

Honor Council By-Laws

Article I. Duties of Officers

Section 1: Judicial Chair. The Judicial Chair shall preside at a plurality of all proceedings, act as a procedural advisor to the accused student, and, along with the Communications Chair, carry out any other duties delegated to the Chairs in the Constitution of the Honor System and subsidiary documents. The Judicial Chair shall see that adjudicative duties of the Honor Council are properly performed and ensure all cases are resolved fairly and justly.

Section 2: Communications Chair. The Communications Chair shall act as the main point of contact with the administration and faculty members, coordinate student and faculty orientations with the External Vice-Chair, ensure confidence in the Honor System is sustained, and along with the Judicial Chair, carry out any other duties delegated to the Chairs in the Constitution of the Honor System and subsidiary documents. The Communications Chair shall see that administrative duties of the Honor Council are properly performed.

Section 2: Internal Vice-Chair. The Internal Vice-Chair shall assume the duties of the Chair when necessary, serve as treasurer, and to assist the Chairs in other areas as the Chairs deems necessary.

Section 3: External Vice-Chair. The External Vice-Chair shall be responsible for executing student Honor System orientations, coordinating with college representatives, chairing cases, and for the dissemination of all information concerning the Honor System. The External Vice-Chair is also responsible for editing and posting abstracts on the website.

Section 4: Secretary. The Secretary shall handle the correspondence of the Honor Council, notify and assign members to serve on investigation and hearing panels, and manage all audio recordings. The Secretary shall keep and post minutes of all meetings when required.

Article II. Meetings

Section 1: All meetings shall be open unless a Chair or three Honor Council members request a closed meeting.

Section 2: An open meeting shall be open to any interested party.

Section 3: Meetings may be called by a Chair, three members of the Council, or by the Student Association Senate.

Section 4: There shall be public notice of all open meetings.

Section 5: At least one open meeting shall be held each academic year.

Section 6: No Honor Council member may miss more than three meetings per academic year without a valid excuse. Any member who does so will be automatically considered for removal.

Section 7: A quorum of the Honor Council shall consist of three-fourths (3/4) of the currently serving members.

Article III. Consensus on Penalties

Section 1: The Council shall have a consensus penalty structure, in order to lend an element of consistency to the penalty-deliberation phase of hearings. This consensus should be established through a quorum of the Council, and meetings to decide on the consensus shall occur at least once a year.

Section 2: The consensus shall recommend particular and predefined penalties for specific levels. The penalty for each level should be based on the weight of the assignment in question, as well as a punitive aspect that reflects the impact violations have on the University. These recommendations should be viewed as starting points in Council discussion of penalties.

Section 3: The consensus shall also define a set of mitigating and aggravating factors. These factors, and others, can be used to change the penalty assigned to a certain violation, should the facts of the case merit it.

Article IV. Orientation

Section 1: An online copy of The Honor System booklet will be available to every new student upon acceptance to Rice University.

Section 2: The pledge affirmed before registration shall read as follows: "I, the undersigned, signify that I have read the Constitution of the Honor System and hereby pledge my support to it. I understand what is expected of me as a student of Rice University, that my obligation to satisfy the requirements of the Honor System extend from my matriculation to my graduation, and that a plea of ignorance will not be accepted by the Honor Council."

Section 3: During Orientation Week, the Honor Council shall orient all new students to the Honor System and administer the Honor Council Examination to those who are undergraduates.

Section 4: The Honor Council shall also orient new students at the beginning of the spring

semester.

Section 5: The Honor Council shall orient new faculty to the Honor System at the beginning of each academic year.

Article V. Elections

Section 1: Campaigning by candidates for Honor Council office shall be limited to

- a. writing a campaign statement for the Thresher;
- b. speaking at forums organized by blanket tax organizations and open to all candidates;
- c. entering into discussions with other students regarding qualifications for and opinions on the Honor System.

Section 2: A person with an Honor Code violation in their record may not be a member of the Honor Council.

Article VI. Changeover

Section 1: The Honor Council's Changeover will occur within two weeks of spring elections. At that time new officers will be elected and begin their terms.

Section 2: Newly elected members will assume their positions upon election. Graduating members will serve until graduation. All other members will continue serving as members until Changeover.

Article VII. Councilmember Service

Section 1: If a council member fails to serve on at least four panels (either investigations or hearings) in a semester, barring reasonable explanation, it is grounds for suspension or retirement of that member as under Article VIII of the Constitution.

Section 2: A council member shall recuse himself or herself from a panel if they feel they are unable to make a fair and unbiased decision. Reasons for recusal include, but are not limited to, having a close personal relationship with the accused student or working for the professor of the course as a grader.

Article VIII. Selection of Ombuds

Section 1: Ombuds are nominated by a committee comprised of the five officers and one

Ombuds. That committee shall present a slate of potential Ombuds to the Director of Student Judicial Programs, who will then confirm or deny each candidate. The committee will communicate the final selection with the candidates.

Section 2: The selection committee shall interview all qualified undergraduate candidates who apply for the Ombuds positions. Responsibility for publicity about and sign-ups for the Ombuds interviews shall lie with the selection committee.

Section 3: The selection committee shall convene within the first four weeks of the academic year to choose new Ombuds. The selected students will serve as Ombuds until the selections are made the following year, or until the graduation of the Ombuds, whichever occurs first. There shall be no restriction on the number of terms a student may serve as Ombuds.

Section 4: Before serving on a case, a new Ombuds should observe at least one case (Investigative Meeting and Hearing) and be observed by an experienced Ombuds for at least one case (Investigative Meeting and Hearing).

Section 5: In the event that the Honor Council must conduct an investigation or hearing when no Ombuds is available, the senior Judicial Affairs officer shall be empowered to appoint eligible students as Ombuds on a temporary basis.

Section 6: In addition to University regulations determining eligibility for an appointed office, a student serving as Ombuds cannot be a current member of the Honor Council. Students with prior violations of the Honor Code may be eligible for appointment as Ombuds on an individual basis after all outstanding Honor Council cases against them have concluded. Such applicants must complete the same application process expected of any other candidate, and may also be subject to additional questions at the discretion of the selection committee.

Section 7: An Ombuds will serve on each case on a rotating basis according to availability.

Article IX. Duties of Ombuds

Section 1: The Ombuds shall serve as a procedural advisor to the accused student.

Section 2: The Ombuds shall attend the investigation and hearing.

Section 3: During the investigation, the Ombuds shall inform the Investigating Committee if any investigating procedures are overlooked.

Section 4: During the hearing, the Ombuds shall indicate to the Council if procedural errors occur.

Section 5: The Ombuds shall interrupt the deliberative process if grounds for an appeal arise, and remind the Council of its obligation to recall the accused student in light of future evidence.

Section 6: The Ombuds shall be bound to indicate to the accused student if the deliberative process is defective, and present any grounds for appeal.

Section 7: The Ombuds shall interrupt the deliberative process if a Council member shows undue and prejudicial bias on a case and remind that member of the option to recuse himself or herself.

Section 8: The Ombuds shall initiate an appeal only if based on a matter of defective deliberation, but he or she may be asked to provide testimony when the accused student appeals on other grounds. Otherwise, the accused student shall not be approached by the Ombuds concerning appeals.

Section 9: The Ombuds shall be subject to the same rules of secrecy as the members of the Honor Council.

Article X. Suspension of a Member from the Ombuds Pool

The Council, at its own discretion, may take a vote to recommend to the senior Judicial Affairs officer that an Ombuds not currently involved in a case be removed from the pool. A majority vote of the Honor Council is necessary to pass this recommendation.

Article XI. Cooperation of the Honor Council and Faculty

Section 1: The Honor Council shall cooperate with the Faculty in the best interest of the Honor System.

Section 2: When necessary, the President of Rice University shall be required by the Honor Council to assist in securing Faculty cooperation with the Honor Council.

Article XII. Annual Report

Before the end of the academic year, the outgoing Chair may submit to the President of Rice University a report on the state of the Rice Honor System. A copy of this report will be kept with the Honor Council and the office of Student Judicial Programs. The President of the University or the senior Judicial Affairs officer may request that the outgoing Chair submit a report.

Article XIII. Members

Section 1: All members enter as observing members and remain observing members until they fulfill the requirements to become a voting member.

Section 2: Members must serve on two hearings and one investigation as an observing member to become a voting member. Once they are voting members, they become eligible to vote when serving on panels.

Section 3: A voting member must have served on four panels in the previous semester to be considered an active member in the current semester. Active members have the ability to vote at changeover. Officer candidates must be active members.

Section 4: If a council member fails to serve on at least four panels (either investigations or hearings) in a semester, barring reasonable explanation, it is grounds for suspension or retirement of that member as under Article VIII of the Constitution.

Article XIV. Composition

Section 1: The Composition of the Honor Council shall be as follows

- a. A representative from each of the residential colleges,
- b. Four senior class representatives, four junior class representatives, four sophomore class representatives, and up to 9 undergraduate at-large representatives.
- c. Four new-student representatives to be selected by the Honor Council at the beginning of each academic year.

Section 2: Each residential college will hold elections to select one member of that college as the Honor Council representative for that college. A residential college may only employ other means to select their representative with approval of the Chairs.

Section 3: The class representatives are to be selected and appointed by the University General Elections.

Section 4: The undergraduate at-large representatives are to be nominated by the Chairs and confirmed by a majority vote of the Council.

Section 5: Any undergraduate positions, except college representatives, remaining open after the filing deadline for the first election can be filled according to the procedures for filling undergraduate at-large representatives.

These By-Laws were last revised in February 2024

