



## CONSTITUTION OF THE HONOR SYSTEM MACON TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

The Honor Council Constitution provides the fundamental principles that govern the Honor System. The Bylaws provide specific rules of guidance for the Honor Council.

### History

During the spring of 1954, the College of Liberal Arts students recognized a need for an Honor System on campus. Following extensive deliberation, a petition was presented to the student body by the president of the student body, Joseph Hendricks, CLA 1955. After a general election, the student body adopted the form of a pledge to be signed by each student on every examination.

The first honor council, consisting of eight members, the president, vice president, secretary of the student body, and the president of each class had the responsibility of enforcing the Honor Code. Then in 1956 the council was changed to consist of nine persons who were not necessarily class or student government officers.

### Article I: The Honor System

**Section 1.** Academic integrity at Mercer University is preserved and promoted through the Honor System. The Honor System demands of each student the responsibility for honesty and assumes the responsibility that each student will report any violations of the Honor Code.

**Section 2.** Since 1956, there have been significant changes to the Honor System. An amendment was passed which requires the reporting of cheating or other academic dishonesty as well as the pledge to academic integrity. This code is now central to the Honor System. All students consent to following the Honor Code upon entering Mercer University:

*I pledge to hold myself to the highest standards of academic integrity while at Mercer University. I further pledge that I will hold my peers to these standards by reporting any violations I observe and that I will foster a spirit of honesty in the University's academic environment.*

Each student is personally responsible for knowing the rights and obligations as set forth in the Honor System as printed in the Mercer University Student Handbook. The student is also expected to cooperate completely and participate fully in the Honor System.

**Section 3.** Each faculty member supports the Honor System by making it an essential component of academic life at Mercer University by educating students on the Honor System, creating a learning environment that is conducive to the effective implementation of the Honor System, reporting violations, participating in the investigative and hearing process, and upholding sanctions by the Honor Council.

## **Article II: Name**

The Honor System is administered by a council under the authority of the Provost of Mercer University. The name of the council is the Macon Traditional Undergraduate Honor Council that serves traditional undergraduate day programs in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, School of Business, School of Engineering, College of Education, School of Music, and College of Health Professions. The council will hereinafter be referred to as the Honor Council or Council.

## **Article III: The Honor Council**

**Section 1.** The purpose of the Honor Council is to foster academic integrity by educating the University community on the Honor System and upholding the Honor Code. The Council investigates and adjudicates allegations of Honor Code violations and assigns academic sanctions under the supervision of the faculty advisor and the Office of the Provost.

**Section 2.** Any student enrolled in a course in a Macon traditional undergraduate program at the time of the alleged violation is under the jurisdiction of the Honor Council and subject to any sanctions it may impose.

**Section 3.** The Honor Council must consist of a minimum of ten (10) student justices who are enrolled in one of Mercer University's traditional undergraduate programs on the Macon campus. Each student member is appointed for leadership ability, character, interest in the undergraduate schools and colleges, academic integrity, and scholarship. Rising sophomores, rising juniors, and rising seniors who meet Council requirements may apply for membership to the Honor Council. The Executive Board reviews applications and selects new members. New justices must complete Honor Council training prior to hearing cases on the Council.

Student members may serve on the Council for multiple semesters. Any vacancy during the academic year must be filled promptly if the number of justices fall below the minimum membership.

**Section 4.** The Honor Council must elect by a majority vote the following officers to the Executive Board: Chief Justice, Associate Chief Justice, and Clerk. The Chief Justice must have at least three semesters of experience on the Council. The Associate Chief Justice must have at least two semesters of experience on the Council. The Clerk must have at least one semester of experience on the Council. A vacancy created on the Executive Board must result in a new election for the office.

**Section 5.** Each school or college listed in Article II must designate at least one faculty advisor to serve on the Honor Council. Faculty advisors serve in a non-voting capacity for a one-year term but are eligible for reappointment. They provide guidance to the Honor Council regarding policies, procedures, and appropriate methods of administering the Honor System. The faculty advisor from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences will serve as Chief Faculty Advisor.

**Section 6.** The Honor Council has the authority to impeach, suspend, remove, or otherwise discipline its own members as described in the Bylaws.

**Section 7.** The Honor Council must submit an annual report to the Office of the Provost. The Provost provides the report guidelines to the Council.

## **Article IV: Violations of the Honor Code**

**Section 1.** A violation of the Honor Code involves cheating, plagiarism, academic negligence, or other acts which compromise academic integrity.

**Cheating** is the unauthorized use of information, materials, sources, devices, or practices to complete academic activities that meet course and/or program requirements.

**Plagiarism** is the use of ideas, facts, phrases, or additional materials from any source without giving proper acknowledgement for such material, regardless of intent.

**Academic negligence** is unacceptable academic conduct that the student should have known, such as a student's failure to understand the faculty's specific instructions on an assignment.

**Perjury** is the falsification of testimony or other evidence presented to the Council or the willful omission of evidence.

**Falsification of class records** or other materials submitted as course requirements or to gain class credit.

**Fabrication or falsification in research** involves misrepresenting research data or results and/or altering elements of the research that do not accurately reflect the research record.

It is the responsibility of the student to ascertain what would constitute a violation of the Honor Code in any given academic situation or publication.

**Section 2.** Each student is responsible for reporting any and all violations of the Honor Code either to the faculty member or the Honor Council. The student accepts this responsibility when entering the University as a vital participant in the Honor System. The procedure for reporting Honor Code violations is explained in the Bylaws.

## **Article V: Investigations and Hearings**

**Section 1.** An investigation of the case is conducted by a member of the Honor Council.

**Section 2.** All business conducted during investigations and hearings must be held in strictest confidence among the Honor Council members involved in the case. The Chief Justice may share general, nonconfidential information about the Honor Council policies and procedures with the student body, faculty, and staff.

**Section 3.** The accused student has the rights to due process and equal protection under the Student Government Association Constitution and subsequent legislation when facing a hearing before the Honor Council. The accused student also has responsibilities when facing a hearing before the Honor Council. The witnesses and faculty member involved in the case have rights and responsibilities. Detailed rights and responsibilities are explained in the Bylaws.

**Section 4.** An accused student may participate in a formal hearing or informal hearing. The Council reserves the right to pre-select the type of hearing at any point in the process.

- a. A **formal hearing** is conducted when a student pleads “not responsible” or “responsible” to violating the Honor Code. The Council convenes to adjudicate the case and determine a recommended sanction.
- b. An **informal hearing** may be conducted if the accused student pleads “responsible” to violating the Honor Code and has not previously been found responsible for an Honor Code violation. Since the accused student admits to being responsible for the violation, the Council only convenes to decide the recommended sanction.

**Section 5.** A member of the Honor Council must be recused from a hearing if the member is related to an accused student, shares a residence with the accused student, is a member of the same student organization or team as the accused student, or for any other reason that may cause a perceived conflict of interest for the justice or accused student.

**Section 6.** The Honor Council must have a preponderance of evidence that it is substantially more likely than not that an Honor Code violation occurred. A majority of the Honor Council justices must vote “responsible” to find the accused student responsible for a violation of the Honor Code. If the accused student is found responsible for violation of the Honor Code, the Honor Council determines the recommended sanction. Decisions of the Council are recommendations to the Office of the Provost for approval.

**Section 7.** Written notification of the verdict and sanction will be sent to the accused student, the faculty member related to the case, the dean from the academic unit of the accused student, and other relevant University personnel. The Office of the Registrar will be notified if the decision and sanction involve a failure of course, suspension, or expulsion.

**Section 8.** Sanctions will be implemented as soon as feasible, either upon the outcome of any appeal or the expiration of the window to appeal without an appeal being requested. Faculty must uphold the final decision in the case.

**Section 9.** An official record of the hearing will be made by the Chief Justice of the Council for internal University use only. Case records are kept on file for seven (7) years except for suspension and expulsion records which are kept permanently.

## **Article VI: Appeals**

**Section 1.** The accused student may appeal the Honor Council’s decision on the following grounds:

- New information or evidence, available after the hearing, of a nature that the verdict or sanction may have been different.
- Significant procedural errors occurred which substantially affected the outcome of the hearing and/or violated the student’s rights.

- The sanction imposed was inconsistent with the nature of the violation.

**Section 2.** The student may appeal in writing to the Dean of the accused student's school/college. The accused student may appeal the Dean's decision to the Provost. The decision of the Provost is final.

### **Article VII: Amendments**

Amendments to this constitution require the approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the total membership of the Honor Council, including all active faculty advisors, and a majority of the student government, subject to the approval of the Provost and President of the University. The Honor Council must set forth its own specific procedures in the Bylaws, subject to approval by the Provost.

Adopted in 1955. Revised in August 2022.