

Honor Code Rationale

Concordia University Chicago

I. Concordia University Chicago Honor Code History and Rationale

The Faculty Senate at Concordia University Chicago moved to adopt an honor code at this institution because it lacked a uniform and functioning procedure for dealing with academic dishonesty. This had become an increasing concern and therefore demanded a uniform policy for the administration, faculty, and students to understand and follow. Yet an initial discussion about a traditional, punitive process seemed inadequate in relationship to the Concordia University Mission Statement:

“As a distinctive, comprehensive university of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and based in the liberal arts, Concordia University equips men and women to serve and lead with integrity, creativity, competence, and compassion in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world”

Thus, the faculty turned to the mission statement for guidance and to explain why an honor code made sense for this university. The mission statement’s opening sentence states that Concordia “equips men and women to serve and lead with integrity.” This implies more than setting rules and expecting everyone to follow them; rather, in developing the whole person, each individual and the people as a whole reflect upon and care about their own personal moral and ethical behavior, something fundamental to the workings of an honor code. The larger explanation that explains the individual components of the mission statement more directly asserts that “Concordia places a major emphasis on sound moral character built upon Christian principles” and continues to explain that the university “approaches its students holistically.” Fostering moral character must go beyond encouraging students to “respond to the needs of others” and work in a “diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world.” The university must first instill in students an understanding of their own ethical and moral behavior. An honor code that applies to their academic work serves in this capacity.

Indeed, the development of the entire student as an ethical and moral citizen of the world includes the notion of academic integrity and personal responsibility. An honor code articulates concretely the level of honor and integrity expected of all scholars. It instills such personal guidelines in every member of the community. It supports the development of a Christian community in which people come together for a variety of reasons but ultimately share responsibility for their fates.

Occasionally individuals violate this trust and integrity. Any act of academic dishonesty is a serious offence in a university community. It takes unfair advantage of other students—who work within the expectations of the Honor Code—and of their instructors—who trust their work. Any violation of the Honor Code is therefore taken seriously as a breach of honor with the entire community and not a private matter between student and instructor.

In short, Concordia University Chicago has implemented an honor code to emphasize further the importance of moral and ethical decision making in every aspect of a person’s life.

II. The Concordia University Chicago Honor Code

- A. Honor Pledge: “As a student of Concordia University Chicago and a member of the larger society, I pledge to uphold an academic honor code that supports serving and leading with strong personal integrity. Specifically this includes not cheating or using inappropriate or dishonest means to complete anything I do for a grade, program, or graduation requirement. This also includes giving unauthorized assistance to, or participating in inappropriate collaboration with, others. I understand that this is a privilege and it is my responsibility to uphold actively this honor system. Furthermore, this pledge signifies that I will treat others with utmost respect within the classroom and on campus as I expect others to treat me.”
- B. Every student will sign this honor pledge before admission to Concordia University Chicago.
- C. Every syllabus should include the statement, “In accordance with the honor code that you have signed, turning in any piece of work with your name on it constitutes your pledge that you have not given or received any unauthorized aid.”
- D. Continued participation in a program also affirms a student’s upholding of the pledge in all non-course related requirements of the program.
- E. Instructors will define for the students what constitutes unauthorized aid in regard to each class. However, it is the responsibility of each student, when in doubt, to ask the instructor what is or is not authorized aid.

III. Categories of Unauthorized Aid

Though impossible to outline all forms of unauthorized aid, the following definitions serve as a general guide, so that all in this community understand what is expected in a community of scholars. Honor Code violations may be deliberate or unintentional. It is understood, however, that each class is different and each instructor will delineate what constitutes authorized aid for each class.

Cheating: cheating includes, but is not limited to, the surreptitious use of prepared answers, notes, or other aids on exams that are not explicitly sanctioned by the instructor; the copying of the work of others with or without their knowledge; any unauthorized collaboration on assignments; ghost-written assignments, exams, or comparable projects; the obtaining of testing materials in advance not explicitly sanctioned by the instructor; the unauthorized, after-the-fact revising of assignments or exam responses; the submission of false, inaccurate or deceptive information; collection of data from human subjects without appropriate approval of the CUC Institutional Review Board; the unsanctioned use of the same materials to satisfy requirements in more than one course; and any scheme or device to obtain an unfair advantage over other students acting in accordance with the specified policies and instructions for any assignment.

Plagiarism: plagiarism is a special form of cheating – the simultaneous theft and cover-up of intellectual property. There are many reasons why student scholars should give credit to the work of others: 1) it shows their gratitude to the efforts of others before them; 2) it provides readers with the opportunity to consult the source to further their own understanding and

inquiry into the subject matter; 3) it demonstrates that the author has conscientiously examined the views of others in the field. The failure of a student to cite explicitly the source or sources of words, images, and ideas used in any formal work is a breach of integrity. Plagiarism, including inadequate paraphrasing, can be willful or careless; certainly the more deliberate and knowing the offense, the greater is its seriousness. Plagiarism in all cases disregards the usual method of quotation and citation prescribed in the particular course or generally used in the relevant discipline.

Tampering with Records: a serious form of academic misconduct is any attempt to create, change, or delete records bearing on a student's course assessment or overall academic performance, whether it be altering written remarks on the evaluation of individual academic tasks, the altering of academic records in the possession of the university faculty, the altering of records connected to university internships, service learning hours, academic transcripts, and the altering—or entire creation—of letters of recommendation. All media in which records are kept are equally protected. It also includes falsifying grades and/or signatures on academic progress reports and documents.

Intimidation: in all academic settings, students ought to treat one another as colleagues. An attempt to pressure other students to engage in unethical behavior or to impede their academic progress is academic misconduct. Any attempt to influence university faculty, staff members, or supervisors of internships to engage in unethical behavior or to gain an unfair advantage or dishonest evaluation is likewise academic misconduct.

IV. Honor Code Council Membership

A. Director of the Honor Code System: the Director administers all aspects of the honor code procedures.

1. The Director shall be a staff member appointed by the President.
2. Responsibilities include administering all honor code procedures, records, promotion, education, and personnel. He/she shall also develop the procedures and bylaws of the Honor System and submit this and any changes to Faculty Senate for approval.

B. Undergraduate Honor Council Membership

1. Student Membership: 5-12 undergraduate students
2. Qualifications
 - a. The student must have completed two semesters at Concordia University Chicago.
 - b. The student must be in good standing at all times
3. Application Procedures
 - a. A faculty recommendation is needed for a student to apply to the council. This recommendation can come at the initiation of a faculty member or

by a student's request. A second letter of recommendation is required from someone who can attest to the integrity of the applicant. Students must also submit the application form.

- b. The student must interview with the honor code director, who will determine which students to appoint.

4. Responsibilities

- a. To serve as a role model to the whole community, to participate in the training program, to educate the community, to serve on honor code panels, and assist the director in other capacities as requested.
- b. An appointment is valid and lasts until graduation, as long as the student remains in good academic standing, serves responsibly, and is never found guilty of an honor code violation.

C. Faculty membership

1. All Concordia University Chicago full-time faculty members are included.

2. Responsibilities

- a. To serve on investigative teams, honor code panels and appeals. Faculty members are selected by the Director on a rotating, case-by-case basis.
- b. University College student matters: all full-time Concordia University Chicago faculty members and adjunct instructors teaching in University College as appointed by the GIP Dean.
- c. Graduate student matters: full-time Concordia University Chicago faculty members with graduate faculty status.

V. Honor Code Judicial Protocol

A. Step One: When an infraction is suspected.

1. Student response:

- a. If a student suspects that another student is preparing to or in the process of some form of academic dishonesty, he/she should confront that student and in some way encourage the student to do the work honestly and with integrity.
- b. If an act of academic dishonesty comes to the awareness of a student, she/he may report the incident. Instead, she/he may also approach the instructor of the course or the Director of the Honor System to convey information about suspected academic dishonesty confidentially (and only the instructor, the Director of the Honor System, and the members of the Honor Council that work on the incident need to know the identity

of the student who reports the incident). The faculty member, then, may report the allegation.

2. Faculty Response

- a. If a faculty member determines that a deliberate and/or deceitful act of academic dishonesty occurred which requires an academic sanction, it must be reported to the Director of the Honor System.
- b. If a faculty member determines that an inadvertent error was made by a student that does not require an academic sanction, the instructor can use the incident as a learning experience. However, it is required that the incident be reported as to provide an opportunity for an intervention by the Honor Code Director with the student and to enable tracking.

If a faculty member suspects that a violation of the honor code may have occurred, the instructor shall address the allegation, present the findings and discuss the issue with the student.

B. Step Two: Violation Report Procedure

1. If a violation of the honor code is confirmed and uncontested by the student, and the student is in agreement with the consequence, the instructor must levy the appropriate academic penalty and immediately report the incident and the penalty levied, if any, to the Director of the Honor System.
2. If the student contests the allegation and/or disagrees with the consequence, the Honor Code Director will discuss the allegation with both the student(s) and professor to determine if the case will proceed to Step Three of the process.
3. If the student has had a prior Honor Code violation(s), The Director shall take this to the Honor Council for determination of appropriate further sanctions.

The Director of the Honor Code System will notify the student of the receipt of a violation report within 48 hours of its receipt. Students who contest the allegation and/or disagree with the consequence must respond to the Director within 14 days of notification. Students and faculty should expect to know if a hearing will be held within 30 days of initial notification.

Once the allegation is reported to the Director of the Honor System for handling by the Honor Council, a letter and/or email is sent from the Director of the Honor System notifying the student of the allegation(s) as well as the procedure and the rights of the student. The student must respond to this letter within 14 calendar days of the date of the letter. If the student admits to the honor code violation, this case proceeds to step four. If the student contests the allegation, the director will determine if the case should proceed to step three or be dismissed.

Violations must be reported no later than 30 days past the end of the course or, in the event of an incomplete grade, no later than 30 days after the date in which the incomplete grade was removed.

C. Step Three: Investigation of an Alleged Violation

The Director will determine if further investigation should take place. In addition to the investigation by the Director, he/she may choose to appoint an investigative team. The investigative team may include up to 3 faculty members, including at least one member from the department in which the course is housed. The role of the investigative team is to interview the incident reporter, the accused student(s), pertinent instructors, and other people as appropriate; gather other information; and submit a written report to the director.

1. If the investigative team determines that there is not sufficient evidence, the director drops the case, all records are shredded, and the student is notified in writing.
2. If there is sufficient evidence of an honor code violation, the director proceeds with the case to step four.

D. Step Four: Honor Code Panel Membership and Procedure

1. Undergraduate Honor Panel Membership: the director appoints a panel which may include one member of the investigative team who attends the hearing as a non-voting member, but must include 3 honor council students and 2 faculty members as voting members.
2. University College and Graduate Honor Panel Membership: the director appoints a panel which may include one member of the investigative team who attends the hearing as a non-voting member, but must include three other faculty members from the appropriate pool as voting members.
3. The accused student is encouraged to attend the hearing and may opt to bring his or her own advocate. This advocate can be a faculty or staff member or another student but may not be of familial relation.
4. The professor is encouraged to attend the hearing and may opt to bring his or her own advocate. This advocate can be another faculty member or their department chair. In the professor's absence, the professor may opt to substitute his/her own advocate.
5. The accuser and reporter are also encouraged to attend the hearing.
6. At the hearing, the Honor Code Panel reviews all documents and hears from the appropriate individuals. The director informs the panel of any documented history of academic misconduct by the student and precedents for punishment or procedure that have been set in cases that are similar. The Council deliberates in private with the director and determines the appropriate consequence. If guilt is found, the Council then determines the appropriate consequence. If guilt is not found, the case is dropped and all records shredded and expunged.
7. The director notifies the student in writing of the panel's decision and applied consequences, if any, within 48 hours. All panel decisions are binding to all parties. No Honor Code Council hearings will be held when classes are not in session (i.e. Christmas break and the break in August between the summer session and the start of the fall semester.)

VI. Honor Code Violation Consequence Recommendations

Consequences can range from a formal warning and reprimand to expulsion from the university. Normal consequences should be dealt with based on the number of previous offenses and on the following guideline:

First Offense: Failure of that assignment on which the violation took place.

Second Offense: Failure in the course in which the violation took place.

Third Offense: Failure in the course and suspension from Concordia University.

Fourth Offense: Failure in the course and expulsion from Concordia University.

Should the offense concern something other than an assignment or test, the consequences will be of an equivalent nature determined by the panel.

If the offense is of sufficient seriousness, the panel may enforce a harsher consequence than the guidelines suggest, ranging from moving to the next level of consequence to expulsion. Similarly, if there are mitigating circumstances and the offense appears to be minor and easily correctable, then the consequence could be less than the proscribed normal sanction. Degree revocation is also possible.

VII. Appeals

Only the student or the professor who filed the violation report may appeal a decision clearly based on the two reasons below. All appeals should be sent to the attention of the Director of the Honor Code System.

Appeals may be granted for the following reasons:

- Mishandling of the case from a procedural standpoint.
- New evidence not reasonably available at the time of the hearing.

Non-attendance at a hearing and/or disagreement with the outcome are not valid reasons for appeals.

Appeal Procedure

- A. A written appeal may be made to the Director of the Honor System within thirty days of the receipt of the verdict notification letter for a procedural error and within 90 days of the receipt of the verdict notification letter because of new evidence.
- B. If the student is currently enrolled and wishes to appeal an expulsion, suspension, or a grading consequence that is time-sensitive (e.g. involving a prerequisite course), the student must notify the Director of the Honor Code System of the intent to appeal within 72 hours of the receipt of verdict notification. This ‘intent to appeal’ should simply inform the Director that a formal appeal will be filed. The formal appeal must be in writing and must be received within 48 hours of receipt of the “intent to appeal” letter. If the student does not contact the Director within 72 hours

of verdict notification of their intent to appeal, or an appeal is not received within the time allotted, the Director will then initiate the withdrawal/removal process.

- C. After the appeal is received, and if the Director of the Honor System determines that the appeal is warranted, he/she appoints a new committee to reassess the offense or determines an appropriate resolution. If he/she cannot be objective regarding the appeal, and/or the appeal was filed due to mishandling by the Director, it will be reviewed by the Sr. Vice President for Academics.
- D. Only one appeal may be made for each violation.

VIII. Recording and Sharing Information Concerning Instances of Academic Dishonesty

- A. The honor code director shall keep the official records concerning the disposition of specific instances of academic dishonesty.
 - 1. The file shall consist of forms and letters documenting the substantiated findings of academic dishonesty, the findings of the panel, and the penalty.
 - 2. It will not be an archive of evidence.
 - 3. No record of unsubstantiated allegations shall be kept.
 - 4. The files shall not be public, and they shall be purged upon the graduation of the student or seven years after the termination of active student status of the individual(s) involved, whichever happens first.
- B. Academic accountability
 - 1. The honor code director will submit to the faculty and student body a yearly written statistical summary of documented findings of culpability by category drawn from the reports of incidents and decisions of the Honor Council. The report will not include student names to protect the privacy rights in accordance with FERPA regulations.
 - 2. The honor code director shall develop a policy outlining the circumstances, if any, under which individual faculty members may view student files as specified in a written request.
 - 3. Appropriate bodies in the university that must judge the fitness of a student's character for legitimate academic or employment purposes may request in writing to view, if any, incidents of academic dishonesty as held by the honor code director. Such appropriate bodies include Dean of Students, Assistant Dean of Residence Life, Synodical Placement, the Care and Concern Committee of the College of Education, the Certification Officer of the College of Education, and those who interview and recommend seminary candidates.