

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 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 evidence indicating the violation was confined to only a portion of the assignment.

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.

Assignment Weight	Penalty	Alternative Resolution Penalty
40%+ of the course grade	F in the course and 2 semester suspension	F in the course
30-40% of the course grade	F in the course and 1 semester suspension	F in the course
20-30% of the course grade	F in the course	3 letter grade reduction
10-20% of the course grade	3 letter grade reduction	2 letter grade reduction
5-10% of the course grade	2 letter grade reduction	1 letter grade reduction
under 5% of the course grade	1 letter grade reduction	Letter of Reprimand

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 in 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.

Aggravating factors include, but are not limited to:

- 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.