

# Honor Court Faculty Handbook Agnes Scott College 2012

Dear members of the faculty,

Due to the large number of new faculty, common misconceptions about the Honor Court case process, and an increased number of honor code violations the Honor Court, in conjunction with the offices of the Dean of Students and the Dean of the College, has revised this handbook to clarify the honor code and the purpose of the Honor Court. This handbook is essentially a condensed version of the Student Handbook and should be used as a guide for general honor code procedures. Please refer to the Student Handbook or consult with a member of Honor Court or the Dean of Students for more specific information. We hope that this handbook proves helpful.

We would also like to clarify your role in upholding the honor code; we realize that if the honor code is to be upheld, there must be a complete and binding partnership between student and professor. Therefore, we have written a faculty handbook, which focuses specifically on the Honor Code as it pertains to faculty members. We hope that this handbook will help you understand the importance of your role in maintaining the honor code.

Each year the Honor Court aims to teach all new students about the honor code and to instill in them a respect for the honor code as a way of life at Agnes Scott College. As you may know, the Honor Court holds orientation sessions and a special ceremony for First-years, during which they sign the Honor Pledge. During these sessions members of the Honor Court, accompanied by a representative of the office of the Dean of Students, explain the many facets of the Honor Code to new students by carefully and thoroughly reviewing the ASC Student Handbook.

The Honor Court typically faces the majority of honor code violations during midterms and the end-of-semester exam period. Therefore, we request that you remind your students of the importance of the honor code as these times approach. The simple act of pledging her work serves as a vital reminder to a student of her agreement to follow the code. Providing your students with specific instructions as to how they should complete a test or paper is also a way to help students avoid violations. During the exam period there are specific exam regulations students must follow. The most pertinent is that students are not permitted to carry purses, backpacks, cellular phones, and unauthorized textbooks into Buttrick. Failure to adhere to exam regulations is considered a violation of the honor code and will result in an official *Warning File*. We would appreciate your reminding your students of such rules. For more information refer to the exam regulations e-mail sent out to the campus each semester by Dean Cannady.

We appreciate the time you devote to reading and understanding this handbook and especially your support of the Honor Code. Furthermore, we welcome any input as to how we can help increase and clarify the benefits of the Honor Code for both students and faculty. Please feel free to contact any member of the Honor Court to make suggestions or ask questions.

Sincerely,

Honor Court

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### **Dual Responsibility**

This concept is central to the Honor Code at Agnes Scott. Dual responsibility purports the following two things: personal responsibility and responsibility to the community. Personal responsibility extends to faculty and staff and the student body. The idea is simple; we are all responsible for honorable and respectful behavior. If a student is suspected of an honor court violation she should be given the opportunity to take personal responsibility for her actions. If she refuses to take personal responsibility then the person who witnessed her possible violation has a responsibility to the community to report the violation to the Honor Court. The Honor Code only works if everyone participates by using dual responsibility.

### **Case Overview**

The procedures for Honor Court cases can be confusing and reading the student handbook can be very tedious. Below is an overview of case procedures involving a violation reported by a faculty member. It is not an exhaustive representation of the handbook but a summary. Special circumstances may require you to reference the handbook or contact Honor Court to answer any questions.

#### Case Procedure:

1. Observation of possible violation by member of Agnes Scott Community. (This may include, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, forging data, reusing previously submitted papers without instructor permission, or personal harassment or discrimination by the student.)
2. Faculty notifies the student that they believe the student has violated the honor code and tells her (him) that she (he) has forty-eight hours to turn herself (himself) in to the president of Honor Court or the Dean of Students. (*A student turning herself in is not admitting guilt but acknowledging the charge and showing her willingness to cooperate with the court procedures.*)

3. After forty-eight hours the faculty member turns the accused student in to the President of Honor Court or the Dean of Students by phone or e-mail.
4. The President will appoint an advocate and investigator for the student. The investigator gathers evidence and the advocate assists the investigator and helps the student prepare for her hearing. The faculty member will also be contacted by the vice president of Honor Court who will act as the faculty member's advocate.
5. Advocate and investigator are both present at the meetings with the interviewees. They interview the accused student, the faculty member, any witness to the event, and anyone else who may have pertinent information for the case.
6. Advocate and investigator report back to the President who in consultation with the Dean of Students decides whether or not a case is warranted. (A case is warranted once enough evidence has been collected to suggest that the student violated the honor code.)
7. The President gives the student written (or e-mailed) copy of the charges and the student has at least 72 hours to prepare her case including giving the president names of character witnesses she would like to call.
8. The President will set a time for the case to convene. The investigator briefs the court on the facts of the case and the advocate accompanies the student into the court room. Once the court has heard all the evidence the advocate, investigator, and student will leave and the remainder of the court will deliberate. The faculty member who has reported the violation is not required to appear before the court but has the right to do so if they feel it is necessary.
9. A quorum of eight Honor Court members is required to hear a case. The president helps make up the quorum but only votes in the case of a tie. The president is primarily there to guide deliberations and make sure all members' opinions concerning the case are heard.
10. The court will discuss the case and vote the accused student responsible or not responsible. If she (he) is found responsible then the court will deliberate and vote on sanctions. Sanctions of disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal are recommended to the Judicial Review Committee for approval, disapproval, and modification.

### **Faculty's Relationship with the Honor Court**

Honor Court often works very closely with faculty members and it is important to emphasize the importance of this relationship. The Honor Court has been put into place to support the Honor Code by investigating possible infractions and imposing appropriate sanctions when a student is found responsible. Each faculty member who reports a case will be assigned an Honor Court advocate of their own. This advocate will be the Vice President of Honor Court and she will be responsible for explaining the case process to the faculty member and answering any questions he or she may have. This advocate role was designed to keep faculty updated as the case proceeds and dispel any confusion surrounding the case. There are also a number of ways that faculty can aid the Honor Court as they perform their duties. Here are some ways that faculty can facilitate the case process and possibly even prevent cases:

1. **Keep all information regarding a case confidential.** It is never appropriate to notify a supervisor or fellow colleague about a possible Honor Court violation. If a student is found not responsible for an alleged violation, then disclosing information to other faculty members may create unwanted bias. All questions about possible violations should be directed to the Dean of Students or the President of Honor Court only.
2. **Students are presumed innocent** until the case has been heard and the student found responsible. Even once a student is found responsible she (he) may still appeal. A student should continue going to class and turning in assignments until the case has been heard. No grade shall be given on work, however, until the case is resolved. If the violation is near winter break and the case cannot be heard before the break begins then the student shall receive an incomplete for the class in which the alleged violation took place. The case will then be resolved once classes resume in the spring.
3. **Be clear in the syllabus about your understanding of plagiarism.** Often faculty simply refer to the Student Handbook for cheating and plagiarism policies. The problem is that most students do not sit down and read the handbook so they need to know exactly what your definition of plagiarism is. These are two very different but good examples of explicit plagiarism definitions from Agnes Scott faculty:

*Example 1:*

**Plagiarism**

We all know that plagiarism is cheating, but it's not always clear to students exactly what constitutes cheating. Here are various examples of plagiarism and cheating:

- A student pays an Internet business to compose a paper.
- A student copies paragraphs from a book and presents them as her own.
- A student writes a paper or makes an oral presentation based on someone else's ideas and does not attribute them to that person.
- A professor presents a theory in his lecture without attributing the ideas to the scholar whose theory it is.

*Example 2:*

**Policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity:** I follow the College's general policies on Academic Honesty to the letter. The College's Honor Code will be enforced. I will seek disciplinary action against any student who violates the tenets of academic honesty and integrity, which includes plagiarism, cheating on exams, collaboration without permission, falsification, and multiple submission of work. I'm quite good at catching plagiarists so test me at your own risk. If you do not know whether or not what you are doing is plagiarism, **JUST ASK!!!**

4. If you have turned in a student for a possible violation make sure to have physical evidence ready for the advocate and investigator. **Physical evidence like tests, plagiarized papers with sources attached, or raw data is very important.** The advocate and investigator will need a detailed account of what events took place leading up to the alleged violation and will need you to include what caused you to notice a possible violation. During the interview

the advocate and investigator will take notes and will ask you review them. If the notes are accurate then you will be asked to sign them as a pledge that the facts recorded are true. If the notes are not accurate, then you will be asked to make appropriate modifications and then sign. The advocate and investigator will also sign as a pledge that they will not alter the notes once the interview is over. The following articles are helpful to the investigator and advocate:

- A copy of the course syllabus—usually the syllabus has some reference to the academic violation, e.g. plagiarism, and the repercussions of such a violation.
  - The student’s attendance record.
  - An estimate of the student’s performance—grades accumulated over the semester.
  - The original evidence or a copy.
5. **Never make deals with students!** There are several problems concerning bargaining with students. One problem is that often the “deal” does not fix the problem. For example, a professor may tell the student that they will not turn them into Honor Court if they simply rewrite a plagiarized paper only to find the next paper they turn in is equally plagiarized. The student still ends up coming to Honor Court but now the case is much more complex since there are agreements already in place that may not be consistent with the court’s decision. Another reason why bargaining is not a good idea is that it introduces inconsistency in sanctioning. If all faculty members made these bargains there would be little in common between cases. The Honor Court hears many plagiarism and cheating cases and can more objectively assess flagrancy and appropriate sanctioning. What is flagrant and unacceptable to one professor may seem a simple mistake to another. The court hearings provide a level of consistency from student to student.
6. Rather than making “deals”, **suggest possible sanctions to the advocate and investigator.** The Honor Court often imposes the sanctions suggested by the faculty member if the student is found responsible. Common Honor Court sanctions are as follows for academic violations: warning file (student’s case record will be reviewed if another alleged incident occurs), plagiarism workshop, zero on paper/test, F in the class, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal.

### **Appeals and Judicial Review**

Students have the right to appeal if they are found responsible for a violation of the Honor Code. They can appeal the responsible verdict and/or any sanctions imposed by the court. They can appeal to the student body but will more likely appeal to the Judicial Review Committee. This committee is made up of the President of the College, Dean of the College, Dean of Students, Registrar, the President of Honor Court, the President of Senate, the President of Judicial Board, the President of the Student Government Association, and four faculty members. The Judicial Review Committee hears student appeals but also considers recommendations of the Honor Court for disciplinary probation, suspension, or dismissal. The Committee, when considering these sanctions or an appeal by the student, can vote to approve, disapprove, or modify the Honor Court’s decision.

The Judicial Review Committee will likely want to hear from the faculty member that turned the case at the time of the Judicial Review hearing.

### **Other Policies**

#### 1. Testing policies:

##### **A. In-class Tests**

- Tests are to be announced at least a week in advance. Attendance at these tests is mandatory. If a student, because of unavoidable circumstances, cannot be present for a test, lab or oral presentation at the appropriate time, permission to make up the test, lab or oral presentation at another time may be granted by the instructor in the course.
- No student is required to take more than two tests on one day provided that she notifies the instructor at the time the third test is announced.
- Time allotted for test periods should be equal for all students. So that no student will be given an unfair advantage over another, tests should be collected by the instructor or turned in by the student no later than 10 minutes past the end of the class period.
- Each student must indicate by the word "pledged" and her signature that she has neither given nor received unauthorized aid on the test.

##### **B. Take-Home Tests:**

- Take-home tests are to be administered with care and consistency. All take-home tests are to be given to students in sealed envelopes, which are provided by Faculty Services. Take-home tests should not be handed out as a folded or stapled sheet of paper. The envelope should be filled out by the professor and will indicate the name of the student, the professor's name, the class department and number (e.g. English 110), the time limit, and the date and time due (normally not to exceed seven days). Special instructions, including open book or other notations, must be included. Tests should be returned directly to the faculty member in class or by special arrangement with the instructor. Tests must be taken in one, uninterrupted sitting unless otherwise noted in the special instructions. Tests must be pledged and may not be discussed with other students in the class until the professor notifies the class that discussion is permitted. If students are allowed to work together on a take-home test, they should be given explicit instructions on how and to what extent they can work with other students.

##### **C. Talking About Tests:**

- To insure that no student receives an unfair advantage on a makeup test or on a self-scheduled exam, no student should discuss a graded assignment, quiz, test, or exam until the professor gives permission to do so. If the professor does not specifically say that students should not discuss the graded assignment, students should assume they may **not** discuss it. A student may not say how much time it took her to take the test. If not all students have completed a test, please remind



other students to refrain from discussing the test. At the beginning of the semester, professors should address whether or not students may discuss the test after it has been taken.

## 2. Written Work and the Honor Pledge

### **A. Preparation of Papers and Written Work:**

The principles of the Honor Code as applied to the preparation of papers are intended to allow the student the necessary freedom in preparing her papers and to expressing her own ideas. The principles are interpreted to mean:

- that a student may freely discuss ideas with others, since discussion is a valuable stimulation to independent thought, but that a student must organize the material and express her ideas in the paper for herself;
- that, in the use of sources, a student should observe the recognized conventions of acknowledging by appropriate documentation the ideas, phrases, and sentences borrowed from the sources used;
- that it is the responsibility of the individual instructor to define the nature and purpose of each paper assigned and to clarify to what extent and in what manner sources (e.g., texts, writings of critics and scholars, comments of fellow students, ideas gleaned from visiting lecturers, etc.) may be appropriately used;
- that a student should not turn in the same, or nearly the same, paper for two or more different classes unless permission has been given by all professors involved; and
- that no rewriting or excessive editing (i.e. collusion) of one student's work by another is allowed. Students may help each other learn the rules and practices of writing through discussion and consultation, but a student should not in any sense do another student's work for her.

The Center for Writing and Speaking is available to students for responsible tutoring and support services to supplement the counsel provided by instructors in class or in student conferences. Professors are encouraged to suggest these resources to students.

### **Final Notes and Reminders**

Reminders:

- Allow students the opportunity to turn themselves in.
- Have evidential materials ready once an advocate and investigator initiate interviews.
- Keep all information confidential and refer all questions to the Dean of Students or Honor Court president.
- Be explicit about your expectations for students in class as it pertains to the Honor Code

Final Notes:

- We know it can be difficult to confront students and that participating in cases can be arduous. We appreciate your commitment to students at Agnes Scott and to the Honor Code. Without your help the Honor Code would cease to function properly.
- Feel free to approach Honor Court members to ask questions. If they don't know the answers they may refer you to the president but they will be happy to help when they can.
- The Honor Code extends beyond academics. Students have had cases for blatant disrespect or discrimination against faculty and staff. It is important that the court hear social as well as academic violations.