

PALMER COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES GRADUATE HONOR COUNCIL POLICY

1. Purpose and Guiding Principles

The Palmer College of Professional Studies (hereafter “the College”) holds integrity, mutual respect, and ethical conduct as foundational to its mission. The Graduate Honor Council Policy affirms our commitment to creating and sustaining a culture of honor, reflecting:

- **Trust:** Each member of the Mary Baldwin University community (student, faculty, staff) is entrusted with upholding and modeling academic integrity.
- **Responsibility:** Each individual takes responsibility for their own actions, and helps hold other members of the university accountable for their actions and responsibilities.
- **Fairness:** Procedures and policies must be clear, consistent, and work to protect the rights and dignity of all.
- **Teaching & Learning:** While accountability is vital, the College also emphasizes education, personal growth, and the continuing evolution of ethical norms, including in emerging areas like artificial intelligence (AI).

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all graduate students, non-degree and certificate-seeking students who otherwise follow graduate policy in the catalog for matters pertaining to student status in every program within the College. It governs academic misconduct, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, unprofessional conduct, falsification of documents or data, lying in official matters, sabotage, and failure to report known violations. This Policy also recognizes that new forms of misconduct may arise as technology evolves, including the improper or undisclosed use of generative AI to complete academic work.

3. The Honor Pledge

By enrolling in a Palmer College of Professional Studies graduate program, students affirm the following Honor Pledge ([catalog link](#)):

“Believing in the principles of Student Government, I pledge myself to uphold the ideals and regulations of the Mary Baldwin University community. I recognize the principles of honor and cooperation as the basis of our life together.

I shall endeavor faithfully to order my life accordingly. I will not lie, cheat, steal, plagiarize, or violate my pledge of confidentiality. I will encourage others to fulfill the ideals of the Honor System and will meet my responsibility to the community by reporting incidents of Honor offenses.”

This pledge applies to all academic, clinical, research, and professional contexts, both on and off campus.

4. Definitions of Academic/Professional Misconduct

1. Plagiarism

- Presenting someone else’s ideas, words, images, or code as one’s own without proper attribution.
- Incorporating material (even paraphrased) from any source (including AI-generated text, websites, articles, books, unpublished work, or peers) without acknowledgment.
- “Hybrid writing” co-created with AI, must be disclosed if the assignment instructions require original, individually authored work. Failing to disclose AI assistance, or passing off AI-generated content as fully one’s own, may constitute plagiarism.
 - i. Faculty retain discretion to allow or prohibit AI usage.
 - ii. Students remain responsible for the integrity and transparency of submitted work.

2. Cheating

- Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, resources, or collaboration in any academic exercise (e.g., looking at another student’s paper, unauthorized use of notes or devices, undisclosed assistance).
- Providing or receiving unpermitted help (including the use of generative AI, unauthorized private tutoring services, or pay-to-hire/contract cheating services) on tests, quizzes, assignments, projects, or other course and program requirements.

3. Lying/Misrepresentation

- Providing false or misleading information in official communications or course activities.
- Altering documents (e.g., clinical logs, research records, academic records) in a way that does not represent the truth and is not approved by all parties affected.

4. Stealing or Sabotage

- Taking or using another’s property (including intellectual property, data, or equipment) without authorization.
- Damaging, destroying, or hindering another’s work or resources.

5. Falsification or Manipulation of Data

- Altering or fabricating data or records in any academic, research, or clinical context.

6. Failure to Report

- Knowing about a violation yet failing to report it to the appropriate College authority.

5. Graduate Honor Council

1. Composition

- The Graduate Honor Council (hereafter, “Council”) consists of five voting members: three graduate students (appointed or elected) and two faculty members from graduate programs in the College.
- One additional faculty member (or College administrator) will serve as Council Chair. The Honor Council Chair (hereafter, “ Chair”) shall have no vote except in the event of a tie.
- An Associate Dean or designee appointed by the Dean will serve as a non-voting advisor to help the Council follow Policy and due process.

2. Membership & Term

- Student members serve a renewable one-year term. Faculty members serve two-year staggered terms.
- All members must sign a confidentiality agreement and complete brief annual training to ensure familiarity with the Policy.

3. Quorum

- A quorum requires at least four voting members.
- If conflicts of interest arise, an alternate student or faculty member (previously identified) may serve.

6. Reporting Process

1. Reporting

- **Reporting form**
 - i. Report a violation using the [Honor Code Violation Reporting Form](#).
- **Self-Report**
 - i. Students who believe they may have committed a violation (e.g., unintentional misuse of sources) are encouraged to self-report to the committee.
 - ii. Early self-disclosure is a mitigating factor in determining the outcome of the charge.

- **Faculty/Instructor Report**
 - i. Faculty/Instructors who believe a student in their course may have committed a violation may choose a reporting path that best aligns with the scope and severity of the misconduct.
 - ii. For first-time or minor infractions, the instructor may elect an informal resolution with the student. For more information about this type of resolution, including how to report the informal resolution to the Honor Council, see [Informal Resolution of Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).
 - iii. If the student rejects the informal path, or if the instructor/Chair deems the alleged misconduct too serious, the procedure moves forward to a Formal Investigation and Hearing. See [Investigation & Honor Council Review Procedure](#) for more information.
- **Third-Party Report**
 - i. Anyone (e.g., faculty, staff, student, the Chair) who suspects a violation has occurred must submit a confidential report to the Honor Council Chair or the Dean's office within five (5) business days of discovery.
 - ii. The reporter must provide relevant information and evidence (e.g., assignment text, communications, screenshots).

2. Preliminary Review

- The Chair (or a designated faculty advisor) may perform a preliminary review to determine if the allegation merits a formal hearing.
- If insufficient evidence exists, the Chair may dismiss the report.

7. Informal Resolution Option

- An informal resolution may be requested (by students) or selected (by faculty/instructors) in minor cases of academic misconduct, such as unintentional plagiarism or first-time violations of the academic code..
- An informal resolution may include but is not limited to:
 - Adjusting the amount of credit earned for the assignment,
 - Providing an opportunity for assignment revision for partial or full credit,
 - Completing additional educational requirements (such as a module on plagiarism/proper citation, an assignment on documenting, AI use transparency, etc.), or
 - Other mutually-agreed outcome.
- If an agreement is reached, both instructor and student sign an informal resolution form summarizing the details of the misconduct and the informal resolution reached.
 - The form is submitted to the Dean's office (or alternatively approved system) for record-keeping and future reference by the Honor Council.

- In most cases, a matter resolved does not automatically proceed to a full investigation and Honor Council hearing.
- However, in the event of repeated informal resolutions, the Chair may advise the course instructor of past conduct reports. Alternatively, the chair may notify the Chair or Director of the student's program for further review and investigation.

8. Formal Hearing Option

When the preliminary review indicates sufficient evidence or no informal resolution is reached, the Honor Council will convene:

1. Notification

- The student receives written notice of charges, the evidence, and a hearing date at least five (5) business days before the hearing.
- The student may select a faculty member or staff advisor (not an attorney) to provide support.

2. Hearing

- The Chair presides. Each side (the College representative/instructor and the student) may present statements, evidence, or witnesses.
- Members of the Council may question all parties.

3. Deliberation & Decision

- After presentations, the Council deliberates in private.
- The standard of proof is **preponderance of the evidence** (i.e., it is "more likely than not" that the reported conduct occurred).
- A majority vote of the Council is required to find the student "in violation."

4. Sanctions

- The Council recommends sanctions proportional to the seriousness of the violation, prior history, and whether the student self-reported.

9. Sanction Guidelines

While each case is unique, sample sanctions include but are not limited to:

- **Formal Warning or Educational Directive:** Reflective essay, completion of a citation/AI ethics module, or redoing the assignment for partial credit.
- **Grade Penalties:** Lowered or failing grade on the relevant assignment or in the course.
- **Probation:** Establishing conditions for a period of time that a student must meet in order to maintain their position in the program/university.

- **Suspension or Dismissal:** In cases of egregious misconduct (e.g., repeated offenses or large-scale data falsification), the Council may recommend suspension or dismissal from the University. Final approval rests with the Dean or Provost, as appropriate.

10. Appeals

- A student found in violation has the right to appeal the decision in writing within five (5) business days of the Council’s decision.
 - Grounds for appeal include but are not limited to (a) claimed procedural errors, (b) new evidence not previously available, or (c) an excessive or unfair sanction.
- The Dean or the Dean’s designee reviews the appeal, may consult with additional College leaders or the Honor Council Chair, and decides whether to affirm, modify, or overturn the outcome.
- If suspension or dismissal is upheld, a final appeal may be directed to the Provost.

11. Confidentiality

- All participants (Council members, witnesses, faculty, staff, and the accused) must maintain confidentiality.
- The outcome is shared only with the student, the instructor, and relevant College officials.
- The Council may periodically publish anonymized summaries of cases to educate the community.

12. Postplagiarism and Continuous Policy Evolution

Recognizing that academic integrity must adapt to evolving technologies and cultural norms, the College will periodically review and update definitions and procedures based on:

- **Postplagiarism¹ scholarship:** We acknowledge the shift toward co-creation with AI and the ethical complexities of invisible or implantable technologies that may challenge traditional plagiarism definitions.
- **Feedback from Students & Faculty:** The Honor Council will regularly invite suggestions and track emerging forms of misconduct.
- **External Guidelines:** Accreditation requirements, licensure boards’ ethical standards, and relevant legal regulations.

13. Implementation

This Policy is effective immediately upon publication and supersedes any prior graduate academic honesty or misconduct policies for the College as outlined in previous academic catalogs. Questions should be directed to the Honor Council Chair or the Dean’s office.

¹ For more on postplagiarism, ethics, and integrity, see [Eaton, 2023](#)