

## The Honor Code: Living Our Values

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Wake Forest takes integrity and academic honesty as key characteristics of the community. They matter. They are a critical part of our mission to educate the whole person by helping students act with honor, learn from mistakes, and develop as people of character.

The Honor Code reflects these values by stating our expectations and outlining our systems of accountability. Students are introduced to this information very early in their time at Wake: they are directed to the Honor Code as part of the Student Code of Conduct, they take an online tutorial, and they sign an Honor Pledge (usually during Convocation) as part of Orientation.

We have additional opportunities to remind students of the commitment to academic honesty and integrity in each of our classes, and taking advantage of these chances supports the culture of honor we want to thrive at Wake Forest. This work remains important during this time, when so much about what we do as teachers and learners is being reconfigured. The good news is that while cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are perceived to happen more frequently in the online context, research suggests that is not the case; not much has changed in the numbers of self-reported cheating activity. This doesn't mean that cheating isn't happening online, of course, but it does suggest that it's not happening anymore rampantly than in traditional learning formats. (Doug Ledermann article on IHE, July 22, 2020 <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/07/22/technology-best-way-stop-online-cheating-no-experts-say-better>)

We know that students are less likely to cheat when they feel supported and equipped to complete the task successfully. Stress, understandably, can have the opposite effect. We can take several steps to mitigate the temptations to cheat in relatively easy ways; here are a few to consider:

- Discuss the importance of academic honesty with students early in the semester—and keep the conversation going.
  - Encourage them to identify core principles and expected behaviors.
  - Remind them of the commitment to the Honor Code they expressed when they signed the Honor Code Pledge.
  - Prompt them to accept that they are part of a community to which they are accountable and in which they can hold everyone accountable for maintaining integrity.
- Be clear about your expectations and policies.
  - Include them in your syllabus and point them out to students.
  - Be specific about your expectations for consulting outside sources, working with peers, using online references, citing sources, etc.
- Develop more frequent and low-stakes quizzes and assignments rather than high-stakes, high pressure exams, infrequent exams.
- Have students sign an honor pledge before exams and written assignments.
  - This helps to remind them of their commitment, and research shows the practice to help in curbing dishonesty.

Of course, even when we do these things, there will be instances of cheating, plagiarism, etc. When that happens, we have a system for holding students accountable. The Honor and Ethics Council (HEC) is the body appointed to oversee adherence to the academic Honor Code. As a body, the HEC is best positioned to adjudicate cases of academic dishonesty in a consistent manner, so that all students have access to a standard process that takes into account the best interests of both the individual student and the community at large. If you encounter instances of academic dishonesty, referring it to the HEC process (by contacting the Judicial Liaison) is one of the best ways to support our broader culture of academic integrity.

Below are links to resources and references you might find helpful, as well as a copy of the Honor Code pledge students sign during Convocation and language you might consider including in your syllabi.

We appreciate all that you do to support and sustain a culture of integrity within our academic community. Our students are better for it. As we go into the semester, please be intentional in supporting our community's integrity and academic honesty. In keeping with our primary goal to educate, start with instituting practices and policies that support learning and disincentivize academic dishonesty. Follow through by holding students responsible for unacceptable behavior. Our students will benefit from this character-building commitment. Thank you in advance for all the important work you will do with and for our students.

Additional Resources:

**The Honor System as outlined in the Undergraduate Student Handbook:**

<https://studentconduct.wfu.edu/honor-system-wfu/>

**"Academic Writing"** – a page on the Wake Forest English Department website outlining basic expectations for collegiate writing, including an explanation of plagiarism and an online plagiarism tutorial: <https://english.wfu.edu/course-information/academic-writing/>

**The Honor Code Pledge that Students Sign:**

Wake Forest University is firmly committed to principles of honor and ethical conduct. The Honor Code embodies a spirit of trust that pervades all aspects of student life. It is the responsibility of every student to act honorably in all phases of student life and protect the integrity of the Honor Code. In specific terms, this means that each student agrees not to deceive any member of the community; not to steal, cheat, or plagiarize on academic work; and not to engage in any other form of academic misconduct. Living within the Honor Code means that we can trust each other and that we accept responsibility for our own behavior. As a student at Wake Forest University, I pledge to support and uphold the Honor Code. I will endeavor to make it an integral part of my life and promote its values in the community.

**A sample statement for course syllabi:**

Wake Forest University is committed to a culture of academic integrity. As a part of this community, you share the responsibility for creating a place of honesty, intellectual curiosity, and individual accountability. As you committed to with your honor pledge signature, you agree "not to deceive any member of the community; not to steal, cheat, or plagiarize on academic work; and not to engage in any

other form of academic misconduct.” If you have questions about documenting your work, working with external sources, working with peers on assigned work, etc., consult with me as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Honor and Ethics Council.

**The HEC Co-Chairs are Erica Still ([stillel@wfu.edu](mailto:stillel@wfu.edu)) and Ellen Kirkman ([kirkman@wfu.edu](mailto:kirkman@wfu.edu))**

**The Judicial Liaison for 2020-2021 is Barry Maine ([maine@wfu.edu](mailto:maine@wfu.edu))**