

Conduct Covenant: Duke Divinity School*

We, the faculty and students in the Divinity School of Duke University, make covenant, individually and corporately, to uphold the highest standards of personal and academic integrity. This includes, but is not limited to, never lying, cheating, stealing, causing harm to self or others, or defacing property. Set aside by our calling, we hold ourselves and each other to the highest standards of conduct (1).

As a Divinity School committed to forming and educating persons for the ministry of Jesus Christ, we covenant together to embody truth in every aspect of our lives, including our academic work. In joyful obedience to Christ, we gratefully involve our bodies, minds, and spirits in this community of discipline and love, recognizing that we are a people called to worship God by the Spirit of truth (2).

Interpretation/Exposition:

(1) Our call is lived out in community. We do not claim as our own that which belongs to the community. We will respect the places of learning, help to care for the facilities, and share in the exchange of materials, neither stealing nor abusing books or other valuable tools of learning. We will abstain from cheating of every kind. We will not plagiarize, fabricate, or falsify our work or aid others in these forms of dishonesty. When we observe any forms of dishonesty, we recognize that we are under moral obligation to report the offender to the Academic Dean. In the truthful pursuit of knowledge and understanding, we will foster the honest and respectful exchange of ideas, prepare for class, listen carefully, seek to understand, and give a fair, accurate, and charitable account of ideas, positions, and arguments with which we agree and disagree. In this vital exchange, we will open ourselves to judgment, always seeking to learn and not bear false witness.

(2) Those who claim Christ speak and live truthfully. We are called to show respect to all we meet, acknowledging in our daily behavior on and off the campus that we are called to live in the image of God. We work to strengthen one another in Christ. We are welcoming and hospitable, endeavoring to create a place where all will feel safe and free to share joys and struggles, passions and conflicts, hopes and fears. We serve and do not exploit one another. We honor the friendships we form, transcending self-service with mutual service. We live honestly before our friends, giving and receiving godly wisdom and holding ourselves accountable to one another as disciples of Jesus Christ. We attend to the concerns of our families, avoiding neglect, abuse, or evil counsel. We are faithful to the covenants we enter: personal, marital, familial, communal. We encourage each other to ever-deepening commitment to Christ in prayer, fasting, chastity, worship, study, and acts of charity, justice, and mercy.

Covenant Keeping:

Introduction: Breaches of community covenants are grievous matters, both to the individuals concerned and to the community as a whole. To encourage covenant faithfulness, the Divinity School conduct covenant tries to be explicit in describing the kind of attitude and behavior that honors the distinctive nature of the Divinity School. The Divinity School will work to make students aware of our covenant together from the beginning of their academic program.

A Pastoral Process: The response of the community to both alleged and confirmed fractures of our covenant will be guided by pastoral concerns. In this instance *pastoral* denotes reconciling, restorative, healing. At times we can be reconciling, restorative and healing simply through sharing, listening sympathetically and responding with forgiveness and understanding. In other instances reconciliation, restoration to the community and healing of person and community can occur only through confession, an attitude of penance and penitential acts indicating remorse, contrition, and a desire to learn from one's errors. Members of the covenant community who are aggrieved by the conduct of other members of the community should find a friend and approach the offending party to work out the misunderstanding or offense (Matthew 18:15-20). However, because of their gravity, matters related to plagiarism, cheating, theft or abuse of property (including academic property), fraud, or personal (and especially sexual or racial) harassment, should be brought directly to the Academic Dean for address and resolution following the processes described below. As members of a covenant community, all persons have a moral obligation to report breaches of the covenant.

When grievances are brought to the Academic Dean, the following processes will be implemented:

- A) Faculty accused of covenant violation will be subject to the policies and procedures of the currently effective Duke University Faculty Handbook.
- B) Students accused of covenant violation may elect (1) to authorize the Academic Dean to initiate an informal process to resolve the accusation and apply any indicated disciplines, or (2) to authorize the Academic Dean to initiate a formal process involving fellow students, faculty and administration who will attempt to determine whether there has been a violation and take appropriate pastoral action.
 - (1) ***Informal Process:*** Under this procedure the person bringing the accusation, the accused, the Academic Dean, and whomever the Academic Dean deems appropriate will work to review the facts of the offense. The Academic Dean will decide on guilt or innocence, the Divinity School's response to it and any indicated discipline.
 - (2) ***Formal Process:*** Under this process, the alleged offense(s) will be reviewed by The Divinity School Judicial Board, composed of the Academic Dean (who will serve as Chair of the Board), the Associate Dean for Student Services, four students (one of whom shall be designated an alternate), and three faculty and/or staff members (one of whom shall be designated an alternate). This committee will review the grievance, dismiss it or admit it, and decide on any action to be taken in response to it.

In either the informal or formal processes, the student who is the subject of a complaint or accusation will be fully informed of the grievance(s) brought against him/her, given ample opportunity to respond and be assured s/he will be heard fully, fairly and in Christian charity. Proceedings under both (1) and (2) should be held in strictest confidence by all parties concerned. Disciplinary measures, depending on the severity of the offense, may include but not be limited to: required counseling, a mandated leave of absence for a term or terms, failure of a course, and suspension or expulsion from the Divinity School.

*Duke Divinity School is a Christian community shaped by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While we do not expect members of other faith traditions to share the theological framework out of which this covenant was developed, we welcome into our community anyone who is willing to live and work under the standards of conduct specified herein.