

HONOR CODE ORIENTATION CONCEPTS

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This is a list of concepts that could/should be discussed at ISO and NSO.

TONE: positive and serious.

Summary of the Honor Code:

"No member of the Caltech community shall take unfair advantage of any other member of the Caltech community."

This applies to classes, work and life at Caltech.

It is important to the Caltech culture

Consider your access to keys of labs, to equipment after hours, trusting you to do your exams unproctored and homeworks without collaboration.

Ignorance is not an excuse. Making sure what resources are kosher is your responsibility. Speak out. Try to contact professor/TA. If not possible, make most conservative assumption and proceed.

Core message to be delivered is that the Honour Code:

Is good for everyone in the community.

Works well, pointing out the structures in place.

Leads to a trusting community, which is valuable in as small a place as Caltech, where everyone knows everyone else.

Needs to be a part of the *active* culture. It is not an excuse for laziness. Students must strive towards maintaining it as a lifestyle. A *necessary* component of this is reporting violations, either as an individual or as a TA. Professors also need to work to try to make it a fair environment, without temptations and stress incommensurate with the goals of learning (this does NOT mean no stress).

Makes Caltech unique, in that it lessens administrative burdens for both students and faculty, while increasing flexibility, and gives students the opportunity to do their best.

One of the core precepts is protection of all concerned parties. Hence confidentiality of all procedures involving suspected violations. This makes it easier to come forward if you have something to report, makes it easier to weigh the case on its merits, and makes it easier to help any violators fit back into the Caltech community.

The history of the honor code may be of interest. Go to <http://donut.caltech.edu/about/history/Jou2/Jou2Honor.pdf>.

Many schools have honor codes with various mandates and statements. Caltech's is exceptionally broad.

Examples of Honor Code Violations:

Cheating: Using resources that are not allowed on a particular assignment. This includes, but is not limited to, reference books, scientific papers, classmates, other people, and extra time.

Plagiarism: Taking words, ideas or concepts from a textbook, reference book, scientific paper or another person without citing where the information came from. It is not acceptable in class, in lab, of math mathematical concepts or of proofs. Many students do not know that they have to cite resources when they do homework. They also do not understand when or why to cite mathematical concepts or proofs.

Appropriate citations in your option need to be clearly explained. An emphasis on "When in doubt, cite" is a good idea.

Non-academic Honor Code Violations include, but are not limited to, destruction of property (whether Caltech's or an individuals), "borrowing"/use of resources without permission, creating an uncomfortable/hostile environment for others, creating a dangerous lab environment (ie, not following safety procedures) and being in housing that you do not qualify for.

Knowing about an honor code violation and not reporting it is an honor code violation.

Remember the honor code is a code of conduct, not a comprehensive list of allowed and disallowed activities. Once again, when in doubt remember, do not take unfair of advantage of anyone in the Caltech community.

Consequences include, but are not limited to:

Must appear before the GRB.

No credit on the assignment(s) where violations have occurred.

Must pay for damages caused.

Possible suspension/expulsion for repeat or grievous violations.

Lessens trust of professors to students in general.

In a philosophical generalization, the scientific community at large also belongs to the Caltech community. Honesty in science is important; ancient and recent examples of what happens when that ethic fails is evident. Even broader generalization - "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In general it's a way of life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PLACES TO GET HELP:

Never feel overwhelmed for lack of choices. Caltech is flexible.

Suggestions for people to talk to/places to go to.

Upper class grad students/lab-mates - They have experience in dealing with situations. They might even have taken the same class.

Advisors - They are putting a lot of money into you and generally care about you too.

Professors - Those teaching the class you're taking are in the best position to help you with your direct academic issues. If you feel uncomfortable talking with them, consider talking to your research advisor, or a senior faculty you know and trust.

Ombuds Office - Utterly confidential. Their entire job consists of listening to grievances and offering advice.

Deans of Students - Their function at this institute pertains to covering all aspects of student life. They also have considerable power over academic affairs.

Health Center - Do not disregard your body's needs over academic affairs.

Counseling Center - Helpful staff, bound to confidentiality. They know how to deal with stress, depression... problems involving your mental health in general.

ISP - If you're an international student.

GSC and your graduate student representative. They are your conduit to the Caltech administration. Find out who your option representative is. Or become your option representative.

GRB - Pertaining to Honor Code issues. We also have access to people with power on campus. Join the GRB.

Caltech Y/clubs - Sometimes just doing social stuff helps.

THE GRB PROCESS:

Not supposed to be a mysterious society. It's a committee of your peers dedicated to upholding the Honor System at Caltech (and you can join too! :) Full details available at <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~grb>

Here's an outline

Report of an Honor Code violation. Often by a TA or professor of a class.

Preliminary investigation - carried out confidentially by the Chair and Secretary.

IF ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROCEED

Chair and Secretary present evidence to Board, who decide whether or not to examine case.

IF BOARD DECIDES TO EXAMINE CASE

Witnesses called. Accused have a right to know charges, know what evidence has been presented, be present through all proceedings except private deliberations of the Board, have a member of the GRB act as counselor who explains procedure, have a friend for support.

IF BOARD DECIDES TO CONVICT

Nullification of the advantage that was taken. Example - give a zero on that part of the assignment where a violation occurred (to undo advantage).

Protection of all concerned parties. This includes education or recommendation of counseling. A leave of absence or expulsion recommended in extreme cases.

At every point, full confidentiality maintained by all parties, violation of which is in itself a violation of the Honor Code.

TIPS FOR STUDENTS

When clarification on policy is needed, ask. Be conservative in assumptions when you don't know, get it in writing on assignments. Mention on your homework sheet resources you have used.

If the professor does not already do so, suggest to him/her that using collaboration policy sheets is a good idea.

<http://donut.caltech.edu/about/boc/policy-sheet.pdf>

Do not set yourself up to cheat/reduce temptations.

Do work early :)

Tell others class policies, if you think they do not already know about them.

If you have a closed book homework/exam, move relevant books away from desk; do the homework/exam someplace without easy access to disallowed resources, for example the library.

If the exam is timed, set up an appointment/date with a friend for the point in time when you expect to be finishing.

GET HELP! No-one will think you're stupid, weak, or that you don't belong. Resources listed above.

Put things in perspective -- Failing one class does not equal the end of a
career
Understand that life throws curve-balls - deaths, births, illness.
Academic woes are much lower down.

More information available at the GRB website.

<http://www.its.caltech.edu/~grb>

Or contact Catherine Ward (GRB chair) or Sid Jaggi (GRB Secretary).