

Mount Vernon High School Honor Court Constitution

Article I. Honor Court Mission Statement

One of Mount Vernon High School's core values is academic excellence. Essential to this value is a commitment to academic integrity at all times. To ensure academic honesty, all members of the Mount Vernon High School (MVHS) student body are required to abide by the MVHS Honor Code.

If a student receives a discipline referral for breaking the MVHS Honor Code, the student may appeal the referral to the MVHS Honor Court. The Honor Court will convene, listen to and question the appellant and witness(es), deliberate, and determine whether the student is guilty or not guilty of the Honor Code violation cited on the discipline referral.

Article II. Honor Code

At the beginning of each school year, every student will be required to sign the following statement on a document that will be separate from the Students Rights and Responsibilities booklet: *"I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on any test, quiz, research paper, lab or any other student-generated work as long as I am enrolled at Mt. Vernon High School."* These documents will be stored in the appropriate subschool office for possible use in a hearing if the student is brought before the Honor Court.

Each new student who arrives at Mount Vernon High School will sign the Honor Code pledge when registering with his/her counselor.

Article III. Organization of the Court

Section One: Composition

The Honor Court shall consist of seven members: five voting members and two alternates. The Court shall also be advised by a minimum of two faculty or staff sponsors.

Section Two: The Application Process

A committee that consists of the Honor Court administrator and the faculty advisors shall appoint students to the Honor Court. Selection will be based on the qualifying criteria.

When places on the Court become available, the Honor Court administrator or a designee shall allow students to apply for a period of time to be no less than one week. In order to qualify the student must:

- Have and maintain a 3.0 GPA.
- Be in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade.
- Obtain two teacher recommendations.
- Write an essay explaining his/her interest in becoming a member of the Court.
- Obtain approval / signature from the appropriate subschool administrator that the applicant has a clean discipline record. A clean discipline record indicates that the student has no documented Alternative Instructional Arrangement (AIA) detentions (i.e. after school or Saturday school detentions) or out of school suspensions (OSS) during the applicant's middle school and high school years.
- Obtain parent/guardian's approval and signature.

NOTE: All members of the Court are expected to attend all hearings and meetings unless excused by the faculty sponsor or administrator. The member must notify the faculty sponsor or administrator of the absence within 24 hours of receiving notice of an upcoming Court session. Court sessions take precedence over other commitments.

A Court member's first unexcused absence from a Court session will result in counseling and a written warning. A subsequent unexcused absence from a Court session will result in removal from the Court.

Section Three: Term of Office

Once appointed to the Court, a student will remain a member until he/she graduates, moves out of school boundaries, declines to serve, resigns, or is removed for a violation.

Section Four: Permanent Officers of the Honor Court and Duties

1. Chief Justice

The Chief Justice will be elected by the members of the Court and will remain in this position for one school year. The Chief Justice may serve more than one term if he/she is reelected.

The Chief Justice shall:

- Supervise the work of the Court.
- Call sessions to order.
- Preside over the Court.
- Determine which alternate member will vote if a voting member cannot be present.
- Attend all hearings unless excused in advance by the faculty sponsor or administrator.

The Chief Justice will be a voting member unless he/she recluses him/herself.

2. Associate Justice

The members of the Court will elect the Associate Justice who will serve as the Chief Justice if the Chief Justice cannot be present. In the event that the Chief Justice is removed from the Court, the Associate Justice shall take on the Chief Justice's responsibilities until a new election can take place. The Associate Justice will be a voting member unless he/she recluses him/herself. The Associate Justice is expected to attend all hearings unless excused in advance by the faculty sponsor or administrator.

3. Clerk

The members of the Court will elect the Clerk of the Court. The Clerk will be responsible for keeping track of all paperwork related to the Court. He/she will also be responsible for providing a summary of the Court's proceedings and maintaining any records that are deemed necessary. The Clerk will always be a voting member of the Court unless he/she recluses him/herself. The Clerk is expected to attend all hearings unless excused in advance by the faculty sponsor or administrator.

4. Other Members of the Court

The rest of the Court will consist of two voting members who will listen to cases, ask relevant questions, and make a determination based on the evidence.

The remaining two members are alternates who listen to the cases, ask questions, and deliberate, but do not vote unless a voting member cannot be present. The Chief Justice will decide which of the two alternates will vote on any case prior to the case being heard.

The members of the Court are expected to attend all hearings unless excused in advance by the faculty sponsor or administrator.

Section Five: Faculty Members

The Court shall have a minimum of one faculty member present at all proceedings. The faculty advisor(s) can listen to testimony, ask questions, and participate in deliberations. The faculty advisors are non-voting members of the Court.

Section Six: Removal from the Court

A faculty advisor or administrator can remove any member of the Court. Reasons for such a removal can include but are not limited to:

- The student's GPA falls below 3.0.
- The student is disciplined.
- The student commits an Honor Code violation.
- The student violates the confidentiality of the Court.
- The student consistently fails to perform his/her duties.

- The student fails to meet attendance requirements. Court members must attend all hearings unless excused in advance by the Court faculty sponsor or administrator. Court hearings take precedence over other commitments.
- The student acts in an unethical or inappropriate manner.

Removal from the Court shall be immediate and permanent for the rest of the student's high school years.

Article IV. Faculty Responsibilities

Section One: Reporting a Suspected Violation

As a member of the Mount Vernon High School Community, each member of the faculty and staff is responsible for referring all cases of suspected cheating, plagiarism, and any other violation of the Honor Code to the student's subschool principal.

Section Two: Court Decision

Faculty members shall abide by the decision of the Court and the administrator in charge of the Court.

Section Three: Faculty and Staff Responsibilities

Faculty and staff members shall:

- inform students of their responsibilities to uphold the Honor Code.
- correct behavior(s) in students who they feel are starting to exhibit questionable behaviors as related to the Honor Code.
- regularly remind students of their responsibility to uphold all portions of the Honor Code.
- conduct both formal and informal lessons on the Honor Code, including examples of violations of the Code, as needed.
- display the Honor Code in each classroom.

Article V. Student Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all students to:

- ensure that they do not violate any portion of the Honor Code.
- question faculty and staff members when uncertain about potential violations of the Honor Code.
- seek permission from the appropriate faculty member(s) when they wish to combine their work with other student(s) on a project.

Article VI. Grounds for Conviction for Violation of the Honor Code

Activities that have the effect or intention of interfering with education, pursuit of knowledge, or fair evaluation of a student's performance are prohibited. Examples of such activities include, but are not limited to, the following definitions:

Cheating: using or attempting to use unauthorized assistance, material, or study aids in examinations or other academic work or preventing, or attempting to prevent, another student from using authorized assistance, material, or study aids.

Example: using a cheat sheet during a quiz or exam, altering a graded exam and resubmitting it for a better grade, etc.

Plagiarism: using the ideas, data, or language of another without specific or proper acknowledgment.

Example: copying another person's paper (including homework assignments), article, or computer work and submitting it as their own work, copying someone else's ideas without attribution, such as failing to use quotation marks and footnotes where appropriate, etc.

Fabrication: submitting contrived or altered information in any academic exercise.

Example: making up data for an experiment, misrepresenting data, citing nonexistent articles, contriving sources, etc.

Misrepresentation of academic records: misrepresenting or tampering with or attempting to tamper with any portion of a student's transcripts or academic record.

Example: forging a change of grade slip, tampering with computer records, falsifying academic information on a resume, etc.

Facilitating academic dishonesty: knowingly helping or attempting to help another violate any provision of the Code.

Example: working together on a take_home exam, allowing someone to copy one's work, etc.

Unfair advantage: attempting to gain unauthorized advantage over fellow students in an academic exercise.

Example: gaining or providing unauthorized access to examination materials, obstructing or interfering with another student's efforts on an academic exercise, lying about a need for an extension for an exam or paper, continuing to write even when time is up during an exam, destroying or keeping library materials for one's own use., etc.

Violating any of the above conditions will result in a referral to the student's subschool principal.

Article VII. Procedures

Section One: Meeting Schedule

The Honor Court will meet as necessary, whenever there is a case to be heard or business to be conducted.

Section Two: Preliminary Actions

When a student wishes to appeal a referral for an Honor Code violation, the referral will be sent to the administrator in charge of the Court. This administrator will review the referral and check that there is sufficient documentation of the incident to move forward with a Court hearing. After this review, the faculty sponsor for the Court contacts all involved parties and sets a Court date.

The Honor Court must act on the Honor Code referral within a two week period or by the Court date set by the administrator who oversees the Court.

Section Three: Honor Court Proceedings

In order for the Court to convene, a minimum of five Court members and a faculty advisor must be present. If a quorum of these individuals cannot come together, the Court will not meet and a new date will be set.

The Court, in consultation with a faculty sponsor, directs the manner and order of the presentation of information, to include the testimony of the appellant and other witnesses.

Any appellant who has an unexcused absence, cuts class, or fails to appear on the day he/she is scheduled to be heard by the Honor Court shall forfeit this opportunity and shall be found guilty. The student's discipline referral will be given back to his/her subschool principal and an appropriate consequence will be assigned as outlined in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook

The following is the general procedure for a Court session:

1. The appellant is called before the Court
2. The referral is read to the appellant, and he/she presents oral and/or documentary information on his/her behalf. This information must be relevant to the case before the Court. The appellant may also bring one witness to the hearing to speak on the appellant's behalf.

The members of the Court and/or faculty advisors may ask the appellant questions to help determine guilt or innocence.

The appellant is excused.

3. After the appellant's statements, the Chief Justice calls any witnesses the Court deems necessary to arrive at a just conclusion. The witness is usually the faculty member who witnessed the Honor Code violation and wrote the discipline referral.

The members of the Court and/or faculty advisors may ask the witness questions to help determine the guilt or innocence of the appellant.

The witness is excused.

4. At the end of the questioning period, the appellant or the witness may be recalled for further questioning or to make final statements.

5. The Court enters a closed session to deliberate based on the evidence given during the Court session. Conviction of a student requires a 4/5 vote by the voting members of the Court.

The faculty advisors and administrator do not have a vote in this process.

6. The Court will not announce its decision to the appellant at the end of the session. Instead, the appellant will be informed of the verdict by his/her subschool principal and any action to be taken will be noted on the discipline referral.

If found guilty, the appellant will receive the appropriate measure from his/her subschool principal in accordance with the guidelines found in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. The appellant may appeal the Honor Court decision to the principal.

Article VIII. Amendments to the Honor Court Constitution

Section One: Procedure for Amendments

1. Proposed amendments to the Honor Court Constitution originating in the Student Government Association or the Honor Court must be approved by a 4/5 vote by the Honor Court and 2/3 majority by the Student Government Association.
2. Amendments must also be approved by the administrative staff to ensure that no FCPS policy or regulation is violated.
3. The amendment shall take effect immediately upon ratification.