

# Graduate and Professional Student Handbook

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Volume 2015 2015-2016

Article 5

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7-2015

## Part II: Graduate and Professional Honor Code

Saint Mary's College of California

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### Recommended Citation

Saint Mary's College of California (2015) "Part II: Graduate and Professional Honor Code," *Graduate and Professional Student Handbook*: Vol. 2015 , Article 5.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.stmarys-ca.edu/graduate-professional-handbook/vol2015/iss1/5>

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# Part 2: Graduate and Professional Academic Honor Code

Saint Mary's College expects every member of its community to promote and abide by ethical standards, both in conduct and exercise of responsibility towards other members of the community. Academic honesty must be demonstrated at all times to maintain the integrity of scholarship and the reputation of the College. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of College policy because, among other things, it undermines the bonds of trust and honesty between members of the community and betrays those who may eventually depend upon the College's academic integrity and knowledge.

As an expression of support for academic integrity throughout the Saint Mary's learning community and as an administrative tool to discourage academic dishonesty, Saint Mary's has implemented an Academic Honor Code. The Academic Honor Code has been approved by the ASSMC Student Body, the Faculty Academic Senate, the provost and the president of Saint Mary's College.

## ACADEMIC HONOR CODE PLEDGE

All enrolled students are required to abide by the pledge. The pledge reads as follows:

As a student member of an academic community based in mutual trust and responsibility, I pledge:

- to do my own work at all times, without giving or receiving inappropriate aid,
- to avoid behaviors that unfairly impede the academic progress of other members of my community, and
- to take reasonable and responsible action in order to uphold my community's academic integrity.

## ACADEMIC HONOR CODE PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

### Individual Responsibility

It is the responsibility of every student and faculty member of the College community to know and practice the tenets of the Academic Honor Code. If there is confusion over the appropriateness of a particular action in light of the code, or if a community member has recommendations about how to amend or alter the code, those questions and suggestions should be addressed to the Academic Honor Council through the AHC coordinator.

### Community Responsibility

In addition to maintaining one's own academic integrity, each member of the academic community should strive to preserve and promote integrity among his/her peers. This community empowers its members to take appropriate action in support of the Academic Honor Code. If a student, faculty member, staff member or administrator suspects a violation of the Academic Honor Code, he or she should take action consistent with the Academic Honor Code Procedures described below. Additional possible actions include:

- Actively encouraging academic integrity among one's peers,
- Using moral suasion to avert a peer's academic dishonesty,

- Alerting a faculty member to suspected violations of academic integrity,
- Educating one another regarding the responsibilities of academic integrity,
- Helping a faculty member maintain an environment that is conducive to academic integrity.

## VIOLATIONS OF THE ACADEMIC HONOR CODE

All violations of the Academic Honor Code are administered by the Academic Honor Council. Members of the academic community are presumed to be familiar with the procedures outlined for determining a violation of the Academic Honor Code and, therefore, ignorance of the code is not available as an excuse for an alleged violation of it.

Forms of violations of the Academic Honor Code include, but are not restricted to:

**In Examinations:** unauthorized talking during an exam; use of "cheat sheets" or other unauthorized course materials during an exam; having someone other than the student registered in the course take an exam; copying from another student's work; giving assistance to another student without the instructor's approval; gaining access to an exam prior to its administration; informing students in other course sections of the contents of an exam; preparing answer sheets or books in advance of an exam without authorization from the instructor; unauthorized collaboration on a take-home exam; altering another person's answers in the preparation, editing or typing of an exam; bringing unauthorized materials into an exam room.

**On Papers and Class Assignments (understood as all work assigned in a course):** submitting work prepared by someone else as one's own; using the thesis or primary ideas of someone else, even if those ideas have been edited or paraphrased, without proper citation; plagiarizing words, phrases, sections, key terms, proofs, graphics, symbols or original ideas from another source without appropriate citation; receiving unauthorized assistance in preparing papers, whether from classmates, peers, family members, or other members of this or any other College community; collaboration within a class or across sections of a class without the consent of the instructor; preparing all or part of a paper for another student; intentional failure to cite a source that was used in preparing the paper; citing sources that were not used or consulted to "pad" a bibliography; citing sources out of another's bibliography without having consulted those sources; re-using previous work without the consent of the current instructor; providing a paper to another student for any purpose other than peer editing or review; using unapproved sources in preparing a paper; lying to an instructor to circumvent grade penalties; interference with access to classrooms, computers or other academic resources.

**In Research:** fabricating or falsifying data in any academic exercise, including labs or fieldwork; using material out of context to inappropriately support one's claims; sabotaging another person's research; using another researcher's ideas without proper citation; taking credit for someone else's work;

hoarding materials and/or equipment to advance one's research at the expense of others.

**In the Use of Academic Resources:** destruction, theft or unauthorized use of laboratory data, research materials (including samples, chemicals, lab animals, printed materials, software, computer technology, audiovisual materials, etc.); stealing or damaging materials from the library or other College facilities; not returning materials when asked to do so; appropriating materials needed by others such that their work is impeded; helping others to steal, hoard, destroy or damage materials.

**In Academic Records:** changing a transcript or grade in any unauthorized way; forging signatures on College documents; willful public misrepresentation of achievements, whether academic, athletic, honorary or extracurricular; falsifying letters of recommendation to or from college personnel; bribing any representative of the College to gain academic advantage; breaking confidentiality about the proceedings of the Academic Honor Council, an Academic Review Board, or an investigative committee in the student's program.

These types of conduct constitute violations of the Academic Honor Code and will be considered, if determined to have occurred, as acts of academic dishonesty. Any conduct that represents falsely one's own performance or interferes with that of another is academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is distinguished from academic inadvertence. The Academic Honor Council or the dean or program director for undergraduate professional and graduate programs, receives and considers all reports of conduct that is alleged to be a violation of the code and, thereafter, decides whether the alleged conduct, if determined to have occurred, constitutes academic dishonesty or academic inadvertence, which involves an act that might appear to be a violation of the Academic Honor Code, but is determined during the Review Board process not to be. In cases of academic inadvertence, no charge of academic dishonesty is made and the student is referred to the instructor for appropriate resolution.

The Academic Honor Code is not intended to impede or inhibit the free exchange of ideas and collaborative learning that are hallmarks of a Saint Mary's education. The College supports and encourages cooperative learning, group projects, tutoring, mentoring or other forms of interchange of ideas among students and faculty, one of the most important benefits of academic life.

## OVERSIGHT AND SANCTIONS

The procedures for the administration of the Academic Honor Code, the determination of violations and the imposition of sanctions are overseen by the Academic Honor Council (AHC) and the Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies.

### OVERSIGHT: ACADEMIC HONOR COUNCIL

#### Graduate and Professional Honor Council Membership

The Honor Council will include graduate and undergraduate professional students and faculty with representation from all schools. There will be 15 graduate members total (three students and two faculty members representing each of the three schools), each serving a one-year term. These members

share special responsibility for the dissemination and implementation of the Academic Honor Code.

### Responsibilities of the Academic Honor Council

The responsibilities of the AHC include, but are not limited to, the following:

- To review and revise the Academic Honor Code as necessary, offering recommendations for changes to the code to the Admissions and Academic Regulations Committee of the Academic Senate,
- To constitute Review Boards from among its membership to consider alleged violations of the code,
- To consider requests for the removal of "XF" grades from student transcripts and records.

### Coordinator of the AHC

The coordinator's responsibilities are: to serve as first contact for a party who wishes to register a concern; to maintain office hours during which community members may file concerns, seek advice, obtain written materials relevant to the Academic Honor Code; to update written materials and information as per the instructions of the AHC; to distribute materials to appropriate parties during student orientation and at the beginning of new academic terms; to function as a "neutral party" in organizing and scheduling reviews by the AHC; to contact all involved parties and inform them of their rights and responsibilities in the process of pursuing a concern; to assign Advisors at the earliest possible time; to compile brief case inventories on concerns that are raised; to schedule and book meetings of the Academic Honor Council at large, and to coordinate the constitution and meetings of Honor Review Boards.

### Honor Review Boards

In cases when a violation of the Academic Honor Code is not handled through the channels of No-Contest Resolution, the coordinator establishes an Honor Review Board comprised of members of the AHC.

Honor Review Boards are comprised of five voting members: three student members (one from each school) and two faculty members (at least one from the school in which the offense occurred), and also include one non-voting facilitator, who is not directly associated with the program related to the alleged violation. The appropriate sanction is decided by the majority vote of the voting members.

The non-voting facilitator serves as the neutral presiding officer of the review and is typically a disinterested faculty member, program director or dean. The facilitator is also responsible to help the respective parties in their understanding of the Academic Honor Code, provide confidential advice, assist in preparing the respective parties for the Honor Review Board process, aid the parties in understanding the decisions of the Honor Review Board, and inform the parties of processes for petition for reconsideration. At no time during the review does the facilitator formally represent the party in the hearing or speak on his/her behalf; rather, each party is expected to speak for him- or herself.

### SANCTIONS

#### Standard Sanction: Assignment of an "XF" Grade

For violations pertaining to a course, the standard sanction upon a student who commits a violation of the Academic Honor Code is the assignment of an XF grade in the course. For violations that do not pertain to a course, the sanction is determined by the Honor Review Board hearing the case.

The XF grade indicates failure in the course, and that the course failure was the result of a violation of the Academic Honor Code. A notation will be included in the student's transcript indicating the meaning of the grade. For the purposes of computing grade point average and class standing, the XF will be treated as an F.

In addition to the notation on the student's transcript, an XF grade disqualifies a student from representing the College as the leader of an approved extracurricular activity, or as a member of an athletic or scholarly team that is sponsored by the College. Students with XF grades will be eliminated from consideration for departmental or College awards and honors. No student with a standing XF grade may be a member of the Academic Honor Council.

Through a letter filed with the AHC Coordinator, a student may petition the Academic Honor Council to remove an XF grade in the semester following its assignment. A successful petition will result in the replacement of the XF with the grade of F and the removal of the notation from the student's transcript. Such a petition will be considered if the student has completed a non-credit seminar on academic integrity (administered by the Academic Honor Council) and has avoided any further violation of the Academic Honor Code. The decision to remove an XF grade resides with the Academic Honor Council and is not guaranteed merely with completion of the seminar on academic integrity. A letter reflecting the violation, the sanction, and the removal of the XF grade remains in the student file held in the Office of the Registrar.

### Alternative Sanctions

That the assignment of an XF grade is the standard sanction for violations that pertain to coursework does not preclude the right of the Honor Review Board to assign an alternative sanction, one that is either more harsh or more lenient. The rationale for an alternative sanction other than the standard is the nature of the offense and not the status or identity of the offender. The community member who brings forth the charge against the alleged violator may recommend a particular sanction to the Honor Review Board, but the assignment of the sanction rests with the board.

Alternative sanctions include but are not limited to:

- Reprimand by the AHC, with a letter placed in the student's permanent file in the Registrar's office,
- Community service requirements, either to the College or to a selected community agency consistent with the offense committed,
- Community education requirements, including participation in the development of workshops, displays, bulletin boards, testimonials, brochures or College forums,
- Attendance of a non-credit seminar on academic integrity,
- Academic or extracurricular probation,
- Loss of privileges for College leadership or athletic participation,
- Removal from the course, with alternate plans for completing it,

- Failure of the assignment,
- Failure of the course,
- Modified XF grade, with no limitation on extracurricular activities,
- Suspension from the College at the end of the term,
- Immediate suspension from the College,
- Expulsion from the College,
- Withholding of a degree, even in cases where all College requirements have been met,
- Revocation of a degree already received.

**Note:** All student information generated in connection with the code and its implementation are education records of the student(s) involved and cannot be discussed or disclosed (or redisclosed) other than on an educational need-to-know basis or with the student(s)'s prior written and dated consent.

### PROCEDURES FOR SUSPECTED VIOLATIONS OF THE ACADEMIC HONOR CODE

The procedure to be followed in any suspected violation of the Academic Honor Code will follow three steps, and, in certain instances (as specified, below), a fourth step.

#### Step One: Initial Discussion

**If a faculty member becomes aware of conduct that might constitute a violation of the code, then he or she should first discuss the conduct with the suspected violator. This discussion might include asking the suspected violator(s) to explain the situation or confronting them with relevant information about the suspected conduct. The possible outcomes are:**

- If the faculty member concludes that no violation has occurred, then the matter will be dropped.
- If the discussion results in confirmation by both parties that a violation has occurred, then the faculty member requests a No-Contest Resolution by contacting the coordinator (Step Two).
- If the discussion results in lack of confirmation by both parties that a violation has occurred, then the faculty member refers the case to review by an Honor Review Board by contacting the coordinator (Step Three).
- If a student or staff member wishes to report conduct that might constitute a violation of the code, then he/she has two options:
  - Refer the matter to the relevant faculty member, or
  - Refer the matter to the Academic Honor Council by contacting the coordinator (Step Three).
  - Upon referral by the faculty member, the coordinator will contact the student. From that point, the student has five business days to schedule and attend an intake meeting.

#### Step Two: No-Contest Resolution

The No-Contest Resolution process is an option in cases when the following four conditions are met: 1) neither party contests that the conduct has occurred; 2) the nature of the violation caused by the conduct is clear; 3) the violation is course-related, and 4) both parties agree to the standard sanction for the admitted violation.

In No-Contest Resolution, the standard sanction of XF is applied. To provide fairness in its application, the coordinator will witness the No-Contest Resolution process. The coordinator will serve only as an advisor to the proceedings and not as an agent of formal review. He or she will clearly inform both

parties regarding the nature and consequences of No-Contest Resolution. By choosing No-Contest Resolution, both parties waive the right to contest the matter at a later date.

### Step Three: Honor Review Board

In the absence of a No-Contest Resolution, the case is referred through the AHC Coordinator to an Honor Review Board for review and determination.

**Preparation.** The coordinator convenes the Honor Review Board. Once the Chair has established the Honor Review Board for a case, it will hold a review hearing. The hearing is a closed and confidential meeting with the person raising the concern, the alleged violator(s), and any witnesses who have relevant information that either party wishes to include in the proceedings. Prior to the review hearing, the facilitator will provide a list of witnesses and relevant information to both the person raising the concern and the alleged violator(s).

**Confidentiality.** All of the testimony and relevant information from the review hearing will be kept in confidence, in accordance with the College policy and to protect the privacy of the student(s) involved under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"). Failure to maintain the confidentiality of the matters and/or the privacy of the student(s) involved will result in a separate and independent charge of code violation. No lawyers or lawyers' representatives (e.g. paralegals) representing the involved parties or family members of either party may be present during the review process or the deliberations of the Honor Review Board.

**Multiple Alleged violators.** In the case of multiple alleged violators in closely related cases, one Honor Review Board will hear all testimony and evidence. The facilitator has the discretion to hold one review for all students concerned, subject to receipt of the prior written and dated consent of the student(s) involved, or separate reviews for each alleged violator. Reviews will be closed to all other persons unless all parties concerned consent in writing to an open review.

**The Review Hearing.** The facilitator sets and coordinates the time and place for the review hearing, as well as its structure and flow. Each party has the opportunity to present his or her position and offer relevant information and testimony, including that of witnesses, to support their respective positions. Members of the Honor Review Board may forward questions during any phase of the review with the permission of the facilitator.

**Deliberation and decision.** Upon hearing all arguments, the Honor Review Board meets privately to deliberate and make its decision. A valid decision constitutes a simple majority arriving at a common conclusion as to whether a violation "more likely than not" occurred. In the event of a split or tied vote, the case will be referred to the full body of the AHC for deliberation and decision. Within 48 hours of the close of deliberations, the facilitator of the Honor Review Board informs both parties about the decision and sanction, if appropriate, through written notification. Notwithstanding this notice requirement, failure to inform both parties of the decision and sanction within 48 hours does not constitute a material procedural irregularity.

**Removal of a Board Member.** Any member of the Board who has a conflict of interest or bias or whose participation would give rise to the appearance of bias or conflict of interest must recuse him or herself from the deliberation and decision process. If during the review hearing or the deliberations the facilitator

detects a bias that may interfere with the impartial consideration of information by any voting member of the Honor Review Board and that may significantly affect the outcome of the Board's decision, the facilitator must remove that representative from the Review Board immediately. Review and deliberations will continue with the remaining members.

**Ad Hoc Review Boards.** In the event that a review is necessary outside of the confines of the regular academic calendar (in the summer or over Christmas break, for example), then the Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies may convene a special ad hoc Honor Review Board consisting of two students and one faculty member. If possible, those representatives should be current or former members of the Academic Honor Council, but the dean may exercise the right to appoint other representatives as necessary.

### Step Four: Petition to Reconsider

**Grounds for Reconsideration.** Except as permitted below, the decision of the Honor Review Board is final (whether it is the product of a regular or ad hoc review board), and will be reported to the Academic Honor Council as well as to the Registrar's office. The decision may be reconsidered only if: new information not available at the time of the deliberation and Board's decision can be offered for consideration, one or more parties can provide information that supports an allegation that there was a failure to follow procedure that materially affected the decision of the board, or the sanction applied goes beyond the standard sanction. If the case is not subject to reconsideration, then the matter ends at this step.

**Reconsideration:** Any petition for reconsideration of a decision by the Honor Review Board is filed with Vice Provost. The Vice Provost determines whether or not the information and reasons offered support the request for reconsideration (based on the above criteria). If the Vice Provost deems that the information offered is sufficient to support reconsideration of the case, then it is brought before the full body of the Academic Honor Council. The Council rehears the case, taking into account the new information and/or material procedural irregularity that has been established. The Vice Provost presents the original case (in brief), the board's decision, and the stated grounds of the petition to the AHC. The AHC may, in its sole discretion, rely on existing written information or call for new information and/or testimony as needed to allow a full and fair consideration of the petition. If the AHC disagrees with the decision of the Honor Review Board, then a new decision may be reached by the entire Academic Honor Council by a majority vote of those present. The Vice Provost will be excluded from the initial vote and will only vote in the case of a tie. If the AHC upholds the decision of the Honor Review Board, then the case will be closed. In either situation, the decision of the Academic Honor Council is final.

### Final Responsibility

**Saint Mary's, through its designated officers, faculty and/or employees is solely charged with and responsible for interpreting and applying the Academic Honor Code. In exercising that responsibility, the College chooses to give students a distinct and significant role in designing the code, hearing cases, recommending sanctions, and educating the campus community about the importance of academic integrity. This student participation, however, in no way prevents Saint Mary's from exercising its sole discretion, without prior notice, in interpreting, implementing and/or amending these policies and procedures.**