



VIRGINIA
WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

Honor Code

2023-2024



Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dear Virginia Wesleyan University Community,

The Virginia Wesleyan honor code is central to our academic endeavor and is a critical part of who we are as a campus community. We stand behind our own work and each individual's learning is evaluated on its own merits. We as a community stand for truth and personal integrity, where each student is expected to live honorably and act in ways that reflect that honor.

The policies described in the following pages represent our attempt as a community to codify that honorable behavior and clarify our expectations for all members of our community. I would encourage you to familiarize yourselves with these policies and procedures, and the rights and responsibilities of all members of the campus community.

Sincerely,

Susan Larkin, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Section I: Philosophy

As a liberal arts university, Virginia Wesleyan is committed to values of citizenship and social responsibility that are fundamental to a community of scholars. People who join this academic community agree to maintain academic honesty and, therefore, not to cheat, lie, falsify data or commit plagiarism or academic theft.

The purpose of the Honor Code at Virginia Wesleyan University is to foster an environment of learning based upon trustworthiness and willingness to assume personal responsibility for honorable behavior. Responsibility for safeguarding honor and trust belongs to the entire academic community; therefore, students need to assume increasing measures of accountability for honorable behavior in themselves and others as they advance academically.

Students enter an institution with a variety of experiences and values concerning academic honesty; it may take time for them to develop the personal responsibility essential to a community founded on trust. A liberal arts education develops each student's ability to think and act with integrity. Students and faculty need to consider how honor and trust shape the life of an academic community. Consequently, the attitudes and beliefs embodied in such a code are part of the education of our students. Faculty, staff, and students need to assume leadership for integrating the intent of this code, over time, into individual courses and our entire academic program.

Practical steps to build effective levels of trust and responsibility include classroom discussions of the Honor Code. In the presentation of papers and projects, students and faculty need to be clear with each other about expectations and methods of documentation. Faculty should explain appropriate use of source materials; students should make sure that they understand their professors' expectations and that they protect the University's resource materials.

Honor and trust will grow in such an environment.

Section II: Violations Defined

Cheating is the deliberate submission of work for a grade or credit that is not one's own or that violates professors' implied or stated instructions concerning the type and amount of aid permitted. The student who gives prohibited aid shall be considered as responsible as the student who receives it.

- Copying answers from a fellow student during a test is cheating.
- The use of testing materials or papers from past semesters as study guides is cheating unless such practice is explicitly permitted by the professor.
- The use of unauthorized notes or tapes during testing is cheating. Use of cellular telephones, MP3 or similar players, calculators, Smartwatches, or similar devices, or laptop computers during an examination, unless expressly authorized by the faculty member, is prohibited.
- Obtaining or giving unauthorized information about the content of a test is cheating.

Plagiarism is the oral and/or written presentation of words, facts, or ideas belonging to another source without proper acknowledgment. This includes the reuse of the student's own academic work from another class or assignment without the permission of the instructor.

Lying means making a statement that one knows is false with the intent to deceive a fellow member of the university community in relation to academic matters. Falsifying personal or university documents by mutilation, addition, or deletion is lying.

Academic Theft is the removal, hiding, or mutilation of academic materials, including library resources, computer software, and laboratory equipment, thereby depriving others of opportunities to use such materials.

Falsifying Data is the deliberate fabrication or misrepresentation of research data and results.

Section III: Responsibilities and Rights

Students

Every VWU student has the following responsibilities:

- To request that a course instructor review a concern he/she has regarding an act that student has observed.
- To request that a course instructor investigate a questionable action by another student.
- To request that the Provost investigate a questionable action by another student.
- To address another student observed violating the Honor Code.
- To appear before the Honor hearing panel if requested to do so.

A student accused of violating the Honor Code has the following rights and is responsible for exercising those rights:

- To be presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- To have a written statement of the charges.
- To have written notice of the date, time, and place of his/her hearing.
- To refer matters involving a violation of the Honor Code immediately to the Honor Council if the student feels that the situation cannot be resolved between the faculty member and the student.¹
- To request in writing a continuance be granted for good cause.
- To have an advocate² from the university community.
- To have a neutral body—an Honor hearing panel—hear and consider the evidence.
- To obtain witnesses in his/her behalf.
- To question witnesses.
- To testify in defense of the accusation/s.
- To have an explanation in writing of the reasons for the decision reached.
- To be free from any penalty if exonerated.

¹ The Vice President for Academic Affairs notes the following clarification: In the case of a first offense for which a faculty member has imposed a Level 1 penalty, the right of a student to take a matter to the Honor Council is limited to the question whether a violation of the Honor Code has occurred. The faculty member retains the right to impose whatever grade she or he deems appropriate for the assignment and the course. See also p. 9, “Level 1” Penalty for undergraduate students.

² An advocate is an individual from the Virginia Wesleyan University community who is knowledgeable of the Honor Code. This individual may be a faculty adviser, Learning Center adviser, counselor from Counseling Services, etc. who knows the student and his/ her/ their circumstances and academic history.

For online students unable to attend a hearing or meeting on campus, video conferencing or other methods of communication will be utilized by the hearing panel.

Faculty

Every VWU faculty member has the following rights and responsibilities:

- To resolve violations of the Honor Code by private discussion with the student(s) in question and to immediately report actions taken to the Provost.
- To refer matters involving a violation of the Honor Code immediately (within two weeks of identifying the violation) to the Honor Council if the faculty member feels the situation cannot be resolved between the student and the professor.
- To provide a written statement of the charges for the Chairperson of the Honor Council.
- To have a written notice of the date, time, and place of any hearing in which he/she has an official interest.
- To testify before the Honor hearing panel.
- To request a continuance be granted for good cause.

Section IV: Procedures for Dealing with Violations

Procedures Leading Up to Hearing

- The charging party must submit a written statement of the charge identifying specifically how the Honor Code has been violated.
- If it is determined that the case shall be heard, the meeting of an Honor hearing panel will take place as soon as possible and in no case later than fourteen days at the discretion of the Coordinator.
- All individuals involved will be notified in writing about the time and place of the Honor hearing panel meeting. This notice will also instruct these individuals that the meeting may be held in their absence.
- The Coordinator of the Honor system will preside and three faculty members and three student members must be present.
- The proceedings shall be conducted so as to achieve fundamental fairness in a prompt resolution and is not considered a legal proceeding.
- At the Honor hearing panel only those persons (other than the charged student's university community advocate and the hearing panel itself) directly involved in the incident may be present. A written record will be kept of all meetings.

Conduct of the Hearing

The Coordinator conducts the hearing as follows:

- The Coordinator asks parties to enter, seats them, and then explains details of the charge and the evidence presented so far.
- Previous offenses cannot be discussed until the Hearing panel has determined that a violation has occurred in order to reduce the potential of a prejudicial ruling.
- The Coordinator asks charging party to respond and to say what she/he wishes to say.
- The Coordinator asks accused party to respond and to say what she/he wishes to say. The accused party may make statements and/or ask questions.
- The Coordinator invites the Honor hearing panel to ask questions. The Coordinator makes sure questions are non-argumentative and relevant.
- The Coordinator and members of the Honor hearing panel cannot inquire or ask specific questions about the need for learning accommodations.
- Once everyone has had a chance to testify, ask questions, and hear all the evidence, the Coordinator asks all of those not on the Honor hearing panel to leave while the hearing panel deliberates. The three students and three faculty members determine whether or not a violation of the Honor Code has occurred, and if so, determine a sanction.

- The Coordinator votes only to break a tie.
- The Coordinator asks parties to return and explains the Honor hearing panel's findings.
- The Chairperson gives an explanation of the reasons for the Honor hearing panel's decision and adjourns the meeting.

Within twenty-four hours after the Honor hearing panel, the Coordinator shall give an official written report on University letterhead of the Honor hearing panel's decision to the charging party, accused party, the Provost, and the Senior Vice President. This written report shall include an explanation of the reasons for the decision reached. If a Level 2 or Level 3 penalty is imposed, the Senior Vice President will be called upon to assist in the process of withdrawal from the University. Ordinarily this will occur within forty-eight hours of the decision.

If an individual is found guilty and is dismissed from the University, the evidence and records of the proceedings should be maintained permanently in the Office of the Provost.

If an individual is found guilty, is suspended, and is then readmitted to the University, the evidence and records of the proceedings shall be kept in the Office of the Provost and then destroyed after the graduation of the person.

If an individual is found not guilty, the evidence and records of the proceedings shall be held for two weeks and then destroyed.

The student's name, the charge, the date, and the decision in each case should be kept permanently in the Office of the Provost.

Section V: Penalties

The Graduated Penalty System for Undergraduate Students

Virginia Wesleyan University operates under a graduated penalty system. In this system there is no set penalty for each violation of the Honor Code. Once it is determined that a student has violated the Honor Code, it is first the responsibility of the individual faculty member and then the Honor hearing panel to determine what penalty is justified in a case. The penalties consist of the following:

Level 1: Faculty are able to implement Level 1 penalties for purely academic violations without referring the matter to the Honor Council.

- Verbal reprimand
- Written reprimand
- Failure of assignment or test
- Failure of course³

Any faculty may recommend alternative sanctions for a Level I violation, but these must be approved by the Honor hearing panel following determination that a Honor Code violation has occurred.

Faculty are required to report any and all punitive action in response to substantiated Honor Code violations immediately to the Provost. If the student has committed a previous offense, the Provost may recommend that the faculty member refer the new violation directly to the Honor Council.

Level 2: The presumptive sentence for the commission of a second honor offense is suspension from the University for a minimum of one semester, which, in the judgment of the Honor hearing panel, may be the semester in which the offense occurs or the semester following the occurrence of the offense. The maximum Level 2 sentence may not exceed suspension for four semesters. A student may overcome the presumption in favor of suspension by showing mitigating circumstances, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Self-reporting of the offense prior to the charge;
- Admission of, and remorse with regard to, the offense; and/or

³ The *Adding and Dropping Courses* policy found in the Academic Catalog states, “Students cannot evade the imposition of a course grade of F as the result of an Honor Code violation by withdrawing from the course.”

- Lack of understanding with respect to the nature of the offense.

In the event that the Honor hearing panel chooses not to impose suspension for a Level 2 offense, it may impose an appropriate alternative penalty or penalties, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Completing a workshop on the topic related to the violation;
- Writing a paper on a topic related to the violation, citing sources;
- Completing community service hours related to the violation; and/or
- Writing and presenting a speech on the Honor Code to various audiences.
- Failure of the assignment
- Failure of the course

A first Honor offense may constitute a Level 2 violation if, in the judgment of the Honor hearing panel, there were aggravating circumstances, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The student knowingly engaged in a pattern of deception with regard to more than one assignment in the same class;
- The student knowingly conspired with other students to compromise the integrity of an assignment or test; and/or
- The student knowingly engaged in an act of dishonesty affecting more than one course or the campus generally.

Level 3: The commission of a third offense constitutes a Level 3 violation for which the mandatory sentence is separation from the University and loss of credit in all courses in which the student is enrolled at the time of the violation. A second Honor offense—or, in rare instances, a first Honor offense—may constitute a Level 3 violation if, in the judgment of the Honor hearing panel there were aggravating circumstances, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The student knowingly engaged in a pattern of deception with regard to more than one assignment in the same class;
- The student knowingly conspired with other students to compromise the integrity of an assignment or test; and/or
- The student knowingly engaged in an act of dishonesty affecting more than one course or the campus generally.

Honor Code Violations and Latin Honors:

The Academic Catalog states the following: “Students guilty of violating academic honesty policies, such as through cheating or plagiarism, are not eligible for Latin honors” (Graduating with Honors, Academic Catalog).

The Graduated Penalty System for Graduate Students

Virginia Wesleyan University operates under a graduated penalty system. In this system there is no set penalty for each violation of the Honor Code. Once it is determined that a student has violated the Honor Code, it is the responsibility of the Honor hearing panel to determine what penalty is justified in a case. All suspected honor code violations, to include first offenses, by graduate students will be automatically referred to the Honor hearing panel. Faculty are required to report any and all suspected honor code violations immediately to the Provost. The penalties consist of the following:

Level 1: The presumptive sentence for the commission of a first honor offense at the graduate level is suspension from the University for one to four 16-week semesters or two to eight 7-week sessions. Suspension may occur in the semester in which the offense occurred or the semester following. A student may overcome the presumptive sentence in favor of failure of the course⁴, or in rare cases failure of the assignment, by showing mitigating circumstances, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Self-reporting of the offense prior to the charge;
- Admission of, and remorse with regard to, the offense; and/or
- Lack of understanding with respect to the nature of the offense.

An academic hold for an honor code violation will be placed on the student's account preventing course registration, which will be lifted upon successful completion of the presumptive penalties.

Level 2: The mandatory sentence for a level 2 violation is dismissal from the University for 5 years and a loss of all credits the student is currently enrolled in at the time of the violation. There will be no refund of any tuition, fees, or other expenses.

⁴ The Adding and Dropping Courses policy found in the Academic Catalog states, "Students cannot evade the imposition of a course grade of F as the result of an Honor Code violation by withdrawing from the course."

Section VI: Procedure to Request a New Hearing or an Appeal

Procedure

The person requesting a new hearing or an appeal shall file a written notice with the Provost within seven days following the original hearing (weekend and holidays excluded). In the case of new evidence, however, this time period may be extended by the Coordinator.

Requests shall be dated and contain a statement of the grounds for the new hearing or appeal and the signature of the person making the request. Requests shall specify whether an appeal or a new hearing is requested.

New Hearing

Grounds for a new hearing include the discovery of new facts that even in the exercise of due diligence were unavailable at the time of the original Honor hearing panel and which could alter the outcome.

Requests for a new hearing must include the following:

- A statement of new evidence;
- The names of those individuals who will present this evidence;
- Reasons for omission of evidence from original hearing; and
- Reasons that this evidence could contribute to a decision other than that which was originally made.

Duties of the New Hearing and Appeals Committee in response to Request for New Hearing. This committee will review the request and determine if the request has merit. If the committee finds the request has merit, it has the power to call for a new hearing. If a new hearing is indicated then the full Honor hearing procedure will be repeated, this time to include the new evidence.

Appeal

There are two grounds for appeal: excessive sanctions or material violation(s) of the hearing procedure.

Excessive Sanctions. If the appeal is based on excessive sanction, specific information must be cited indicating why the sanction is unreasonable in light of the charges.

Duties of the New Hearing and Appeals Committee in response to a request for an appeal based on excessive sanction.

This committee will review the request for appeal and determine if the request has merit. If the New Hearing and Appeals Committee decides to consider the appeal, it has the power to:

- Uphold the original decision;
- Uphold the original decision but alter part or all of a previously imposed penalty; and/or
- Exonerate the student.

Material Violation(s) of Procedure. If the appeal is based on a violation(s) of hearing procedure it must include:

- Citation of specific procedures in the Honor Code that were omitted or improperly followed;
- Reason(s) why procedural error was not mentioned in the original hearing; and
- Reason(s) why correction of error can contribute to a decision other than that which was originally made.

Duties of the New Hearing and Appeals Committee in response to a request for an appeal based on a material violation(s) of hearing procedure. This committee will review the request to determine if the request has merit. If the New Hearing and Appeals Committee decides to consider the appeal, it has the power to:

- Determine that no material violation(s) of procedure occurred and uphold the original decision; or
- Find that material violation(s) of procedure occurred and declare the original decision void due to procedural error. In such case, the committee may, but shall not be obligated to, remand the case to the Honor Coordinator with directions to call a new hearing panel.

Section VII: Membership of the Honor Council and of The New Hearing and Appeals Committee

Members of the Undergraduate Honor Council

Coordinator: Dr. Eric Mazur

Coordinator: The Honor Council Coordinator shall be a faculty member appointed for a three-year term by the Provost in consultation with the school deans and the student body president. The Coordinator shall convene and preside over all hearing panels. The Coordinator shall decide the outcome of all hearing determinations which result in a tie. The Coordinator represents the Honor system to all campus constituencies.

Faculty: Any full-time member of the faculty may be called to serve on the Honor hearing panel.

Students: The student members of the Honor Council shall consist of a pool of nine members, to be appointed by directors of Campus Life and Operational Management and the President of the University. Three of the nine members will be called upon depending on availability per case. Each member will serve a one-year term. The Provost may appoint interim student members when necessary, if regular members and alternates are unavailable to serve.

In addition to conducting hearings, the Honor Council is responsible for educating faculty, staff, and students on a yearly basis on matters regarding the Honor Code.

Members of the Graduate Honor Council

The Graduate Honor Council will consist of the Honor Coordinator, the relevant School Dean, the Global Campus Dean, the department or program Chair, and three faculty members.

Members of the New Hearing and Appeals Committee

The New Hearing and Appeals Committee will consist of the Provost, one faculty member to be elected in the spring semester, and the Student Government Association president. Members of the New Hearing and Appeals Committee shall not sit on Honor hearing panels.

Members of the 2020-2011 New Hearing and Appeals Committee

Dr. Susan Larkin, Provost

Dr. Sara Sewell

SGA President

For additional information or clarification, contact:

Dr. Susan Larkin,
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

or

Dr. Keith Moore,
Senior Vice President

or

Dr. Eric Mazur
Honor Coordinator