

Consensus Penalty Structure

Honor Council Penalty Structure

The Honor Council meets at least once a year to establish a penalty structure. This is done to give the Council a basis for consistency and to give the students and faculty an expectation of how the Council will act in a given year. This CPS will remain in effect until the next structure is adopted.

The Honor Council shall begin with the following recommended set of penalties during deliberations and may alter these penalties based on the aggravating and mitigating factors present in the case. However, the Council may recommend alternative penalties if warranted by the nature of the case. The course grade referenced below refers to the weight of the assignment in question - if a violation occurs on a specific assignment, the entire assignment should be treated as if it is in violation unless there is significant evidence indicating the violation only affected a portion of the assignment.

The Alternative Resolution penalty is one category lower than the hearing penalty. In the event that the accused student accepts an Alternative Resolution penalty and the assignment weight falls on the border between two penalty categories, the Council must recommend the lower of the two Alternative Resolution penalties. For the Alternative Resolution, the severity level is set as 2, and can neither be mitigated nor aggravated.

Assignment Weight	Penalty	Alternative Resolution Penalty
Over 30% of the course grade	F in the course	F in the course
Over 20% of the course grade	F in the course	3 letter grade reduction
Over 10% of the course grade	3 letter grade reduction	2 letter grade reduction
Over 5% of the course grade	2 letter grade reduction	1 letter grade reduction
5% or less of the course grade	1 letter grade reduction	Letter of Reprimand
Mitigated Penalty	Letter of Reprimand	Letter of Reprimand

Severity	Penalty
Level 4	Expulsion
Level 3	Suspension
Level 2	Reprimand
Level 1	Warning

The Council shall consider both "assignment weight" and "severity" separately. The assignment weight category should only be mitigated; the Council may decide to aggravate the grade penalty only under exceptional circumstances where the nature of the violation warrants a stronger grade penalty.

The severity category is decided on a separate vote by the panel members. The baseline penalty is Level 2, reprimand.

Description of Severity Levels

Level 1 – Reserved for technicalities that the Council deems do not violate the spirit of the Honor Code.

Level 2 – The standard level; this is the baseline severity level.

Level 3 – An aggravated penalty reserved for when the Council deems the student committed a particularly reprehensible violation and thus could benefit from time off from the university. These can include, but are not limited to, heinous violations, students with prior violations, violations including multiple assignments and aggravated violations.

Level 4 – The highest penalty; multiple prior violations and prior violations that resulted in a suspension.

Description of Severity Penalties

Warning – The student's disciplinary record is not affected, and none of the negative consequences (save for the grade penalty) of an "In Violation" finding apply. The student must also complete an educational assignment within 2 weeks of receiving their decision. Otherwise, the judicial hold on the student's account will not be lifted.

In the case of a subsequent violation, the hearing panel may, but is not required to, consider a Warning as a prior violation. A warning does not preclude the student from being offered the AR.

Reprimand – The standard severity level. The violation is listed on the student's disciplinary record and is reportable. Subsequent violations are aggravated.

In the event that a student makes an unprompted self-accusation in good faith prior to any confrontation, the Council may not consider suspension as a penalty. The Council may cite mitigating and aggravating factors to reach an appropriate penalty, given the unique facts of every case. Examples of such circumstances include, but are not limited to, the following:

Mitigating factors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The amount of the assignment that is demonstrably not affected by the violation
- Cooperation shown through: 1. Substantial disclosure that helps the Honor Council reach its decision. 2. Bringing in relevant information before the hearing, if applicable
- In extenuating cases, when the Council deems the nature of the violation does not merit the letter grade reduction

Aggravating factors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Deceit of the Council and/or false disclosure that can be proven by material evidence.
- Attempt to conceal a violation after the initial violation has occurred.

The Council specifically cannot consider the following in penalty deliberations:

- Number of years at the University
- Academic Program

- Ignorance of the Honor Code, or unclear class Honor Code
- Academic or personal stress
- Academic, emotional, or professional external effects of the penalty
- Remorse or signs of rehabilitation
- Class performance, or performance in other classes
- The student's plea of either "in violation" or "not in violation"
- Any student testimony unsupported by evidence that opposes material evidence

The Honor Council may go beyond these penalties in the case of a heinous violation. This distinction can only be made by consensus of at least five of the six voting members. If Council members determine that a violation is heinous, they are not limited to the above-mentioned aggravating factors. A violation may be considered heinous whenever it is considerably damaging to the academic atmosphere of Rice University or directly harmful to an individual. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, destruction or theft of another's work, intentional or harmful actions taken to cover up a violation, or involvement in a large-scale conspiracy.

Previous violations allow the Council to go beyond the penalty structure, though the Council is not required to do so.