

The Honor Code at  
TMI – The Episcopal School of Texas



The mission of TMI is to provide an excellent educational community with values based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, challenging motivated students to develop their full potential in service and leadership.



# Frequently Asked Questions about the Honor Code At TMI – The Episcopal School of Texas

## 1. Why does TMI have an Honor Code?

The words of the TMI Honor Code, “Because I believe that integrity is essential, I promise not to lie, cheat, or steal,” support and uphold an important community standard and tradition embodied in the overall TMI mission statement. As in other areas, the TMI community has chosen to hold itself to a higher standard of personal integrity.

## 2. How can I avoid compromising my personal integrity?

Most alleged honor code violations involve thoughtlessness on the part of the accused student. Students get in a rush or allow a stressful situation to dictate their actions rather than carefully considering what they are doing beforehand. They compromise their personal integrity because at that moment cheating, or lying, or stealing seems to offer an easy way out of an unpleasant situation. Later, when they thoughtfully consider what they’ve done, most students know what they did was dishonest.

Here are three tests that can help students determine if something they are thinking about doing may be dishonest (these tests are also printed on the back of the TMI Honor Code pocket card):

**(1) Does this act attempt to deceive anyone or allow anyone to be deceived?**

**(2) Does this act allow me or someone else to gain an unfair advantage over others?**

**(3) Would I be dissatisfied by the outcome if I were on the receiving end of this act?**

If applying these tests doesn’t provide clear guidance, students should seek advice from their student honor representative or from a member of the faculty or staff.

## 3. How do I find my class honor representative if I have a question or concern?

Each class honor representative is introduced during the honor assembly at the start of the year and names and photos of the members of the Honor Council are posted in Coates Hall and in Ayres Hall.

## 4. What constitutes cheating and how can I avoid it?

Cheating means using unauthorized means to gain or to give an unfair advantage

over your classmates. For example, looking on another student's test or quiz or copying answers from another student's graded work constitutes cheating. Receiving or providing information that is not available to all students about what is on a test or other graded assignment constitutes cheating. Having a "cheat sheet" (this includes electronic information) with material not available to others who are taking the test constitutes cheating. It is important to note that having a cheat sheet of any kind in your possession during a test or quiz is an honor violation even if you do not actually use the information on the cheat sheet.

The best ways to avoid cheating are (1) to do your own work, (2) to keep your eyes on your own paper during tests and quizzes, (3) to never discuss what is on a test or quiz outside of class, (4) to never make or use a cheat sheet of any kind, and (5) to always ask your teacher for clarification ahead of time if you are unsure about what kind of help you may get on any graded work (included graded homework).

## **5. Can I help or tutor other students without being guilty of cheating?**

Yes, helping fellow students understand material or concepts is always encouraged in the TMI community; however, you must not provide specific answers or guidance or material that would give an unfair advantage to the student you are helping. For example, helping students understand how to do a graded homework problem is usually okay. Simply allowing students to copy your homework problem solution is not okay. Helping students edit their graded essays by pointing out errors or suggesting revisions is usually okay. Fixing the errors in students' papers for them or letting them simply copy from your paper is not okay. Helping students review for a test or quiz is usually okay. Telling students specifically what is on or not on a test or quiz when all the test takers did not have access to this information is not okay. If you are unsure about what kind of help you can provide, always check with the teacher who assigned the work before you give the student specific help. Again, the standard is fairness (apply test #2 from the Honor Code card).

## **6. What is plagiarism and how can I avoid it?**

Plagiarism means presenting words and ideas that belong to others as if these were your own words and ideas. Academic integrity requires that you clearly show your audience the sources of any words and ideas in your work that did not come from your own head. Often students accused of plagiarism will explain that they didn't make their sources clear to their audience because they couldn't remember where they got the information, so a key to avoiding plagiarism is to carefully keep track of all sources and to correctly document these sources in your work. Always read over your work carefully before you submit it for grade, asking yourself if a reader or hearer will be able to clearly identify any words or ideas that are not your own and the source(s) of these unoriginal words and ideas. If you are unsure whether or not you have clearly distinguished between your own words and ideas and those of others, you should see your teacher before the assignment is due to clarify any possible plagiarism. Once an assignment is submitted for grade, it is too late to claim you didn't understand how to show the

source(s) of any words and ideas that were not your own.

### **7. What is the difference between stealing and simply borrowing?**

Stealing is taking something that does not belong to you without first getting permission from the owner. You can avoid being accused of stealing by never borrowing anything without first getting the owner's permission. As a last resort, if you cannot find the rightful owner and must borrow an item, always leave a clear, signed, and dated note for the item's owner indicating what you borrowed and when you will return it.

### **8. What happens if I am accused of an Honor Code violation?**

You will receive notification to appear before the members of the Honor Council in a formal honor hearing to answer their questions about the alleged offense. This notification will be done privately, and you will be expected to refrain from discussing the case except with your student honor representative, your faculty advisor, or one of the faculty sponsors of the Honor Council. The honor hearing will be conducted as discretely as possible, and the members of the Honor Council will treat you with dignity and courtesy. You may ask your faculty advisor to accompany you to this honor hearing (not to represent you before the Honor Council but to give you encouragement and support). The members of the Honor Council will expect you to be truthful in your answers. Based on your testimony as well as the testimony of others, the members of the Honor Council will vote individually (and secretly) to find you guilty or not guilty. If you are found not guilty, you will be informed of this finding, and all records of the accusation will be destroyed. If you are found guilty, you will be informed of this finding and of your punishment.

*NOTE: the Honor Council recommends punishments for honor code violations to the school administration, and the administration approves or modifies the punishment and imposes it. A record of your honor violation will be kept on file for the remainder of your time at TMI. Having an honor conviction on your record may prevent you from holding certain student offices and will be considered in any future honor cases you are accused of.*

### **9. What should I do if I realize I have violated the Honor Code?**

You should turn yourself in to your student honor representative or to a faculty member. The fact that you realized your error and turned yourself in will be taken into consideration by the Honor Council during any honor hearing that results.

### **10. What should I do if I see someone violating the Honor Code?**

Since the Honor Code is a community standard, violations of the code should never be ignored by members of the community. The Honor Code belongs to the community, so the whole community must be involved in living by it and upholding it. At the same time, no one wants the TMI community to operate in an oppressive climate of suspicion or mistrust or false accusations. Although it takes personal courage and is sometimes difficult for people to challenge the integrity of others, the best course of action when you observe an honor violation is for

you to confront the student yourself and explain what you saw. Then give this student a chance to explain himself or herself. If this explanation is unsatisfactory, then you should urge the student to turn himself or herself in to a teacher or to your class honor representative. Please take a moment to record the key details of the incident such as dates, times, and names. Then, in a day or two, please follow up to ensure that this student did turn himself or herself in. If they did not, then you should report what you saw to your class honor representative or to a faculty member. Of course, another way to handle a suspected honor violation is for you to report what you saw or heard to a teacher or to your class honor representative yourself. As a witness, you should expect to be asked to provide truthful testimony and to answer questions about your report from the members of the Honor Council. If warranted, the Honor Council can arrange for students to testify privately.

### **11. What is the TMI Book of Honor?**

In a solemn ceremony at the beginning of each school year, all students recite the TMI Honor Code and then sign their names in the *TMI Book of Honor* as a formal and public way of affirming their commitment to personal integrity as members of an honorable community.

### **12. What does it mean to pledge my graded work?**

Rather than writing all the words of the full honor pledge on every piece of graded work, “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work,” students simply write the word “pledge” on all their graded assignments. By doing this, students are affirming and reminding themselves of their commitment to academic integrity. Forgetting or neglecting to write “pledge” on an assignment does not absolve students of the honor standard; the pledge is simply a reminder of this standard.

### **13. Where can I get answers to my questions about honor?**

The best source is your class honor representative. If you have questions concerning a specific assignment, you should ask the teacher who assigned the work.

### **14. Does the Honor Code apply to me outside of school?**

As a member of the TMI community, you have a responsibility to maintain your personal integrity in everything you do. Since dishonest behavior outside of school is likely to reflect poorly on the school as a whole, you should do your best to abide by the TMI standards for honorable behavior in all you do. The three tests on the back of your TMI Honor Code card provide useful guidance for actions and behaviors outside of school as well.

### **15. What do the student representatives on the Honor Council do?**

Besides living by the TMI Honor Code themselves as members of the TMI community, members of the Honor Council have been elected by their classmates to assume the responsibility for teaching and enforcing the Honor Code. As

teachers, they provide formal and informal instruction, encouragement, and materials promoting the Honor Code. They also investigate reported honor violations and deliberate in hearings, deciding the guilt or innocence of accused students and making recommendations to the school administration concerning punishments. Periodically, the Honor Council reports statistics on the outcomes of honor cases they have heard to the school community. Additionally, Honor Council members participate in student leadership activities.

### **16. How do students become members of the Honor Council?**

In the spring, the faculty and staff members vote to nominate three students for each Honor Council position. Then each class votes to select its honor representative(s) for the next academic year from this list of nominees. Plaques displayed in the Registrar's Office in Coates Hall list past members of the TMI Honor Council.

### **17. How did the current honor system at TMI come into being?**

A strong tradition at TMI since its founding in 1893, the Honor Code was revitalized during the 1995-1996 school year when a proposed honor constitution was drafted by a committee made up of students and faculty members. The student body overwhelmingly approved the new honor constitution that spring, and classes elected their honor representatives. During a solemn ceremony at the start of the 1996-1997 school year, all students recited the Honor Code and signed their names in the *TMI Book of Honor*. This ceremony has been conducted annually ever since. The 1996 Honor Constitution still governs the honor system that is such a distinctive part of the TMI community. Key provisions of the TMI Honor Constitution are (1) the Honor Code itself with its primary emphasis on personal integrity, (2) the composition of the Honor Council with student representatives from each grade elected yearly to ensure student ownership and oversight of the Honor Code, and (3) the process whereby students write the word *pledge* on all graded work to signify that they have neither given nor received unauthorized help on their assignments.

### **18. What are the key points I should remember in order to uphold our TMI Honor Code?**

- Before you act, consider the three tests on the back of your TMI Honor Card. If you are still unsure, ask your honor representative or a teacher (see #2 above).
- Pledge all your graded work (see #12 above).
- Don't discuss graded work outside of class (see #4 above).
- Never borrow something without the owner's permission (see #7 above).
- Avoid the temptation to plagiarize or cheat by starting work early and by keeping track of source materials you use (see #6 above).
- If you observe a violation of the honor code, do something about it--don't simply look the other way (see #10 above).

## **Nondiscriminatory Policy for TMI - The Episcopal School of Texas**

TMI - The Episcopal School of Texas welcomes students of all faiths, grades six through 12. TMI - The Episcopal School of Texas does not discriminate in its selection of students or in its administration of educational policies, financial aid, merit scholarships, and other school-administered programs on the basis of race, gender, religion, ethnic origin or physical ability. Educating leaders since 1893!