



HONOUR SYSTEM AT PALM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Introduction and Background Information

As part of ensuring we achieve our mission to educate ethical leaders in Africa and especially Ghana, the Institute Council, the Executive Team, faculty and staff of Palm University College started discussing and pursuing the need to adopt an Honour System at Palm University College in June 2020.

The Leadership of Palm felt very strongly that without an Honour System, our mission of educating ethical leaders may be an illusion. We strongly believe that adopting an Honour System would help build the kind of trust we need as a Community.

The Palm family therefore came to the conclusion after several faculty and staff conversations that an Honour System will guarantee the building of a community of trust and integrity. We also felt very strongly that as a community, we needed to be major stakeholders of the mission of the College. That if we believe in educating ethical leaders and place a high premium on our mission, then we must be willing to live it as a community. We must be willing to practice it in all aspects of our operations including the administration of examinations.

Adopting an Honour System means Palm faculty, staff and students will not compromise with any form of enticement. They will take ownership of the Palm mission of educating ethical leaders and intentionally deny their colleagues the opportunity to cheat thereby protecting the integrity of being educated at Palm at all cost. We acknowledge that it means all members of the Palm family are pledging to do the right thing even when no one is looking. It means that Palm students who adopt the Honour System would write their examinations without invigilation.

Consulting other Universities

In our quest to take the right and appropriate steps toward introducing an Honour System and Examination Code at Palm University College, the leadership of Palm University College started holding series of conversations with Senior Executive Team members at Ashesi University. The sole aim was to learn more about what they are doing with the Honour System and Examination Code and how they did it.

A team of faculty and staff was commissioned by the Leadership of Palm to conduct a research on Honour Systems in universities around the world and put together a document to that effect in August 2020.

As part of the Consultations, it became necessary to inform the University of Cape Coast our mentor University, about our plans and efforts to adopt an Honour System and Examination Code.

Why the Honour System at Palm?

There is no doubt that we need to adopt an Honour System at Palm and indeed all other universities in Ghana. Our universities have over the past 60 years or so produced graduates who have written examinations under invigilation, yet we have had several instances of examination malpractices. This fundamental issue we are seeking to address is the fact that if a student does not cheat because there is an invigilator watching, it is very likely, that student will cheat at every opportunity that presents itself if there is no invigilator. The questions to ask therefore are, what is the value of such an education at the highest level? What is the value of earning such a degree? And what is the guarantee that such a graduate will be ethical in his/her dealings when there is no one watching over them?

By adopting a mission to educate ethical leaders, Palm University College would be emulating the example of Universities like Ashesi University, Princeton University, the College of William and Mary and the University of Virginia that have successfully practiced the Honour System. In the case of Princeton University, they have done it for centuries and Ashesi University has done it for several years here in Ghana. Implementing an Honour System at Palm University College at this stage of development will ensure the integrity of examinations and to prevent candidates from committing examination offences. If Ghana is to succeed, effort should be made by Universities to train morally upright individuals who would be intolerant to corruption.

Getting Student Commitment

Instead of moving to adopt an Honour System that would be imposed on classes of students, Palm is electing to consult with every class of students who enroll at Palm in any of our academic programs to educate them about the relevance of the Palm Honour System. The students will therefore be given the choice to vote to be part of an Honour System or not. Palm University College faculty and staff will take the steps to educate all freshmen and women on the Honour System and Examination Code prior to voting.

Maintaining Student Commitment to the Palm Honour System

As an institution of higher learning, we will maintain student commitment to the Honour System by ensuring the following:

- Hold regular conversations with students during the *Time with the President and Executive Team Meetings* (a Palm Community Hall Meeting).
- Ensure ethics and integrity are emphasized in our curriculum and learning goals.
- Invite professionals from Industry; Ghana, Africa, the United States and the United Kingdom to speak on issues of ethics and integrity in the workplace and society in general.

- Facilitate relevant debates amongst Freshman Classes throughout the first and second semesters to ensure proper understanding and the relevance of the Honour System prior to voting to join the Honour System.

Voting to Join the Honour System

All fresh students of Palm will be given the opportunity to thoroughly discuss the Honour System during their freshman year (first and second semesters). The purpose is to enable them to own the Honour System as a Class. It is also designed to give them an opportunity to endorse or otherwise choose to operate outside it.

Students will be called upon to vote after thorough discussions and several conversations. The outcome of their vote will be upheld for the rest of their stay at Palm. For a Class of students to adopt the Honour System there has to be a **clear vote of Two Thirds Majority (2/3) in favor of the Honour System** for that Class to adopt the Palm Honour System. If a Class chooses not to adopt the Honour System, the Class will write their examinations under proctoring, supervision and invigilation. In essence, that Class have opted to operate outside the Palm Honour System and Examinations Code at Palm.

Examination Honour Code of Conduct

By way of upholding the Palm Honour System, the proposal was put forth to adopt an Examination Honour Code. The purpose of the Examination Honour Code is to uphold the integrity of all examinations at Palm and to foster an ethical examination environment at the College. The proposal to adopt an Examination Honour Code is to ensure that students who do not abide by the Code after adopting it are properly and procedurally disciplined.

The following would be observed in the Honour System during all examinations at Palm University College:

- Students will not be allowed to talk to each other, exchange information or material of any kind, or engage in any activity that may result in the unfair administration of the examination to give advantage to one or more students, before, during and after the examination whether they are in or out of the examination hall.
- Students must leave all textbooks and books of any kind and other learning materials, tools and equipment in a place where they can easily access them after the examination. In the case of open textbook quizzes or examination, students would be allowed to access textbooks at the discretion of the lecturer/faculty.
- Students must ensure that they have all they need and are required to have on them for an examination. Example, pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, appropriate calculators etc.
- Students must ensure they are seated far enough away from their colleague students to avoid being accused of cheating. Thus, students must leave a reasonable amount of space, well enough to ensure they cannot see the examination paper or questions of other students.

Execution of the Examination Honour Code at Palm

For the Examination Honour Code to be properly executed in Palm, classes of students who vote to adopt the Palm Honour System and Examination Code will take quizzes, tests and examinations without proctoring/invigilation/supervision. This means that the students will take quizzes, tests and examinations in their Honour.

It also means that at the end of each quiz, test or examination, students may sign the following statement to show their approval or disapproval of the integrity of the quiz, test or examination.

Actions that Constitute Violations of Palm Honour System and Examination Code

In order to ensure there is no doubt whatsoever about what the Honour System and Examination Honour Code entails and to ensure we uphold and maintain the integrity of our mission as a University College, all faculty, staff and students of Palm are to note that the following constitutes violation of the Honour System and Examination Code of the College:

- Disregard for the Honour System.
- Failure to abide by the Examination Code.
- Aiding and abetting violation of the Honour System and Examination Code.
- Obstructing access to reliable evidence to prove violation of the Honour System and Examination Code during an Honour System and Examination Code investigation.
- Falsely accusing a colleague (faculty, staff or student) of violating the Honour System or Examination Code.
- Intimidating, discouraging, threatening a colleague (faculty, staff or student) from reporting, serving as a witness or assisting with Honour System or Examination Code investigations.

Practices and Procedures under the Honour System and Examination Code

Students are encouraged to report suspected violations of the Palm Honour System and Examination Code.

Suspected violations of the Honour System and Examination Code must be reported by taking the following actions in the following order:

- Intentionally omitting to sign the Pledge Form.
- Speaking directly with the faculty responsible for the examination for which the violation was committed.
- Reporting the matter to the Dean of Student Affairs, Registrar or the President.

If a Pledge Form is unsigned, the following steps must be observed and followed:

- The student will be contacted in order to ascertain whether he or she intentionally left the pledge form unsigned.
- If the absence of signature was intentional, the faculty member or Dean of Student Affairs or Registrar will investigate the matter further to ascertain why the Pledge Form was unsigned by the student(s).
- Violations of the Palm Honour System and Examination Code are investigated and adjudicated by the Palm Judicial Council (PJC).

Proposed Academic and Administrative Precautions

In order to demonstrate our community's commitment to the Honour System, Palm faculty and administrators will ensure the following measures are put in place to protect the integrity of all examinations at Palm:

- Faculty will be trained to shuffle examination questions to ensure that students seated by each other do not have the same line of questions.
- Examination seats will be widely spaced during final examinations in order to help prevent cheating during examinations (quizzes, tests, mid semester examinations).
- An examination seating chart will be created for each examination room for every semester.
- Students will not be allowed to bring in bags, mobile phones, laptops, textbooks (except during open textbook examinations) to the examination rooms.
- Faculty will be encouraged to avoid the use of multiple-choice examination questions which are likely to encourage cheating. Faculty are encouraged to set questions that encourage and require a demonstration of conceptual and theoretical understanding of the courses taken during the semester. This allows faculty to detect cheating easily.

The Palm Judicial Council - Role of the Palm Honour System Judicial Council

In order to ensure fair and transparent hearing when there is a suspected violation of the Honour System, the College Council, Executive Team, staff and faculty of Palm proposed the setting up of The Palm Honour System Judicial Council to adjudicate cases.

The Judicial Council will consist of president of Palm Student Council (PSC), one faculty member, one staff member and a student representative from each year group. These individuals must be voted onto the Judicial Council.

All violations of the Honour system will be adjudicated by the Judicial Council. When a report of a suspected violation of the Honour System is received, a section of the Judicial Council shall conduct an immediate investigation to ascertain the validity of the claim. If the initial investigation indicates that a full investigation is warranted, the entire Judicial Council will be convened, and a more detailed and confidential hearing will be held. If the student in question is exonerated, all records of the hearing will be destroyed. On the other hand, if a student is found guilty and culpable, the Council will recommend appropriate sanctions to the Dean of undergraduate students. Students found guilty of violating the Honour System can expect to be suspended from the College for one, two, or three years or expulsion depending on the severity of the offense.

Proceeding Cautiously

The College Council, Executive Team, faculty and staff recognize the fact that the choice to implement an Honour System at Palm will come with its own challenges. We therefore wish to proceed with caution and would do everything carefully to ensure all checks and balances are put in place and observed to ensure the successful implementation of this Honour System at Palm.