

George Mason University

THE HONOR COMMITTEE

A Brief Explanation of the Adjudication Procedures

Accusation packets are available during normal office hours in the Office of the Dean of Students, 302 Student Union I. When a completed packet is returned to this office, an accusation letter is sent by certified mail to the accused student or students. This is normally mailed on the first business day following receipt of the completed charge packet. In this letter, the student is notified of the nature of the charge (plagiarism, cheating, lying), the associated academic course, and the name of the accuser. The accused student is told to contact the Dean of Students within one week to discuss the basis of the accusation and the procedures used to resolve the charge. During the meeting with the Dean, the student is also required to enter a plea to the charge.

If the student accepts responsibility for the violation, a meeting with three members of the Honor Committee is scheduled. The accuser does not normally attend these hearings. The accused student is given an opportunity to present any mitigating circumstances. An appropriate sanction is then determined by the panel members. The Professor's recommendation is always given significant weight in determining the sanction.

If the student denies responsibility for the alleged violation, a more complex procedure is followed. Five members of the Honor Committee, a faculty advisor to the hearing panel, and the accuser meet with the accused student. The accuser outlines the case against the student and the accused then presents a defense. Witnesses may be called by either side. While the procedures are relatively informal and flexible, procedural due process is observed.

To find the student guilty of the offense, four of the five panel members must determine that the case has been proven to a *clear and convincing* level. This standard of proof is defined as between the *preponderance of evidence* level of 51% and the 99+% proof required for *beyond a reasonable doubt*. If the student is found responsible for the violation, the faculty penalty recommendation is reviewed and a sanction imposed.

Honor Code hearings are normally scheduled in the evenings. A guilty plea case can usually be processed within thirty days of filing. A not-guilty case can take several months depending on the number of cases filed in any given semester. Any involved faculty member may request a status report on a case at any time by contacting the Dean of Students (993-2884).

The hearing panel can impose community service, oral and written reprimands, and other non-academic requirements. Changes to a student's grade are recommendations from the Honor Committee to the instructor. Suspension and expulsion recommendations are sent to the Provost's office for approval and implementation.

Questions? Contact the Dean of Students in 302 Student Union I; telephone (703) 993-2884.