

# Phoenix Seminary Student Conduct

Phoenix Seminary is committed not only to the theological education of its students, but also to their personal and professional formation for ministry. Student conduct is therefore of concern to the Seminary faculty, especially when poor conduct compromises the learning environment of the Seminary or the personal preparation of the student. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we strive to be obedient to Him. Our responses to our failure to do so should be repentance, taking responsibility for our decisions and actions, and reconciliation with others as required.

Because striving for obedience to Christ is fundamental to the religious mission and objectives of Phoenix Seminary, students who fail or refuse to comply with such standards may be subject to discipline. Some discipline may be a simple conversation and admonition, or it may mean dismissal when appropriate. There are many other approaches between these extremes.

Behaviors bearing upon moral conduct are diverse in nature; however, some of these behaviors merit particular emphasis because of their effects on a person and his or her relationships. These areas are discussed below under Section I: Standards of Conduct, paragraphs A through I.

There are also aspects of student conduct that are not necessarily moral in nature. These are discussed below in paragraph J: Conduct Bearing on Fitness for Ministry.

## **SECTION I: STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

### **Statement of Unity and Respect**

At Phoenix Seminary we desire to create an educational community which reflects the kind of community called for in Scripture. The New Testament is patently clear that: (1) love and unity among Christians are cardinal Christian virtues (Galatians 5:14–15; Colossians 3:14) and are the most powerful evidence of the veracity of the gospel (John 13:34–35; 17:21–23); and that (2) in the body of Christ there is absolute equality in value and dignity, regardless of gender, race or social status (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). In view of these two principles, all students at Phoenix Seminary are expected to treat others in the Phoenix Seminary community with respect and dignity. We desire to be particularly careful to treat women and ethnic minorities with dignity and respect as fellow bearers of the image of God. In keeping with the principles of Matthew 18, we strongly encourage students or employees who believe this statement of unity and respect is being violated to discuss their concerns with the individual they believe is violating the statement. However, if for any reason this is not possible or if discussion with the alleged violator fails to resolve the concern, the student or employee is asked to see the Dean of Students (in the extended absence of a Dean of Students, the Provost will substitute) or the Director of Human Resources (as appropriate) and discuss the concerns with him or her. In addition to any appropriate disciplinary

consequence imposed pursuant to the school disciplinary policies, a professor may dismiss any student from his or her classroom who is in violation of this policy and is not responding appropriately to input from the professor.

### **Church Attendance**

Students are expected to attend and participate in a worshiping and serving community of Christ. The New Testament indicates that connection to a local church body is the normative expression of being a disciple (Hebrews 10:25). For this reason the Seminary attaches great importance to a student's regular involvement with his or her family in a local assembly of Christians.

### **Drug-Free Campus**

As required by federal regulations (Drug Free School and Community Act Amendments of 1989), Phoenix Seminary maintains policies for students and employees regarding a drug-free workplace. The policies for students include:

- The unlawful possession, use or distribution of a controlled substance is prohibited on Seminary property or as part of any Seminary activity.
- Students found to be in violation of the above will be subject to appropriate action, up to and including dismissal.
- Any student who becomes aware of a violation of this policy is encouraged to report it immediately to the Academic Dean so the matter can be investigated. (There is no penalty for failure to report, however it is in the best interests of the Seminary community and the person in violation that intervention take place.)

Alcohol and drug consumption causes changes in behavior ranging from impaired judgment and coordination to inhibiting a person's ability to learn and use higher mental functions. Repeated use can lead to dependence and long-term use will cause permanent damage to the brain, liver and other vital organs. Use of illicit drugs and the abuse of alcohol present major health risks such as addiction, chronic illness and even death. Other risks associated with alcohol and drug use include impaired mental functioning, drunk driving, accidents, domestic violence, injuries, acquaintance rape and sexually transmitted diseases.

Students with a drug or alcohol abuse problem are encouraged to seek assistance through counseling, treatment and rehabilitation programs. A student who voluntarily seeks assistance to correct a drug or alcohol abuse problem will not be subject to disciplinary action as a consequence of such abuse. This applies whether the student has sought help on their own or as a response to disciplinary actions under the Student Discipline Policy. Even though voluntary assistance has been sought, the student becomes subject to further disciplinary action if the abuse continues.

Some drug and alcohol counseling, treatment and rehabilitation programs that are available to students include:

- National Council on Alcoholism  
800.622.2255 or [www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)
- Calvary Addiction Recovery Center  
602.279.1468 or [www.calvarycenter.com](http://www.calvarycenter.com)
- St. Luke’s Behavioral Health Center  
602.251.8535 or [www.stlukesbehavioralhealth.com](http://www.stlukesbehavioralhealth.com)
- Family Service Agency  
602.264.9891 or [www.fsaphoenix.org](http://www.fsaphoenix.org)

The Seminary will cooperate fully with the enforcement of local, state and federal laws regarding those who unlawfully possess, use or distribute illicit drugs and alcohol on campus.

### **Separation and Divorce**

Phoenix Seminary is committed to Scripture’s teaching on the nature of marriage. This teaching holds marriage to be a witness to the permanent bond between Christ and His Church. If a student is experiencing marital difficulties, he or she is strongly encouraged to see his or her mentor, a faculty member or the Dean of Students for counsel so that help can be secured to resolve the difficulties.

A student is *required* to notify the Dean of Students and his or her mentor immediately in case of any of the following occurs:

1. The student or the student’s spouse has filed for divorce;
2. The student or student’s spouse has stated his or her intention to file for divorce;
3. The student and his/her spouse have separated.

The student may be required, following such reporting, to withdraw from the Seminary for 12 calendar months, except that the Dean of Students may, at his or her discretion, modify this requirement on a case-by-case basis. A withdrawal arising from separation or divorce is not for disciplinary purposes. Rather, it is intended to free the student to concentrate on reconciling with his or her spouse or to manage the spiritual and emotional damage of a divorce.

Any student who wishes to be considered for an exception to the withdrawal requirement must submit such request to the Dean of Students in writing. The request must include the following:

- A statement of commitment from the student to receive counseling appropriate to the situation.
- A statement of support from the student’s counselor for the student to take classes.
- A statement of support from the student’s pastor or congregational board of elders (or comparable overseeing body) for taking classes.

At the discretion of the Dean of Students, counseling may be required during the withdrawal and before return to the Seminary.

### **Academic Honesty**

It is assumed that students at Phoenix Seminary will endeavor to practice the highest integrity in all matters pertaining to their Seminary education. Acts of cheating, including but not limited to, revealing exam questions to students testing late, bringing illicit notes to exams in any form, texting or messaging during exams, utilizing “term-paper mills,” or otherwise passing off work you have not personally completed as your own, is a violation of the trust placed in you by the faculty.

Of particular concern is plagiarism. Plagiarism is any “use or close imitation of the language or thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work” (*Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*, 2001). Much academic work is based upon the thoughts and ideas of others, so it is essential that proper credit (or citation) be provided so one’s original work and the sources used to inform one’s opinions can be assessed and evaluated. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following, when submitted as one’s own work or without appropriate attribution: (1) copying another’s work, (2) closely paralleling the ideas or language of someone else’s work and (3) cutting and pasting information from the Internet or other sources.

Students must give proper credit to the source of ideas as well as direct quotations. Fabricating, plagiarizing and other forms of academic dishonesty show a lack of professional respect and personal integrity. Academic dishonesty is an extremely serious offense and will be treated accordingly.

The handling of academic dishonesty is the responsibility of the individual instructor, who may take any of the following actions:

1. Forgive the offence;
2. Assign a failing grade to the test or assignment in which academic integrity has been compromised;
3. Assign a failing grade for the course;
4. Report the student to the Dean of Students to initiate student disciplinary proceedings.

If a student feels he/she has been unjustly accused of academic dishonesty or treated unfairly as a consequence of an alleged act of academic dishonesty, appeal to the Academic Administrative Committee by the student is permissible.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Each student, staff or faculty member should be able to work and learn in an atmosphere free of discrimination or intimidation based on sex, race, color, age, national origin or disability. Sexual harassment of students, staff or faculty by any member of the Seminary community will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment includes any repeated or unwanted verbal or sexual advances, sexually explicit derogatory remarks or offensive statements made by someone in the workplace or classroom when:

- Submission to the conduct is either explicitly or implicitly a condition of employment, grades or good will; or
- Submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as a basis for grading or relational decisions affecting any person; or
- The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with student, staff or faculty performance or of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or learning environment.

If you, as a student, staff member or faculty member, experience sexual harassment as described in any of the above categories, you are encouraged to report the incident(s) to the Dean of Students or Provost for appropriate handling in accordance with applicable laws and Seminary policies.

Any student, staff member or faculty member who observes what they believe to be sexual harassment of another person as described in any of the above categories, is required to report the incident(s) to the Dean of Students or Provost for appropriate handling in accordance with applicable laws and Seminary policies. Please remember that men and women may be victims of sexual harassment.

### **Sexual Responsibility**

No area of moral responsibility is as universal and fundamental as the sexual. This is because sexuality is not only what we may do, it is also fundamental to who we are as persons. Consequently, sexual expression that pleases God is that which fulfills his intention at creation. The Seminary holds the position that this sexual expression is 1) faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman or 2) chastity in singleness.

A student who is engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage is required to contact the Dean of Students to formulate a plan for growth and healing. It is our first desire to handle these matters pastorally rather than punitively. Failing to disclose unrepentant or ongoing sexual sin may bring disciplinary measures to bear (see Section II: Student Disciplinary Policy).

NOTE: Cohabitation with a person of the opposite sex may create the appearance of immoral conduct even when there is none present. Hence a student should use mature judgment in making his or her living arrangements in order to meet the biblical goal of being above reproach.

Use of pornography is a vexing and serious issue among both men and women. The social justice and ethical costs of pornography and the victimization inherent in its production, as well as its tendency toward personal bondage and marital disruption, make it imperative that Christians take safeguards to protect themselves and others from its use. A frank talk with the Dean of Students can help begin this discussion. The use of blocking software and accountability partners is critical to address this matter effectively. For some the compulsive use of pornography may be addressed by counseling therapy and / or a support group, either of which the Dean of Students may require.

### **Arrests / Convictions / Punitive Military Discharges**

A student will be subject to the provisions of the Student Disciplinary Policy if he/she is convicted of or pleads no contest to any criminal offense. This includes all DUI convictions / pleas.

If a student is charged with a crime, the student must notify the Dean of Students of the details of the situation immediately. Copies of police and other legal documents issued to the student may be requested as the Seminary may choose to conduct its own investigation of the circumstances. Criminal charges may subject the student to the Student Disciplinary Policy regardless of the action of any pending or completed criminal proceedings.

A student who receives a punitive military discharge (Bad Conduct or Dishonorable Discharge) from any branch of the armed forces while an admitted student at the Seminary will also be subject to the Disciplinary Policy. Discharges characterized as Other than Honorable (OTH) will have their case reviewed by the Dean of Students to determine if it is appropriate to subject the student to the Disciplinary Policy.

### **Additional Areas of Student Conduct**

A student who is experiencing any of the following issues must contact the Dean of Students to discuss the problem and to formulate a plan for growth and healing. Any of these behaviors or behaviors bearing on moral conduct that are ongoing and for which there is no stated repentance, may, at the discretion of the Dean of Students, subject the student to discipline and may be grounds for dismissal:

- Church discipline has been imposed on student;
- Student no longer has the recommendation of his or her church for continuance at Phoenix Seminary due to moral concerns;
- Student is a perpetrator of violence;
- Student engages in possession or use of any illegal substance or engages in abuse of prescription drugs or alcohol.

### **Conduct Bearing on Fitness for Ministry**

Occasionally, a student may exhibit behaviors that are not necessarily moral misconduct but nevertheless compromise one or more of the following:

- The student's ability to successfully meet his or her educational goals;
- The Seminary's ability to provide a learning environment conducive to spiritual and professional preparation; or
- The ability of the faculty or staff to effectively meet the student needs of the broader Seminary community.

These behaviors may be considered issues of overall fitness for ministry. Behaviors can come from a variety of causes including undiagnosed, untreated or insufficiently treated mental illness. They include such things as

erratic or oppositional behaviors related to personality, emotional liability and gross unsuitability for professional ministry life. It may also include interpersonal behaviors that are maladaptive and interfere regularly with basic life activities, relationships and responsibilities.

When a faculty member, mentor or Seminary staff member has concerns about a student's inappropriate conduct, personal immaturity or evidence of emotional or psychological unsuitability for Seminary studies or vocational ministry, he or she is encouraged to speak to the student directly about the student's behaviors. If further action is deemed necessary, the concerned party may contact the Dean of Students, indicating his or her specific concerns in writing. The Dean of Students will investigate the concerns by consulting the student, the student's professors and the student's mentor.

When a student's personal and professional conduct is in question and after the faculty reviews the investigation by the Dean of Students, the faculty (or a subcommittee thereof appointed by the Academic Dean) will vote approving one of the following actions:

- *No Action.* Concern for the student's personal and professional conduct is unwarranted.
- *Non-Punitive Probation.* The student will be required to negotiate a plan to generate improvement. This may also require counseling by a qualified therapist (at the student's expense) to address the issues of concern. The student may continue Seminary coursework.
- *Non-Punitive Suspension.* The student may not register for coursework and will be withdrawn from classes. (The faculty may choose to allow the student to complete current courses.) The student may reapply following completion of a remediation plan the faculty may require, the completion of which is verified by the Dean of Students.
- *Non-Punitive Dismissal.* The student's relationship with the Seminary will be terminated. Reapplication will be considered after two years.

Determinations of student status under this policy are labeled "non-punitive" to differentiate them in the student's record from actions under Section II: Student Disciplinary Policy.

### **Appeal of any Action by the Faculty Regarding Fitness for Ministry**

Action by the Faculty (or subcommittee thereof) may be appealed to the Student Disciplinary Committee. Any such appeal must be made in writing through the Provost to the Student Disciplinary Committee. Such an appeal must be received by the Provost within five calendar days of the date upon which the student is provided written notice of the Faculty's action. Unless the Student Disciplinary Committee, in its discretion, deems additional proceedings appropriate, the Student Disciplinary Committee's review will be limited to the record submitted. The decision of the Student Disciplinary Committee is final. Students are required to agree to these standards in both the Admission and Registration processes.

### **Considerations for Counseling Students**

In addition to the Seminary's general policy concerning Student Conduct as well as the aforementioned Conduct Bearing on Fitness for Ministry (par. J), students enrolled in programs with a counseling concentration (MAC, MDiv CF) are evaluated on an ongoing basis for clinical suitability. If, in the judgment of the Counseling Program Intervention Committee, a student's personal and professional conduct is not suitable for clinical placement, the Committee may recommend or require remediation or the committee may prohibit a student from proceeding in his or her degree / diploma program.