



## **Frequently Asked Questions - Panels**

### **What are Hearing Panels/Honor Panels?**

Hearing panels/Honor panels are a decision-making body. These panels hear the information that is presented by the community and the student involved to decide if a student is responsible for violating University policies and sanctions as appropriate.

### **Who serves on these panels?**

Panels are composed of three members from the Student Honor Council (SHC). Panels occurring when the University is on winter or summer break, panels may have different compositions and include faculty or staff if members from Student Honor Council are not available. The Student Honor Council is comprised of students that represent the University community. The students on the council represent are involved in a variety of activities at CNU. Students are selected to serve as SHC members through a formal recruitment process where they must complete an application and interview process. Once selected, these students are thoroughly trained on university policies and procedures.

### **What are the specific panels and how are they different?**

1. Honor Panels will be convened as necessary to hear allegations of Honor System violations. Honor Panels will be comprised of three students selected from the Student Honor Council. Honor Panels must reach a unanimous decision in order to find a student responsible for misconduct under the Honor Code.
2. Hearing Panels will be convened as necessary to hear allegations of Student Code of Conduct violations. Hearing Panels will be comprised of three students selected from the Student Honor Council. Hearing Panels must reach a majority decision in order to find a student responsible for misconduct under the Student Code of Conduct.
3. Combined Panels will be convened when an alleged violation occurs within the Honor System and the Student Code of Conduct during the same incident. Combined Panels will be comprised of three students selected from the Student Honor Council. Combined Panels must reach a unanimous decision in order to find a student responsible for misconduct under the Honor Code and a majority decision in order to find a student responsible for misconduct under the Student Code of Conduct.
4. Recess Panels will be convened during university recesses and summer terms to hear allegations of Honor System violations and/or Student Code of Conduct violations. In some rare cases Recess Panels may be convened at other times such as finals week or if no Honor Council Members are available. Every reasonable attempt will be made to convene panels with members of the Student Honor Council. Recess Panels are comprised of three members. At least one student panel member selected from the Student Honor Council will serve on this panel. The other two members will be any combination of judicially-trained faculty members or university administrators. Recess Panels must reach a unanimous decision in order to find a student responsible for misconduct under the Honor Code and a majority decision in order for a student to be responsible for a violation under the Student Code of Conduct. In the event of a recess panel and a student honor council member is not available to serve in the student advocate role, a staff member in the Center for Honor Enrichment and Community Standards or trained Student Affairs representative may assume this role.

### **When would the Hearing Panel and/or Honor Panel become involved in the adjudication process?**

Once an Initial Conference has occurred, a staff member will decide if the student is responsible for the alleged violation and then assign appropriate sanctions. If that sanction is suspension or dismissal from the University, suspension or dismissal from Housing, or an Honor Code violation, an Honor Panel or Hearing Panel may be convened in two ways:

- a. By the request of the staff conduct officer;
- b. By the alleged student to review a decision made during the Initial Conference. Review requests must be submitted in writing to the Director of the Center for Honor Enrichment and Community Standards within 5 business days of receiving the decision letter. To learn more about a hearing panel or honor panel please visit the CNU Student Handbook.

### **What is the procedure once a Panel request has been made?**

All parties will receive notification of the date, time, and place of the hearing. While the student may elect to have an advisor of their choosing, all alleged students will be assigned a student advocate to help prepare for the panel. Witnesses may be called to the hearing to describe the events of the incident in question. The list of witnesses will be given the date, time, and location of the panel. Both the community advocate and the alleged student are permitted to call witnesses. All parties must be notified of witnesses in advance of the panel.

### **Who is present during a hearing?**

During a hearing, three student panel members will be present, the community advocate, the alleged student and their assigned student advocate, witnesses (if requested) and Student Honor Council advisor.

#### **Who are panel members?**

Panel members, including the panel chair, will ask questions of the alleged student and any witnesses. It is the panel member's duty to determine responsibility of any policy or Honor Code violation, and assign appropriate sanctions.

#### **Who is the community advocate?**

The community advocate represents the University community during a panel. They are a trained member of the Student Honor Council who understands the university's policies, procedures, and student rights. They will give opening and closing statements, and ask questions of the alleged student. They do not participate in deliberation, nor do they have a say in the panel's findings.

#### **Who is the student advocate?**

The student advocate is a resource to help the alleged student prepare for the panel. They are a trained member of the Student Honor Council who understands the university's policies, procedures, and student rights. The alleged student is encouraged to meet with the student advocate before the panel to prepare. They can help the alleged student prepare opening and closing statements, questions for witnesses and answers to typical questions. During the hearing, the student advocate will not speak on behalf of the student, they may only advise the student in writing. They are not involved in the panel's deliberation.

#### **Who is the Student Honor Council advisor?**

A representative from the Center for Honor Enrichment & Community Standards will also attend the panel to serve as an advisor to the Student Honor Council. The representative may not attend the deliberation and is not involved in the decision-making process.

### **How should I prepare for an upcoming Panel?**

A student should be prepared to make opening and closing statements, question any witnesses, and respond to questions from the panel and the community advocate. It is recommended that a student work with their student advocate to prepare ahead of time. The student advocate, or an advisor of the student's choosing, is present during the panel to advise in writing. During the panel, the student advocate or the advisor of the student's choosing will not be allowed to address the panel on the student's behalf, but can advise the student in writing during the panel or verbally during a brief recess. To learn more about a hearing panel or honor panel please visit the CNU Student Handbook.

### **Can I call character witnesses?**

Although alleged students may not call character witnesses during the panel, they can submit character reference letters. All character letters, submitted before a panel makes a decision, will be provided to the panel members after a decision regarding responsibility is made. It is recommended that character witness letters are submitted prior to the panel to ensure the panel has them during deliberation.

### **Do I have an opportunity to remove panel members/community advocate/student advocate/advisor?**

The alleged student has the opportunity to remove any member of the panel, the community advocate, student advocate, or advisor due to a proven bias. If the student elects to dismiss a panel member, they must explain why in writing and submit the request at least 48 hours before the hearing to the Director or their designee by emailing [checs@cnu.edu](mailto:checs@cnu.edu) or coming to the office.

### **What should I expect at a Panel?**

The following is the order of events for a hearing panel/honor panel.

1. The panel chair will share the proceedings of the panel. The process of the hearing will be explained and the student may ask any questions they have regarding that process.
2. Both the alleged student and the community advocate will then have the opportunity to make an opening statement. The community advocate will go first.
3. If any party has called a witness, both parties and the panel members have the right to question witnesses as necessary.
4. Following witnesses, the community advocate and the panel members have the right to question the alleged student. The alleged student has the right to share their perspective and respond to questions.
5. Both the alleged student and the community advocate have the opportunity to make a closing statement. The community advocate will go first.
6. At the close of the panel the three panel members will privately deliberate. They first determine responsibility for each alleged charge. Once a determination of responsibility has been made they will decide on appropriate sanctions, taking into consideration prior violations and/or character references.
7. The hearing will be recorded and on file with the Center for Honor Enrichment & Community Standards.

### **Is it possible to have another alleged student participate in a panel at the same time?**

Yes. It is possible for two or more alleged students to share a panel if they were involved in the same incident. Each student will present their own opening and closing statements and will be asked questions separately. Separate case correspondence will be sent.

### **What happens after the Panel?**

The findings for the charges and if applicable, the sanctions, will be forwarded as a recommendation to the Director of the Center for Honor Enrichment and Community Standards. The student will receive notice of the decision in writing within 10 business days of the panel (the date of the panel is considered day zero).

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### **Can I appeal a panel's decision?**

Yes. The VPSA/Dean of Students or their designee may only consider appeals based on two issues:

- New information now exists that was unknown at the time of the panel proceeding. this new information must be so significant that it would likely alter the panel's decision on violations or their recommendations on sanctions
- Provisions for a fair hearing set out in Section G. Panel Procedures (pg. 23) were not followed and that failure resulted in fundamental unfairness.

Disagreeing with sanction(s) does not constitute fundamental unfairness. Given the importance of the appeal, students should craft a clear and thorough letter outlining their concerns based on the grounds in which they are appealing along with any supporting documentation they may have. The appeal should be submitted to the VPSA/Dean of Students or their designee within five (5) business days of the panel decision. The decision of the VPSA/Dean of Students or their designee is final.

### **How can I learn more?**

If you have any questions about any parts of the conduct process, please contact our office at [checs@cnu.edu](mailto:checs@cnu.edu) or 757-594-7190. Our office is available to assist you during business hours, Monday – Friday. You may also consult the CNU handbooks, which are located on the University's [website](#).