Studies.
4. The three faculty members shall serve staggered three-year terms, with at least two continuing members each academic year. The student may serve until graduation.

C. Responsibilities

1. Interpret the Honor Code in an advisory capacity for students, faculty, staff, and administrators seeking clarification.
2. Establish and publicize clear procedures for adjudicating alleged violations of the Honor Code.
3. Receive all complaints concerning alleged academic violations of the Honor Code.
4. Review promptly all reported complaints, ensuring that a fair, consistent, and confidential process is followed.
5. Recommend or decide on appropriate sanctions when the AHB determines that a violation of the Honor Code has occurred. No disciplinary action may be taken by a faculty or staff member concerning an alleged violation without *prior* consultation with the AHB.
6. Present an annual report to the faculty summarizing all cases heard and their resolution. The names of the parties involved in the cases shall be omitted to protect confidentiality.

IV. Process for Adjudicating Complaints

A. Filing a Complaint

Any community member who suspects a violation of the Academic Honor Code should promptly submit a report to the AHB using the [online form](#). Reports should contain a complete description of the incident and the identity of the alleged violator(s). Supporting material, if available, should be submitted to the Dean of Studies.

B. Notification of Charges

1. The AHB will provide a written notification to the student accused of violating the Academic Honor Code (hereafter the “respondent”). The notification will specify the alleged violation and the identity of the person filing the complaint (hereafter the “complainant”). The student must respond in writing to the charge within the time frame given in the notification.
2. The College’s primary means of communicating with students is through their Mount Holyoke email accounts; students are responsible for reading and responding to all official emails sent by the College.

C. Investigation of Charges

1. The AHB will review the complaint and any supporting material within two weeks and determine if sufficient grounds exist for adjudication.

2. If the Board determines there is insufficient evidence, the charges will be dismissed and the complainant and respondent will be so notified.
3. If the Board determines there is sufficient evidence, the Dean of Studies will communicate with the complainant and respondent and proceed as follows:
 - a. If the respondent accepts responsibility for the alleged violation and it is a first violation, the AHB will offer the option of an individual meeting with the Dean of Studies or a hearing before the full Academic Honor Board to finalize adjudication.
 - b. If the respondent denies the alleged violation or if it is a repeat violation, the Dean of Studies will schedule a hearing with the full Academic Honor Board.

D. Procedure during the Hearing

1. Hearings require the presence of the Dean of Studies, who serves as chairperson, at least two other members of the AHB, and the accused student. The respondent may request the presence of the appropriate class dean or academic advisor, but this person may speak only with the respondent during the hearing. Additionally, the AHB may require the complainant and/or additional witnesses to appear at the hearing.
2. The chair will summarize the alleged Academic Honor Code violation.
3. The respondent will respond to the allegations.
4. The complainant and/or witnesses (if present) will offer their account of the incident.
5. The respondent may offer a rebuttal to the statements of the complainant and/or witnesses.
6. AHB members may question the respondent, the complainant, and/or any witnesses.
7. The complainant and/or witnesses will have the opportunity to make final statements.
8. The respondent will have the opportunity to make a final statement.

E. Resolution of Complaints

1. The AHB shall meet in closed session immediately after the end of the hearing to deliberate and render its decision.
2. The Dean of Studies shall communicate the AHB's decision in writing to both the respondent and the complainant. The decision shall be communicated within two business days from the conclusion of the hearing.
3. The AHB will resolve the complaint in one of the following three ways:
 - a. **No violation** - A decision that the respondent did not violate the Honor Code.
 - b. **Warning** - A decision that the preponderance of evidence does not clearly confirm a violation but the facts of the case raise sufficient concern.
 - c. **Violation** - A decision that the accused student did violate the Honor Code as charged and is subject to sanctions.

F. Sanctions

1. Violations of the Honor Code are among the most serious offenses that a student may commit at Mount Holyoke College. The AHB shall invoke penalties at its discretion, up to and including suspension or dismissal from the College. The number and nature of violations shall be taken into account in the deliberations of the AHB.
2. If a complaint is filed with the AHB involves a student's work is associated with a course, the student may not take any action(s), for example, withdraw from a course or elect the ungraded option until the complaint is fully adjudicated.
3. **For first violations:** the AHB will consult with the faculty member, when course related, in whose class the violation occurred concerning the choice of sanction, but the final decision as to which option is selected rests with the faculty member. The AHB will recommend one of the following sanctions depending on the nature and level of the first violation. In circumstances that transcend the boundaries of the course, the AHB will retain the right to make the appropriate sanction.
 - a. An F (failing grade) for the specific exam, paper, or other assignment; the student may elect to withdraw from the course by the appropriate deadline, and thus lose credit for the course.
 - b. Expulsion from the course with a W (withdrawal) recorded on the student's transcript.
 - c. Expulsion from the course with an F (failing grade) recorded on the student's transcript.
 - d. In circumstances when a student's behavior constitutes a threat to the integrity or reputation of the College or community members the AHB may determine that a required leave (suspension) or required withdrawal from the institution is appropriate.
4. **For subsequent violations:** the AHB will consult with the faculty member in whose class the most recent violation occurred, but the final decision regarding sanctions rests with the AHB. The sanctions that the AHB may impose include:
 - a. An F (failing grade) in the course with no opportunity to withdraw from the course or to elect the ungraded option.
 - b. Suspension from the College.
 - c. Required withdrawal from the College.
5. If a complaint submitted involves behavior that is not related to a student's work in a course, the AHB will render the final decision and impose sanctions, if appropriate.

G. Appeals

1. Appeals of AHB decisions must be addressed in writing to the Office of the Dean of Faculty within five business days of the issuance of the AHB decision.
2. The letter must state one or both of the following grounds for the appeal:
 - a. Violation of fair process.
 - b. Availability of new evidence not presented at the hearing.

3. Sanctions imposed by the AHB will not be implemented until after the appeal is resolved.
4. The Office of the Dean of Faculty will notify the student in writing of the outcome of the appeal. If the appeal is denied, the sanctions imposed by the AHB will be implemented, and the College will consider the case closed.

V. Principles Underlying the Adjudication Process

A. Policies Governing the AHB

1. The AHB shall conduct all business with utmost regard for ensuring fairness at every stage of the adjudication process.
2. Members of the AHB who feel they have a conflict of interest involving a case shall recuse themselves.
3. The AHB may require the cooperation of any member of the Mount Holyoke community in furnishing testimony or evidence directly related to the adjudication of a case.
4. Ordinarily, the AHB shall hear a case within two weeks of receiving a complaint. Complaints received when the AHB cannot convene a majority of its members along with the respondent (for example, during winter or summer break) may be held in abeyance until such time as the AHB may be able to convene a majority of its members along with the respondent, either on campus or by videoconference.
5. If the respondent fails to appear for a scheduled hearing without prior notification, the AHB may proceed with the available information and render a decision. The College will not necessarily drop charges of misconduct because an accused student leaves the College for any reason.
6. Hearings will be held in closed session.
7. Hearings will be recorded. Recordings will be used by the AHB during its deliberations and by the Office of the Dean of Faculty should an appeal be filed. The recordings will normally be destroyed after a decision is rendered or the appeal process is complete. If the AHB decides to archive recordings from a specific case, the recordings cannot be held past the student's enrollment at Mount Holyoke College.
8. The AHB will render decisions based on the standard of "fair preponderance." That is, in cases where the respondent denies violating the Honor Code and where no conclusive evidence of a violation is present, the AHB should decide—based on the available evidence and testimony—if it is more likely than not that the alleged violation occurred.
9. The Dean of Studies will maintain a written summary of all hearings, which will be included with the respective case file. The summaries will be compiled into an annual report to the faculty in which all names shall be redacted. Case files will be

archived for seven years following a student's graduation or withdrawal from Mount Holyoke College and destroyed thereafter

10. All material in the case file is to be treated as confidential and may be shared with individual faculty and staff members only on a strict need-to-know basis as determined by the AHB.
11. Disciplinary action taken against a student ***beyond the first violation*** may be reported to outside institutions and agencies.

B. Rights of Students Charged with Honor Code Violations

1. Written and detailed notification of charges, including the identity of the complainant.
2. Presumption of innocence until found in violation by the AHB.
3. Resolution of charges according to established, announced, and published AHB policies and procedures.
4. At least seventy-two hours' notice of the time and place of a hearing, and the right to ask for an extension under extreme circumstances.
5. Opportunity to review in full the report of the alleged violation and any supporting material.
6. Assistance before, during, and after the hearing from the appropriate class dean or faculty advisor.
7. Right to produce supporting evidence or witnesses.
8. Right to appeal the AHB ruling to the Office of the Dean of Faculty.
9. Written notification of the results of hearings and appeals.
10. Confidentiality regarding the outcome of the hearing and any subsequent appeal. This right of confidentiality is qualified only by the complainant's right to be informed of the AHB's ruling on whether a violation did or did not occur, but not necessarily the sanctions imposed, if any and qualifications specified in **Section V: A. Policies Governing the AHB** above.