



## HONOR CODE FACULTY HANDBOOK

### OVERVIEW

This Faculty Handbook serves as a quick guide to the Rice Honor System and outlines the most important points that all faculty members and instructors should know. For more information regarding Council policies and procedures, please consult the Honor Council Blue Book online at <http://honor.rice.edu> or email the Honor Council at [honor@rice.edu](mailto:honor@rice.edu)

### SYLLABI

All syllabi should include an “Honor Code” section. Each faculty member or instructor has the responsibility and opportunity to determine how best to apply the Honor Code to their particular course. Thus the rules for each course and assignment will vary, necessitating that each instructor clarify his expectations with his students.

It is the policy of the Honor Council that any resource or course of action not permitted by the instructor is prohibited. Please list what is and is not allowed on a given assignment – be as specific as possible.

Suggested topics to cover in the syllabus (if relevant to the particular course) include policies regarding the following:

- Citation – it may be helpful to list a resource for students to consult.
- Extent of collaboration allowed on particular types of assignments
- Take home exams – materials allowed, breaks, time limits, citation policy, etc.
- Multiple submission –the resubmission of any work by a student that has been used in identical or similar form in fulfillment of any academic requirement at this or another institution.
- Old tests, assignments from previous years, solutions manuals – if they are allowed please say so and specify which particular years for old tests/assignments
  - Many residential colleges have “test banks” that students assume are allowed to be consulted if not told otherwise.
- Peer editing and proofreading – how much is allowed?
- Sharing class notes with other students in the class
- Permissible types of sources

It is particularly important for these guidelines to be clarified for assignments that are repeated throughout the semester. Individual assignments should have the associated instructions listed directly on the assignment sheets.

It is important to clearly establish these rules early in the semester and inform all students of any changes made throughout the semester. Many professors find it helpful to verbally explain the specific rules for the class on the first day. **It is also important to make sure that if a student is unclear on the policy for the class, they should ask the faculty member responsible for setting the policy to get the most accurate information.**

## EXAMINATIONS

It is crucial that expectations and regulations are made clear to all students for every exam. All exams should include instructions covering the same material included on the syllabus.

Please explicitly state if tests or problems from previous years are allowed to be consulted. If so, they should be made available to all students by placing copies on reserve in the library. Most of the residential colleges have "test banks" with old exams. Many students study off these exams to practice. If this is unacceptable in your class, they should be told not to use these resources.

### In-Class

In an effort to avoid any inadvertent problems with this type of exam, in-class exams should be given with students sitting as shown below:

X		X		X		X
	X		X		X	
X		X		X		X
	X		X		X	
X		X		X		X

X = occupied seat

It is the responsibility of the instructor to arrange adequate facilities for the administration of examinations. Students should sit in alternate chairs of a row and in alternate rows with the students in line behind each other. When this seating cannot be carried out exactly, students should attempt to retain the effect of this guideline.

Professors are asked not to actively proctor exams; however they are allowed to remain in the testing room to answer questions.

### Take Home Exams

If students are not allowed to see the exam before they take it, the test should be distributed in a sealed envelope. Clear instructions should be listed on the outside of the envelope. Leave spaces for students to write "time started" and "time completed" and sign the Pledge. Have students return their completed tests in sealed envelopes to a secure location such as a department coordinator or in a class. Tests that are to be returned should be

issued with a sealable envelope. It is also a good idea to have students sign-in and note the time of return. Have an established procedure for students to ask questions about the exam after they have started.

Take home exams that allow students to see and think about the questions before actually taking the exam bring up a new set of concerns. To what extent is outlining allowed? Some students' outlines are essentially written essays without conjunctions. If you want to eliminate this, do not allow outlining or restrict it heavily.

Please be specific with how much time is allowed on the exam. Most students assume that a "three hour exam" means that it must be completed in one sitting. However, there are exams where students are allowed three hours of work time, but can take breaks in the middle. It never hurts to clarify.

What resources can be used on an exam?

Calculators, graphing calculators, programmable calculators, the text book, notes, other students notes, other books, rulers, Excel or another spreadsheet, Matlab or Mathcad, word processors, etc. Try to anticipate what the students may want to use and state whether they can or not. In general, it is good to tell students what they need on the outside of the envelope for take-home exams, so they can locate the materials without detracting from their time.

### **Re-grades**

Professors might consider giving students a period of time to review their graded work so that they might submit the work for a re-grade (if necessary). Some professors keep scanned copies of students' exams and return the originals to the students.

### **PAPERS**

Ensure that citation guidelines are explicitly established for the class. Some students are unfamiliar with specific citation rules, so provide them with citation resources. Take a few minutes in class to note that documentation is required and explain the form you prefer.

Remind students that multiple submission of a paper is unacceptable. This is specifically covered by the Honor System Blue Book, however many students are unfamiliar with this guideline.

Explicitly define the guidelines relevant to peer editing because professors have individual expectations with regard to assistance from other students.

You may require that students in lower level classes turn in rough drafts. This would serve as an early detection system for potential documentation problems. Professors may also ask students to include their research source locations in their bibliographies. If questions arise, the professor can check sources quickly.

## **HOMEWORK/PROBLEM SETS**

Be specific about the level of collaboration that is acceptable on homework assignments or problem sets. Some professors choose to allow full collaboration among any number of students, while others restrict collaboration to small groups or prohibit it entirely.

Explicitly state what outside resources students may consult in order to complete the assignments. (Can they use a course textbook, outside books, class notes, internet sources, solution manual, past homework assignments, etc.?)

## **GROUP PROJECTS**

Make it clear that each group member is responsible for all parts of a group project.

Explicitly state the limits of collaboration among group members where individual members submit separate products. Also clarify the degree of acceptable collaboration between groups.

## **GRADUATE COURSES**

All graduate courses should include information on the Honor System in the first lecture, especially if it is typically a first year graduate course. There are many students from other schools and countries who are unfamiliar with our system.

## **REPORTING SUSPECTED VIOLATIONS**

Faculty members are obliged to report suspected violations of the Honor System to the Honor Council as soon as possible. Informally adjudicating violations by adjusting the student's grade without reporting the violation to the Honor Council is harmful to the Honor System and raises issues of liability for the faculty member. Dealing with violations informally denies students important procedural rights. It may also adversely affect the University's ability to enforce a penalty in the event of a court action. It also allows students to violate the Code multiple times in multiple classes without severe repercussions because there is no mechanism for centrally reporting such informal adjudications.

The Honor System operates with an expectation of confidentiality. Suspected violations should only be discussed with the Honor Council. When reporting violations to the Honor Council, first e-mail the Honor Council officers at [honor@rice.edu](mailto:honor@rice.edu) or call the Honor Council (x2426) to discuss the suspected violation with the Honor Council Chair.

After consulting with the Chair, the professor will be asked to write a formal letter of accusation describing the specifics, in as much detail as possible, of the alleged violation. The professor should send with this letter any evidence that would aid the Council in investigation of the matter (i.e. copies of the test, assignment, or paper in question). The Council will notify the professor that the letter has been received and will proceed with the case. The professor may be contacted for more information during the investigation process and may be called as a witness.

It is important that the professor or grader grade the assignment as if no violation occurred. This is helpful if the situation results in a simple explanation of a misunderstanding, and allows the student to move forward in his or her coursework until the Council renders a decision on the case.

The Honor Council appreciates the amount of time that professors invest in drafting letters of accusation and the stresses involved in reporting one of their students. The Council will inform the professor of the status of the case and will provide a likely timeline for the proceedings. The professor will also be informed as soon as the case moves forward from investigation to hearing, or if it is dropped at the level of investigation. At the end of the proceedings, the presiding Chair will give a written explanation to the professor regarding the deliberative process and the reasons for the decision.

### **HOW TO REACH THE HONOR COUNCIL**

- E-mail the officers at [honor@rice.edu](mailto:honor@rice.edu)
- Campus Mail to the Honor Council, MS 529
- Call the Honor Council Office, x2426
- Contact info for Officers and Members is available online at <http://honor.rice.edu>

### **BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF TRUST**

The following is a list of recommendations which will help to strengthen the effectiveness of our Honor System.

- Be open about your support for the Honor System
- Report suspected violations to the Honor Council
- Be clear about what is permitted by stating it in your syllabus and again on exams and assignments
- Arrange for Honor System seating (or as close to this seating arrangement as space limitations will permit) and ask students to put books and notes in front of the classroom during closed-book tests
- If you require research papers, explain plagiarism and proper documentation, or refer your students to resources available in the library and online
- Be explicit about the permissibility of students working together and their use of tutorial help
- Require students to protect their computer files and guard their passwords
- Abide by the Faculty Grading Guidelines
- Make suggestions for improving the system to the Honor Council
- Set a positive example for students by being aware of the rules for use of copyrighted materials

Thank you again for your help and support of the Honor System.