



# NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY HANDBOOK

18TH EDITION



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## WELCOME FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE

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When the National Honor Society was established by the National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in 1921, the principals involved hoped to create an organization that would recognize and encourage academic achievement while also developing other characteristics essential to citizens in a democracy. These ideals of scholarship, service, leadership, and character remain as relevant today as they were in 1921. In fact, as we prepare future leaders for global citizenship, the opportunity to support these ideals becomes even more important.

Membership in NHS is both an honor and a commitment. It is this commitment that has helped shape the Honor Society's reputation for excellence, making it a valued asset among administrators, faculty members, students, parents, and communities.

This is an exciting time for the Honor Societies, as we embark on new initiatives designed to further support students in their quest to uphold the values that earned them selection. These initiatives will allow student members the opportunity to engage in activities that extend far beyond their local communities. Students will be proud to identify themselves as a member of the *National* Honor Society.

On behalf of all the school leaders associated with NASSP, thank you for recognizing your finest students through your affiliation with the National Honor Society.



JoAnn D. Bartoletti  
Executive Director, NASSP





# INTRODUCTION

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**T**hank you to all of the advisers who selflessly give of their time to support those students who exemplify the ideals of the National Honor Society (NHS).

This handbook is designed to be your comprehensive resource for chapter management. It includes tools such as sample letters and scripts, which you can customize to your needs. Many of these items can also be found by logging in to the Adviser Resource Center on our website, [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

The national office is excited about the new programs and services that were rolled out beginning in the 2015-16 academic year. These initiatives are designed to support the college and career readiness of members and expand the opportunities members are afforded beyond their local communities. We look forward to making the student member experience truly “national” in scope.

As these programs and services are launched, be sure to use this handbook in combination with other great resources for advisers, such as our website, the national magazine, and our e-newsletter Honor Society News, to stay abreast of developments.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals, as the parent organization of NHS, believes it has a professional responsibility and ethical duty to support Honor Society students and an obligation to assist the teachers who serve as advisers. Furthermore, the association takes seriously its duty to support the principals of NHS chapter schools.

We hope you find this handbook to be one particularly useful tool in supporting your vital work.



Jonathan D. Mathis, PhD  
Director, National Honor Societies

# 1. CONSTITUTION OF THE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY



All policies and procedures for NHS chapters are based on the provisions of the National Constitution. The following version of the NHS Constitution was approved for all chapters on July 8, 2016, by the NASSP Board of Directors. This is the most recent edition for use by chapters. Changes have also been approved for the NJHS Constitution. Chapter advisers and school principals are asked to review this document carefully. Copies can be provided to chapter officers and all chapter members as a reference to the national guidelines that govern all chapters of NHS. (Always consult [www.nhs.us/constitution](http://www.nhs.us/constitution) for the most recent edition of the National Constitution.)

## ARTICLE I: NAME AND PURPOSE

- Section 1.** The name of this organization shall be the National Honor Society of Secondary Schools (NHS).
- Section 2.** The purpose of this organization shall be to create enthusiasm for scholarship, to stimulate a desire to render service, to promote leadership, and to develop character in the students of secondary schools.
- Section 3.** NHS is a program of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1537, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit association.

## ARTICLE II: THE NASSP STUDENT LEADERSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Section 1.** The control of this organization shall be vested in the NASSP Board of Directors.
- Section 2.** There shall be a national advisory committee to advise the NASSP staff and Board of Directors regarding NHS and its policies and procedures.
- Section 3.** The Student Leadership Advisory Committee shall consist of 14 members appointed by the Board of Directors of NASSP, as follows:
- 6 high school student members (3 NHS, 3 NASC member schools)
  - 2 middle level student members (1 representing the school of the middle level adviser-at-large and 1 from the NJHS principal-at-large)
  - 2 high school advisers-at-large (1 NHS, 1 NASC member school)
  - 1 middle level adviser-at-large (1 NJHS or 1 middle level NASC member school)
  - 3 practicing principals-at-large (NASSP members: 1 NHS school, 1 NJHS school, 1 NASC school)
  - The executive director of NASSP shall be an ex officio member of the Student Leadership Advisory Committee.

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Section 4. Members shall be appointed for a term of no more than two years.

## ARTICLE III: STATE ORGANIZATIONS

- Section 1. Local chapters may choose to organize state associations.
- Section 2. Any state association of National Honor Society chapters shall conform to this Constitution and shall work with NASSP in furthering the purposes of this organization.
- Section 3. All state associations shall be affiliated with the National Honor Society.
- Section 4. The state affiliate shall not serve as an appeal board for local chapter nonselection or dismissal cases. Section 5. Bylaws of the state associations must be approved by NASSP and must be consistent with the NHS Constitution.

## ARTICLE IV: LOCAL CHAPTERS

- Section 1. Any secondary public school is eligible to establish a new chapter. Nonpublic secondary schools accredited or approved by state departments of education or by accrediting agencies approved by NASSP are eligible to apply for a chapter. Each school shall have its own chapter except in cases where a school's size precludes the formation of a full Faculty Council. In such cases, a chapter can be shared as long as all other constitutional requirements can be met. A middle level unit in the same building with a high school unit will be appropriate cause for two separate chapters (one for the National Junior Honor Society and one for the National Honor Society). (See Chapter 4 for clarification of this last provision of Section 1.)
- Section 2. Deleted.
- Section 3. Each school with a chapter shall pay an annual affiliation fee approved by the NASSP Board of Directors.
- Section 4. The annual individual member dues paid to a chapter or state affiliate, if any, shall not exceed twenty(20) dollars inclusively. The exact amount shall be determined by the executive committee of the chapter and shall be subject to the approval of the chapter membership.
- Section 5. Duly chartered local chapters shall conform to this Constitution as set forth by the NASSP Board of Directors. Failure to do so may result in the loss of the charter.

## ARTICLE V: THE PRINCIPAL

- Section 1. The principal shall reserve the right to approve all activities and decisions of the chapter.
- Section 2. The principal shall annually appoint a member of the faculty as chapter adviser, who may serve consecutive terms. Co-advisers may be appointed where necessary.
- Section 3. The principal shall annually appoint a Faculty Council composed of five members of the school's faculty who may serve consecutive terms.
- Section 4. The principal shall receive appeals in cases of nonselection of candidates, and the disciplining or dismissal of members.

## ARTICLE VI: THE CHAPTER ADVISER

- Section 1. The chapter adviser shall be responsible for the direct, day-to-day supervision of the chapter and act as liaison between faculty, administration, students, and community.
- Section 2. The chapter adviser shall maintain files on membership, chapter history, activities, and financial transactions. The chapter adviser shall complete the annual survey and submit it to the national office.
- Section 3. The chapter adviser shall regularly review each member for compliance with Society standards and obligations.
- Section 4. The chapter adviser shall help the chapter officers understand and carry out their duties.
- Section 5. The chapter adviser shall be an ex officio, non-voting, sixth member of the Faculty Council and shall facilitate all meetings of the council.
- Section 6. The chapter adviser shall be a member of the faculty, appointed annually by the principal, and may serve consecutive terms.

## ARTICLE VII: THE FACULTY COUNCIL

- Section 1. The Faculty Council shall consist of five (5) voting faculty members appointed annually by the principal. The chapter adviser shall be an ex officio, nonvoting, sixth member of the Faculty Council. No principal or assistant principal may be included on the Faculty Council. (See commentary in Chapter 3 regarding the functions of the Faculty Council.)
- Section 2. The term of the Faculty Council shall be one year. Members may be appointed to consecutive terms.

# OFFICIAL NHS CONSTITUTION

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**Section 3.** The Faculty Council shall meet at least once a year to review the procedures of the chapter, select members, and to consider nonselection, dismissal, other disciplinary actions, and warning cases.

**Section 4.** The Faculty Council will develop and revise, when necessary, all chapter procedures for selection, discipline, and dismissal of members, all of which must remain in compliance with this Constitution and NHS policies.

## ARTICLE VIII: MEMBERSHIP

**Section 1.** Membership in the local chapter is an honor bestowed upon a student. Selection for membership is by a Faculty Council and is based on outstanding scholarship, character, leadership, and service. Once selected, members have the responsibility to continue to demonstrate these qualities.

**Section 2.** Membership shall be known as active, honorary, and alumni. Active members shall become alumni members at graduation. Alumni members shall have no voice or vote in chapter affairs.

**Section 3.** Members of the Faculty Council shall support the school leader in creating and sustaining a school environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community. As such, the Faculty Council shall reserve the right to award honorary membership to students who warrant special consideration—including those who receive accommodations for a disability, or foreign exchange students—in recognition of achievement and/or outstanding service rendered to the school in keeping with the purposes of the National Honor Society. The Faculty Council might also award honorary membership to school officials, principals, teachers, NHS advisers, or other adults. Honorary membership grants to the recipient all of the privileges of membership without the obligations associated with active member status (See Chapter 3 of the National Honor Society Handbook for additional information).

**Section 4.** Candidates become members when inducted at a special ceremony.

**Section 5.** Members who are seniors in good standing are eligible to apply and compete in the National Honor Society Scholarship program.

**Section 6.** An NHS member who transfers to another school and brings a letter from the principal or chapter adviser to the new school adviser shall be accepted automatically as a member in the new school's chapter. Transfer members must meet the new chapter's standards within one semester in order to retain membership.

**Section 7.** Members who resign or are dismissed are never again eligible for membership or its benefits.

## ARTICLE IX: SELECTION OF MEMBERS

**Section 1.** To be eligible for membership the candidate must be a member of those classes (sophomore, junior, senior) designated as eligible in the chapter bylaws. (Freshmen [ninth graders] are not eligible.) Candidates must have been in attendance at the school the equivalent of one semester.<sup>1</sup> [See notes at end]

**Section 2.** The national minimum standard for scholarship shall be a cumulative scholastic average of at least 85 percent, B, or 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or the equivalent standard of excellence. Candidates shall then be evaluated on the basis of service, leadership, and character.

**Section 3.** The selection of each member to the chapter shall be by a majority vote of the Faculty Council. Prior to notification of any candidates, the chapter adviser shall review with the principal the results of the Faculty Council's deliberations.

**Section 4.** A description of the selection procedure shall be published in an official school publication that is widely available in a timely fashion to all students and parents of the school. The selection procedure shall be determined by the Faculty Council and shall be consistent with the rules and regulations of NHS.

**Section 5.** NASSP shall not review the judgment of the Faculty Council regarding selection of individual members to local chapters.

# OFFICIAL NHS CONSTITUTION

## ARTICLE X: DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

- Section 1.** The Faculty Council, in compliance with the rules and regulations of the National Honor Society, shall determine the procedure for dismissal. A written description of the dismissal procedure shall be available to interested parties.<sup>3</sup>
- Section 2.** Members who fall below the standards that were the basis for their selection shall be promptly warned in writing by the chapter adviser and given a reasonable amount of time to correct the deficiency, except that in the case of flagrant violation of school rules or the law, a member does not have to be warned.
- Section 3.** The Faculty Council shall determine when an individual has exceeded a reasonable number of warnings.
- Section 4.** In all cases of pending dismissal, a member shall have a right to a hearing before the Faculty Council. (Note: This hearing is required and is considered “due process” for all members.)
- Section 5.** For purposes of dismissal, a majority vote of the Faculty Council is required.
- Section 6.** A member who has been dismissed may appeal the decision of the Faculty Council to the principal and thereafter under the same rules for disciplinary appeals in the school district.
- Section 7.** NASSP shall hear no appeals in dismissal cases. (Note: Refer to Article VIII, Section 7 regarding the permanent consequences for members when dismissed.)

## ARTICLE XI: CHAPTER OFFICERS

- Section 1.** The officers of the chapter, their duties, and the method of their election shall be determined by the members of the chapter, approved by the Faculty Council and the principal, and described in the chapter bylaws.
- Section 2.** New officers shall be installed at a special ceremony. (See sample officer installation ceremony in Chapter 3.)

## ARTICLE XII: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Section 1.** The executive committee shall consist of the officers of the chapter and the chapter adviser.
- Section 2.** The executive committee shall have general supervision of the affairs of the chapter between its business meetings, make recommendations to the chapter, and determine and perform

such other duties as are specified in the chapter bylaws. All actions and recommendations of the executive committee shall be subject to the review of the chapter membership.

- Section 3.** The executive committee shall have the responsibility for ensuring that chapter activities and procedures follow school policy and regulations.<sup>4</sup>

## ARTICLE XIII: MEETINGS

- Section 1.** Each chapter shall have regular meetings during the school year on days designated by the executive committee and in accordance with school policy and regulations.
- Section 2.** The regularity of the meetings (i.e., weekly, monthly, bimonthly, etc.) shall be designated in the chapter bylaws.
- Section 3.** The chapter president or other designated student leader may call special meetings approved by the executive committee.
- Section 4.** Chapters shall conduct meetings according to Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised in all points not expressly provided for in this Constitution or the chapter bylaws.

## ARTICLE XIV: ACTIVITIES

- Section 1.** Each chapter shall determine one or more service projects for each year.
- Section 2.** All members shall regularly participate in these projects.
- Section 3.** These projects shall have the following characteristics: Fulfill a need within the school or community; have the support of the administration and the faculty; be appropriate and educationally defensible; be well planned, organized, and executed.
- Section 4.** Each member shall have the responsibility for choosing and participating in an individual service project that reflects his or her particular talents and interests. This is in addition to the chapter projects to which all members contribute.
- Section 5.** Each chapter shall publicize its projects in a positive manner.

## ARTICLE XV: OFFICIAL INSIGNIA

- Section 1.** This organization shall have an official emblem. The emblem shall be uniform and its distribution and rules for its use shall be determined by the NASSP Board of Directors.

# OFFICIAL NHS CONSTITUTION

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- Section 2.** Each active, honorary, or alumni member in good standing with the chapter shall be entitled to wear this emblem.
- Section 3.** Any member who resigns or is dismissed shall return the emblem to the chapter adviser.
- Section 4.** All insignia must be procured from the national office of the National Honor Society, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA, 20191. All insignia are registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office and may not be copied by anyone without written permission of the NHS national office. (See also, Logo Usage Guidelines at [www.nhs.us/logo](http://www.nhs.us/logo).)
- Section 5.** The motto of the National Honor Society shall be Noblesse oblige.
- Section 6.** The official colors of the National Honor Society shall be blue and gold.
- Section 7.** An alumni member may purchase a replacement for a lost emblem by verifying membership to the national office.

## ARTICLE XVI: CHAPTER BYLAWS

- Section 1.** Each chapter shall write bylaws to amplify sections of this Constitution and to clarify operating procedures of the chapter. Bylaws do not need the approval of NASSP but must be consistent with this Constitution.
- Section 2.** The chapter bylaws shall contain information concerning the election and duties of officers, the schedule of meetings, member obligations, dues, and the like. (Note: See Chapter 3 and the adviser section at [www.nhs.us/bylaws](http://www.nhs.us/bylaws) for additional information regarding the appropriate content of chapter bylaws.)

## ARTICLE XVII: AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by the NASSP Board of Directors based on the recommendations of the Student Programs staff and approved by the NASSP Board of Directors.

### Notes:

1. Article IX, Section 1. Some candidates may be ineligible for induction because of the semester ruling. Many students, including students of military parents, are required to move with parents or guardians who have transferred in their work. The present school principal should seek a recommendation from the previous school principal or chapter adviser pursuant to the candidate's selection. On the basis of the recommendation from the previous school, the Faculty Council may waive the semester regulation.
2. Article IX, Section 2. Local chapters may raise the cumulative GPA standard above the national minimum, or increase standards for the remaining selection criteria, apply them fairly and consistently, and include these standards in their locally published selection procedures. See Chapter 4 for additional information.
3. Article X, Section 1. To maintain compliance, all local procedures must conform to the full provisions of this article. Faculty Councils can consider disciplinary actions that are less severe than dismissal if circumstances warrant.
4. Article XII, Section 3. This section is generally viewed to include chapter activities except those with regards to the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members, which are the sole domain of the chapter's Faculty Council per the provisions of Article VII, Section 4.

### NHS National Constitution

Last revised and approved by the NASSP Board of Directors, July 2016.



# 2. THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

## 2.1 Overview of the National Office

The National Honor Society is a program of NASSP and is located in their offices in Reston, VA. NASSP is the leading organization of and national voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and all school leaders from across the United States and more than 35 countries around the world. The association provides research-based professional development and resources, networking, and advocacy to build the capacity of middle level and high school leaders to continually improve student performance. Reflecting its longstanding commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Association of Student Councils. For more information about NASSP, visit [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).

In 1921, NASSP organized the National Honor Society. In 1929, the association added the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) to promote student recognition for younger students. To honor excellence in elementary school students, in 2008 the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS) was founded. The national staff serves students, activity advisers, and administrators in schools nationwide and in more than 70 countries internationally.

Leadership education and national student recognition are the primary goals of all student programs administered by the national office. Our award-winning magazine helps to facilitate communication between the national office and its affiliated schools. The office also publishes a monthly e-newsletter, Honor Society News, and maintains an active presence at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us). Through these many programs and services, we demonstrate our commitment to the importance of student activities in schools along with the value of effective and engaged student leadership, service to others, and good citizenship.

NASSP maintains eight administrative regions for its membership and the Honor Societies. See the map on page 11.

## 2.2 Governance

The NASSP Board of Directors is responsible for the operational control of the National Honor Society at the national level. Per provisions of the National Constitution for NHS, NASSP cannot review the judgment of the local chapter's faculty council regarding selection and/or dismissal of individual members to local chapters.

## 2.3 The NASSP Student Leadership Advisory Committee

The NASSP Student Leadership Advisory Committee consists of 14 members appointed by the NASSP Board of Directors. The committee advises NASSP staff and the Board of Directors regarding NHS and its policies and procedures. The committee meets annually at the NASSP national headquarters. Correspondence can be directed to the committee at 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191.

## 2.4 Resources Provided by Your National Office

### For NHS Advisers:

- An award-winning national magazine, designed to support your work as a chapter adviser. Inserts within the magazine during the year include:
  - a. The *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* (a catalog of items available for purchase mailed with the first issue of the magazine each year)
  - b. Information on leadership conferences held throughout the year
  - c. National Student Leadership Week materials
- Annual adviser ID card
- NHS National Scholarship information (November).
- The spring induction kit promotion from the NHS Store (January)
- Honor Society News, monthly e-newsletter

### For Principals with affiliated chapters:

- Annual school affiliation certificate
- The annual affiliation renewal notice in the spring (notices mailed in March; due date: June 30). Email renewal reminders are sent simultaneously to chapter advisers.

Note: Principals seeking additional information about membership with NASSP are encouraged to visit [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org) or contact the membership office at 800-253-7746, option 4.

### Additional mailing to your school:

- Prudential Spirit of Community Awards promotion (September)



# THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

## 2.4.1 Contacting the National Office

Advisers and principals are encouraged to have their member and school ID numbers available whenever contacting the national office. Also, please note your title (adviser or principal) to facilitate the fastest response.

Name corrections or changes of school address information should be faxed to the membership department, 703-860-3422 or emailed to [membership@nassp.org](mailto:membership@nassp.org). We rely on this support from chapters to see that the national database remains accurate.

## 2.5 Conferences and Workshops for NHS

A variety of meetings, including LEAD Conferences and State Summits, are held each year to give advisers and students the opportunity to share ideas, learn new skills, and build greater understanding of their National Honor Society. For the latest information on programs, go to [www.nhs.us/events](http://www.nhs.us/events) and [www.leadconferences.org](http://www.leadconferences.org). Notices of conferences also appear in the magazine.

### State Conferences and Workshops

There are more than 20 state associations of Honor Society chapters in the U.S., all of which provide some types of meetings, conferences, and/or workshops for students and/or advisers. A list of all active state associations can be found online at [www.nhs.us/states](http://www.nhs.us/states).

## 2.6 Official Insignia

When the National Honor Society was founded in 1921, the National Council authorized and approved an official emblem. This emblem can be issued by a National Honor Society chapter only to duly elected active or honorary members.

The emblem of the National Honor Society was first described by E. J. Eaton, a member of the first National Council: "The emblem of this society is the keystone and the flaming torch. The keystone bears at its base the letters CSLS, which stand for the four cardinal principles of the organization: character, scholarship, leadership, and service. As the keystone is placed by the builder to hold the perfect arch in perpetual stability, so the structure of our education must be held firm and true to the purposes of life by the virtues represented in this symbol. To bear forward the searching light of truth, to lead that others may follow in light, to keep burning in our school a high ambition for the enduring values of life, and to serve—these purposes are symbolized in the torch."

The distribution of official National Honor Society emblems is controlled by NASSP. Advisers and principals are given the authority to purchase official insignia from the national sales office. Consequently, telephone, fax, or emailed

orders can be placed only by the principal or chapter adviser. All official insignia are included in the *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* sent to advisers at the beginning of each school year. These products are also posted online at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store) or under the Store link on the home page of the website.

The NHS logo was updated in 2008 and at this time all chapters should be using this latest version for all chapter publications and promotions.

From time to time, the national office licenses commercial vendors to produce and sell items bearing the official insignia of the organization. Indications of this license are expected to be included in all promotions produced and distributed by these licensees. Advisers who question the authenticity of any promotion bearing the name or insignia of the Honor Society should report their concerns to the staff of the national office. Look for the ® or "TM" as an indicator of the official emblem.

The National Honor Society emblem cannot be duplicated without permission of NASSP. The names "National Honor Society" and "NHS" and the insignia design are similarly protected.

Electronic versions of the logo are available in the adviser section of [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us) for use by active chapters. Permission is granted to members of duly affiliated chapters of NHS to copy pages from this handbook relating to chapter activities for free distribution. Similarly, chapters can utilize the name and logo of NHS for official publications and activities per the guidelines that follow.

## NHS Trademark Policy and Logo Usage Guidelines

All local and state advisers are responsible for helping to protect the use of all NHS trademark items. NASSP, as parent organization and owner of the rights to all Honor Society names and logos, expresses its policy concerning the use of trademark materials as follows:

Local NHS chapters and state associations are permitted to use trademark items without obtaining approval from the national NHS office (NASSP) on printed materials, promotional pieces, and displays that are not sold. Approval must be obtained in writing from NASSP for any item that will be sold by local or state NHS chapters or that is produced by a commercial vendor. Commercial vendors are not permitted to use NHS trademarks on any goods offered for sale or otherwise unless they have been licensed by NASSP. A Logo Usage Request Form has been developed to assist local chapters in obtaining permission for sales or when using commercial vendors. The form is available at [www.nhs.us/logo](http://www.nhs.us/logo).

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**On the Web:** For Internet/website development, local chapters may utilize the NHS logo for a period of three years as long as the following conditions are met:

- a. The “TM” or ® (trademark) sign should appear next to the name “National Honor Society” or initials “NHS” when it first appears on the page.
- b. A footnote is added to the page where the “TM” or ® appears stating: “National Honor Society and NHS are duly registered trademarks of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Unauthorized copying or use of said trademarks is strictly prohibited.”
- c. A link to the site or email attachment of the usage described in “a” and “b” is sent to the national office by email to [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us). Note “Logo Usage” in the subject line.

**Website Logo Usage:** Local chapters may establish links to the national NHS site found at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us). Please inform the national office if your chapter has its own home page/website.

**Use of the Official Emblems:** The purchase of an emblem is not an obligation of membership for any student or chapter.

Emblems are often purchased through the school activity fund on the same or similar basis as athletic letters and presented to new members at the induction ceremony. Community organizations (the PTA, Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions Club, for example) sometimes provide funds for the purchase of the emblems. In a school where no financial provision is made, individual members may purchase the emblem with assistance from the chapter adviser.

Regardless of who pays for the emblem, the title to the emblem remains with the chapter until the member has graduated. Each member should have a clear understanding of this stipulation. Members who are dismissed for any reason must surrender the emblem to the chapter adviser. If the dismissed member refuses, that individual should be reported through normal school disciplinary channels. If the emblem was paid for by the member, the chapter should reimburse the student for the original cost of the emblem.

The emblem and other insignia should always be worn with dignity and pride. Individual student members may not design their own clothing or jewelry featuring official NHS insignia.

In some schools, the National Honor Society pin is worn on the graduation gown. Other schools recognize the Society members by having them wear the official stole over the academic gown. In many instances, NHS members are so designated in the printed program. If chapters indicate through their local bylaws or guidelines that all members have a right to wear the pin, stole, honor cords, etc., then this right cannot be removed without first dismissing the member per the due process outlined in Article X of the National Constitution. If,

on the other hand, chapters indicate that such insignia are privileges of membership and will only be allowed among members in good standing, the chapter may revoke such privileges in the event the member is not in good standing. (See Article XV, Section 3 of the National Constitution.)

Pins and charms may be engraved with the member’s initials, but the engraving is not available through the national office.

Alumni members who lose emblems should contact the principal of the school where induction took place. If the principal (or current chapter adviser) certifies in a letter to the national office that the individual was selected for membership and is a bona fide alumni member, a price list and order form will be sent. Unless membership can be so verified, additional emblems cannot be supplied.

Advisers should use only current order forms when ordering official insignia. Chapters that do not have a current *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* and order form can contact the national sales office of the National Honor Society, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191 or email their request to [sales@nhs.us](mailto:sales@nhs.us). Be sure to state the name of the school and chapter and include your school affiliation number, which can be found either on the adviser’s ID card or on the label of all mailings from the national office, including the magazine.

**Commercial Requests:** The national office cautions principals, chapter advisers, and members to be wary of commercial groups that request lists of National Honor Society members for any reason. Such groups often operate fraudulently. School officials concerned about offers that appear to exploit students should check with local postal authorities or the Better Business Bureau ([www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)) if the organization in question does not fulfill its claims, or consult the NASSP List of Approved Contests, Programs, and Activities for Students. The list is made available at [www.nassp.org/contests](http://www.nassp.org/contests) and is updated annually. (Additional information regarding this service from NASSP is found in Chapter 8.)

In addition, all official correspondence from NHS, including all invoices for affiliation renewal, will bear the official logo and the Reston, VA, return address. Chapters suspecting misuse of the name or logo or the questionable request for member names can report this information to the national office.

## 2.7 Official Colors, Motto, and Flower

The official colors of the National Honor Society are blue and gold. Advisers can contact the national office for official Pantone color designations. The Society’s motto is *Noblesse oblige*, a French phrase meaning “nobility obligates” or “nobility is an obligation.” In broader terms, it signifies that those of high rank or ability (or birth, in its original context) have the

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obligation to behave honorably, generously, and responsibly to others. The official flower of the NHS is the yellow rose.

## 2.8 Annual Surveys

Each active chapter is required to submit an annual survey of activities to the national office. Surveys are conducted online and the deadline for submission is June 30.

It is the responsibility of the chapter adviser to complete and submit this annual survey. The data gathered from these surveys each year assists the national staff in better understanding our members so that more effective programs, products, and services can be provided to assist in maintaining your chapter. Surveys are posted in the spring and remain live through June 30 each year. Links to the survey are provided in the magazine and e-newsletter beginning in April.

## 2.9 Additional Honor Societies

NASSP administers two additional Honor Societies for schools: The National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) and the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS, in collaboration with the National Association of Elementary School Principals).

NJHS is an Honor Society for middle level schools. Students become members through a selection process that parallels that used for NHS with the addition of citizenship as the fifth criterion for membership. Grade level eligibility exists for students beginning in second semester of sixth grade through ninth grade. Membership in NJHS has no direct influence on whether a student becomes a member of NHS in high school. The two Honor Societies operate separately even when operating on the same campus such as in a K–12 school. While many high schools operate under a 9–12 grade level structure, the National Constitution of NHS prohibits the establishment of an NJHS chapter in such schools to accommodate freshmen. More information about NJHS can be found at [www.njhs.us](http://www.njhs.us).

In 2008, NASSP, along with colleagues from NAESP, established the National Elementary Honor Society, NEHS. Membership is based on good grades (scholarship) and demonstrated qualities of responsibility at home, at school, and in the community. NEHS chapters focus on providing leadership training and service experiences for their members once they are selected. Students in grades 4–6 are eligible for consideration in schools with an NEHS chapter. Additional information can be found online at [www.nehs.org](http://www.nehs.org).

**State Associations.** Some states have state associations of NHS and/or NJHS chapters. These organizations maintain an active affiliation with the national office. Chapters in those states hosting such associations are encouraged to join and become active members. For a list of those states sponsoring

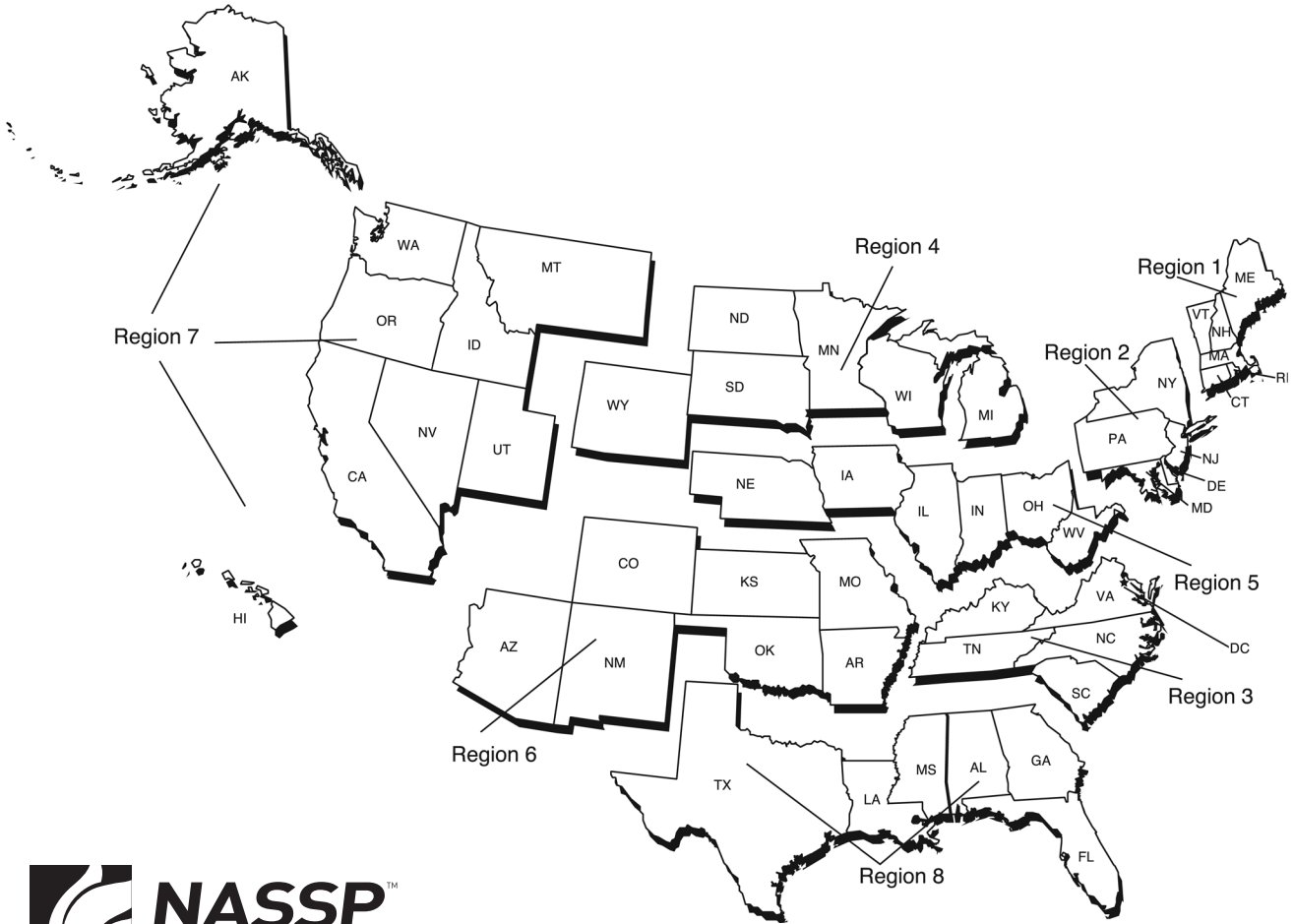
state Honor Society associations, visit [www.nhs.us/states](http://www.nhs.us/states).

In some states where there are no formal state associations, some state principals' associations sponsor annual meetings and workshops for either advisers or students or both. NASSP works closely with both state Honor Society associations and these state principals' groups to promote leadership development for students and professional development for advisers.

**Other Honor Societies.** In virtually every area of secondary study, there are honor societies for students. Science, English, math, music, and art, to name but a few disciplines, maintain important organizations to recognize and engage students demonstrating outstanding skills in these areas of study. NHS supports the existence of such organizations in schools to further the cause of student recognition. Schools with questions regarding the authenticity of any other honor society are encouraged to inquire with the NHS national office at [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us).

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## 2.10 NASSP Regions Map





# 3. CHAPTER ORGANIZATION



## 3.1 Getting Started

This section is designed to provide chapter advisers with the essential information needed to get their chapter up and running—or for the experienced adviser, a thorough review of the key elements for every chapter. For a summary of what the National Constitution requires of every chapter—use Chapter Management Tool 3.1 (CMT 3.1)—Ten Basic Necessities for All Honor Society Chapters, found at the end of this chapter. Chapter advisers and principals are also encouraged to review the New Adviser Checklist (CMT 3.2).

### 3.1.1 Key Contacts

There are three essential contacts that each adviser should establish when forming or assuming responsibility for an Honor Society chapter on campus.

#### I. Principal

- Responsible for payment of the annual affiliation renewal fee.
- Appoints the chapter adviser and the faculty council (five members).
- Consulted for general schedule considerations: When will the induction ceremony take place? Spring or fall or both? (From here the schedule for the selection process can be derived working backwards from the induction ceremony date on the school calendar.)
- Sets priorities for your style of recognition: What type of recognition (pins, certificates, etc) will the chapter provide to members both at induction and at graduation (i.e., pins, certificates, honor cords, medallions, stoles, etc.)

- Coordinates funding for the chapter: How will chapter activities, including recognition, be financed? School budget allocation? Chapter dues? (Maximum allowed: \$20 per member per year) Fundraising activities? Policies or limitations that exist on fundraising?
- Reviews the principal's authority regarding Honor Society activities per the guidelines found in the National Constitution (Article V, Section 1); the handbook; and all school, school district, or state guidelines or policies that effect the running of the Honor Society.

#### II. Faculty Council

- Provides contact information/phone tree/room assignment, etc.
- Knows the schedule of meetings (minimum of one per year)
- Aware of all duties, including:
  - Selection procedures for membership
  - Discipline and dismissal of members
  - Chapter bylaws development and approval
  - Other duties/activities
- Professionalism: Understands the importance of maintaining a strong reputation for your chapter and its procedures.

#### III. Chapter Members and Officers: Governance, Activities, and Other Considerations

- Who are your chapter officers and what are their duties as identified in the chapter bylaws?
- What are the member obligations and what types of fulfillment records are kept for those obligations?

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- What is the committee structure for your chapter and their annual responsibilities?
- What are the chapter goals for the year (which also must be evaluated at some point)?
- When are the regular chapter meetings and what are the major chapter activities for the year; is there a master calendar?

## 3.1.2 Obligations of the Chapter to the National Office

Three main obligations can be identified for each Honor Society chapter each year:

### 1. Annual Affiliation Renewal

A renewal notice (invoice) is mailed in the spring (usually in mid-March) to the school principal seeking renewal of the chapter's affiliation. Notices of this mailing will appear in the magazine and in Honor Society News. The notice will request three things:

- Verification of the correct school name and address
- Verification of the name of the designated chapter adviser, with email contact information. Principals are able to change (update) the official adviser name if necessary on this form.
- Payment of the annual affiliation renewal fee. This fee is subject to change from one year to the next.

All chapters must submit their completed renewal form and payment by **June 30** each year. Submission by this time ensures that the chapter's status is updated and the adviser name entered in time for the back-to-school mailing that includes the annual *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* of insignia and publications and the first issue of the magazine.

To protect your chapter funds, please note that all official invoices for your chapter's annual affiliation renewal with NHS, including reminder notices, will bear the official logo of the organization and include a Reston, VA, return address.

### 2. Annual Survey Submission

Each spring, chapter advisers are asked to complete an online survey referenced in Article VI, Section 2 of the NHS National Constitution that serves as the "annual report." A link to the survey is also posted in the adviser section of the website.

Chapter advisers are requested to complete and submit this survey by June 30 each year. The responses gathered provide essential input to the national staff that guides the development of programs, policies, and products.

### 3. Stay up-to-date

To see that your chapter stays informed about developments in the Honor Societies, we encourage you to:

- Read the magazine.
- Check the national website monthly (a duty that can be assigned to a chapter officer) for any late-breaking news.
- Review each month's edition of Honor Society News, emailed to all advisers, then share relevant content with chapter leaders and faculty council members.
- Annually review and evaluate your chapter activities and policies and procedures to ensure full compliance with all national, state, and local guidelines. Include the principal in these sessions to incorporate any school system policies.
- Maintain strong communication links with all chapter members, officers, faculty council members, and other relevant parties.
- Develop and implement effective annual goals for the chapter that support the purposes of the Honor Society as expressed in Article I of the NHS National Constitution.
- Monitor your members on a regular basis to see that they continue to meet your standards and all obligations of membership.
- Dedicate time and resources to professional development and participation in training conferences provided by the state and national organizations.
- Share your successes.
- Stay focused. Remind chapter members annually of the purposes of NHS (see Article I), and take time to assist your student members in finding purpose in life and achieving their personal goals.

### 3.1.3 Chapter Name

Chapters may choose a name other than their school name to reflect local culture or honor someone in the school or community. Incorporating the reason behind a special chapter name into the induction ceremony is an effective way to establish and preserve chapter history. To avoid the impression that the Honor Society is a social fraternity or sorority, Greek names are discouraged. Chapters can order a replacement charter with the name they have selected from the NASSP sales office.

### 3.1.4 Dues for Members

Chapters determine and specify in their bylaws the amount of annual local chapter dues, if any, for their members. Dues are not to exceed \$20 a year per member.

If your school imposes fees for activities programs, please inform candidates and their parents of the distinction between official chapter dues and other fees imposed upon the chapter.

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No student should be denied membership because they cannot pay extra fees, and chapters should allow exemptions for those who cannot pay.

## 3.2 Governing Documents

Two documents govern the members and activities of all chapters: the NHS National Constitution and the local chapter bylaws.

### 3.2.1 The National Constitution

All chapters must adopt and follow the NHS National Constitution. This obligation is outlined in the chartering agreement signed by every school with a chapter. The Constitution of the National Honor Society is the primary source for policy information for all chapters. It has been approved by and can be amended only by recommendation of the national office staff and the NASSP Board of Directors. The Constitution has changed over the years. While the basic tenets of the organization have remained constant, the society has evolved to reflect new thinking since 1921. (The current National Constitution is found in Chapter 1, as well as at [www.nhs.us/constitutions](http://www.nhs.us/constitutions).) The online edition of the Constitution is the most up-to-date.

### 3.2.2 Chapter Bylaws

All NHS chapters function under a single National Constitution. In addition, local chapters must adopt bylaws to establish local procedures, as noted in Article XVI, Sections 1 and 2. Bylaws exist as a written set of rules for a group, defining the limits of authority for the organization and giving a sense of order and purpose.

Chapter bylaws should specify guidelines on such topics as the schedule of meetings; member obligations regarding meeting attendance, participation in projects, etc.; information on chapter officers (which ones are required, what their duties are, how they are to be elected or removed from office); dues requirements; a description of projects for the year; and scholarship nomination procedures. Chapters may add other information and procedures pertinent to the chapter. Chapter bylaws should be written in simple and direct terms and should include only essential items. (See sample bylaws in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.)

The chapter should regularly review the bylaws and change them to meet local needs. Though the local bylaws are not approved by the national office, they must be consistent with the NHS National Constitution and the policies derived from it. Upon request, the policy staff of the national office can assist chapters with the writing or review of bylaws.

### 3.2.3 Changing the Bylaws

Once the bylaws have been accepted by a vote of the chapter and approved by the faculty council and the administration, they become the official policies of the organization. Every set of bylaws should include a description of the procedures for amending the articles. It is good practice to have the entire chapter and faculty council review proposed changes before they are put to a vote or adopted.

There are times when an outdated set of bylaws is a hindrance to a chapter, so the bylaws may occasionally have to be revised or completely rewritten. A bylaws revision committee may be established, and the work of the committee is reported to the membership when the review is complete.

After a written draft of the proposed changes has been prepared, the members of the chapter should be informed and given copies so that they can discuss the issues before they come to a final vote. Proposed amendments or revisions usually require a two-thirds vote of the chapter for adoption. (Note: Sections dealing with revisions to the procedures for selection, disciplining, and dismissal of members can be changed only by the faculty council, though input from the chapter is allowed.)

Some good reasons for amending bylaws are:

- Statements no longer suit the chapter or school situation
- Bylaws are arranged so poorly that essential information is hard to find (this often occurs when an old document has been added to over a period of years)
- Bylaws contain elements that have caused long-standing disagreement
- Bylaws violate individual rights or do not conform to local or state policies or laws
- Bylaws prevent the chapter from adapting to change.

### 3.2.4 Other Chapter Records

In addition to the NHS National Constitution and the local chapter bylaws, each chapter should have the following on file and available for review:

- The *National Handbook* that includes the National Constitution
- Local selection procedure description including all forms used in the selection process and lists of member obligations once selected (per Article IX, Section 4)
- Policies and procedures relating to the disciplining and dismissal of members
- Chapter membership lists (both present and past)  
In addition, it is recommended that chapter files also contain the following:
- A copy of the chapter's charter



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- A history of the chapter (founding date, explanation of the chapter name, names of advisers and the years they served, etc.)
- Induction ceremony scripts and planning guides
- Chapter meeting agendas and minutes from current and previous years
- Service project records detailing projects undertaken for school or community by the chapter in past years
- A copy of the *NHS Adviser Resource Guide*
- Copies of the magazine for reference.

Note: Chapters may keep digital records or files of all of these elements, but chapters are advised to also keep hard copies. (See CMT 3.3 and CMT 3.4 at the end of this chapter for additional information.)

## 3.3 Personnel

In managing any chapter, there are three key positions: principal, chapter adviser, and the faculty council.

### 3.3.1 Principal

The principal has the right to approve all activities and decisions of the chapter (see Article V), including selection and dismissal of members. The principal cannot serve as chapter adviser and is not a member of the voting faculty council. The principal receives appeals in cases of nonselection of candidates and the discipline or dismissal of members.

The principal appoints and works closely with the chapter adviser and the faculty council to develop and follow fair selection and disciplinary procedures consistent with the Constitution. The principal cooperates with the adviser to achieve a smooth-running, productive chapter. The principal should be familiar with the *NHS National Handbook* and stay abreast of the activities and procedures of the school's chapter.

### 3.3.2 Chapter Adviser

The chapter adviser must be a member of the faculty of the school where the chapter is located and should be someone who has faith in the abilities of young people and is willing to spend time with them to develop their potential. The adviser is expected to be familiar with the *National Handbook* and have a working knowledge of Honor Society policies, as well as those of the school and the school district. The adviser promotes chapter activities, stimulates positive actions by members, and provides information on local and national policies regulating chapter activities. A checklist for new advisers is in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.

In addition, the adviser approves chapter activities, maintains chapter records, and attends all meetings and functions.

The chapter adviser is a nonvoting, sixth member of the faculty council. Neither principals nor assistant principals may serve as chapter advisers. Chapters may appoint co-advisers to run the chapter, particularly in cases involving very active chapters or those with large student memberships.

New advisers should contact the national office's membership department to confirm the correct adviser's name is on file to ensure accurate and timely correspondence. (See also the adviser job description model found online in the adviser section of [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).)

### 3.3.3 Faculty Council

The faculty council consists of five voting faculty members, appointed annually by the principal. If the principal delegates the power to make this appointment to the adviser, the list of faculty council members should be approved by the principal prior to the first meeting of the council.

The chapter adviser facilitates all meetings of and works with the faculty council in selecting, disciplining, or dismissing members. No principal or assistant principal may be on the faculty council. Members of the faculty council should be from the professional staff on campus (generally those with professional education degrees or certification) and not from among the support staff on campus (custodians, secretaries, etc.). Parents and students cannot serve as members of the faculty council.

The adviser and the faculty council cooperate in developing and periodically reviewing all local selection and disciplinary procedures and guidelines. Chapter members can be given the opportunity to comment on these procedures, and the members' recommendations should be considered in procedure formulation and review.

It is important that all members of the faculty council recognize that they are working on behalf of the total faculty of the school. All judgments reached by members of the faculty council should, therefore, be both sound and professional. The faculty council members must be fully knowledgeable of the guidelines for their chapter and follow carefully all stated guidelines and procedures.

#### 3.3.3.1 Role of the Principal Regarding Meetings of the Faculty Council

The school principal has the right to approve all activities and decisions of the local chapter as stated in Article V, Section 1 of the National Constitution. Furthermore, the principal appoints the chapter adviser (Article V, Section 2) and members of the Faculty Council (Article VII, Section 1), although this latter responsibility can be delegated to an assistant principal or adviser as needed.

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It is stated in Article VII, Section 1 that “no principal or assistant principal may be included on the faculty council”—indicating that the administrator does not serve as a member of the group that selects, disciplines, or dismisses members. This prohibition extends to the principal sitting in on the meetings of the faculty council because:

- Nowhere in the description of the duties of the principal nor in the explanation of the membership of the faculty council is there reference to having the principal as a member of that body.
- Because the principal serves as the primary authority for appeals of nonselection or discipline (as per Article V, Section 3), a conflict of interest could arise if the principal was also part of the initial decision in these cases. By sitting in on the decision-making process, the principal compromises his/her objectivity in hearing an appeal, the result of which would necessitate passing the appeal on to the next higher level of the school system for consideration (supervisors, superintendents, school boards, etc.). This delay would be both time-consuming and frustrating for all involved.
- The principal has entrusted the adviser and members of the faculty council with the authority over selection and discipline. To impose direct supervision of their function could be perceived as either micromanaging or a lack of trust in their professional capabilities, or as undue influence in the process. Either of these perceptions could be damaging to the chapter in the school and community.

How can a principal provide direction and instruction to the faculty council if he/she is prohibited from attending the meetings? One way would be for the principal to provide guidance at an annual private meeting with the adviser and members of the faculty council. Such meetings could involve a review of the previous year’s events, and the professional standards of the local chapter could be reinforced in a manner that supports the integrity of the members of the faculty council.

In addition, Article IX, Section 3 requires that before any decisions of the faculty council are made public, that the chapter adviser must share the results first with the principal. This step allows the principal to intervene before erroneous or otherwise embarrassing decisions leave the school.

### 3.3.3.2 Role of the Chapter Adviser in the Meetings of the Faculty Council

Since the principal cannot serve as a member or even an observer of the faculty council’s deliberations, the chapter adviser takes on the responsibility of representing the administrative offices of the school. In this role, the adviser serves in two capacities: the supervisor who ensures that proper procedures are being followed, and as the representative of the interests of the student(s).

As supervisor, the adviser first makes sure that both the national and local guidelines for procedure are being followed. A total familiarity with local procedures and the *National Handbook* are desirable, or they should at least be available for quick reference. In addition, a vital role of the faculty adviser is to see that the faculty council avoids gossip, hearsay, speculation, and rumors when considering the case of any individual student. To do this, the adviser serves as a facilitator of the discussions, keeping the council focused on objective data used to review each case.

This latter quality is the first step in serving as a representative for students who are brought before the faculty council. Usually, the first step is to collect data or facts to be considered. A thorough accounting of all information being used is one of the primary responsibilities of the adviser. Whether for selection or disciplinary consideration, the faculty adviser also serves to guarantee that each student receives a fair review. Although he or she is a member of the school’s faculty, the adviser must assume the role of the student’s representative to guarantee that only relevant and valid information is brought under consideration by members of the faculty council.

If nothing else, the faculty adviser plays a very diplomatic role in the meetings of the faculty council. For this reason, principals must carefully select advisers.

### 3.3.3.3 Size of the Faculty Council

The number of faculty members serving as voting members of the faculty council is set at five. Nowhere in the Constitution is there an exception made for the size of the faculty council and maintaining an odd-numbered council ensures that voting will resolve questions with a majority or greater vote.

Local chapters, particularly in larger schools, can allow input from additional staff members when undertaking candidate review during the selection process. For example, in schools with 12 academic departments, a representative of each department may assist in reviewing candidates. Local chapters may also seek input from the school counseling office. Administrators can also be asked to submit relevant commen-

# CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

tary during the review of candidates, particularly information obtained through school disciplinary records.

However, when it comes time to vote, only the five appointed members of the faculty council should engage in the final deliberations and voting. The decisions reached are to be shared with the principal and, thereafter, with the candidates under consideration.

### 3.3.3.4 Confidentiality of the Faculty Council

The concern regarding the identity of members of the faculty council usually arises when parents of nonselected students wish to ask each of the council members why the student was not selected. Because the chapter adviser and principal are chiefly responsible for responding to parental (or other) concerns, the national office does not encourage such inquisitions and supports local chapter efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the faculty council.

Some schools may wish to retain the names of the faculty council in complete secrecy. The motivation for this is understandable—no one wants the candidates to attempt to influence faculty council members in order to achieve membership.

However, complete secrecy can create problems for chapters when it comes to dismissal. According to the National Constitution (and presumed by the national office to be a “due process” of all members), any student being considered for dismissal has a right to a hearing with the faculty council prior to any decision being made on his/her status as a member. The purpose of this hearing is to allow a student to present his or her case to the council prior to its decision regarding dismissal. Such meetings would take place face-to-face and traditional protocol would request introductions be made, and if not, most students would recognize the members of the faculty anyway. Unless a chapter decides never to dismiss a student (a questionable position if assumed to be policy), eventually the names of the faculty council membership will be revealed. Of course, in the situation where a court or officials of the school system have requested the names of the faculty council, the principal may, at his/her discretion, provide the names.

The national office will support any principal or adviser who retains the confidentiality of the faculty council in order to avoid unnecessary questioning of their judgment. Efforts should be taken, however, to fully explain the selection process and respond to the inquiries in a professional manner. Requests or demands for members of the faculty council to be presented for interrogation on how each member evaluated the complaining student should be politely refused.

### 3.3.3.5 Alternates for Faculty Council Members

The National Constitution stipulates voting by five members of the faculty council. Because a member of the council may be sick, undertaking other professional responsibilities, or may have a conflict of interest when the council is called to meet, chapters should consider naming one or more official alternate members to the faculty council. With approval by the principal, these individuals could receive the same orientation to chapter guidelines as the official five members, but would be available for service in the event one of the five is not present. It is important to clarify the role of these individuals for the meeting in question, noting that after this meeting they will revert to alternate status. However, if any appeals emerge based on the decisions reached when the alternate was voting, then the alternate should be brought back in for any reconsideration of the case.

## 3.4 Membership

Membership in the National Honor Society is both an honor and a responsibility. Students selected for membership are expected to continue to demonstrate the qualities of scholarship, service, leadership, and character that were the basis for their selection. Membership is divided into three categories: active, alumni, and honorary.

### 3.4.1 Active Membership

A candidate for membership must first be selected by the faculty council and then inducted at a special ceremony to become an active member of the chapter. Active members have a voice and vote in chapter affairs, and they are expected to maintain the standards of the Society by which they were selected. They also fulfill certain obligations, as detailed in the chapter guidelines.

#### 3.4.1.1 Membership Lists/Rosters

A formal list of all members of the chapter is to be maintained by the chapter adviser. This list is updated following each round of selection and induction, as well as anytime a member is dismissed from the chapter. It is recommended that the chapter adviser maintain one copy and file another copy in the main office for backup. Although yearbooks and school newspapers often publish member lists, the official chapter membership roster should be confirmed and dated by the chapter adviser each year.

All official membership lists are maintained by the local chapter. The national office does not require chapters to submit membership lists, nor are they maintained in the national files. Advisers are encouraged to work with the principal to ensure a secure location for all membership lists.

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## 3.4.1.2 Obligations of Membership

The National Constitution defines several obligations for members. First, all members are to maintain the standards by which they were selected (i.e., continued performance at or above the required GPA, involvement in service and leadership projects, etc.). In addition, the Constitution expects members to attend meetings if called for, and to participate in both individual and chapter service projects during the year.

Chapters can choose to add to these obligations as long as they are identified for candidates prior to selection and that appropriate and timely notification is given to all members, once inducted, about their obligations. To avoid conflicts, students should have significant input into the creation of these obligations. The chapter should also carefully consult the school calendar and be sensitive to personal needs based on pre-existing familial or cultural/religious obligations.

The primary question that should be asked about all membership obligations is: Do they support the purposes of the organization as outlined in the Constitution? If they do, and support for the events can be demonstrated among a majority of the chapter members, these extra obligations are supportable. As every adviser knows, NHS members are already very involved in many school activities or they wouldn't have been chosen in the first place. Alternatives to mandatory obligations include offering students a choice, for example, to attend any two out of five events; making such activities voluntary; or giving members extra "points" or "credit" for participating that could be used toward fulfilling other membership obligations.

Local chapters are encouraged to survey the membership on this topic, and also to find out what other chapters in the area are doing before developing a plan. Publication of all member obligations is an important responsibility of the chapter. In addition to publishing the chapter bylaws for each member, chapters should include a list of member obligations in the general chapter description that appears in the student handbook, faculty handbook, parent newsletters, or any other official publication of the school or school system. Potential candidates and their parents will then have a better understanding of the level of commitment required by the Honor Society.

Many chapters will outline all member obligations and include them either in the candidate's packet of information (See Chapter 4) or in a new member packet, and then request (or require) that the student and parent or guardian sign the form affirming their understanding of all member obligations. This document will assist in supporting the school's position should a student be called up for disciplinary action for not meeting some or all of the member obligations.

(See also "The Five Constitutional Obligations of a Duly Inducted Member" and "How to Be a Good Chapter Member" in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.)

## 3.4.1.3 Transferring an Active Membership

Article VIII, Section 6 clearly indicates that a student's membership transfers automatically when a member moves from one school to the next. Differing standards and procedures among chapters can cause difficulty for students who transfer. Although the Constitution states that transfer members must be automatically accepted into the NHS chapter of the new school, the transferee may be unable to meet the new chapter's standards within one semester. For example, if a junior transferred to a school that accepted only seniors into the National Honor Society, the junior could not meet the requirements of the new chapter within one semester. In such or similar cases, the transfer student may have his NHS membership declared temporarily inactive, until he or she is able to meet the new chapter's standards. In other cases where the cumulative GPA standard of the new school is higher than that of the old school (e.g., 3.5 at the new school, but only at 3.0 at the member's old school), then the transferee is granted membership and given a reasonable amount of time (e.g., a semester) to raise the GPA to the new standard. In all transfer cases, the local faculty council is charged with making a sound, professional judgment regarding the membership status of the individual.

It is the obligation of the student member, when transferring to a new school, to notify, in a timely fashion, the adviser of the new school's chapter of his/her membership. Chapter advisers can require proof of membership in the former chapter, which could include a membership card, certificate, or official designation on the school transcript.

To facilitate informing the new school's chapter adviser of the transfer, the former chapter adviser can provide the transferring member with a letter that confirms that the member was in good standing when leaving. A sample transfer letter is provided online in the adviser section of [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

## 3.4.1.4 Preparing NJHS Students

As noted elsewhere in this handbook, membership in NJHS does not confer status of NHS membership, nor does it automatically make a student a candidate for consideration. While NJHS membership may serve to introduce middle level students to the general concepts of the criteria, strengthen their talents, and familiarize them with the selection process (the same as that used for NHS), there is no formal connection between membership in the two Honor Societies.

Where an NJHS chapter does exist in a middle level school that feeds into the high school, it is suggested that

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the two chapter advisers establish professional communications, and share selection procedures and chapter guidelines. Furthermore, the NHS chapter can consider meeting with the members of the NJHS chapter prior to the end of the middle level experience (e.g., at the last NJHS chapter meeting in the spring) to orient those members to high school, and how and when students are considered for membership in the high school chapter of NHS. Not only would such collaboration help smooth the transition for those NJHS members into their high school experience, but it will help them establish academic and activities goals for eventually obtaining membership in NHS.

### 3.4.1.5 Homeschooled Students

As a rule, students who are homeschooled full time and not enrolled at a school where an NHS chapter is present are not eligible for consideration as members. However, homeschooled students who are enrolled part-time at a member school, based on existing local and state policies, may be eligible for consideration. Advisers should consult with their principal in all such cases. If selection of part-time homeschooled students takes place, it is important for chapter advisers to outline all chapter obligations to ensure continued active membership.

### 3.4.1.6 Dual Enrollment, Postsecondary Option, and Alternative Placement Students

In recent years, school reform efforts have created a variety of new opportunities for students. Among these are dual enrollment with other secondary-level schools or some postsecondary institutions, options to complete high school while simultaneously receiving college credit through postsecondary options, and alternative programs for students who, for whatever reason, do not respond well to the traditional school setting.

Questions arise for NHS chapters regarding whether or not students enrolled in such programs are eligible for membership consideration, and if selected, what level of expectation exists for the fulfillment of chapter obligations.

For all such programs, two essential questions exist: Where is the student enrolled and who has ultimate authority over the student? In many cases, students and their parents sign off on a letter of agreement regarding their nontraditional status. Advisers should consult such agreements for answers to the questions of enrollment and authority. If the student is technically enrolled in your school and your principal has authority over him or her, that student may be eligible for membership and, if selected, can be counseled regarding all member obligations. Chapters are not expected to make exceptions for such students, but may be expected per local or state policies, to

develop reasonable accommodations, particularly if selected as members of the chapter.

The school that grants the high school diploma is another factor to consider. If the student is enrolled part time at your school but receives the diploma from the alternative education program, for example, one could argue that membership eligibility should only exist on the alternative education campus. If that campus does not maintain a chapter, there is no formal obligation for your chapter to consider him or her for membership.

Due to the great variety of plans currently in place, it is virtually impossible for a definitive section of this handbook to be created. However, if any of these nontraditional opportunities exist in your school system, it is suggested that the chapter adviser and principal, and perhaps a representative of the school system's administrative staff, formulate policy statements for inclusion in the local student handbook regarding eligibility and authority where the Honor Society candidacy and membership are concerned.

### 3.4.1.7 Students with Special Needs

Students who have received accommodations for their disability, based on their having been identified with one or more physical, emotional, learning or other disabling conditions, raise some unique questions where selection to NHS is concerned. For these cases, several relevant points should be considered.

First and foremost: Any student who is judged by the faculty council to meet the selection criteria (scholarship, service, leadership, and character) for membership should be selected.

Local selection procedures cannot be written to exclude students in an accommodated curriculum. If extra guidelines are included (e.g., "In addition to the required cumulative GPA, students must take at least two years of a foreign language to be considered as candidates"; "students must be enrolled in the precollege curriculum," etc.), local schools should first review these policies with local, state, and federal guidelines to ensure that such selection policies are legal and acceptable and supportable as being nondiscriminatory. Advisers should confer first with the principal, and, if necessary, with the school system legal counsel to authorize these elements of their selection process.

Should it be judged that the potential member does not meet all of the selection criteria, the faculty council may consider bestowing honorary membership upon a student with a registered disability. Honorary membership can be bestowed upon students with disabilities or foreign exchange students in recognition of achievement and/or outstanding service rendered to the school in keeping with the purposes of the National Honor Society. (Reference: Article VIII, Section 3 of

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the NHS National Constitution.) Other students at the school who are outside of these two categories are not eligible for honorary membership.

Put simply, honorary membership grants to the recipient all of the privileges of membership without the obligations associated with active member status.

When local schools consider students with special needs for membership, the faculty council should consider one of three options: selection as an active member, nonselection based on failure to meet the selection criteria, or selection as an honorary member of the chapter. (See also “Honorary Membership.”)

### 3.4.1.8 Nondiscrimination

Included in the sample bylaws at the end of this chapter is a suggested paragraph regarding nondiscrimination policies for chapters. Such policies are often incorporated into school system policies and guidelines, particularly in public school settings, and are suggested here for use by all chapters for inclusion in the selection process guidelines as well as operating bylaws for the chapter.

Our chapter of NHS maintains policies and practices that are designed to prevent discrimination against any qualified candidate or member on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, and disability. This policy of nondiscrimination applies to all practices, including the chapter administration and the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members.

While the inclusion of such statements is advised, it is not required. Interested chapter advisers should first confer with the principal and/or school system representatives regarding the inclusion of this language to be certain it conforms to existing local and state policies.

### 3.4.2 Alumni Membership

Active members become alumni members upon graduation. Alumni members have no voice or vote in chapter activities. Similarly, because alumni members are no longer within the jurisdiction of the chapter’s faculty council, they cannot be dismissed once graduated.

### 3.4.3 Honorary Membership

As identified in the Constitution, honorary membership may be granted to certain individuals who have extended outstanding service to the school or community in keeping with the purposes of the National Honor Society. Faculty councils are urged to use discretion in conferring honorary memberships.

The faculty council may also honor an outstanding student who has a disabling condition that prevents the student

from fully meeting the requirements for membership. Other students (those without disabling conditions) who attend the school are not eligible for honorary membership, with the exception of foreign exchange students who are unable to meet the requirements in full (particularly those of attendance), but who, in the opinion of the faculty council, deserve the recognition.

The usual membership card or certificate may be given to honorary members with the word “honorary” typed on it. Honorary members are permitted to wear the official insignia. Simply put, honorary membership bestows upon an individual all of the privileges of membership without imposing any of the obligations of membership.

The names of honorary and transfer members should also appear on the chapter’s official membership list, which is kept on file by the school or school district. (See also section 3.4.1.7, Students with Special Needs.)

## 3.5 Chapter Officers

Chapter officers are the core of student leaders who help advisers run the chapter. Each chapter has the responsibility to designate, through the chapter bylaws, officer positions that are appropriate for the smooth functioning of the chapter. Chapters often designate the following positions: president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, parliamentarian, historian, and reporter/public relations officer.

**Installation.** New officers should be installed in a ceremony at a chapter meeting, at a dinner meeting, or at another special event for the chapter. (Article XI, Section 2 in the NHS National Constitution.) The installation ceremony reinforces the idea that good officers are crucial to a strong chapter. A sample officer installation ceremony is found in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.

### 3.5.1 Officer Elections

We discourage using the term “election” regarding the selection of new members to an Honor Society chapter. However, election is used with chapters when explaining the process for identifying new chapter officers. Election procedures for chapter officers are determined by the membership and approved by the faculty council. For all officer election systems, democratic principles of operation should be used, with an emphasis on fairness in conducting all procedures. If the chapter needs assistance in completing chapter officer elections, advisers should consult with the school’s student council or other organizations on campus for examples of effective procedures.

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## 3.5.1.1 Publication/Bylaws/Duties

Every chapter must have bylaws and include the local provisions for chapter elections. The establishment of bylaws is mandated by Article XVI of the National Constitution as a means to amplify provisions of the Constitution. A separate set of bylaws or guidelines can be developed as chapter elections guidelines that should similarly be published. Regardless of where the elections guidelines are published, follow the established procedural guidelines.

An outline for your chapter bylaws, containing a section for the election and duties of officers is in the sample chapter bylaws found in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter and also at [www.nhs.us/bylaws](http://www.nhs.us/bylaws). Please note that neither of these sections includes a list of specific duties for your officers. These should be developed locally. It is worthwhile, at the end of each year, to have your officers review the set of published duties to determine whether or not those descriptions are accurate, and if not, make amendments to bring them up to date.

## 3.5.1.2 Voting Procedures

Once your processes and duties are clearly expressed in local documents, then carry out the election of your officers. Prior to the nomination of candidates, it is always helpful to present a fresh copy of the elections guidelines to all chapter members with a planned timeline for the entire election process. See that every member, including those who are absent, receives a copy and that some time is given for answering questions raised by the members.

A few topics should be addressed in this elections orientation. First: Who is eligible to run for office and who is eligible to vote? If you limit candidates to a certain grade level, for example, rising seniors, be sure this is clearly stated. Similarly, some chapters wish to limit who can vote for the coming year's officers to those members who are returning. Because such a practice excludes some current members from voting, it is essential that a rationale exists to clarify for those who question the practice. Although this is a local decision, the national office discourages the use of such exclusionary rules in chapter elections because it does not parallel standard voting practices in which all citizens at the time of the election are allowed to vote.

**Quorum.** Chapter presidents and advisers should be aware of the quorum rule which indicates that no official business of the chapter—including voting—can take place unless a minimum of one more than 50 percent of the members are present. Local chapters can set a quorum at a higher or lower percentage, but it is important to take an accurate count of members attending and voting during the election process. Some chap-

ters do not announce results until all members have submitted ballots, allowing those who missed the meeting to vote with the chapter adviser following the planned meeting.

**Tie votes.** When confronting tie votes in any election, look to your established procedures for advice, and if no such statement exists, consider developing one prior to the next election. Recounting and revoting are often the first steps in such circumstances, even allowing the tied candidates to make additional comments to the membership.

**Campaigning.** Whether your chapter allows campaigning in the form of signs, posters, speeches, or other methods should be addressed in your chapter bylaws. Approval of or limits to the content of all campaign activities is suggested. One problem that chapters have had to address in recent years is whether or not online campaigning is appropriate, whether at school or via home computers. In all such guidelines, it is recommended that the adviser compare the chapter guidelines with those in place in the school's student council or other student organizations. When in doubt, request input from the principal. Similarly, there may be school system guidelines on elections for student groups that would need to be followed by your NHS chapter.

## 3.5.1.3 An Officer Election Schedule Alternative

Chapters often find that in the second semester of an officer's last year at the school that officers have a tendency to slack off on their responsibilities. To counter this effect, a chapter can institute elections in December or January every year, whereby the new officers would serve a term that includes second semester of one year through first semester of the next. Although there may be many chapter activities impacted by such a plan, this allows officers to maintain their efforts over the summer, avoids the problems of reduced effectiveness at the end of the school year, and removes an important chapter function from the end of the school year which is already packed with events.

## 3.5.2 On the Job

Once elected, new officers should be publicly installed. Chapters are encouraged to create a respectful ceremony for the installation that serves as a reminder of the duties these individuals have assumed and the responsibility of the membership to support their new leadership.

The chapter should also consider publishing a press release to local media regarding the newly elected officers. Nothing helps keep an officer mindful of his or her responsibilities more than public awareness of the position.

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Patty Hendrickson, a consultant and leadership trainer, offers four essential points that advisers should use when working with their new officers:

- Encourage self-assessment and reflection
- Help each officer create a notebook
- Provide blank business cards for use by the officers
- Focus on a few, key goals for the group.

Visit [www.PattyHendrickson.com](http://www.PattyHendrickson.com) for more suggestions.

## 3.5.2.1 Dealing with Officer Problems

There may be times when officers don't perform their duties as assigned. It is important that consequences are laid out in the chapter officer guidelines. Officers can be warned, removed from office, or in extreme cases dismissed from the chapter. Though the latter function is reserved for the faculty council, any and all disciplinary processes should be spelled out in the chapter bylaws for all members.

In the case of removal or dismissal or even when an officer transfers to a different school and the vacancy needs to be filled, a policy should similarly be developed for filling vacancies whether by special election, appointment by the executive committee, the adviser or faculty council, or by simple succession. This replacement policy should also be carefully outlined and applied fairly and consistently in all circumstances.

## 3.6 Executive Committee

It is recommended that each chapter create an executive committee. The executive committee is composed of the chapter officers and the chapter adviser. This committee helps direct the business affairs of the chapter and determines the dues structure, makes recommendations concerning the bylaws, time and place of meetings, meeting agendas, special projects, member obligations, nominating procedures for the National Honor Society Scholarship Program, and the like. All actions and recommendations by the executive committee are subject to review by the membership.

The executive committee should be especially aware of the chapter's relationship to other school organizations, the administration, the faculty, and the community. Care should be taken that activities of the chapter do not duplicate or interfere with those of other school organizations. Ideally, any project or activity developed by the chapter will complement and serve the best interests of the total school program.

## 3.7 Chapter Committees

The committee system is used to develop and maintain the chapter throughout the year. Chapters establish committees to further the purposes and organize the functions of their chapter. Traditionally the chapter president appoints all committee chairpersons with prior approval of the chapter adviser or executive committee.

There is a traditional structure that identifies two types of committees: standing committees and special committees. Standing committees are those that the chapter can expect to use every year. An example of this might be the "induction ceremony committee" charged with designing and implementing the annual new member function. A special committee, also known as an ad hoc committee, can be appointed to handle events that are unique to a year such as the 50th Anniversary committee to handle the celebration of another of the chapter's milestones.

An alternative structure for committees can be derived from the purposes of the Honor Society. This structure would incorporate four committees described as follows:

- **Scholarship:** To provide mentoring and tutoring project supervision, honor roll postings, freshman motivation programs, etc.
- **Service:** To fulfill the chapter's obligations to both school and community, organizing and implementing projects; assisting in tracking service hours of members
- **Leadership:** To supervise officer training, creation of a member's handbook, bylaws review and/or revision, etc.
- **Character:** To develop and monitor a Code of Ethics, providing inspirational quotations for each meeting.

Whatever structure you choose, committees are helpful tools to organize your chapter and to ensure involvement of all members. Officers can chair these groups or involve other leaders within the chapter to assume additional positions of responsibility. Records and files of committee project plans and evaluations, and reports given at each chapter meeting will assist the ongoing success and sustainability of your committees.



# CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

## CHAPTER MANAGEMENT TOOLS—CHAPTER 3

### CMT 3.1 Ten Basic Necessities for All Honor Society Chapters



- 1. AFFILIATION:** Every chapter must affiliate with the National Office on a yearly basis. Article IV, sections 2 and 3 refer to this responsibility. Once your chapter is chartered, the yearly affiliation fee entitles you to all of the benefits of membership including your subscription to the magazine and receipt of newsletters, scholarship information, and other benefits. Annual expiration date is June 30; renewals are sent to the principal in the spring.
  - 2. BYLAWS:** Chapter bylaws, according to Article XVI, are designed to “amplify sections of this [the National] Constitution and to clarify operating procedures of the chapter.” A set of sample bylaws are included in the Chapter Management Tools on page 25. It is not necessary to rewrite the National Constitution into your local bylaws, but it is appropriate to make reference to it as the general guideline for all chapter functions.
  - 3. SELECTION PROCESS:** Once organized, each chapter must develop a selection process (Article IX). This process will include utilizing a five-member faculty council, appointed by the principal, that undertakes the selection of all new members as well as the disciplining of existing members. The selection process is supervised by the chapter adviser who sits as a sixth, nonvoting member of the council.
  - 4. PUBLISH:** Because the Honor Society serves to recognize outstanding students in the school, it is important for all members of the school community to understand the nature of the honor of being selected. To accomplish this, all chapters must publish their procedures (both selection and discipline) in school publications distributed to students, faculty, and parents (Article IX, section 4). The public description of these procedures maintains a healthy view of the chapter and counters any perceptions of the chapter being a secretive or elitist organization.
  - 5. INDUCTION:** Once selection of new members has been completed, every chapter sponsors an induction ceremony (Article VIII, section 4). Though these ceremonies may include the national insignia, motto, and colors, there is no required procedure. However, it is important to make the ceremony special. Local traditions and history play an important part in any school ceremony and can be included in your induction ceremony. (Additional details are found in Chapter 5.)
  - 6. MEETINGS:** Regular meetings of the chapter are to be held in order to conduct the business of the chapter and to plan activities. Article XIII provides a good outline of the basics: hold the meetings regularly, describe the meeting time in your bylaws, be prepared to host special meetings when needed, and run your meetings in an orderly fashion. As you train your members and officers during the year, focus on good meeting skills as one of the leadership qualities you wish to add to your members’ characteristics.
  - 7. SERVICE:** Required chapter service projects have evolved directly from one of the purposes of the national organization, i.e., “to stimulate a desire to render service.” Many chapters open their projects to participants from the student body, using chapter members as organizers and supervisors of the project. In this way, the desire to render service is built into the lives of all students in the school. (See Article XIV).
  - 8. INDIVIDUAL SERVICE:** In addition to the chapter service project, Section 4 of Article XIV speaks of each member’s responsibility to engage in a service project developed from his or her own particular talents and interests. Here the adviser can provide direction to chapter members regarding the variety of projects available in the community and follow up by monitoring the student participation to see that sufficient hours of service are being provided.
  - 9. REVIEW:** All chapters, under the direction of the adviser, should regularly review their guidelines to see that they conform to the National Constitution (Article IV, section 5). It is helpful to include the principal and the faculty council in this review so that there is a common understanding of all guidelines and the criteria for membership. This review should happen yearly, but definitely when there is a new principal or new members of the faculty council are appointed.
  - 10. ANNUAL SURVEY:** After all is said and done, the national office asks each adviser to complete an online annual survey on the chapter and its activities (Article VI, section 2). This survey is available on the website in early spring and is to be completed no later than June 30. As NHS continues to grow and offer more opportunities for development, the statistics gathered in this survey become increasingly significant.
- It is important that every chapter begin with these fundamental requirements. As an active part of student activities programs, your chapter can make a positive difference for your entire community.

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## CMT 3.2 New Adviser Checklist



- 1. Do you know your school affiliation number? It is found on the mailing label on every issue of the magazine.
- 2. Can you and your principals lay your hands on your copies of the *National Handbook*? Ask yourself this in a month after you've put the handbook back on the shelf or in the file cabinet!
- 3. Do you have a written set of bylaws for your chapter? See [www.nhs.us/bylaws](http://www.nhs.us/bylaws)
- 4. Do you have your selection process in writing? See Chapter 4.
- 5. Do you have your chapter's discipline and dismissal procedures in written form? See Chapter 7.
- 6. Do you know the names and room numbers of the members of your five-person faculty council?
- 7. Do you have the names and contact information for all of your chapter officers?
- 8. Do you know when your induction ceremony(-ies) will be? Is there a written ceremony script that you can follow?
- 9. Are you a member of your statewide NHS and NJHS organization? See [www.nhs.us/states](http://www.nhs.us/states).
- 10. Do you have the toll-free phone number and/or email address of the NHS national office available? Find them both at the end of Appendix 4, the FAQs, or online at [www.nhs.us/contact](http://www.nhs.us/contact). They are also on your NHS Adviser ID card.

## CMT 3.3 Sample Chapter Bylaws



### 4. Sample Bylaws: Outline and Full Text

**Note on terminology:** The national office uses the term “constitution” to refer to the NHS National Constitution, reserving the term “bylaws” for the operating procedures adopted by the local chapter. Some chapters refer to their bylaws as a “local constitution,” but that can lead to confusion as to whether the local or national document is being referenced.

### A Suggested Outline for Honor Society Chapter Bylaws

- |                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Article I</b>   | <b>Name:</b> Statement of the name of the organization.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Article VIII</b> | <b>Meetings:</b> Frequency of meetings and provisions for special sessions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Article II</b>  | <b>Purpose(s):</b> The general purpose of the group. (See Article I of the National Constitution for reference.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Article IX</b>   | <b>Activities:</b> Overview of the regular activities of the chapter including chapter and individual service projects.                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Article III</b> | <b>Powers:</b> Powers vested in the organization; the final authority which rests with the principal (per V.1 of the National Constitution)                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Article X</b>    | <b>Discipline and Dismissal:</b> Provisions herein should be based on Article X of the National Constitution. Information in this section must be consistent with the national guidelines, developed by the faculty council, and is not subject to member approval as per Article X of the National Constitution. |
| <b>Article IV</b>  | <b>Membership:</b> Definition of membership categories for the group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Article XI</b>   | <b>Ratification/Approval:</b> Method and procedure for formal approval (ratification) of the bylaws.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Article V</b>   | <b>Selection of Members:</b> Establishes the time, methods, and procedures for the identification of candidates and selection of members. (Information in this section must be consistent with the national guidelines, developed by the faculty council, and is not subject to member approval as per Article IX, section 4 of the National Constitution.) | <b>Article XII</b>  | <b>Amendments:</b> Provisions/methods for amending the bylaws.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Article VI</b>  | <b>Obligations of Members.</b> The duties and responsibilities of the organization, the officers, adviser, committees and committee chairs, and members. Reference to meeting attendance, project participation, and dues can be included in this section.                                                                                                  |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Article VII</b> | <b>Officers:</b> Duties of office, procedures for officer election, removal from office, and filling vacancies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
- Additional local sections, as developed by the faculty council, membership, or administration, can be inserted. It is recommended that the ratification and amendments articles appear at the end of the bylaws followed by a) the date of approval and b) signatures of the chapter/school leadership in the year of approval. See also sample bylaws next.

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## SAMPLE BYLAWS TEXT: NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY\*

\*Note: Provisions found within this sample have been compiled from a variety of bylaws submitted over the years to the national office. Local chapters should review their own needs, policies, and procedures to amend this model to suit their local needs. Though bylaws are a constitutional mandate (Article XVI), the wording found in this sample is not. Blank spaces indicate parts of the document where local variations are allowed.

Chapter Bylaws Of the \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Of the \_\_\_\_\_

National Honor Society. Adopted: [Enter date of approval to verify this as the most recent version.]

### ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this chapter shall be the \_\_\_\_\_  
Chapter of the National Honor Society of \_\_\_\_\_  
(name of school). [Formatting note: When there is only a single section within an article, it is not necessary to enumerate sections. Only when multiple sections exist (see Article III below) is it necessary to number the individual sections.]

### ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter shall be to create an enthusiasm for scholarship, to stimulate a desire to render service, to promote worthy leadership, and to encourage the development of character in students of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school).

### ARTICLE III: POWERS

- Section 1.** This chapter operates under the direction of and in full compliance with the NHS National Constitution. See [www.nhs.us/constitutions](http://www.nhs.us/constitutions).
- Section 2.** The chapter adviser is given the authority to supervise the administration of chapter activities, as delegated by the school principal.
- Section 3.** Final authority on all activities and decisions of the chapter resides with the school principal. (See Article V, Section 1 of the National Constitution.)
- Section 4.** Nondiscrimination. Our chapter of NHS maintains policies and practices that are designed to prevent discrimination against any qualified candidate or member on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, and disability. This policy of nondiscrimination applies to all practices, including the chapter administration and the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members. (Note: Local advisers should confer with the principal and/or school system representatives regarding the inclusion of the language from this section to be certain it conforms to existing local and state policies.)

### ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

- Section 1.** Membership in this chapter is an honor bestowed upon deserving students by the faculty and shall be based on the criteria of scholarship, service, leadership, and character.
- Section 2.** Membership in this chapter shall be known as active, honorary, and alumni. Active members become alumni members at graduation. Honorary members are selected at the discretion of the faculty council. Alumni and honorary members have no voice or vote in chapter affairs.
- Section 3.** Eligibility:
  - a. Candidates eligible for selection to this chapter must be members of the sophomore, junior, or senior class.
  - b. To be eligible for selection to membership in this chapter, the candidate must have been enrolled for a period equivalent to one semester at \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Candidates eligible for election to the chapter shall have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. (Note: While the level of GPA performance can be raised by individual chapters, the standard must still remain as a cumulative GPA. Chapters are discouraged from allowing their GPA standard to change on an annual basis, but are encouraged to maintain and publicize this standard to assist students in setting goals for achieving this level of academic performance.)
  - d. Upon meeting the grade level, enrollment, and GPA standards, candidates shall then be considered based on their service, leadership, and character.

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## ARTICLE V: SELECTION OF MEMBERS

(Note: While selection procedures must be published and available as required by Article IX, Section 4, it is not required for the selection procedure to be included in the local chapter bylaws. The selection procedure can exist as a shorter, separate document.)

**Section 1.** The selection of members to this chapter shall be by a majority vote of the faculty council, which consists of five faculty members appointed by the principal. The chapter adviser shall be the sixth, nonvoting, ex officio member of the faculty council.

**Section 2.** The selection of active members shall be held once a year during the second semester of the school year. (Note: Alternative or additional selection periods may be added.)

**Section 3.** Prior to the final selection, the following shall occur:

- a. Students' academic records shall be reviewed to determine scholastic eligibility.
- b. All students who are eligible scholastically (i.e., candidates) shall be notified and asked to complete and submit the candidate information form for further consideration. (Sample forms can be found in Chapter 4.)
- c. The faculty shall be requested to evaluate candidates determined to be scholastically eligible using the official input form provided by the chapter adviser. (Sample forms can be found in Chapter 4.)
- d. The faculty council shall review the candidate information forms, faculty input, and other relevant information to determine those who fully meet the selection criteria for membership. (Note: Additional steps such as essays, external recommendations, or interviews can be included here as components of the local selection process. See Chapter 4.)

**Section 4.** Candidates become members when inducted at a special ceremony.

**Section 5.** An active member of the National Honor Society who transfers from this school will be given an official letter indicating the status of his/her membership.

**Section 6.** An active member of the National Honor Society who transfers to this school will be automatically accepted for membership in this chapter. The faculty council shall grant to the transferring member one semester to attain the membership requirements and, thereafter, this member must maintain

those requirements for this chapter in order to retain his/her membership.

## ARTICLE VI: OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS

**Section 1.** Annual dues for this chapter shall be \_\_\_\_\_. (Note: Dues cannot exceed \$20 per member per year as noted in the National Constitution.) Dues will be payable to the chapter within 30 days of induction. (Note: Member dues are not required for any chapter.)

**Section 2.** Each member of this chapter who is in good standing with regard to the membership standards and member obligations shall be granted the privilege to wear the emblem adopted by the National Honor Society.

**Section 3.** Any member who withdraws, resigns, or is dismissed from the chapter shall surrender the privilege of wearing the emblem to the chapter.

**Section 4.** Chapter members who are seniors in good standing shall be granted the privilege of wearing the honor cords (or other insignia adopted at the local level) at graduation.

(If additional member obligations exist for the local chapter, they should be delineated using additional sections of this article. A full accounting of all member obligations should be in place and can be replicated in student handbooks, candidate packets, or member handbooks as needed.)

## ARTICLE VII: OFFICERS

**Section 1.** The officers of the chapter shall be president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

**Section 2.** Student officers shall be elected at the last meeting of each school year. All returning members in good standing with the chapter are eligible to run for a position as an officer. Any active member can nominate an eligible member as a candidate for office.

**Section 3.** Voting shall be by secret ballot. A majority vote shall be necessary to elect any officer of this chapter. If the first vote does not yield a majority, a second vote shall be taken of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes.

**Section 4.** It shall be the duty of the president to preside at the meetings of the chapter, and serve as the official representative of the chapter at school and community functions.

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**Section 5.** The vice president shall preside in the absence of the president and shall also keep a record of members' contributions to leadership and service.

**Section 6.** The secretary shall keep the minutes and attendance records for meetings and be responsible for all official correspondence.

**Section 7.** The treasurer shall keep the record of business expenses, dues, and all other financial transactions of the chapter

(Note: If additional or alternative officers or duties exist, their positions and duties of office should be detailed in this article of the bylaws. Also consider adding components that would describe how to fill vacancies among officers, and when and how officers can be relieved of their duties [suspensions, etc.] in cases not involving dismissal from the chapter.)

**Section 8.** Officers and the faculty adviser(s) shall collectively be known as the chapter's executive committee. The executive committee shall establish annual goals for the chapter and have general charge of the meetings and the business of the chapter. Any action by the executive committee is subject to the review of the chapter members.

## ARTICLE VIII: MEETINGS

**Section 1.** Regular meetings of this chapter shall be \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., monthly, weekly, etc.). Special meetings can be called by the president with approval of the adviser.

**Section 2.** This chapter shall conduct its meetings according to *Robert's Rules of Order*.

**Section 3.** Members are expected to attend all chapter meetings.

## ARTICLE IX: ACTIVITIES

**Section 1.** The chapter shall determine one or more service projects for each year.

**Section 2.** All members shall regularly participate in these projects.

**Section 3.** These projects shall have the following characteristics: fulfill a need within the school or community, have the support of the administration and the faculty, be appropriate and educationally defensible, and be well planned, organized, and executed.

**Section 4.** Each member shall have the responsibility for choosing and participating in an individual service project that reflects his or her particular talents and interests and is approved by the chapter adviser. This is in addition to the chapter projects to which all members contribute.

**Section 5.** The chapter shall publicize and promote its projects in a positive manner.

(Additional projects or activities that make up the annual program for the chapter can be delineated in this article.)

## ARTICLE X: DISCIPLINE and DISMISSAL of MEMBERS

**Section 1.** Any member who falls below the standards of scholarship, service, leadership, or character may be considered for discipline or dismissal from the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter of the National Honor Society. A member of the National Honor Society is expected to maintain his/her academic standing and take an active role in service and leadership in his/her school and community.

**Section 2.** If a member's cumulative grade point average falls below the standard in effect when he/she was selected (fill in the minimum cumulative grade point average for your chapter selection), he /she will be given a written warning and a reasonable time period for improvement. If the cumulative grade point average remains below standard at the end of the warning period the student will be subject to further disciplinary action by the faculty council that can include consideration of dismissal from the chapter.

**Section 3.** Violations of the law or school regulations can result in immediate consideration of the dismissal of a member (see Section 5 below). These violations include, but are not limited to DWI; stealing; destruction of property; cheating; truancy; or possession, selling, or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol at school or school-related activities or in the community.

**Section 4.** Offenders of the school conduct code (such as use of profanity, failure to comply, unexcused absences, excessive tardiness, etc.) will receive written warning notification. A conference may be requested by either party (faculty council or student/parent). If the member is involved in another violation of the school conduct code, the member may be considered for dismissal.

**Section 5.** Chapter officers, as representatives of the chapter, can be removed from their positions as a consequence of disciplinary action taken by the faculty council.

**Section 6.** In all cases of pending dismissal:

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- a. The member will receive written notification from the adviser/faculty council indicating the reason for consideration of dismissal.
- b. The member will be given the opportunity to respond to the charge(s) against him/her at a hearing before the faculty council prior to any vote on dismissal (in accordance with due process identified in Article X of the National Constitution). The member has the opportunity to present his/her defense either in person or via a written statement presented in lieu of the face-to-face hearing. Following the hearing, the faculty council will then vote on whether to dismiss. A majority vote of the faculty council is needed to dismiss any member.
- c. The results of the faculty council vote will be presented to the principal for review, and then stated in a letter sent to the student and parents. Dismissed members must surrender any membership emblems to the adviser.
- d. The faculty council's decision may be appealed to the building principal and afterwards according to provisions of the school district discipline policies.
- e. A member who is dismissed or resigns may never again be considered for membership in the National Honor Society.

**Section 7.** In lieu of dismissal, the faculty council may impose disciplinary sanctions upon a member as deemed appropriate.

## ARTICLE XI: RATIFICATION, APPROVAL, and REVIEW.

**Section 1:** These bylaws will be approved upon receiving a two-thirds affirmative vote of all active members of the chapter, a majority affirmative vote of the faculty council, and approval by the administration.

**Section 2:** These bylaws shall be reviewed and if necessary, revised within five years from the date of approval noted on this document.

## ARTICLE XII: AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the chapter, provided notice of the proposed amendment has been given to members at least one month prior to the vote. The exceptions are Articles V and X, which are developed by the faculty council with the approval of the principal (selection and discipline).

(Note: It is recommended that the ratification and amendment articles be the final articles. It is acceptable for the chapter to insert additional articles.)

Approved on [Insert date]: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Indicate date of last approved revisions)

Signatures/Names of the chapter president, secretary, adviser, and principal.

# CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

## CMT 3.4 The Chapter Files



To facilitate the development of the chapter filing system, consider using the following list of topics for your files:

- Adviser duties/job description
- Affiliation with the national office
- Annual chapter goals
- Attendance policies and charts
- Bylaws for your local chapter
- Calendar
- *Catalog/Adviser Resource Guide*
- Charter and Chapter History
- Committee structure and reports
- Discipline policies
- Dismissal procedures
- Faculty council job description and duties
- Fundraising projects
- Handbook
- Induction ceremonies and scripts
- The magazine
- Meeting agendas, minutes, and reports
- Member responsibilities and obligations
- Membership lists
- Mentoring and tutoring guidelines and procedures
- National conferences
- National Constitution
- National Office contacts, information, and mailings
- NHS chapters nearby
- Officer job descriptions
- Projects (character development, citizenship development, leadership promotion, scholarship promotion, chapter and individual service)
- Selection procedures
- State NHS association

## CMT 3.5 Adviser and Member Notebooks



To help the adviser keep track of essential information and keep it readily available, and to teach your student members the value of personal organization, here are two suggested outlines for an adviser notebook and a member notebook to help organize your chapter.

### The adviser notebook should include:

- Budget
- Calendar of chapter activities
- *Catalog/Adviser Resource Guide* and order form
- Chapter bylaws
- Committees and their duties
- Contacts and resources, school and community
- Faculty and staff roster
- Faculty council, members and responsibilities
- Forms
- Induction ceremony
- Local disciplinary procedures and records
- Local school policies
- The national magazine
- Meetings: agendas and minutes
- Member obligations
- Membership roster
- *National Handbook* and constitution
- Officer names and their duties
- Projects
- Selection procedures

### The member notebook should include:

- Bylaws of the chapter
- Calendar of chapter activities
- Chapter membership roster (annual)
- Contacts for school and community
- Forms: Service hours submission forms, project report forms, etc.
- History of the chapter
- Meeting agendas and minutes
- Member obligations
- Membership roster
- Officers and committees and their duties
- Policies: Selection, discipline, and dismissal
- Student handbook (local)

Be sure to include a space for student names, i.e., "This notebook belongs to \_\_\_\_\_" to ensure continued use by each member.

# CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

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## Creating a Member Handbook

Creating an organized handbook for individual members of the chapter is an excellent way to keep your members informed, organized, and attuned to chapter activities and their responsibilities. Too many times, members respond to questions about their participation in chapter activities with, “Nobody told me” or “I didn’t know.” While it is the member’s responsibility to know and understand the obligations of his/her membership in the chapter, taking the time to prepare a relevant and effective handbook for members is a good idea.

When creating a member handbook for the first time, consider a variety of sources. Because this will be a handbook for members, the current members (or the officers who represent them) would be primary sources for ideas.

In addition to student input, faculty council members and the principal of the school are two obvious sources for ideas. Consider having a representative of the parent community (PTA president, Booster club member, etc.) take a look at the handbook prior to printing. Getting input from a variety of sources will enhance the overall quality and usefulness of your new handbook.

Make certain that all of the information in the handbook conforms to existing school policy.

### So, what should be included? Here’s a list of topics to consider:

- **Congratulatory letters** from the chapter president, the adviser, and the principal. This personalizes your handbook to each administration and builds a strong, working relationship between the chapter and school leadership.
- **Master calendar for the chapter** and its planned activities along with major school events (i.e., Homecoming, winter vacation, etc.).
- **Obligations of Membership:** List the responsibilities and obligations required of all members of the chapter per your local bylaws. Some chapters include a “Statement of Ethics” for along with relevant portions of the code of student conduct in this section.
- **Contact information** including the adviser, chapter officers, and the principal. This information can be a listing of the individuals by name or it can include their phone numbers and duties of office. Another name to consider including on this list is the leader of the parent organization for your school.
- **Roster of Members:** Who are the current members of the chapter and what grades are they in? This would need updating annually to reflect the new inductees. With permission of the individual members, such a directory can contain contact information as well (phone numbers, emails, etc.).

- **Meeting schedule and structure:** Identify the day and dates of your regularly scheduled chapter meetings. It is a good idea to remind students on this page what the chapter’s meeting attendance policy is and what the consequences are for not adhering to that policy. Include a generic agenda and relevant excerpts from *Robert’s Rules of Order* (or other guides for meeting management).
- **Project planning guide:** To help all members understand what to do if presented with a new project planning responsibility. (See Chapter 5.)
- **Committees:** If you operate your chapter with standing committees, each with its own set of duties or responsibilities, include a review of these and a list of the committee chairpersons (particularly helpful for new members).
- **Motivational material:** Insert inspirational reminders of the four criteria that were used for member selection. You’ll be surprised how often students will claim that they’ve used this to help them and how willing they are to suggest new quotations, books, or other resources to include in such a section.
- **Chapter bylaws:** In addition to being a national requirement for all chapters, bylaws help members understand those policies that govern their chapter.
- **Standards and process for selection:** Let the members assist in communicating the nature of your criteria and the process for selecting members. This helps members understand how significant their selection actually is.

There are a few additional pieces of information to consider for inclusion, for example, a copy of the National Constitution. Chapters are granted permission to make copies from the *National Handbook* or website for use in their chapter activities. Also, if your school belongs to the state association of NHS, include some relevant information about that membership as well.

Major projects can be explained in a separate entry of the handbook to make certain all members understand the purpose and process for the event.

Finally, many schools have local policies regarding participation in cocurricular activities that are often augmented with a great array of forms. Though your member handbook does not have to repeat information that may be found in your school’s student handbook, some reference to relevant school policies is appropriate.

Once you’ve organized and disseminated your handbook, here are four more suggestions for helping to systematize the process for your chapter:

1. Plan to review the content each year with your chapter officers. What works? What doesn’t work? What else needs to be added? You may find your handbook



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assuming greater volume, so from time to time, implement the K.I.S.S. principle (Keep it Short and Simple).

2. Maintain a file of all master documents, either in your paper files so that replacement pages can be readily accessed, or in your electronic files for easy editing.
3. Assign the handbook's maintenance and updating as a duty of office for one of your chapter officers. When your chapter gets new transfer members in the middle of the

year, see that this officer knows to provide them with a copy of your member handbook.

4. Share the information. Give a copy to your counselors and a member of the administration. Counselors value up-to-date information about activities on campus. Administrators like to see that members are being kept informed about school policies. Your handbook will also serve as a model to other activity groups on campus—an important role for any Honor Society chapter.

## CMT 3.6 Faculty Council Contacts and Notebooks



For your adviser notebook, create a new form each year that helps you keep track of your current members on the faculty council. Include the following fields of information:

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (Current school year, e.g., 2015–16)

Faculty council member name \_\_\_\_\_

Subject(s) taught and schedule of classes taught with reference to planning or free periods \_\_\_\_\_

Room assignment(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone number or cell phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Add your (the adviser's) name and contact information, a space for an alternate's information (see paragraph on this topic above), and emergency contact information for the principal (work and cell phone numbers). Make copies of this form for all council members.

**Notebooks for the faculty council:** Advisers are the key facilitators of all meetings of the faculty council. It is always beneficial to see that all members of the faculty council are well-informed and prepared for their all-important duty of selecting new members. To ensure that your faculty council members are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities, consider creating a notebook for each member. Among the items to include are:

- Title page
- Table of contents
- Welcome letter from the principal and adviser specifying appreciation for the service being provided and noting the term of their position (usually one year with specific reference to the individual school year).

- The National Constitution (download the most recent edition from [www.nhs.us/constitutions](http://www.nhs.us/constitutions))
- Local chapter bylaws
- Description of the local selection process (and candidate forms if space permits)
- Membership obligations list (as provided in candidate packets and for all members)
- Calendar of chapter activities noting the planned dates of the selection process and induction ceremony
- Roster of active chapter members and officers
- Roster of the faculty council, adviser, and principal contact information, with reference to the national website, email ([nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us)) and phone, 800-253-7746.
- Other data, forms, or information, particularly any aspects of local school policies or procedures relevant to the chapter, that you may deem necessary for the council members to undertake their duties in the most professional manner possible.

While nothing prevents you from having multiple copies of the *National Handbook*, one copy is generally sufficient for chapter management.

(Note: You can purchase an official Honor Society 3-ring binder from the national sales office to help distinguish your chapter's faculty council notebooks. See [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store) for details.)

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## CMT 3.7 The Five Constitutional Obligations of all Duly Inducted Members

- **Dues** (Article IV, Section 3): Chapters may ask active members to pay annual chapter dues. The Constitution limits this amount to \$20 per student per year. For this amount and any other obligatory expenses bestowed upon members, the school should be able to provide alternative sources of funding for those students who are unable to pay. The inability of a member or his/her family to pay should not be a reason for discipline or dismissal of any member. Chapters are not required to charge dues, but once established, members can be required to meet this obligation.
  - **Maintaining standards** (Article VIII, Section 1). Once selected, all members are expected to maintain the standards by which they were selected as published in the description of the local selection process.
  - **Meetings** (Article XIII, Section 1). Chapters hold meetings and may require members to attend. The meeting schedule should be well publicized. In addition, chapter officers should work closely with the adviser to see that the agenda for all meetings is well thought out and planned.
  - **Chapter Service Project(s)** (Article XIV, Sections 1 & 2). All chapters are required to sponsor a chapter service project and all members are expected to participate (Section 2), assuming that the project meets the criteria as outlined in the Constitution (Section 3).
  - **Individual Service Projects(s)** (Article XIV, Section 4). In addition to the chapter service project noted above, members are required to perform additional service according to their own talents and interests. The quantity of this service and the degree to which the chapter monitors this activity should be defined in the chapter bylaws.
- Additional Obligations (Article XVI, Section 2): If additional obligations exist for members of the chapter, such obligations should be spelled out in the local chapter bylaws for all members. It is recommended that a set of these bylaws be presented to each member yearly as a reminder of all member obligations.

## CMT 3.8 Officer Installation Ceremony

To assist chapters in implementing a special ceremony to install their officers, the following text presents a sample installation ceremony. Use this as a place to start, expanding the content to add relevance and importance for your chapter.

**Installing Officer:** The installation of any group of officers is an important and serious occasion. You have indicated your faith and trust in your elected officers to serve for the coming year. Their service and accomplishments depend largely on your cooperation. Following is as important as leading. In any organization, there comes a time when some must lead and others must follow.

The National Honor Society is founded upon the principles of scholarship, service, leadership, and character. In all your undertakings, may you always keep in mind these guiding principles.

A candle's but a simple thing;  
It starts with just a bit of string.  
Yet dipped and dipped with patient hand,  
It gathers wax upon the strand  
Until, complete and snowy white,  
It gives at last a lovely light.  
*(lights candle on table)*  
Life seems so like that bit of string;  
Each deed we do a simple thing,  
Yet day by day if on life's strand  
We work with patient heart and hand.  
It gathers joy, makes dark days bright,  
And gives at last a lovely light.

Will each retiring officer step forward as your name is called and receive a lighted candle, symbol of the flaming torch of freedom and knowledge, and reminding us to bear forward the searching light of truth and to lead others to follow the light?

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(Lights a candle for each retiring officer and gives it to him or her as the officer's name is called; president, vice president, etc.)

Outgoing officers, you have made the candles which you will pass on to your successors. You have worked with patient care, made dark ways bright. We thank you for all your efforts. They have added to the history of this organization. We now ask you to pass your lighted candle to your successor. (Old officers retire.)

We welcome the new officers of our chapter. (Reads name and office of each new officer and then continues the installation ceremony.)

New officers, you have been duly elected by your peers to assume positions of leadership for our chapter. In accepting these offices you have indicated your willingness to give the best in time and effort to carry out the principles of the National Honor Society. Yours is an important responsibility as well as a privilege. The world today, as never before, needs faithful and efficient leaders, and your chapter is looking to you to lead its

members. With this in view, do you pledge your best efforts to these offices you now accept? If so, new officers please respond, "We do." (Pause while new officers respond.)

Hold high the torch,  
You did not light its glow.  
'Twas given you from other hands you know.  
'Tis only yours to keep it burning bright,  
Yours to pass on when you no more need light;  
For there are other feet that you must guide  
And other forms go marching by your side...  
Some day in turn they'll lift it high and say,  
"I watched another carry it this way."

May your light blaze forth for a successful year, and at the expiration of your term of office, may it be passed on with the satisfaction that much was accomplished for the welfare of our school and our chapter. Congratulations! (Leads applause.)

## CMT 3.9 How to Be a Good Chapter Member



Here are some tips for how to be a good, positive, and productive member of the chapter.

1. Attend and participate in all chapter meetings. Set a goal of making one positive contribution at each session—even if nothing more than being on time and paying attention to every presenter.
  2. Participate in and support all of the chapter's projects throughout the year, whether these are providing service, raising money, providing leadership and training, or otherwise reaching out to the school or community.
  3. Promote service through your individual service project activities and by supporting service activities done by other groups both at school and in the community.
  4. If your chapter charges member dues each year, pay them willingly and on time.
  5. Assume a leadership role in the chapter, whether running for office, serving as a committee chair, or otherwise volunteering for a specific responsibility at least once each year. One aspect of this leadership is to show respect for other chapters' leaders as they undertake their duties and responsibilities.
  6. Welcome new members, whether new inductees or transfer members, to help them become an active part of the chapter as quickly as possible. Support their efforts to understand the operations of your chapter by offering explanations where needed and looking out for their best interests. Remember: You are an ambassador for your chapter and for your school.
  7. Read and respond to all paperwork or other administrative requests that are shared at chapter meetings and events in a timely and appropriate manner. Adhere to deadlines.
  8. Communicate effectively. Share ideas and information about chapter activities whenever possible. Be a strong communicator, whether in your oral or written communications, but also practice good listening skills.
  9. Motivate others and yourself to get involved and remain engaged in support of all that your chapter does at school.
  10. Be a good citizen at the local, state, national, and global levels. Support and encourage the ongoing use of democratic principles in all aspects of chapter activity. Be fair.
  11. Remain engaged as an active member of the chapter and encourage others to be similarly engaged throughout the year. Help all students at school find one activity that they can become involved in to enhance their experience at school.
  12. Be a role model for your peers in the chapter, for other students at school, and for those in the community. Each member represents the Honor Society and retains a responsibility to reflect the values of the organization in all that he or she does.
- By becoming a strong member of your chapter, you enhance the reputation and effectiveness of your organization. An effective chapter becomes an asset to the school and promotes the creation of a positive school climate. A positive school climate helps all students achieve and learn, helping to achieve the goals of the principal, faculty, and the school system. A strong school builds a strong community and world. It all begins with you. Make the most of your membership in the Honor Society.

# 4. SELECTION PROCEDURES

## 4.1 Selection of Members

For many students, selection as a member of the National Honor Society is the pinnacle of their achievements in high school. This honor, recognized throughout the nation, is both the public recognition of accomplishment and the private commitment to continued excellence on the part of the new member. Because of the importance placed upon this aspect of high school life, local chapters are charged with creating a selection process that conforms to the national guidelines, is applied fairly and consistently to all candidates, and provides a meaningful recognition of deserving students.

Much care and attention has been given to the formulation of the selection process policies and guidelines that follow, all of which are based on existing provisions of the NHS National Constitution. Through the years, the recommended procedures from this handbook have undergone administrative and judicial scrutiny at every level. Never, to the best of the knowledge of the staff at the national office, has a court of record deemed any of these official procedures as being either unfair or illegal—two very important tests for any policy undergoing review. It is based on this fact that the national office asks all chapters to closely adhere to the recommendations that follow.

All chapters should consider the following four essential qualities as they develop their local selection procedures:

1. Selection to NHS is a privilege bestowed upon students by the faculty of the school, and not considered a right inherent to any student (See the NASSP *Legal Memorandum*, located in Appendix 3, for a legal discussion of this statement.). Technically, students do not apply for membership in the National Honor Society. Instead, they await a request or invitation to provide information to be used by the local selection committee to support their candidacy for membership. Membership is granted only to those students selected by the faculty council in each school on the condition of their having met the standards for selection established at the local level and based on the provisions of the National Constitution.
2. NHS is more than an honor roll. Each member must demonstrate not only good grades, but also strength in each of the remaining three criteria. This is not an election, nor is membership automatically conveyed simply because a student has achieved a specified level of academic performance. The extent to which local chapters emphasize the other components of the selection process should be carefully considered and included in the local selection process guidelines.

3. The selection process must be public information, available to parents, students, and faculty, as noted in Article IX, Section 4. It should also be published appropriately in such publications as the student handbook, the school newspaper, parent newsletters, or other school publications that are widely available to students and parents, and can be shared at orientation programs for new students. Many chapters also include this information on their chapter or school websites. Proper dissemination of information about the chapter, particularly details concerning the selection process used at the school, will help prevent problems with students or parents who may wish to question the process. To ensure that your description of the selection process is fully understandable, it is further recommended that the chapter form a committee of students, teachers, and/or parents to review the description for clarity.
4. Selection procedures reflect professional standards and practices as developed by the school personnel who administer the chapter. Admittedly, all decisions concerning selection have a certain subjective element. Problems can be avoided if the faculty council develops and follows some objective criteria. The national office urges all chapters to follow closely the recommended procedures that are described. All procedures developed and used by local chapters must be fair, nondiscriminatory, consistently applied, and written for public dissemination.



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# SELECTION PROCEDURES

## 4.1.1 The Recommended Selection Process

This section outlines the essential procedures for all chapters to follow when selecting new members. Local variations can be accommodated as long as they are not contrary to the policies found in the National Constitution and this handbook.

- 1. Procedure development.** The selection procedure should be developed by the local faculty council (the five member selection committee facilitated by the chapter adviser), approved by the principal, and must be published and available for review by students, faculty, and parents.
- 2. Academic eligibility.** As the first step in the process, students' academic records are reviewed to determine those individuals who are scholastically eligible for membership, i.e., those persons who meet the required cumulative GPA standard. The GPA used at the local level cannot be set below the national minimum standard outlined in the National Constitution, and, once set, must be applied fairly and consistently to all candidates including any candidates with disabilities.
- 3. Candidate notification and forms.** Students who are eligible scholastically (i.e., candidates) should be notified and informed that for further consideration for selection to the chapter, they are to complete the candidate information form. This form outlines the candidate's accomplishments in the areas of service and leadership (a sample of this form can be found in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter; note that this form should not be referred to as an application). Many chapters offer help sessions for candidates to provide assistance in properly filling out the candidate forms. Be sure to establish guidelines and a time schedule for completing and submitting the forms. It is further recommended that both students and parents sign these forms when submitting them, indicating that the content is both complete and accurate.
- 4. Additional faculty input.** If additional faculty input would be beneficial, all faculty members can be invited to make comments on candidates, most often done on a faculty input form (see a sample in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter). The actual selection of members must be made by the five appointed members of the faculty council. Consequently, point totals or averages of the faculty ratings are not to be considered as "votes" or the sole determinants of membership, but should, instead, be reported to the faculty council to add to their information when considering selections. Faculty members should consider their evaluative input in the most professional manner and be able to substantiate claims with professional actions—particularly for low ratings. All input from faculty must be signed.

- 5. Review, deliberate, and vote.** The candidate form should be reviewed by the faculty council, along with any other verifiable information about the candidates relevant to their candidacy, including whether or not candidates are officially noted as having a disability that could affect their consideration. Some faculty councils may wish to interview candidates personally. The leadership, service, and character of all candidates should be reviewed carefully. Faculty council members are encouraged to deliberate in order to guarantee that their decisions are based on accurate and complete understandings of all information presented for review. With the vote on each candidate, those candidates receiving a majority vote of the faculty council should be invited to be inducted into the chapter. All candidates identified and listed as "not selected" (i.e., those who do not receive the majority vote of the faculty council) should also be notified.
- 6. Report results to the principal.** Prior to notification of any candidates, the adviser must report to the principal the results of the faculty council's deliberations for approval. Lists of selected and nonselected students as well as reasons for nonselection are to be incorporated into this report. This reporting will ensure the support of the administration prior to any student notification.
- 7. Notification.** Chapters should initiate formal notification of all selected candidates and their parents to inform them in writing about selection and the timing of the induction ceremony. Schools should also consider how students who are not selected are properly informed about their nonselection to see that this method is both timely and considerate of the student's well being.
- 8. Verification and induction.** To finalize the plans for the induction ceremony, a plan should be devised for verification of membership and acceptance of the invitation for membership as well as attendance at the induction ceremony.

## 4.1.2. Prerequisite Conditions for Selection

**Enrollment.** According to the Constitution, only those students who have attended the school for the equivalent of one semester may be considered for membership. This period is necessary for students to establish themselves academically and involve themselves in various service and leadership activities, and for the faculty to get to know them and the quality of their character. Even after a semester, however, it may be necessary to contact a transfer student's former school for additional information.

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Some candidates may be ineligible for induction because of the semester ruling. Many students, including students of military parents, are required to move with their family when parents or guardians have been transferred to new locations. The present school principal or adviser should seek a recommendation from the previous school's staff (principal, adviser, counselor, etc.) pursuant to the candidate's selection. Based on the recommendation of the previous school's staff, the faculty council may waive the semester regulation.

A candidate's future enrollment plans are not a factor in his or her eligibility for consideration in selection. A member may transfer membership to another chapter should he/she enroll at another school the next academic year.

**Grade level.** Membership may be open to qualified sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The faculty council may decide to choose only one or a combination of these classes, according to local needs, conditions, or traditions.

When contemplating grade levels from which to select candidates, consider the following: While it is perfectly acceptable to induct students at the end of the junior year where they will be active with the chapter during their senior year, this scenario proves to be a difficult assignment for most chapter advisers. Advisers in this situation will find themselves starting all over again each year with officer orientation, chapter meetings, project planning, etc.

As an alternative, if chapters select new members at either the beginning of the junior year (September/October) or the end of the sophomore year (April/May), or earlier, those new members will have at least their entire junior year to become familiar with being a member of the chapter. When time comes in the spring to run for office, they will know what to expect in the coming year and will prove to be experienced officers assisting the adviser in running the chapter.

Consider selecting new officers after they have had a year's worth of experience as members of the chapter before taking over leadership roles.

**Common GPA standard.** Whatever classes are eligible in a given school, academic requirements must be the same for all candidates in all classes. For example, you may not have a different GPA requirement for sophomores than you have for juniors and seniors.

**No quotas or percentages.** Similarly, there can be no specific quota or percentage of members per class or student body. All students who meet the criteria for selection should be inducted regardless of the number. If it is necessary to limit chapter size, the academic requirement for all candidates can be raised. (See "Changing the GPA Requirement.")

**Freshman eligibility.** Regarding those classes which are eligible for membership, schools with a 9–12 grade structure

may not include ninth graders as members of the NHS chapter. However, when considering candidates for selection, it is appropriate to use grades earned and activities undertaken during the ninth grade year. Also, schools with this 9–12 structure may not have a separate, ninth-grade-only chapter of NJHS on their high school campus (a restriction that has been in existence since September 1983). Related to this concern, schools with a K–12, 6–12, or other multi-level structure (i.e., those with at least two years of middle level students) do fall within the provisions of Article IV, and can establish two chapters at their single school, one NJHS and one NHS.

Note: Please refer to the "Membership" section in the previous chapter for a discussion of special classifications of students (homeschoolers, part-time enrollees, etc.) and how they can or should be incorporated into your local selection process.

**Prescreening.** Can the chapter adviser prescreen students to eliminate some from the pool of candidates? Generally, the answer to this question is "no." The Constitution grants authority only to the faculty council to eliminate any student who is an eligible candidate. So while the adviser may be limited in this case, and prescreening does not appear in the recommended selection process, with the support of the faculty council, some preliminary review can be considered.

Rather than rely upon the response, "Your candidate information form wasn't complete," as the reason for nonselection, advisers can help alleviate these shortcomings by reviewing those forms that are submitted before the deadline. The purpose is not to select members or remove candidates from consideration, but rather to check the forms for completeness and to see that the candidates have followed instructions.

Forms can be reviewed for the following:

- use of proper color ink (blue or black) or typed submissions (no pencil)
- filling in responses for all required components of the form
- required signatures
- completion of the assigned essay
- essay is within the limits for length (250 words)
- form is completed neatly and legibly

If time allows, forms that need to be revised can be returned to candidates along with a letter that identifies which of the items need attention. Revised forms should be submitted by the published deadline. After resubmission, all forms are then reviewed by the faculty council to determine which candidates are to be selected for membership.

Creating this type of prescreening step in the selection process requires additional time and effort. However, it conveys to all candidates of the quality to be expected of members once selected. While passing the prescreening review does

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not guarantee selection as a member, it can enhance a set of skills for students as they prepare for their futures.

**Eliminating names.** While an adviser might feel compelled to remove a student's name from the list of candidates prior to review by the faculty council, advisers should avoid removing any student's name. The National Constitution reserves the authority for selection only to the faculty council and ultimately to the principal following the reporting of the results of the selection process.

Advisers will note that students who have met the cumulative GPA requirement and are thus identified as "candidates" for consideration can find themselves in one or more of the following situations:

- a. They are suspended or are otherwise disciplined by school officials
- b. They refuse to submit the candidate information form for consideration
- c. Upon submitting the forms, they have no listings under service or leadership

All of these situations would tend to minimize the ability for the students in question to be selected by the faculty council. However, chapter advisers have no authority to remove these individuals from the list of candidates to be considered by the faculty council.

It is recommended that these students be reviewed first by the faculty council, with the information in question being noted and substantiated by the adviser. In these three examples, the following points should be considered.

- a. The existence of a disciplinary record cannot automatically disqualify any student from consideration. Care should be taken to confirm the nature of the offense, to determine whether the case is still under appeal, or whether there were any legitimate extenuating circumstances that should be brought into the discussion, usually with input from the administration. Established guilt for violation of school rules or the law can serve as reason for nonselection following careful review of the details by the faculty council prior to a vote.
- b. Lack of a candidate information form is not sufficient as a reason for nonselection. However, without a form to consider, the faculty council cannot substantiate the student's having met the leadership or service criteria and as such must vote against the student for failing to demonstrate meeting these two criteria.
- c. While it might appear clear that a student with no service or leadership listings will not be selected, again it is not the adviser's prerogative to make that decision—such decision making is the sole domain of the faculty council where the adviser sits as a nonvoting member.

The essential point to remember is that the National Constitution assigns the authority for selecting members to the faculty council alone. For example, if the adviser initially identifies 25 eligible candidates, then all 25 names should be voted upon by the council even in cases similar to those described above. A report on the reasons for each nonselection vote is shared with the principal prior to notifying the candidates. This will assist in confirming that proper procedures were followed from the time of identifying candidates through the selection vote.

## 4.1.3 The Criteria

With all of the prerequisite conditions considered, it is now time to examine all candidates regarding the full set of criteria used for membership selection. The faculty council of the chapter selects students who demonstrate outstanding performance in all four criteria of scholarship, service, leadership, and character. According to the principles outlined in Article IX, Section 2, the faculty council should first identify students with the prerequisite GPA (as identified in the local selection guidelines), and then evaluate the candidates' performance in the areas of service, leadership, and character.

Although the academic criterion is important and should be considered first, membership should never be considered on the basis of grades alone, even though a faculty council may consider scholarship as the most important of the four criteria. Schools that select members solely on the basis of scholarship are violating the Constitution and placing their charters in jeopardy.

**Defining the Criteria.** In evaluating potential members for service, leadership, and character, the faculty council often begins with a review of the definitions of these criteria. The definitions that the school agrees to should appear in the public description of the selection process. A common understanding of the criteria for selection helps all involved to accept and understand the professional decisions made by the faculty council.

### 4.1.3.1 Scholarship

**Cumulative GPA.** The scholarship requirement identified in the Constitution is based on a student's cumulative grade point average. The phrase "cumulative grade point average" refers to the total academic performance as demonstrated by the grades received by the student while in attendance at the school where the chapter is found. For example, in a high school containing grades nine through 12, even when students are selected during their junior year, grades from the ninth grade on should be used to compute the cumulative scholastic average. Obtaining grades from a student's middle

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school would be inappropriate and only complicates the selection process.

The minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) allowable is 85 percent, B, 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale), or the equivalent standard of excellence. (Note: These three values are not necessarily equivalents, but are presented here to reflect the three standard grading systems in use in schools.) The faculty council may raise the required cumulative grade point average above the national minimum level.

The faculty council may also choose to use weighted grades in recognition of the varying degrees of difficulty of courses of study. This weighting should be done in accordance with the grading systems currently in place at the school. In addition, if a faculty council chooses to use weighted grades, this weighting should be applied to grades prior to the determination of the cumulative GPA in order to identify all students who have met the scholastic criterion prior to consideration of their service, leadership, and character.

The faculty council also has the option of specifying a prerequisite number of academic courses needed to be identified as a candidate. In all cases involving weighting of grades or the identification of prerequisite academic courses, the faculty council must: 1) confer initially with the administration and/or school system representatives to be assured that such additional guidelines do not conflict with existing local, state, or federal policies; 2) provide to the administration, students, and parents of the school the professional rationale for these additional guidelines or procedures; 3) publicize these GPA adjustments effectively; and 4) see that no students or groups of students are automatically excluded from consideration based on these additional provisions for the local selection process.

Several other scenarios involving the scholarship criterion warrant mention as chapters consider this standard.

## Low and Failing Grades

Rules such as “no grade below ‘B’” are not acceptable. This type of rule runs contrary to the use of a cumulative GPA for all candidates.

Similarly, a failing grade (“F” or other mark used to indicate performance that is below the lowest acceptable grade) is not an acceptable reason to automatically eliminate a student’s candidacy.

## Equivalent Standards of Excellence

Schools with grading practices that include such matters as individualized instruction, independent study, nongraded courses, or pass-fail markings share in the requirement to select the top students for membership. The faculty councils

in these schools have the responsibility to determine ways to identify appropriately those students who meet the scholarship requirement. In addition, school systems that allow middle level students to earn high school credit for courses taken at the middle level school should address whether or not such courses are included in the high school GPA. The information on this policy should be relayed to the middle level students and their parents, as well as the high school counseling office when signing up for such courses or calculating cumulative averages. In both of these situations (i.e., alternative grading practices and middle level course credits), the faculty council must provide a rationale for these determinations and include such in the written description of the selection process.

## GPA Calculation

Wherever possible, chapters are encouraged to utilize the same standard for computing GPA that is currently used within the school, since that is the system most easily recognized and understood by the students and their parents. Utilizing a nontraditional cumulative GPA calculation or scholarship average requires both additional time for the adviser or faculty council to complete the calculations, and additional explanation to be added to the written description of the selection process.

## Revisiting Scholarship

Once it has been determined that a student has met the scholarship criterion, that issue can be put aside and the faculty council’s attention directed to the remaining three criteria. It would be considered “revisiting” the scholarship criterion for the faculty council to bring up the “quality” of a student’s grades or evaluate the degree of difficulty of the courses after the GPA has been determined, and it should not be done. Similarly, teacher recommendation/input forms (an optional concern for local chapters) that include a space for rating the student’s scholarship are also inappropriate.

Schools that rate the level of the students’ GPAs for their point system (see subsection on “Rubrics and Point Systems” for further explanation of this process) in the selection process are similarly revisiting scholarship (e.g. 97–100 = 4 points; 94–96 = 3 points, etc.). In the case of a school using a rubric or point system, points should only be applied to those candidates who have already met the scholastic criteria and now need to be rated on the remaining three criteria. The possible consequence of this inappropriate use of points when revisiting scholarship is that the school may find itself first informing the student that he or she has the necessary GPA to be a member, and then, because the student’s GPA



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was not in the highest possible category (i.e., the student only got 3 points instead of 4) informing the student that he or she was not selected because “the GPA was not high enough to earn the required points for selection.” This contradiction would be inappropriate and confusing to candidates and their parents and should be avoided.

## Using State or Standardized Tests

Some chapters have considered including a requirement that all candidates must have passing scores or scores of a defined level on state-based tests for competency or skill or standardized tests such as the SAT or ACT. However, the cumulative GPA is an indicator of ongoing assessment of student scholarship rather than performance judged from an instrument administered on a single day. While such state-administered or private tests may offer some valuable assessment of student learning, low standardized/state test performance may be a signal to the adviser that a member is facing some difficulties but cannot be used as a factor leading to nonselection.

## Changing the GPA Requirement

In cases where a school wishes to change the GPA requirement by raising or lowering the GPA (but not beneath the 3.0 national minimum) there are a few key points to keep in mind:

- Changes in the selection procedure should be made by the faculty council. The origin of the request for changes may be the administration, the faculty adviser, or even from the body of current chapter members. In all cases, however, the faculty council must provide formal approval.
- As with all aspects of the selection procedure, the change(s) and all information related to the change should be published in a timely fashion and be available for easy dissemination to the public.
- When considering the timing for implementing proposed changes, the best recommendation from the national office is to implement such changes with a class entering the school, e.g., with the new freshman class entering the 9–12 school. While in this case a 4-year transition will be needed to fully implement the change, this process would appear to be the fairest for those affected by the change. If a shorter timeline is called for, it is strongly recommended that a local chapter consider announcing the change at least one full year prior to formally establishing the new criteria. This timeline allows students to set new goals for their scholastic performance (the higher GPA) and sufficient time to achieve them. It also allows the chapter to publish the

new guidelines and to update the faculty and parents of all prospective members.

Under all circumstances, advisers and members of the faculty council are reminded that continued membership in the chapter is based upon students maintaining the standards under which they were admitted as members. Consequently, a member admitted with a 3.0 GPA would be expected to maintain that average as a member, even if the new standard of 3.25 were approved for membership selected for later induction. In cases involving new scholastic standards, this may mean that a given group of chapter members operate under different standards for a period of years while the new criteria are being installed.

In all cases regarding the scholarship criterion, only those students who have a cumulative grade point average of 85 percent, B, 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or equivalent standard of excellence, or a higher cumulative average set by the faculty council meet the scholarship requirement for membership in the National Honor Society. These students are then eligible for consideration on the basis of service, leadership, and character.

## 4.1.3.2 Leadership

The leadership criterion is considered highly important for membership selection. A faculty council may wish to interpret leadership in terms of number of offices a student has held in school or community organizations; however, it is important to recognize that leadership also exists outside elected positions including leadership roles with the classroom and effective participation in positions of responsibility in other activities offered on campus such as athletic team captains, section leaders in band and chorus, committee chairs in student groups, etc. Leadership roles in both the school and community may be considered, provided they can be verified.

Chapters are encouraged to consider a specific, objective standard for the leadership criterion. Such standards could include a specific number of leadership experiences required for all candidates or other indicators of leadership experience. Leadership can be quantified by the candidate using his or her candidate information form; the quality or effectiveness of those leadership experiences can be assessed using teacher recommendations or faculty input forms submitted with professional comments by the staff of the school. (See also the subsection below on using supplemental forms.)

An example of such an objective standard could read, “To meet the leadership criterion for NHS, a student must name three (3) leadership roles at school or in the community achieved since the ninth grade [in a 9–12 school] and indicate

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the roles and the name of the adult who supervised each of these activities on the candidate information form. More than three roles may be listed, but there must be three verifiable listings to be selected to our chapter.”

If a faculty council decides upon such an objective standard, it will prove helpful to have available the professional rationale used in developing the standard, particularly when introducing the standard to the principal for review. The rationale for this or any other aspect of the selection process should be available upon request to any individual.

Chapters can consider the following descriptors as they develop their local definition and standard for leadership. This list is for consideration and should not be thought of as a checklist for this criterion.

A student exercises leadership when he or she:

- Is resourceful in proposing new problems, applying principles, and making suggestions
- Demonstrates initiative in promoting school activities
- Exercises positive influence on peers in upholding school ideals and spirit
- Contributes ideas that improve the civic life of the school
- Is able to delegate responsibilities
- Inspires positive behavior in others
- Demonstrates academic initiative
- Successfully holds school offices or positions of responsibility; conducts business effectively and efficiently; demonstrates reliability and dependability
- Is a leader in the classroom, at work, or in other school or community activities
- Is dependable in any responsibility accepted

### 4.1.3.3 Service

Service is generally considered to be those actions undertaken by the student that are done with or on behalf of others without any direct financial or material compensation. In considering service, the contributions each candidate has made to school and community can be reviewed.

All chapters are strongly encouraged to develop and use an objective standard for service based on either a specific number of projects or a specific quantity of hours. For example, “To be selected as a member of our chapter, a candidate must demonstrate on his or her candidate information form, the completion of ten (10) hours of service undertaken at school or in the community since the start of ninth grade [in a 9–12 school].” A quantity of service, as noted in the selection process description developed by the faculty council after consultation with staff and students, should be determined as a fair and reasonable quantity of service to require. All such

service references by candidates should include verification by an adult supervisor of the activity under consideration. (Refer to the sample candidate information form in the Chapter Management Tools found at the end of this chapter.) It is advantageous both for the faculty council and for students considering membership to have such an objective standard in place for the chapter.

Chapters can consider the following descriptors as they develop their local definition and standard for service. This list is for consideration only and should not be thought of as a checklist for this criterion.

The student who serves:

- Volunteers and provides dependable and well-organized assistance, and is willing to make sacrifices to offer assistance
- Works well with others and is willing to take on difficult or inconspicuous responsibilities
- Enthusiastically renders any requested service to the school
- Is willing to represent the class or school in interclass and interscholastic competition
- Does committee and staff work without complaint
- Participates in some activity outside of school, for example, Girl Scouts; Boy Scouts; religious groups; volunteer services for the elderly, poor, or disadvantaged.
- Mentors in the community or students at other schools
- Shows courtesy by assisting visitors, teachers, and students.

### 4.1.3.4 Character

Character is by all accounts a difficult criterion to define. The faculty council should consider the positive as well as the negative aspects of each candidate’s character. All judgments in this and other selection criteria should be free of speculation, rumor, or hearsay.

National Honor Society is a member of the Character Counts!™ Coalition and supports and recommends the use of a multifaceted definition of character known as the Six Pillars of Character.

A person of character demonstrates the following six qualities: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Schools are encouraged to take this model, modify it to meet their local needs, and utilize it frequently in the work of their chapter. (For more information on Character Counts!, see [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org) )

**Documenting Character.** In considering the standards set for the local character criterion, a candidate will be able to demonstrate an outstanding record of conduct and behavior with regard to school and community rules, guidelines, and policies, or be able to demonstrate sufficient growth and improvement to compensate for previous inadequacies. A

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faculty council is encouraged to document, for purposes of its own decision making or if questioned by the principal, any substandard performance in the area of the character criterion. Such documentation might include such sources as:

- Administrative records of the school
- Counseling records from the counseling office
- Conduct/behavior grades or ratings (including comments) on report cards or progress reports
- Professional records of individual faculty members (grade books, etc.)
- Comments, based on professional evaluation (i.e., judgment) and action, of individual faculty members as they appear on faculty input forms

It is left to the discretion of the local principal, faculty adviser, and/or faculty council as to how much of this information is to be shared with the candidate not selected for membership (or his/her parents).

**Disciplinary records.** Students who have been arrested and found guilty of civil offenses or who have a chronic record of breaking school rules should not be automatically excluded from consideration for membership. As with the scholarship criterion where a cumulative GPA is used, it is advisable to consider the whole child as found in a cumulative report of behavior while in high school. A proper regard for adolescent growth and behavior improvement is essential.

**Pregnancy.** It should be noted that, under provisions of federal law, pregnancy—whether within or without wedlock—cannot be the basis for automatic denial of the right to participate in any public school activity including membership in NHS. Pregnancy may properly be considered, however, like any other circumstance, as a factor to be assessed in determining character as it applies to the National Honor Society. But pregnancy may be taken into account in determining character only if evidence of paternity is similarly regarded. (See Appendix 3 for further information on the legal aspects of selection.)

Chapters can consider the following descriptors as they develop their local definition and standard for character. This list is for consideration purposes only and should not be thought of as a checklist for this criterion.

The student of character:

- Consistently exemplifies positive and desirable qualities of behavior (cheerfulness, friendliness, poise, stability)
- Cooperates by complying with all school policies and regulations and codes of student conduct
- Takes criticism willingly and accepts recommendations graciously
- Demonstrates the highest standards of honesty, academic integrity, and reliability

- Regularly exhibits courtesy, concern, and respect for others
- Complies with instructions and rules, and displays personal responsibility.

Additional character resources are found at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

## 4.2 Implementing the Selection Process

Once the four criteria are defined and the selection process is published, academically eligible students are notified of their candidacy, and the chapter is directed to gather information about each candidate using a variety of forms. Consider these specific items to develop and include in your local candidate materials.

### 4.2.1 Candidate Information Packets

Chapters are encouraged to create an attractive and informative packet reflecting the quality and good reputation of your organization. The official Honor Society logo may be used on all such materials, per the logo usage guidelines in this handbook and online. In addition to checking for accuracy of dates and deadlines on all forms, please be certain that the grammar and spelling used in all documents of the packet have been checked carefully and that the general content reflects a user-friendly format. In schools where a large number of parents may not use English as their primary language, chapters can consider providing translations of some or all of the packet contents as a service to their school population.

A typical packet will include the following:

- Title page and cover letter
- Candidate information form
- Local selection process overview
- List of membership obligations and chapter events
- Receipt or opt-out form

### The Cover Letter

This correspondence begins official communication to the candidate and her or his parents from the chapter adviser and/or principal (or even the current chapter president). The letter includes information indicating the general instructions for all candidates, an overview of the schedule for selection, along with details regarding when and how notification will be made for those selected and not selected. It is always appropriate to personalize these letters and to print them on either chapter or school stationery. Relevant and accurate contact information (e.g., school phone number, adviser email address, etc.) is important to include in case the student or the parents have questions. The cover letter can serve as the title page for the packet.

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## Candidate Information Forms

In order to ascertain the degree to which a student candidate meets the selection criteria, the local faculty council creates and distributes a candidate information form (a sample of which is found in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter) for all academically eligible students (i.e., candidates). Such forms are generally used to obtain information directly from the student regarding leadership and service activities and to elaborate on the student's perspectives concerning the Honor Society and its values.

Because each candidate is considered separately and new members are selected based on their having demonstrated sufficient service, leadership, and character to verify that they meet the chapter standards, the use of forms to obtain information directly from the students/candidates is vital to the chapter's efforts to run a fair and respectable selection process. It is unreasonable to expect that the faculty council, even in a small school, would be fully knowledgeable regarding any student's involvement in these areas, particularly where involvement in community activities is concerned. The best source for accurate information regarding a candidate's experience is the individual candidate.

**Parental signatures.** Providing the opportunity for parents or guardians to sign off on these forms can better insure the accuracy and completeness of all submissions, improves the validity of the forms submitted, and serves as a model for maintaining good communications between the school and the home—and sometimes provides an additional motivational push for an undecided candidate to participate in the selection process. Other adult signatures may also be requested to verify participation in leadership or service activities.

**Terminology.** The candidate information forms should not be identified as “applications” for membership. The candidate forms exist to support the student's candidacy by providing relevant information for use by the faculty council. The use of any form of the term “apply” implies that students with an interest in membership independently determine that they are eligible and are, therefore, requesting consideration. Honor Society membership is not a right, and a student cannot independently request consideration. On the contrary, based on several legal rulings over the years, membership is a privilege bestowed by the school upon those students who are found to meet the criteria for selection. Only those who have established their academic eligibility by meeting the cumulative GPA standard are asked to submit information for this consideration. By avoiding the use of the terms “apply” or “application” the chapter encourages a correct interpretation of this fundamental principle of the Honor Society.

Candidate information forms are for use by the faculty council as working documents during the selection process in support of the student's candidacy. (See “Document Retention” later in this chapter for more information on this last point.)

## Local Selection Process

The candidate information packet should include a description that includes the relevant criteria for selection. The publication of such descriptions is required in Article IX, Section 4 of the National Constitution. While not specifically required to be inserted in these packets, by including this document, chapters not only verify to families that they are in compliance with the constitutional mandate, but also provide a helpful and informative overview of the procedures.

## List of Member Obligations and Chapter Events

As outlined in Chapter 3, a carefully composed list of member obligations and major events of the chapter should be included in the candidate packet. This list can include such items as the chapter's annual meeting schedule, dues required (if any) and when they are to be paid, service project participation requirements (both chapter and individual), planned fundraising activities and expectations for participation. Additional obligation references can include the maintaining of the standards that are used for selection, being role models both on and off campus, and finally, reference to the possibility of discipline or dismissal if the member falls below the standards used for selection. The obligations list can be supplemented with a proposed calendar of chapter events for the year.

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## Receipt/Opt-Out Form

It is strongly recommended that chapters have the student (candidate) and the candidate's parents sign off acknowledging receipt of the packet, noting that the content has been reviewed, and agreeing to abide by the member obligations if selected. Although this can be assumed when a student returns his or her candidate information forms, it is best to ensure that an understanding of these obligations exists prior to participating in the selection process.

**Opt-Out form.** Some students (and/or their parents) realize that there simply won't be enough time to participate in the Honor Society even though they may have a strong chance of being selected. A chapter can include an opt-out checkbox or additional sheet in the packet on which the student and parent acknowledge with their signatures that he/she was a viable candidate for this round of selection, but respectfully declines the invitation to be considered. A signed and dated form, containing both student and parent signatures, can then be kept for future reference. Returning an opt-out form should not preclude the student from being considered in the next round of selection as long as he or she still meets the prerequisite qualifications established by the chapter. The sample candidate information form found at the end of this chapter incorporates this opt-out provision.

## 4.2.2 Faculty Input Forms and Teacher Recommendations

Selection for membership is always made by a majority vote of the faculty council. However, in addition to the candidate forms, the local council members may wish to obtain additional information to assist them in making their decision.

Faculty input forms may be used to supplement the candidate forms (a sample of which is found in the Chapter Management Tools in the back of this chapter). Once the students who possess the prerequisite GPA have been identified, they can submit a candidate form detailing their service, leadership, and character. Faculty input may be used to support the strength of a student's candidacy in the areas of service, leadership, and character. In the event of a low rating on one of the evaluations, it is always important to verify the reasons for such a rating, avoiding the "speculation, hearsay, and rumor" concepts described elsewhere in this handbook.

Input from faculty brings information to the attention of the faculty council that may not otherwise be represented on the candidate forms. Upon reviewing the faculty input and verifying its accuracy, the faculty council is still required to undertake a vote on each candidate, selecting each student who receives a majority vote.

To avoid questionable entries on faculty input forms, all forms must be signed and each faculty member should be prepared to support any below-average rating with substantiating data based on sound professional judgment and action. Anonymous faculty input forms may not be used. The local adviser serves as the link between the faculty council and the contributors, and may conduct informal interviews with teachers who provide the below-average ratings.

It is recommended that an input form be collected from all faculty members, even if some faculty provide no rating because they have never taught, coached, or advised any of the candidates.

In the case of written recommendations from faculty, chapters can indicate that candidates must obtain recommendations from a specific number of faculty members. (See additional text on teacher recommendations below.) Alternatively, some chapters only seek the signature of support from a prerequisite number of staff members to verify the character of a candidate. In either case, please review with the school's faculty what is expected of them and the timetable for submission of all materials in support of an individual student's candidacy.

Recommendations or input forms are not a national requirement, but if they are used for the local selection process, advisers should allow enough time for staff members to complete and submit the forms as well as the time needed by the faculty council to review them.

## Teacher Recommendations

As with faculty input forms, teacher recommendations are not required for any chapter's selection procedures, however, nothing prevents a chapter from incorporating recommendations to supplement the data provided to the faculty council by the candidate information forms or other locally developed components.

The following points are offered for consideration when looking at including recommendations for your chapter's new member selection:

- 1. Adding procedures.** If teacher recommendations are to be incorporated into the local selection process, be sure to seek review and approval from both the faculty council and the principal, and then amend the published version of the local selection procedures. Also seek input from your current chapter officers on how to best implement this addition to the selection process. Check the mood and willingness of the faculty as well—if this new duty comes at the same time as new obligations from the state and central office, your response rate may not be what you need. Consider carefully the timetable for this process along with the necessary approvals.

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2. **Develop reasonable timelines.** Teacher recommendations take time—for both the candidates and the teachers. Give candidates sufficient time to contact teachers; give teachers enough time to write and turn in the forms. Always take into consideration other events on the school calendar when creating your timetable.
3. **Create new forms.** Develop a standardized form for all recommendations. Include a title bearing the Honor Society logo (or your chapter name); space for the candidate to write in his/her name at the top; clear indication regarding when the forms are due; and space for the recommender's signature and date at the bottom. Unsigned (anonymous) recommendations should not be accepted or allowed. Instructions indicating the type of feedback being requested are helpful. Have the faculty council help you write this section since they'll be doing the reading. Develop an online form that can be used by all teachers. Some chapters will instruct candidates to give the form out with a stamped, self-addressed envelope so that all forms are returned to the chapter adviser by the deadline.
4. **Quantity.** Determine how many recommendations you require. Is one recommendation sufficient; are 10 forms too many? Don't ask for more than your faculty council is willing and able to read. Some chapters will ask for three, but will consider this component of candidacy complete if at least two forms are turned in. Another key question: Will you require forms from both the school and the community? Asking for nonschool recommendations requires more time for turning in the forms. Having a nonschool recommendation also requires that the form clearly identifies in what capacity the recommender knows the candidate.
5. **List invited recommenders on the candidate forms.** Have your candidates identify the individuals to whom they have given recommendation forms on their candidate forms for cross-referencing. Include a phone number (or school extension or email) to facilitate either sending a reminder or thanking recommenders and notifying them of the selection of their candidate. Thanking those who take time to submit a recommendation, particularly when from people in the community, will help build better relations with the chapter.
6. **Policy implications:**
  - a. Most schools will prohibit a recommendation from a relative (or immediate family member) of the candidate. Remind candidates of this policy at the time your forms are distributed.
  - b. What if recommendation forms are not turned in or not turned in on time? Should a candidate be responsible for an adult not turning in his or her forms?

It would not seem fair to hold students responsible for adult actions (or inaction). Care should be taken not to automatically exclude any candidate whose recommenders didn't respond or didn't respond on time. Given well-thought out timelines, candidates can be brought in and asked to recontact their recommenders if the preliminary deadline has passed. Allow sufficient time for recommendations and avoid making the submission deadline the same day your faculty council is going to meet.

- c. **New students.** Some newly enrolled students who have just completed one semester at the school (thus meeting the minimum enrollment requirement) may not yet have established community contacts to provide a recommendation. Consider making reasonable exceptions for these students if asked to do so.
7. **Review the process.** If you are using teacher recommendations for the first time this year, take time before your next round of selection to review your policies regarding their use. Look at any problem scenarios that arose because of these forms.
8. **Document retention.** As with any documents collected for selecting new members, verify with your principal or school system managers what the law or policies require regarding the retention of these documents. Some states (notably Texas and New York) maintain very specific document retention policies that apply to all Honor Society chapters, so advisers should seek assurances before eliminating any documents from their files.

Teacher recommendations can be a valuable addition to your local selection process. It is important to weigh the pros and cons of a limited recommendation process against a full faculty evaluation form before making a change. While not required by the national guidelines, teacher recommendations, when carefully inserted into your local guidelines, can bring much-needed information to your faculty council when selecting new members.

As with the candidate information forms, faculty input and teacher recommendations are considered by the national office as working documents to assist the faculty council in making sound decisions regarding membership. These documents are expected to be used only by the faculty council, the adviser, and the principal and should be considered confidential unless local or state policies dictate to the contrary. (See the NASSP *Legal Memorandum* in the appendices, and also the sample faculty input form in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.)

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## 4.2.3 Using Rubrics and Point Systems

The Constitution of NHS makes no reference to rubrics or point systems when selecting new members. Furthermore, the national office does not sanction or approve such systems. This does not preclude a local chapter from developing an effective selection procedure using a rubric or points for service, leadership, and character as long as the result retains compliance with all national guidelines.

In addition, if a rubric or point system is used by the faculty council, a few precautions are in order:

1. All tabulations should be checked and rechecked for accuracy.
2. If points assigned originate from faculty input forms, such forms should be signed by the faculty members in order to verify their accuracy. Anonymous input forms should be excluded from the process.
3. If points are added or averaged in order to determine a cut-off point for membership, two factors should be considered:
  - a. The cutoff should be determined prior to the reading of the candidates' forms.
  - b. The cutoff should not be used as an absolute determinant of membership, but instead serve merely as a guide. An absolute determinant would, under such circumstances, be viewed as a replacement for the faculty council vote and would not enable the faculty council to deliberate effectively over each candidate. Students who fall below the cutoff have already successfully reached the scholastic cutoff (GPA), and they deserve individual consideration and review of their credentials. The faculty council should review the forms of students who fall below the cutoff first in order to make a sound professional judgment regarding selection or nonselection.
4. Point systems should not revisit the issue of scholarship. Once the student's GPA is deemed sufficient for candidacy, the issue of scholarship should be put aside and only the remaining criteria of service, leadership, and character used for determining membership. A reevaluation of a student's GPA to determine whether the academic performance was good enough, would merely be questioning the judgment of fellow faculty members who rendered the student's grades.
5. Points that give specific values to various activities on campus should be approved by the administration prior to implementation.

One of the worst responses an adviser can give to the question, "Why wasn't I selected for NHS?" is, "You didn't get enough points." The logical consequence of such a statement is to ask where the student came up short, so you might

as well save time and indicate that the faculty council did not approve the candidacy and, if your local policies require disclosure of information related to the faculty council deliberations, then indicate that the individual student was weak in one or more of the criteria other than scholarship.

## 4.2.4 Essays

There is no reference to an essay requirement in the recommended selection process. However, this does not preclude a faculty council from including an essay in the local selection process. Many chapters feel that the essay provides a student the opportunity to express the meaning of character and the value of the four criteria in a manner that cannot be accomplished through a simple information sheet format.

Chapters that use essays as part of their selection process should note the following:

- Essays require significantly more of your faculty council's time to read and evaluate effectively.
- Grading an essay provided by a candidate duplicates your consideration of "Scholarship" (see previous section on revisiting scholarship). Students have already been graded on their writing skills through grades in English and other classes where writing is required. Those efforts are reflected in the cumulative GPA. Should you not select a student because of a low grade on the essay, you would be contradicting your initial indication that the candidate's grades were high enough for membership.
- For students already actively involved at school and often already busy writing essays for either class or college admission, creating the essay for NHS selection adds to an already packed schedule of events.
- Use of an essay should be preapproved by your faculty council and more importantly by your principal. The intended usage of the essay within the selection process should be clearly delineated in the chapter's selection process guidelines made available to all students prior to consideration for membership. If attention is to be given by the faculty council to spelling, grammar, and neatness, along with the quality of response to the assigned topic, such information should be provided to all candidates as well. Advisers are encouraged to make themselves available to candidates who need clarification regarding the essay assignment.

Some chapters that still wish to hear directly from the students have progressed to requiring an essay only from students who are selected, excerpts of which are used in the induction ceremony to introduce the new members in their own words. Topics such as "What membership in NHS means to me," "The meaning of leadership (or service) to students at

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[name your school] today,” or “The value of being a person of good character” are appropriate for this type of occasion.

## 4.2.5 Blind Review of Candidates

Many chapters feel that by reviewing candidates for selection in an anonymous manner by removing their names and other identifying information from their candidate forms or by other means, otherwise known as “a blind review,” that they can maintain a more objective selection process devoid of all bias and inappropriately subjective judgment. Though the premise and intention upon which such action is considered may be understandable, this process does create some problems.

For students who are engaged in very public positions (e.g., class president, captain of a sports team, etc.), their names will be discernable by virtue of their activities. This could provide an unfair advantage to some students when compared to other students whose qualities are just as strong, but who have chosen to become involved in less public activities. To avoid this advantage (which translates into an unfair disadvantage for some), all candidate names should be included on their forms.

Chapters may initially review the student information sheets without names attached during a preliminary review, but names should be revealed prior to the final vote of the faculty council. This assists the council in determining whether any legitimate extenuating circumstances, such as the death of a family member, may need to be considered for this student. Some chapters assign numbers to candidates for this objective preliminary review.

At the very least, the actual name of any candidate who is not to be selected should be brought forth to the council before their final vote and the report is submitted to the principal. In the report to the principal following the vote, the faculty council identifies which of the criteria each nonselected candidate did not meet. This practice will better guarantee that the council had a specific reason for not selecting a candidate that could, if requested by the principal, be substantiated in a professional manner. Though not required, this process would clarify the entire procedure at the local level in the event that either the student (or his/her parents) sought specific reasons for nonselection or the superintendent or board of education had cause to question the decisions.

It is not recommended that candidates be reviewed in a fully anonymous manner. The constitutionally based recommended selection process makes provisions for the name of all qualifying candidates to be submitted to the faculty council on their candidate information forms, and even to the entire faculty for evaluation if that is a part of the local process.

## 4.2.6 Deadlines

Can deadlines be a reason for nonselection? Yes, when defined as a reflection of a student’s level of responsibility. Responsibility is one aspect of character (one of the four key criteria considered in the selection process). Every classroom teacher struggles with this issue when assigning deadlines for long-term assignments. One tires quickly of the myriad of excuses, but one also looks for the teachable moment to train students to avoid tardiness from becoming habitual. Some of the same logical steps used in the classroom can be applied when establishing deadlines for activities of the chapter, however, there are also a variety of important elements to consider any time a chapter wishes to implement a formal deadline within the selection process.

It is important that the chapter’s deadlines were:

- a) **Published.** Deadlines are clearly identified in writing for all candidates (where deadlines in the selection process are being considered). Other deadlines for chapter members regarding service hours submission, completion of forms, etc., must also be available in writing, preferably in the list of member obligations or in the chapter bylaws.
- b) **Based on a sound rationale.** It is helpful when publishing the deadlines, to indicate why the deadline is necessary. For example, “We request that the forms be submitted by this date to provide the faculty council sufficient time to authenticate the information provided by candidates and to seek clarification in preparation for the selection meeting. Without such time, it makes it difficult for the council to render an appropriate professional judgment regarding your candidacy. Your cooperation in meeting this deadline is an indication of your responsibility and your commitment to becoming an effective member of our chapter.”
- c) **Reasonable in nature and length** based on school calendar considerations (any conflicting events?) and student schedules (e.g., does the deadline fall in the middle of exams or testing?). Generally, deadlines that require 24 or 48 hours turnaround time for information are not viewed as reasonable in that they often do not take into account student absences and/or parent work schedules (when parental signatures or review are requested).
- d) **Conclusive.** The consequence of not meeting the deadline is clearly expressed and consistently applied (avoiding arbitrary enforcement of the rule).
- e) **Complete.** As the adviser seeks to implement the established deadline policy, one should also consider what provisions have been developed for students who are absent when forms are disseminated or for those who have legitimate extenuating circumstances.



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- f) **Time-Oriented.** If the directions indicate return the forms to room 207 by 3:00 p.m., then someone needs to be in room 207 until a little after 3:00 p.m. to collect the forms. Similarly, allow for minor variations in the official time used. It is always helpful to indicate to chapter members whom they can see ahead of time (adviser, faculty council member, etc.) if they anticipate having any problems meeting the established deadline.
- g) **In keeping with school culture.** It is important to determine the nature of school climate with regards to promptness and punctuality. Is this a value that is regularly presented to students as an indicator of excellence? Is there consistent enforcement of late-submission policies throughout the building? Or is it possible that NHS is the only group on campus that regularly enforces such provisions leading to the possibility that the student expected to be treated less severely based on experiences with other teachers or groups on campus? Even with a carefully worded guideline (e.g., “No late forms will be accepted.”), this review of the overall school culture still needs to be considered.

If a student turns in the form late, the preferred method for handling such cases would be to have the student’s information accepted and submitted to the faculty council with the annotation that it was turned in late (forms timed and dated) and let the faculty council determine by vote whether the reasons for late submission were excusable. An inclusive approach would be to admit the student (assuming that he or she meets all the criteria for selection) and then counsel the student on the importance of more timely behavior in the future. This process works under the policy assumption that no adviser can disqualify a previously identified candidate without the vote of the faculty council.

**Definitions.** In defining character, as noted earlier in this chapter, the national office references the definition supplied by Character Counts! (CC!). CC! defines character using six qualities: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Meeting deadlines is one part of the trait of responsibility, which is merely one-sixth of the total definition of character. To imply that a student’s total character is substandard for having not met less than one-sixth of the criterion can be viewed as an extreme consequence. It is true that a single incident of proven cheating, for example, can keep a student out of the Honor Society or lead to his or her removal. Yet it is more difficult to provide the rationale for taking a single incident of late submission as the sole reason for nonselection or dismissal.

**Consistency.** A final factor is to look at the methods of application of your policy of deadlines. Make sure you have been consistent in applying reasonable deadlines.

## 4.2.7 Candidate Management Forms

It is important to demonstrate that the chapter is effectively managing the processing of all candidates and their forms. This is as much for the benefit of the students who have been identified as eligible candidates as it is for the chapter adviser to make certain that no one is overlooked in the chapter selection process. Based on the recommendations found in the recommended selection process in this handbook and at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us), the following format is suggested for use by chapter advisers when monitoring the names of candidates.

Using the list of students who have been found to be academically eligible (i.e., those who meet the cumulative GPA standard set by your chapter), insert those names, preferably in alphabetical order into a table or spreadsheet that you plan to use during the selection process. Label columns with the following checkpoints for each candidate (noting that the names and quantity of these columns is likely to vary from one chapter to another):

**Name (last name, first name):** Double check the accuracy of the spelling of each student. Consider including nicknames.

**Student’s school ID number:** Optional, but may help facilitate future interactions with the student. Indication of grade level can be added as needed if reviewing students from more than one grade level.

**Notification of candidate status:** If possible, for this and other relevant columns below, insert the date when notices are disseminated, letters mailed, meetings held, etc. Don’t assume that because letters were mailed or announcements made that all candidates got the message. Use additional check points below to verify notification.

**Attendance at selection process help sessions:** Annotate whether this is optional or required. An additional annotation can designate whether the Student (S) or Parent (P) or both (SP) attended. Note: candidates cannot be eliminated from eligibility for failure to attend this session.

**Candidate information form:** Indicates that the student was given/received a copy of the candidate information form used by your chapter. Don’t assume that just because a letter was mailed that the student obtained a form.

**Candidate information form returned:** Use either a check mark or date when form is returned to the adviser. Note 1: Using the forms provided in the *National Handbook*, even non-interested students are asked to return a signed form by the established deadline. Additional annotations can be used to indicate forms turned in after the established/published deadline (i.e., late forms). Note 2: Late forms cannot automatically disqualify any candidate from consideration, but can be used as factors when considering the candidate’s level of responsibility.

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**Not interested:** Indicates receipt of a blank form with student and parent signatures affirming that the student is not interested in becoming a member of the chapter at this time.

**Selected:** Checked once the faculty council has voted to select this individual

**Not Selected:** Indicating those who did not receive the majority affirmative vote of the faculty council

**Reason(s) for nonselection:** Where indicators of the criterion(a) not met are listed, e.g., “L” for not meeting the leadership standard.

**Induction ceremony (IC) invitation:** Checked to indicate the selected candidate has been invited/notified of the date/time/location, etc. of the induction ceremony. An additional separate column could be added to indicate confirmation of attendance received by the adviser.

**Attendance at IC:** Take roll at the IC to facilitate follow-up communications with selected candidates who are absent, but are still in need of induction in order to become members of the chapter per Article VIII, Section 4 of the National Constitution. (See Chapter 5 regarding attendance at the induction ceremony.)

Additional columns can easily be added based on additional local guidelines. While this list of items is extensive, it can be used to assure the principal that the chapter has followed all of the steps necessary for interacting with candidates should any questions or appeals arise.

## 4.2.8 Voting Procedures for the Faculty Council

Although the duties and makeup of the faculty council are described fully in Chapter 3, the following guidance on voting procedures can be used in the selection process.

The National Constitution notes that candidates are selected when they receive a majority vote of the faculty council (Article IX, Section 3, first sentence). The only other reference to voting in the faculty council is in Article X where the same majority vote is needed to dismiss members from the chapter. While these provisions speak to the outcome of the vote, little is said about the techniques recommended for taking the vote in meetings of the council.

Three options for voting arise from traditional considerations of this process: voice vote, show of hands (or standing, more frequently used in large group settings), and balloted voting.

Voice votes are generally the fastest, with “yays” and “nays” being heard. In standard parliamentary procedure, if either the chair or the members cannot determine whether the voice vote yielded a majority, a call for “division of the house” can be presented. The same would hold true for the faculty council, even when listening to only five voices. If the adviser (whose

role is to facilitate all meetings of the council) or any member of the council is uncertain whether there was a majority when hearing the voice vote, any member of the council can call for a division which simply means that members would be asked to provide a show of hands when voting to facilitate accurate counting.

To avoid this additional step, some chapters will always use the show of hands when voting. Chapters that opt for ballots must address two issues that simply do not arise with the other two forms of voting. First, ballots must be collected and counted. In larger chapters, placing all of the candidates’ names on a single ballot asking council members to vote on all following the review and deliberation of each candidate’s forms and records might actually prove to be a faster method. The advantage of the ballot is that it provides for a fully secret vote by the council members, provided that names of the voting faculty council members are not added to the ballot sheets.

The second issue with ballots is the sensitive question of what to do with the paper ballots after the voting is concluded. In some instances these sheets may be considered documents that should be retained under document retention policies of the state or the local school district. In most cases, however, such ballots would more likely be viewed as “working documents” (a phrase pulled from Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [FERPA] guidelines) and only the sheet reporting the results (selected/nonselected) would be needed to report to the principal or others requesting input on nonselection. Advisers should consult with their principal regarding any relevant guidelines that may exist for the chapter.

In none of these three methods of voting is it necessary for the record to reflect how individual members of the council voted on any candidate. The only pertinent information is whether the candidate received a majority vote for selection. This would not be the case if a “roll call vote” were taken. Because the actual vote tally is not called for in the National Constitution, only confirmation that each successful candidate received a majority vote, the use of roll call votes appears unnecessary.

The use of alternate members of the faculty council is explained on page 18. With this option in place, the use of absentee or vote-by-proxy methods is also discouraged. Advisers should plan carefully for their meetings of the faculty council to ensure that all five voting members can be present and remain for the full duration of the meeting. Absentee or proxy votes would not provide for a careful review and deliberation of each candidate’s information within the council meeting and would not, in the opinion of the national staff, be in the best interest of candidates under consideration.

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Does the method of voting need to be identified in the chapter bylaws? While this detail can be included, it is better left to individual faculty councils to determine which method is best, conforms to existing guidelines (local or state), and is the one with which they feel most comfortable.

## 4.2.9 Reporting Results to the Principal

Note that per the constitutional article that describes the guidelines for selection (Article IX) that prior to the notification of any candidates, the chapter adviser should review with the principal the results of the faculty council's deliberations.

This mandate challenges each adviser, with help from the faculty council, to see that all decisions regarding membership are sound and of a professional nature. Having the reasons for nonselection included in this report will assist both the adviser and the principal in responding to students or parents who may request additional explanation for nonselection.

In addition, by providing this report to the principal prior to any notifications of students or parents, the principal can fully utilize the authority granted in Article V, Section 1 of the Constitution wherein the principal is given final authority on all actions and decisions of the chapter including those relating to selection. While principals are cautioned against overturning the decisions of the faculty council without having a rationale available to explain such actions, the power remains in the principal's hands to use if deemed appropriate.

## 4.2.10. Initiation, Blackballing, Hazing

These actions, or any actions resembling them, are expressly prohibited as part of the selection process for any National Honor Society activity. Any chapter found in violation of this regulation risks losing its charter. This prohibition has been included in every *NHS Handbook* since 1921.

For this reason, and to be consistent with the language used in this handbook and the Constitution, it is recommended that the phrase "induction ceremony" instead of initiation be used to refer to the formal presentation of new members to the school and community.

All projects and activities undertaken by the chapter must preserve the integrity and reputation of NHS, and any use of initiation activities or hazing is strictly prohibited.

## 4.3 Notifying Candidates

Those students selected and their parents are generally notified promptly and personally by the principal, chapter adviser, Honor Society president, or by engraved or printed letters. (See sample letters and invitations at the end of this chapter.) The letter may also outline the duties, responsibilities, or obligations of membership in the National Honor Society.

As a courtesy, the chapter adviser or principal should also notify the officers and chapter members of the selection results at an appropriate time. This information should be held in confidence until the formal invitations to the induction ceremony are released.

**Nonselected candidates.** Chapters should consider carefully the timing and method of notification and be sensitive to those who may have been candidates but were not selected for membership. It is recommended that special efforts be taken to show professional care in conveying this disappointing news to nonselected candidates, and to arrange for appropriate counseling of these students where warranted. Nothing prevents the chapter from disclosing relevant information that led to the student not receiving a majority vote of the faculty council. This information should generally be available upon request and should focus on which of the criteria (service, leadership, or character) the individual did not meet when reviewed by the faculty council. (See also section 4.4 below; a sample letter to nonselected candidates is found at the end of the chapter.)

Regardless of the method of notification or announcement, it is advisable to follow up the official notification with a letter of confirmation. The letter should also outline some of the duties, responsibilities, and obligations of membership in the National Honor Society. It is always advisable to see that parents of new members are also kept fully informed concerning selection to, induction of, and obligations of membership.

**Attending the ceremony.** While requiring attendance at the induction ceremony conforms to the provisions found in Article VIII, Section 4, chapter advisers should enforce this rule in a reasonable manner. There may be legitimate extenuating circumstances, whether known ahead of time or occurring at the last minute, that prevent a selected candidate from making an appearance at the ceremony. Advisers are encouraged to counsel with each student who fails to show up for the induction ceremony regarding the reason for not attending. The adviser can ascertain whether or not the individual still wishes to become a member and arrange alternative induction. Officially the student is still in the selected candidate status and not a member of the organization until the induction is completed. The adviser should review with the student all responsibilities and obligations of being a member of NHS in order to prevent situations from occurring when the consequences could be more severe.

## Reapplication for Membership

Membership in the National Honor Society is permanent unless a student's performance falls below the standards by which he or she was selected. Chapters may not ask students

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to reapply on a yearly basis. This does not preclude a chapter's faculty council from requesting that students verify each year that they are still meeting the criteria for selection by updating their candidate information forms or by submitting report cards for verifying their academic performance. However, this process must not be interpreted as a formal return to the selection process with the student's continuing membership in doubt. Only if a student is dismissed (using the process outlined in Article X of the Constitution) or resigns is the student's continuing membership in the Honor Society ever to be curtailed.

## 4.4 Nonselection

Not selecting a student who has already been identified as being academically eligible can present a difficult situation for the principal, chapter adviser, and faculty council. The situation is bound to arise, however, given the necessarily subjective nature of some of the requirements for membership.

In cases of nonselection, efforts should be made to explain the selection process to those students who are unhappy about the results of the selection process. The NHS Constitution requires that a description of the selection procedure be published in an official school publication widely available to all students and their parents (Article IX, Section 4). This description should be well written and thorough in its portrayal of the selection process in order for the nonselected student to be assured that his/her case was handled in accordance with the established procedures.

### 4.4.1 Reasons for Nonselection

The recommended selection process outlines the content of the adviser's report to the principal regarding the results of faculty council voting from each round of selection. Advisers are encouraged to create and use a 3-column chart that identifies selected and nonselected candidates and then, as column 3, next to the name of each nonselected candidate the indication of which of the three criteria each nonselected student failed to meet that led to his/her nonselection (noting that successful candidates must meet all four criteria to be selected).

While this remains as a recommended procedure for all chapters, those chapters in the state of New Jersey fall under additional state regulations. Per ruling from the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, all chapters in the state must be prepared to identify which criterion(a) was (were) not met by an individual candidate if asked by the candidate or their parents following notification. The supporting rationale should also be available to assist in explaining the judgment rendered. Other states can use this as a model for providing a professional response to inquiries about nonselection. Nothing prevents a

chapter from providing a nonselected student a full accounting of the reasons for nonselection.

### 4.4.2 Appeals in Cases of Nonselection

Providing the professional rationale for nonselection is, at best, controversial. In other areas of school work, it is a common or traditional expectation of school personnel to be able to explain how decisions regarding the growth and development of a student on campus were made and, furthermore, to provide effective direction to such students to assist them in reaching their goals, despite the existence of a specific setback. This can be viewed as a fair expectation for parents to assume. In addition, this expectation may influence the procedures used in the local process for notifying and counseling with nonselected candidates.

As noted above, because all chapter advisers are required to report the results of the faculty council voting to the principal before notification, and within that report the criteria-based reason(s) for nonselection should be included, the basis for nonselection should be available to share if requested. Language found in the *Legal Memorandum* (See Appendix 3) encourages the technique of self-reflection to see whether the student can identify these reasons, but if this is unproductive, the professional rationale can be made available. Some states and/or school districts may have policies or laws that supersede these positions regarding the giving of reasons for nonselection. Principals and advisers of all local chapters are encouraged to review local guidelines to verify their compliance with such standards.

Local chapters can create their own appeals process for handling cases of nonselection if they wish (see "Setting up an Appeals Process" in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter). If this is done, it is recommended that the chapter incorporate a statute of limitations regarding when they will accept such appeals, for example, "Appeals must be registered with the chapter adviser within 10 school days [or some alternative and reasonable time period] of notification of nonselection." Generally, such appeals procedures simply indicate that upon request the faculty council will reconsider an individual student's case, and do not include personal appearances by the student or parents with the council members. The existence of an appeals procedure can convey a positive image of the chapter indicating a willingness to respond to any and all questions about their activities.

Under normal circumstances, in the absence of any formal appeals process, because the chapter adviser is closest to the selection process, he or she is best prepared to provide immediate feedback when questions arise regarding nonselection. Should students or parents still not be satisfied, the next level

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of discussion should take place with the principal. The principal should, of course, listen to the concerns of students not selected, or from the parents of such students. (See Article V, Section 4 of the NHS National Constitution.) Following such discussions, if the principal believes that some kind of technical or procedural mistake has been made, the principal may ask the faculty council to reconvene to review the situation. Technical or procedural errors might include the inadvertent omission of a student's name from the list of those qualified for induction, the erroneous averaging of grades, or the chapter's failure to follow prescribed procedures.

Usually, however, nonselected students wish to question the judgment of the faculty council. It is important to try to help such students understand that all decisions of the kind involved in the selection process have some subjective aspects, but that the decisions were derived in a fair manner and based on sound professional judgment.

In some cases, where complainants may choose to request a review by a new or different faculty council, chapters are asked to respond. Technically, per national office interpretations of the Constitution, such requests do not have to be accommodated. Admittedly, a committee composed of a different group of people might well have produced a different result, though it is equally as likely that they might have come to the same conclusion. The admission of varied group judgments is not an effective objection to the selection process itself, but merely an indication that specific decisions reached by the council do not satisfy everyone. The principal is charged initially with appointing five people to serve on the faculty council with assistance from the chapter adviser, in whom he or she can place a high degree of trust. These members of the council must understand the importance of exercising their responsibilities in the most professional and objective manner possible. The principal must assume that the members of the council are exercising their judgment in a legitimate and professional manner and with the good faith expected of them and trust that their decisions were made with the best interests of the students in mind.

Parents and students must understand that no student has a right to be selected for membership in a chapter of the National Honor Society. Reconsideration of a faculty council's decision must be a rare occurrence. It is important to uphold the integrity of NHS standards and to recognize the potential danger of yielding to pressure tactics.

If a nonselected student or his/her parents wish to challenge or appeal the principal's decision, they should follow the local school system complaint procedures.

**The national office staff and NASSP have no authority to review or overturn the judgment of the faculty council regarding selection of individual members to local chapters.**

## 4.5 Document Retention

Neither the national office nor the National Constitution or handbook prescribes any specific length of time for retaining or destroying chapter records. The time period for chapter document retention must be determined at the local level. However, there are several important considerations.

Currently, the *National Handbook* provides the commentary on this topic, as found in Appendix 3, "NASSP Legal Memorandum: Selection, Dismissal, and Discipline: Legal Guidelines for NHS and Other Selective Organizations," regarding the handling of documents during and after the chapter's selection procedures. We encourage all advisers to review with their faculty council and/or administration the subsection, "Procedural Matters" prior to beginning their selection procedure.

Consider the following points:

1. During the selection process, all information provided to the faculty council should generally be from either a) the students themselves (with appropriate parental signature, e.g. at the end of the recommended candidate form), or b) staff providing professional input or recommendation of an individual's performance in relation to the nonscholarship criteria. If the data submitted by the staff is truly professional in nature, it should reflect professional judgment and action taken with or in regards to the individual student.  
If the faculty member submitting the input is unwilling to sign his or her name and to attest to the professional nature of the rating, then conceivably the information should not be submitted in the first place. There is no place in the faculty council's review and deliberation of candidate information for the introduction of speculation, hearsay, or rumor or observations that do not reflect both professional judgment and action. In short, there should be nothing to hide.
2. A chapter's failure to retain its records (i.e., destroy them, if allowed to do so by local or state guidelines), can lead to a negative perception, especially if done without appropriate prior notification. Such actions cast chapter leaders in the same light as individuals in the private sector attempting to conceal faulty business dealings or as governmental officials attempting to cover up wrongdoings.
3. As noted above, some states (specifically, New York and Texas) and local districts have developed indepen-

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

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dent policies with regard to the use or retention of all/ any student information (i.e., anything that bears the student's name). Such policies take precedent by force of law over any interpretations found in this *National Handbook* and must be followed. Principals or school system personnel should be able to provide guidance regarding this topic.

4. At the conclusion of the faculty council's consideration of candidates, we recommend that the council provide to the chapter adviser a list containing three columns: 1) a list of students to be selected, 2) a list of students who are not to be selected, and 3) next to each of the nonselected students, identification of the criterion or criteria that each student did not meet. The presumption here is that the faculty council could, if requested by the administration, substantiate its judgment for nonselection based on professional grounds using the national criteria as the foundation for review.

It is further recommended that this 3-column list be included when the results of the council voting are shared with the principal prior to the notification of students (see Article IX, Section 3 at [www.nhs.us/constitutions](http://www.nhs.us/constitutions)). Thus, if the principal questions one or more of the decisions of the faculty council, then the adviser can provide an informed response. Materials reviewed by the faculty council should be retained until after the principal's review and confirmation of the results.

Note: At any time in the selection process, should a student or parent notify the chapter that they wish to appeal a decision of the faculty council, then from that point on, all materials related to that individual student's consideration must be retained. This applies only to the records for the individual student and not necessarily those of other students for whom no such appeal notification was provided. This practice is in keeping with the provisions of FERPA to which schools are expected to adhere ([www.ed.gov/ferpa](http://www.ed.gov/ferpa)).

To conclude, while no formal document retention policy exists in the national guidelines for NHS chapters, local chapter advisers in New York and Texas have state laws that address documentation for public schools in these states. Advisers and principals in all chapters should verify whether document retention policies exist and to what extent they apply to Honor Society files. Chapters that wish to remove paperwork from their files, notably forms used in the selection process each year, can consider creating a local statute of limitations of reasonable duration for asking questions for filing appeals after which all materials will be destroyed.

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

## CHAPTER MANAGEMENT TOOLS—CHAPTER 4

### CMT 4.1 Sample Candidate Information Form: NHS Selection Procedures



(NOTE: THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION FORM. We encourage local chapters to use this as a template, adding relevant components to reflect their local selection guidelines.)

(Insert Chapter Name) Chapter of the National Honor Society

Directions: Please complete all sections. Type or print all information and submit it by the published deadline. Do not be modest. Every bit of information will be used by the faculty council to assist with the fair consideration of your candidacy during the selection process.

Completion and submission of this form does not guarantee selection. Should you have questions about this form, please contact (fill in the appropriate contact information).

#### I. Administrative Information

Name

Current grade level:

Other information as required by the local chapter, e.g. homeroom number/teacher, current grade level, student identification number, etc.

**II. Leadership Roles**—List all elected or appointed leadership positions or other positions of responsibility held in school, community, or work activities. Only those positions in which you were responsible for directing or motivating others should be included (e.g., elected officer for the student body, class, or club; committee chairperson; team captain; newspaper editor; work area manager; or other community leader). Please include the name of the adult responsible for supervising your leadership in each position.

Leadership Role*	Grade Level(s)*	Activity/Organization	Supervising Adult
(Ex) Program Committee Chair	11	Student Council/Junior Chair	Mrs. Carroll

\*Include year 9 only if included in the grades found at your school. If ninth grade is part of a middle level school, activities from that year should not be considered for the NHS selection process.)

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

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**III. Service Activities**—List service activities in which you have participated. These can be individual or group service projects done either in or out of school [unless your faculty council specifically limits service to school activities only]. Generally, service activities are those that are done for or on behalf of others (not including immediate family members) for which no compensation (monetary or otherwise) has been given. Please ask an adult supervisor who can verify your participation in each activity to sign on the appropriate line, and also list the estimated number of hours you invested while performing this service. [Note: If a minimum number of hours or minimum number of projects is required for selection, please identify that information in this paragraph.]

Activity	Grade Level(s)*	Hours of Service	Supervising Adult

**IV. Other Student Activities**—List all other school-based activities (not noted above) in which you have participated in school. Include clubs, teams, musical groups, etc., and any significant accomplishments in each.

Activity	Grade Level(s)*	Accomplishments

**V. Other Community Activities**—List other community activities in which you have participated and note any major accomplishment in each. These should be any activities outside of school in which you participated for the betterment of your community (e.g., religious groups, clubs sponsored outside the school, Boy or Girl Scouts, community art endeavors, etc.). Do not repeat participation already listed above. Please include the name of the adult supervisor of each activity.

Year	Community Activity	Hours	Accomplishments	Supervising Adult
9*				
10				
11				
12				

\*Include year 9 only if included in the grades found at your school. If ninth grade is part of a middle level school, activities from that year should not be considered for the NHS selection process.)



# SELECTION PROCEDURES

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**VI. Work Experience, Recognition, and Awards**—Though not a specific criterion for membership, please list below any job experiences, honors, or recognition that you have received that support your candidacy for membership in the Honor Society. Work experience may be paid or volunteer.

Year	Job, Recognition, or Award	Group or Activity	Hours Spent on Job or Activity (if applicable)	Supervising Adult
9*				
10				
11				
12				

**VII. Signatures**

I understand that completing and submitting this form does not guarantee selection to the Honor Society. I attest that the information presented here is complete and accurate. If selected, I agree to abide by the standards and guidelines of the chapter and to fulfill all of my membership obligations to the best of my ability.

---

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I/we have reviewed the full candidate information packet provided to us by the chapter. In addition, I/we have read the information submitted by my son/daughter on this form and can verify that it is true, accurate, and complete.

Parent signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred method of contact (check one and fill in the blank):

Parent phone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent email: \_\_\_\_\_

We request this contact information so that we can notify you regarding important details. Return completed form to (insert specific individual/ location to which forms are be returned) no later than (insert submission deadline date).

Note: Include the school address and phone number along with instructions on how questions about this form or membership in general can be answered by Honor Society staff/advisers.

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

## CMT 4.2 Sample Faculty Input Form



NHS Selection for (insert year or semester/year)

The following students have been identified as candidates for selection to our chapter of the Honor Society. Candidacy begins by meeting our scholarship criterion of (insert cumulative GPA criterion) which has been met by these students. Each candidate will submit to the faculty council a candidate information form, but additional information is being requested from the entire staff to assist in this important selection process. Every staff member is being asked to review, sign, and return this form.

Please carefully review the list of candidates. For each of the three criteria, please use the rating scale provided (1 to 4, where 1 = low/poor, 2 = below average, 3 = good, and 4 = high/outstanding) to evaluate any student with whom you have had professional interaction (i.e., as a teacher, adviser, coach, etc.). Should your rating be poor or below average for any candidate (either a score of 1 or 2), it is necessary for you to provide an additional comment that speaks to the professional rationale for this low rating or examples of the poor performance that led to the rating. Please consider these ratings as seriously as you would any grade entered into your grading system.

Please sign the bottom of the form. In the event you have had no professional interaction with any of these students, please attest to that fact by checking the box at the bottom, signing the form, and returning it. All forms should be returned to the chapter adviser, (insert adviser name), by (insert deadline). Your cooperation in this important selection process is greatly appreciated.

Candidate's Name	Leadership	Service	Character	Comments (use the back for additional notes)
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

I certify that my ratings and comments are sound and based on professional interaction with the candidates.

I certify that I have had no professional interaction with the above-named candidates or choose not to participate in the evaluation process for this year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

## CMT 4.3 Sample Letters on Candidacy, Selection, and Nonselection



### SAMPLE LETTERS

Below are sample letters that can be used as models for responding to students or parents at different times during the selection process. Local chapter advisers are encouraged to modify these letters according to local tradition and policy to meet the needs of the chapter. Where appropriate, the use of official chapter or school stationery is encouraged.

- Letter to notify candidates of initial eligibility
- Letter to students selected for membership
- Response form for selected members
- Invitation to parents
- Letter to new members regarding the general responsibilities and obligations of membership
- Letter to nonselected students (and/or parents)

### Letter to Notify Candidates of Initial Eligibility

(Also recommended as a cover letter for the candidate information packets)

[Insert Date]

[Insert candidate's full name]

[Insert home address or homeroom/class where letters will be delivered]

Dear [insert Candidate's first name],

On behalf of the faculty of [insert school name], we are proud to inform you that you have been identified as being academically eligible for consideration for membership in the National Honor Society as administered at our school. Eligibility is determined by your cumulative grade point average which must meet or exceed our chapter's standard for scholarship currently set at [Insert the chapter's cumulative GPA standard, e.g., 3.0 on a 4.0 scale]. You can be proud of this personal accomplishment which serves as the first step in our selection procedures.

You are now eligible to submit additional information for consideration by the chapter's faculty council which will carefully review your credentials. In addition to the scholarship standard, membership in NHS is also based on standards of service, leadership, and character. To be selected as a member of NHS, you must demonstrate on your candidate information form and through the evaluations submitted by the faculty that you have met or exceeded these additional standards. An explanation of what our chapter looks for in each of these areas is included in the pages that follow.

Please review all of the attached information with your parents/guardians. The deadline for submitting your completed forms is [insert deadline date, e.g., 3 p.m. on Wednesday, April 6, 2016.] Turn in your forms directly to Mr. Marano, chapter adviser in room 207 or to his teacher box located in the main office. Candidates will be notified of the results of the selection committee meeting by no later than Friday, April 15.

If you or your parents have any questions regarding NHS or the selection process, you can attend the help session currently scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, in the library, or you can contact Mr. Marano at school by phone, 703-555-1212, or email, Marano@school.edu.

Again, congratulations on being identified as an eligible candidate for NHS.

Signatures: (Suggested: chapter adviser, chapter president, principal)

Attachments: Candidate Information Packet [See section 4.2.1 for an outline.]

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

## Letter to Students Selected for Membership

(Note: Be certain if not using official school stationery to include the school name and address along with the phone number to facilitate contact.)

Date:

Dear (insert name),

Congratulations! You have been selected for membership in the (insert school name or chapter name) Chapter of the National Honor Society. You and your family can be very proud of this accomplishment. Your selection is based upon careful consideration of your scholarship, service, leadership, and character by our chapter's faculty council.

We would like to have you and your parents as our guests at the formal induction ceremony currently planned for the (place, e.g. school auditorium) on (day and date) at (time). Additional information will be provided to all confirmed participants at a later date.

Please return the attached form to the chapter adviser, Mr./Mrs. (name) no later than (day and date). If you have any questions, please call (name) at the school.

We are proud of you for earning this recognition and hope that you will accept this invitation to become an active member of our chapter.

Sincerely,

(Student name here)

President, National Honor Society [or Chapter Adviser]

## Sample Response Form for Selected Members

Please complete this form including both student and parent signatures and return it to the chapter adviser, \_\_\_\_\_, by no later than (insert submission deadline day and date).

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I plan to attend the National Honor Society induction ceremony, (day and date) at (time).

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to become a member, but I cannot attend due to a previously scheduled engagement. (Please contact the chapter adviser immediately for additional information. To become an active member you must participate in an induction ceremony.)

\_\_\_\_ No, I will not attend and I do not wish to accept membership at this time.

Student name \_\_\_\_\_

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Invitation to Parents

The principal and faculty of (school name) are pleased to announce the selection of (student's name) for membership in the (name of chapter) Chapter of the National Honor Society. You are cordially invited to attend the induction ceremony to be held at (location) on (day and date) at (time).

A reception for new members and their parents will follow the ceremony.

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

## Sample Letter to New Members Regarding the Responsibilities and Obligations of Membership

Dear New Inductee:

Congratulations! Membership in the National Honor Society is one of the highest honors that can be awarded to a high school student. Our chapter of NHS has worked hard to bring the accomplishments of outstanding students to the attention of parents, teachers, peers, and the community. Our chapter and the more than 16,000 chapters in schools across the nation strive to give practical meaning to the Society's standards of scholarship, service, leadership, and character.

These four ideals have been considered as the basis for your selection. No student is inducted simply because of a high academic average. The National Honor Society strives to recognize the total student—one who excels in all of these areas. The standards used for your selection were: scholarship (insert local GPA) cumulative average, service, leadership, and character, as demonstrated by activities and teacher input.

Membership, however, is more than an honor. It incurs a responsibility and an obligation to demonstrate those outstanding qualities that resulted in your selection. Your membership also carries a responsibility to the chapter. If our chapter to the National Honor Society is to be effective and meaningful, each member must become involved. A full list of chapter obligations will be provided to you at your first chapter meeting currently scheduled for (insert day, date, time, and location of the upcoming meeting). We challenge you to live up to your obligations by participating in all of our chapter meetings and projects.

We look forward to having you as an active member and wish you continued success.

Sincerely,

(Principal's signature)  
Principal

(Adviser's signature)  
Adviser

(President's signature)  
Chapter President

Note: It is recommended that a list of all local chapter member responsibilities and obligations be shared annually with members and their parents, as well as being available for all candidates to review prior to accepting membership.

## Sample Letter to Nonselected Students (and/or parents)

(Date)  
(Student Name)  
(Student Home Address)  
(City, State Zip)

Dear (First Name),

On behalf of the faculty council of our NHS chapter, I am writing to inform you that after careful consideration, the faculty council of the (chapter or school name) chapter of the National Honor Society has voted to not select you for membership at this time. This decision was made only after a thorough review of your candidacy by the council. As you know, a candidate must receive a majority vote from the council for selection. A careful review of your information did not result in that necessary vote.

Though, as a result of your excellent cumulative GPA, you were initially eligible as a candidate, the council found your efforts in\* the area(s) of (Identify one or more of the remaining criteria as annotated in the list of nonselected students that contains the criterion(a) that each non-selected student did not meet) to be below our chapter selection standards.

We understand that this is disappointing news for you. However, we commend you on your successful efforts so far, in particular your academic accomplishments, and encourage you to continue your hard work in hopes that rewards and recognition will continue to come your way in the future.

Should you or your parents have any questions or concerns about this nonselection decision, please feel free to contact (me/us) within the next two weeks [or other appropriate and reasonable timeframe] at (fill in school phone, room number, email, or other relevant information to facilitate contact being made).

Sincerely yours,  
(Adviser signature)  
(Adviser name/typed)

cc: Chapter files  
Parents of (student name)

\*ALT phrasing: "one or more of the remaining selection criteria", if the chapter cares not to identify the specific criteria(-on) in which the candidate was found lacking.

# SELECTION PROCEDURES

## CMT 4.4 Setting up an Appeals Process



Based on commentary from the New Jersey Principals and Superintendents Association shared with the national office, chapters are encouraged (but not required) to develop language that speaks to an appeals process for students or parents in the event they disagree with the decision of the faculty council regarding selection.

Chapters can identify limited opportunity for appeals. The procedure guidelines can indicate that appeals must be registered with the chapter adviser or principal within a stated and reasonable amount of time. It is recommended that the minimum be one week; a reasonable maximum would be 30 days (one month).

**Records removal:** Indicate in the procedure that if no appeal has been registered within this defined period of time, all records pertaining to this round of selection will be destroyed (as long as this action conforms to the school, school district, or state policies regarding records retention. (Note: In Texas, chapters must comply with the Texas Education Code's guidelines regarding records retention. New York State has a similar provision. State law supersedes NHS guidelines in these two situations.)

The nature of the appeals process can be defined locally. Options can include (but are not limited to):

- a. A review by the chapter adviser of the summary notes from the faculty council session.
- b. Resubmission of the student's information to the faculty council for reconsideration.
- c. Submission of the relevant information to the principal who consults with the faculty council and/or advisers regarding their decision-making processes.

While commentary exists regarding the fact that there are no regulations requiring the giving of a reason (with the noted exception of New Jersey where a chapter must identify the criterion or criteria that were the basis(-es) for nonselection, per instructions from that state's education commissioner), there is nothing that precludes a chapter from presenting the appeal with specific information regarding nonselection. Indeed, it is the contention of the national office that if the recommended selection process has been followed and undertaken in all its aspects in a fully professional manner, then there should be nothing to hide from the appellee regarding their nonselection.

Outcomes of an appeal can include (but are not limited to):

- a. Rejection of the appeal; sustaining of the original judgment.
- b. Request from the principal for the faculty council to reconsider the case.
- c. A change in the decision, resulting in the selection of the student in question.
- d. An overturning of the faculty council's decision by the administration.
- e. Referring the appeal, following rejection, to the next step in the local school hierarchy, e.g. superintendent.

The national office encourages advisers, faculty councils, and principals to review this information carefully as they address the issue of appeals at the local level.



# 5. INDUCTION OF MEMBERS



## 5.1 Introduction

“Candidates become members when inducted at a special ceremony.”

—Article VIII, Section 4 of the NHS Constitution.

Induction of new members into the National Honor Society is an important event for the student, the chapter, the school, and the community. The ceremony, whether public or private, provides an excellent opportunity to dramatize the purposes of the chapter as found in Article I of the NHS Constitution. Because membership in the National Honor Society represents high levels of achievement, the induction ceremony itself should also reflect high standards.

Dr. Edward Rynearson, founder of NHS, spoke eloquently concerning the induction ceremony:

“These exercises [the induction ceremony] should always be public in order that no one will confuse the society with a secret fraternity and that the school and community as a whole may catch the inspiration of higher ideals held up by the speakers. Again the parents of these selected pupils will be drawn closer to the school filled with a deeper appreciation of the work of their children. Being present at the induction of their children into the Honor Society will be a highly prized privilege and reward to many parents who have watched their children carefully and prayerfully.

The program should be dignified and impressive throughout. The school at large will judge the society very largely by these public exercises. Here is a great opportunity to create an enthusiasm for scholarship among those who have not yet been awakened to the importance of a complete development



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of their higher powers. We shall never know how many real personalities have been lost who have all the native endowments of genius and leadership but who for lack of incentive or of proper environmental stimuli, have remained undeveloped and unknown.”

## 5.2 The Traditional Ceremony

The oldest and most common induction ceremony is the candle-lighting service. For a complete script, see CMT 5.1 at the end of this chapter. The script is also available in the adviser section of [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us). After reviewing the script, take time to review all of the following organizational suggestions.

## 5.3 Organizing the Local Ceremony

The most common practice for the induction ceremony is for it to be conducted by the officers and members of the local chapter. In the case of the chapter’s first induction, chapter members of a nearby school or faculty members may also participate. There is no requirement regarding the timing or the style of the ceremony other than the provisions from Article VIII cited at the opening of this chapter. The national office has received suggestions that one special induction ceremony be developed and used by all chapters. However, the national office firmly believes that schools should create their own ceremonies and procedures. The only stipulation the national office has made regarding induction ceremonies is that they be “appropriate and impressive.”

As a result, there could be as many different ceremonies as there are chapters. The best advice comes from the Constitution: Make it special for all involved.

Although the format of each chapter’s induction program will vary with local traditions and procedures, each chapter should include in their script an emphasis on the national criteria, namely scholarship, service, leadership, and character. A complete script, studied and rehearsed, is helpful to all participants. A checklist of props and supplies and other essential arrangements should augment the script.

As noted previously, initiation, blackballing, hazing, or the like are expressly prohibited as part of any National Honor Society activity. For this reason, the term induction ceremony is used in all national guidelines and is recommended for use at the local level instead of initiation to refer to the formal presentation of new members to the school and community.

Chapter are encouraged to hold the induction ceremony at a school assembly that includes the entire student body, the faculty, and the parents of inductees. However, in schools where space is a problem or attendance must be limited, an evening or afternoon ceremony for parents, students, and friends is appropriate.

Each chapter is obligated to hold an induction ceremony. Prospective members, i.e., successfully selected candidates, are not full and active members until they have been properly inducted, preferably soon after selection.

Article XIV offers general guidance for all activities of the chapter which are also relevant for use in planning the local induction ceremony: “These projects shall have the following characteristics: Fulfill a need within the school or community; have the support of the administration and the faculty; be appropriate and educationally defensible; be well planned, organized, and executed.”

## 5.3.1 General Considerations for Planning

1. **Carefully plan the details of the ceremony**, from the notification of inductees through the clean up of the ceremony space. Utilize current chapter members in this entire process.
2. **Present new inductees with a token of membership.** This can be the NHS membership card, the society pin, an emblem or patch, or any other suitable item. A formal printed program will also be a keepsake for students and parents.
3. **Register your new inductees.** Many chapters utilize a formal signing in of the new members in a registry book that uses a new page for each induction ceremony. This serves as a formal record of your chapter. (See your *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* for the official registry available to all chapters.)
4. **Candle lighting.** Many chapters light candles to focus on the four criteria for membership. The national office is frequently asked what the “official” colors of the candles are, but there is no formal standard. It is often recommended to use the NHS colors of blue and gold along with your school colors as a starting point. Many chapters will use a formal candelabra of four or five candles, lighting the other four from the central candle of knowledge or honor, when staging their ceremonies.
5. **History.** An important aspect of any induction ceremony is the telling of the chapter history—for whom the chapter was named, how long the chapter has been in existence, the names of famous chapter members, etc. Current chapter members can provide a great service to the chapter by doing the research in the school library, old yearbooks, or even the local historical society to find information to share in this portion of the program.
6. **Speakers.** It is always appropriate to bring in a notable speaker to present remarks and challenges to the new inductees. Local dignitaries such as mayors or

# INDUCTION OF MEMBERS

school board members are individuals who should be approached for remarks.

7. **Rehearsal.** Prior to any successful ceremony, it is important to rehearse. Rehearsal guarantees confidence in the presenters and the avoidance of any unnecessary glitches or time-consuming mistakes.
8. **Music/Performance.** Every school has talented performers or musicians. Performers can add a wonderful, creative tone to any induction ceremony. Dramatic readings by drama students, interpretive dances (space permitting), and solo or group musical performances are all appropriate. If taped music is to be used, be sure that the quality and volume are tested during rehearsals to verify the appropriateness of the items to be used.
9. **Refreshments.** Food is a great unifier. Parents and students alike can contribute and local food establishments are frequently willing to donate reception foods in return for recognition in your program. A reception following your ceremony provides everyone the chance to spread congratulatory remarks to all the deserving new members.
10. **Records.** Keep records of your induction ceremonies each year. Write out the script and maintain files. Many schools repeat the same ceremony each year; others choose to provide a new service at each induction. Scrapbooks of the ceremony, completed each year, provide your chapter a textual and photographic record of the event, even when posted on the chapter website. Also, to help keep track of ceremonies from one year to the next, it is recommended that the date and location of the ceremony be included—particularly helpful when new members are sending copies of the program to relatives. In any case, the written program may serve as a gift to a new adviser at a neighboring school who needs help in developing the new ceremony.

## 5.3.2 The Ceremony Agenda

Whether using the traditional ceremony or another script, the typical induction ceremony contains the following key features:

- A. Preceremony entertainment: Music (live or recorded\*; for five to ten minutes prior to the program)
- B. Processional/entrance (Often cued from the stage or with special music; audience may stand while chapter participants and new inductees enter)
- C. Call to order by the presiding officer\*\*, chapter adviser, or principal
- D. Invocation and/or welcome message (by the chapter president, adviser, principal, or other)
- E. National Anthem or Pledge of Allegiance (or both).  
Hint: Print the words in your program to encourage participation.
- F. Introduction of guest speaker
- G. Guest speaker
- H. Thank you to guest speaker and introduction to the next part of the ceremony, including a brief review of how students were selected
- I. The criteria (often accompanied by the lighting of candles; see sample script for details)
  1. Scholarship
  2. Service
  3. Leadership
  4. Character
- J. New member introduction, candle-lighting, certificate or pin presentation, signatures in chapter registry (a roll call of new members; methods of recognition will vary)
- J. Honor Society Pledge taken by all new inductees (see CMT 5.2 for sample pledges)
- K. Special awards or recognition: Chapters often thank the faculty council, award honorary memberships, recognize outgoing officers, or install new officers
- L. Closing remarks (often done by the principal or the chapter adviser)
- M. Adjourn to reception (additional planning tips for receptions are found in section 5.4)
- N. Postceremony/recessional music or entertainment/reception\*

\*Prerecorded music is available in the CD from the NHS Store, "Melodies of Achievement."

\*\*See 5.3.10 Emcee Training

## 5.3.3 Themes for Your Ceremony

Having a theme around which to plan your ceremony can be helpful. Themes assist in selecting decorations, music, props, and other key elements used during the program. While the name and criteria of NHS lend themselves quite well to a thematic approach, here are a few themes, suggested and used by chapters, for your additional consideration:

- **Past, Present, and Future.** The importance of past accomplishments and a focus on the role of today's youth in tomorrow's world is stressed with remarks about scholarship, service, leadership, and character. The Jeffersonian/Baconian model promoting Memory to preserve the past, Reason to guide the present, and Imagination to form the future is an effective model to use with this theme.

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- **Patriotism.** There are many variations, but the most common idea is that today’s students are the nation’s greatest resource. Skits and speeches are suitable.
- **Inspiration.** This ceremony usually focuses on the life of a leader or scholar who is held in high esteem by the members. The ceremony is most effective when the person selected can participate in the program as a guest speaker or as recipient of an award. Programs can also center on the life of an alumni member of the chapter.
- **History.** Relate the history of education or the history of leadership, service, or character in this ceremony.
- **Other common themes focus on the school or community** or can relate to the mission, annual theme and/or philosophy of the school.

The national office is always interested in learning about new themes used by chapters. Share your theme and the ceremony components by emailing us at [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us).

## 5.3.4 Selecting your Location

The site selected for the event is very important. Each chapter should determine where to hold its ceremony and reception based on the “five S’s” of site selection:

1. **Size**—How many can be seated? Can every student in the school (or the number of expected participants) fit into the site?
2. **Sound**—Can everyone hear? Is a PA system needed?
3. **Sight**—Can everyone see the speakers and facilitators? When materials are displayed for view, can everyone see them?
4. **Supplies**—Do you have the necessary supplies ordered and other presentation materials ready? Are audio and visual aids available? (PA system, video screen, etc.)
5. **Schedules**—What is your timeline for the day? Will the school require schedule modifications to accommodate student movement to and from the event if you’re holding the event on campus during the school day? Will you be able to accomplish everything in the time allotted?

## 5.3.5 Tokens of Membership

New members of the National Honor Society are usually given membership cards, pins, or other items as proof of their membership. Many chapters also present certificates or charms as other signs of membership. (See “Official Insignia” for details on availability and regulations governing the use and ownership of National Honor Society insignia as well as procedures for ordering such items. See also the CMT 5.3 Supplies and Ordering Procedures at the end of this chapter.)

## 5.3.6 The Registry

Although not required by the national office, many chapters maintain a registry or book containing the signatures and dates of membership of all chapter members. The signing of the registry is usually part of the induction ceremony. While this registry does provide each chapter with a complete record of local members, it in no way replaces the official membership list, which must be kept on file in the school.

## 5.3.7 Logo Usage

Your chapter can use the national logo for its induction ceremony program.

The official emblems of NHS and NJHS are trademarks that are fully protected by federal laws. Use of the marks (as they are known) at the local level is approved for all official and active chapters. The official guidelines for all logo usage can be found elsewhere in this handbook and also in the adviser section of the national website. Visit [www.nhs.us/logo](http://www.nhs.us/logo).

Chapters are encouraged to use the official emblems of the society in all official chapter functions, perhaps most importantly on their printed programs for induction ceremonies. All logo use should retain the honor that the societies stand for and preserve the reputation of the organizations by always displaying them with respect.

Specific questions about the use of the logos can be addressed to the national office at [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us).

## 5.3.8 Organizing Your Planning Files

When preparing for your induction ceremony, the following list of files/papers to be used for the ceremony may be helpful:

- Programs from past inductions
- Memos to inductees detailing responsibilities of inductees (to be handed out at a preinduction information session)
- Details of the induction ceremony for all participants, including the custodians
- Order of the ceremony; a chronology of the event
- Diagram of the room in which the induction will take place detailing decorations, lecterns, sound system, etc.
- Principal’s speech (just in case the administrator runs out of time to develop some new remarks)
- Adviser’s comments (for the same reason)
- List of supplies
- Sign-up sheets for ceremony committees (e.g., refreshments, marshals, parent volunteers, etc.)
- Master list of all of the documents needed for the occasion (a checklist for the ceremony organizers)

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## 5.3.9 Rehearsal Tips

Running an induction ceremony requires a unique set of skills. Here are some questions to ponder as you start planning for the rehearsal of your next induction ceremony.

- **Microphones.** Do the participants know how to speak into and properly use a microphone? A few moments of instruction from your audio technician will be worthwhile. Practice with a “live” mike at your rehearsal.
- **Line ups.** If lining up is required of your members or new inductees, has a system been devised to quickly allow members to find their proper places? Even when using a tried-and-true method of lineup such as alphabetically by last name, it always helps to have a master list on hand for quick reference by staff or members.
- **Sitting onstage.** Remind students that they are visible to everyone while onstage and that they should sit properly for how they are dressed.
- **Using candles.** If you’re using the traditional candle-lighting ceremony, can the officers strike a match and light a candle effectively? It never hurts to practice, particularly to make certain that the matches being used aren’t damp. FYI: Always confirm with the fire marshals that the candles are allowable by local fire codes.
- **Stage voice.** Can those with verbal roles in the ceremony enunciate clearly and project their voices to be heard? Even the best of microphones won’t overcome a mumblor or the softest of voices. Select readers by audition to facilitate choosing the best voices. Alternatively, enlist the support of your drama teacher or debate coach to provide training in maintaining a stage voice.
- **Speaker prep.** Have your speakers/participants been prepared for engaging an audience with their presentation? Do they know the importance of good posture, eye contact, clear expression, and good appearance?
- **Managing insignia.** Can your presenters of certificates or pins effectively shake hands while handing over an item to a new member? Rehearsal is key to avoid any embarrassment that can arise at this point in the program.
- **Photographers.** If you use a photographer, have the participants been briefed on when and how to pose for their photos? If doing a group photo somewhere on the day of the ceremony, do members know where to go, how to organize themselves, and what type of expression to maintain? Pick a suitable location for your local newspaper’s photo so as to “put your best foot forward” when the chapter photo shows up in the local media. Consider also the language to use for instructing parents when and how to take photos during the ceremony. Avoid having

parents disrupting traffic flow during the ceremony. Be respectful with these announcements.

- **Name pronunciation.** Whoever will read the new member names should practice the pronunciations and verify with all new members that the pronunciation is correct. Have students submit an index card with their names spelled out phonetically.

These hints are sure to make the ceremony memorable for your deserving membership!

## 5.3.10 Emcee Training

Selecting the right person to serve as Master (or Mistress) of Ceremonies, i.e., the emcee, is an important step in planning your induction ceremony. Traditionally, chapters rely upon the chapter president to serve in this capacity. Whoever is chosen, consider the following points along with the rehearsal tips listed above when training your emcee.

- **Handling mistakes.** Does your emcee know how to handle delays or mistakes during the ceremony? The phrase “excuse me” is often the best response when a verbal error is made; it is also helpful to consult with the adviser quickly when major delays or other problems emerge.
- **Introductions and follow-ups.** Does your emcee have the ability to both introduce and provide follow-up remarks for your speakers? Does he/she know how to turn over a lectern effectively and respectfully? Are they equipped with proper titles and biographies of those they are called upon to introduce?
- **Call to order.** Does your event emcee understand how to call a ceremony to order? And, perhaps more importantly, does he/she understand how to respond to disorderly members of the audience, such as politely asking members of the audience to refrain from clapping or whistling or yelling until all the names on a list are read, etc.? Similarly, has an appropriate conclusion strategy and remarks been developed for bringing the ceremony to a timely and respectful close?
- **Thinking ahead.** Do your emcees have the ability to think ahead as they move through the ceremony—checking to see that elements of the program are aligned properly?
- **Thank yous.** Does your emcee know how to properly thank musicians, artists, or other key individuals in a respectful and meaningful manner? To guarantee continued support for your program, a sincere word of public thanks goes a long way.
- **Time management.** Can the emcee monitor the passage of time to see that you will end the ceremony on time? Is there a “plan B” in case you need to stretch segments of the ceremony to fill more time? This is particularly essen-

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tial when conducting your ceremony as a portion of the school day—time is of the essence and no administrator likes it when the ceremony ends either very early or very late from the scheduled timing. Talk with your principal about possible options for either scenario, but assure him/her that based on the rehearsal, it is anticipated that the ceremony will conclude on time.

## Additional Program Considerations

Here are some additional ideas for the induction ceremony program for your chapter as submitted by other chapters. Pick and choose those that suit your event.

- In the program, describe significant chapter service projects from the past year either orally or in print, congratulating the project chairpersons for their work.
- Award scholarships to outstanding chapter members, whether senior members or students who have excelled in each of the criteria.
- Recognize teachers on staff who are members of the Honor Society; alternatively, identify an outstanding non-member from the faculty for honorary membership.
- Compose and perform a chapter song; alternatively have one of the chapter members sing the school's alma mater, fight song, or other local melody.
- Allow the chapter president, or other student chosen from the current membership of the chapter, to deliver an address on the meaning of the Honor Society.
- Invite and recognize other or honors groups from your campus, in essence sharing your program with them (French Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, etc.).
- Prepare and present biographies of each of the new inductees highlighting their significant accomplishment (as noted on their candidate information sheets).
- Have each new inductee select a "marshal" to escort him/her to the stage, encouraging them to select parents, grandparents, guardians or even members of the faculty for this honored role; plan to confirm all marshals prior to the ceremony and have backup marshals for essential roles for any no-shows.
- Invite chapter alumni from the community to play a part in the ceremony; some chapters will award an Outstanding NHS Alumni plaque to this individual.
- Be certain that your ceremony's printed programs contain the date as well as the name and address of the school to assist chapter members who wish to send copies to distant relatives (consequently, be sure to print extra copies for this purpose and for your chapter scrapbook and archives).
- For the Pledge of Allegiance (or national anthem) use the school's JROTC or local Boy/Girl Scout troop as an honor guard. VFW chapters and local military bases can also provide this service.
- Be sure to thank the parents and teachers for their contributions to the successes of the members of the chapter. To facilitate this, provide the parents with a flower (corsage or boutonniere) at the ceremony.
- For the outgoing senior members, identify the college/career plans that each has identified, particularly useful for spring induction ceremonies.
- To facilitate the taking of the Honor Society pledge, have it printed in the program for both new members and the audience to see.
- Include in the printed program a note of thanks to any community partners (businesses, service organizations, etc.) who have contributed either to this ceremony or to the chapter during the past year.
- If you have a dress code for participants (whether on stage or in the audience), see that it is clearly communicated in writing to them in time for them to purchase new attire if needed. Also, since many chapters utilize robes and stoles as part of the ceremony, see that these items fit well before the day of your ceremony, especially as a safety concern for those lighting candles.

## 5.4 Conducting the Ceremony

The date has been set, the plans have been made, and the new members have been selected and notified. Now it is time to conduct your ceremony. Your script, agenda, and timeline will guide you through most of the process, but below are some additional steps to consider on the day of your event.

### 5.4.1 Preceremony Considerations

- Scheduling of deliveries (flowers, printed programs) and notification of all office personnel regarding the details of the upcoming event.
- Set up and decorations: Make sure the room is ready for your ceremony.
- Rehearsal: Have your key program participants rehearsed their roles in the ceremony?
- Invitations and programs: Have all parties been notified and invited and programs developed?
- Use an induction ceremony checklist to guide the adviser and the emcee and to assist in making sure that everything is ready for the ceremony.

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## 5.4.2 Recording the Ceremony

Although many families will bring their video cameras to your induction ceremony, consider having your school's video production classes make a formal recording for the chapter archives. Most local TV stations will only feature short excerpts and are not usually willing to remain for the full ceremony. If no class or media outlet is available, request a volunteer video enthusiast from the chapter. Consult with the principal regarding any video or media releases that ceremony participants may be required to turn in for any such recording. When planning, don't neglect to focus on the quality of the audio portion of the recording to maximize the value of your production. Video records of your ceremony can be burned onto DVDs or posted online for distant relatives to watch. These records also provide an essential tool for evaluating the event.

## 5.4.3 Postceremony Receptions

Many chapters follow their induction ceremony with a reception for the new members, their parents, and special guests. Often, a reception committee is established within the chapter to work alongside the induction ceremony committee in making the whole event a spectacular success. Here is an outline of suggestions for planning the "Ultimate Reception" for your chapter:

- Schedule and timing matters: Be sure all participants are informed of the timing of the reception, along with the facility manager who may dictate when the reception needs to conclude
- Budget: Consider the total number of expected participants and formulate a reasonable budget. This number may vary significantly from one year to the next based on the number of new inductees.
- Location: What is the best available location for the event?
- Room set up: air conditioning/heating, a public address system, tables/chairs, etc.
- Decorations: What to do? When to decorate? School colors? Honor Society colors?
- Refreshments: Food and drink (consider allergies)
- Cake decoration with logo: Permission may be needed for some stores.
- Consult with the cafeteria manager who may want to contribute
- Parent/member contributions?
- Utensils, plates, cups, serving utensils, table cloths, punch bowls, platters; consideration for elderly or other disabilities, etc.
- Discount providers: Look for local kitchen/restaurant or wholesale suppliers for bulk purchases of supplies.

- Nametags to help identify parents, teachers, and new members
- Special guests
- Administration reps, superintendent, school board members
- Introductions? Assign a current member as a personal guide.
- Guest book for signing
- Gifts/mementos for new inductees and/or their parents
- Duty stations: Map out a plan for covering all reception functions.
- Program
- Entertainment
- Paper program of the agenda for the reception
- Toast to the new members and/or their parents
- Staff: Chaperones, supervision
- Photographer: Will your chapter historian take care of getting photos or will you invite a local newspaper photographer to attend?
- Emergency plans: Illness, natural disasters, accidents, etc. Consult with your school administrators on your responsibilities in this area.
- Cleanup by members, custodians, etc. See that there are enough trash cans at the reception and for cleanup afterwards.
- Follow-up: Expenses/bills; thank yous; evaluation—planning for next year
- Other considerations? Keep all of your plans and notes in a file for future consultation.

## 5.5 Additional Considerations for Ceremony Organizers

1. **Required attendance.** Chapters can require attendance at the ceremony for all newly selected candidates. Should circumstances such as illness or personal emergency or other legitimate extenuating circumstance prevent a candidate from attending the scheduled ceremony, an informal induction should be held for the candidate at a later date.
2. **Initiation, blackballing, hazing.** These actions, or any actions resembling them, are expressly prohibited as part of the selection and induction processes or within any activity of the National Honor Society chapter. Any chapter found in violation of this regulation risks losing its charter. This prohibition has been included in every *NHS Handbook* since 1921. For this reason, the name "induction ceremony" is used instead of "initiation" for the presentation of all new NHS members.

## INDUCTION OF MEMBERS

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**3. Sharing images of your ceremony.** The national office is always looking for recent photographs (hard copy or digital) of induction ceremonies to use in our various publications and websites during the year. Please consider sending copies, along with reference to any/all permission forms for use of student images, to the national office. When possible, your chapter and school will be identified for your contribution.

**4. Additional resources.** A publication, *Induction Ceremonies: A Complete Guide for Honor Society Chapters*, was produced in 2006 and is currently available from the NHS Store at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store). It elaborates on the planning suggestions and provides additional sample ceremonies for consideration. Additional information about induction ceremonies is also available periodically in our magazine, in our e-newsletter Honor Society News, and on the website.

**5. Evaluation.** It is important to evaluate each year's ceremony. Evaluations can be conducted with the chapter officers. Input from both the old members who attended and the new members (and their parents) would prove helpful. When completed, share the results of the evaluation with the principal, and seek his or her input.

**Include in your evaluation, some or all of the following:**

- Key resources. Be sure to identify the vendors who provided supplies and materials for the ceremony.
- Thank yous. Identify all of the individuals who should receive thank you notes for their support of the event. Don't forget the school custodial staff for their help in setting up and cleaning up after the event.
- Mistakes. If serious mistakes were made, identify them and how the chapter will work to prevent them from occurring in the future.
- Positives. Be sure to highlight the strong points of the ceremony—what worked well for the attendees?
- Rubrics. The use of some type of evaluation scoring rubric will allow you to compare point values from one year to the next. Repeating selected questions each year will then provide comparative statistics to substantiate the conclusions of your evaluations.

# INDUCTION OF MEMBERS

## CHAPTER MANAGEMENT TOOLS—CHAPTER 5

### CMT 5.1 Induction Ceremony Script (The Traditional Ceremony)



New members are inducted by the chapter president, the principal, the chapter adviser, and the four criteria presenters who represent scholarship, service, leadership, and character. Seven chairs are needed for these presenters along with one for each inductee (if they are to be seated on the stage).

A table on the stage is set with four empty candle holders and one central lit candle. While music is played, “Scholarship” enters with an unlit candle and takes a place on the stage followed by the three remaining criteria presenters, “Service,” “Leadership,” and “Character.” The chapter president and principal arrive on the stage, followed by the inductees.

\*\*\*\*\*

President: “Please be seated. [Insert principal’s name\*], [Insert adviser’s name], members of the faculty, parents, and students: Welcome to the [Insert date. Ex. “2016”] National Honor Society induction ceremony. We are gathered here to formally recognize those students who have been selected by the faculty of our school for successfully completing their candidacy and are being inducted as new members of our NHS chapter. For current members and those former members who may be among our guests, we hope this will serve to remind you of the standards of excellence you too are charged with maintaining as members of the nation’s oldest, largest, and most prestigious student recognition program.

Our chapter is proud to have been inducting new members since [insert year when chapter was established] and with today’s ceremony indicates the continuing emphasis on excellence that we represent for our school and community. Throughout the year, members of our chapter serve as role models for other students. In addition to the strong academic records that established our eligibility for membership, our chapter members are leaders in many student organizations and we serve our school and community through many activities including [insert names and summaries of 2 or 3 significant chapter service project activities completed within the last year]. We are proud of this record of accomplishment and welcome these new members who bring new energy in support of our continuing work as NHS members.

It is at this time that we proclaim to all in attendance, that membership in the [Insert school’s chapter name] chapter of the National Honor Society has been earned by these candidates through the effective demonstration of the four qualities that serve as standards for the Society. Members of the chapter will now review these qualities for the candidates. (Pause) We begin with “Scholarship.”

[President steps back from the lectern to allow “Scholarship” to speak, but remains standing behind and to the side of the lectern.]

Scholarship: [steps forward, lights the candle from the lit candle on the table and places it in the first holder of the candelabra.]

“Scholarship denotes a commitment to learning. A student is willing to spend hours in reading and study, knowing the lasting benefits of a cultivated mind. We should continue to learn even when formal education has ended, for human education ends only with the end of life. Knowledge is one great element in life, which leads to the highest success, and it can be acquired in only one way—through diligence and effort. Learning furnishes the lamp by which we read the past, the torch guiding us to understand the present, and the light that illuminates the future. Candidates have the charge to continually expand their world through the opportunities inherent in scholarship.” [Insert favorite quotation on “Scholarship” here.\*\*]

[Scholarship returns to be seated, at which point the president steps forward to introduce “Service.”]

President: “Service.”

Service: [steps forward, lights the candle from the lit candle on the table and places it in the next holder of the candelabra.]

“My office is service. Service can be established in the routine of the day’s work where many opportunities arise to help others both at school and in the community. A willingness to work for the benefit of those in need, without monetary compensation or public recognition, is the quality we seek in our membership and promote for the entire student body. We are committed to volunteering our time and talents to the creation of a better tomorrow.” [Insert favorite quotation on “Service” here.]

[Service returns to be seated, at which point the president steps forward to introduce “Leadership.”]

President: “Leadership.”

Leadership: [steps forward, lights the candle from the lit candle on the table and places it in the next holder of the candelabra.]

“Leadership should exert a wholesome influence on the school. In taking initiative in the classroom and in school activities, the real leader strives to train and aid others to reach their common goals of success. The price of (Continued)



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## CMT 5.1 Induction Ceremony Script (Continued)



leadership is sacrifice—the willingness to yield one’s personal interests for the interests of others. A leader has self-confidence and will go forward when others hesitate. No matter what power and resources may exist in a school, community, or nation, they are ineffectual without the guidance of a wise leader. Leadership is always needed; thus, to lead is a meaningful and substantive charge to each of our members.”

[Insert favorite quotation on “Leadership” here.]

[Leadership returns to be seated, at which point the president steps forward to introduce “Character.”]

President: “Character.”

Character: [steps forward, lights the candle from the lit candle on the table and places it in the next holder of the candelabra.]

“Character is the force within the individual that distinguishes each person from others. It creates for each of us our individuality, our goodness. It is that without which no one can respect oneself, nor hope to attain the respect of others. It is this force of character that guides one through life and, once developed, grows steadily within. Character is achieved and not received. It is the product of constant thought and action, the daily striving to make the right choice. The problem of character is the problem of self-control. We must be in reality what we wish to appear to others—to be rather than to seem. By demonstrating such qualities as respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship, we may hope to prove by example that we value Character.”

[Insert favorite quotation on “Character” here.]

[Character returns to be seated, at which point president steps forward and continues.]

President: “At this time, will the new inductees please rise, raise your right hand, and repeat the pledge?” The audience can follow the text as printed in your program. [Pause for candidates to stand, and then lead the recitation of the Pledge].

“Please join me in reciting the pledge:”

I pledge to uphold

The high purposes of the National Honor Society  
To which I have been selected;

I will be true to the principles for which it stands;  
And will maintain and encourage

The high standards

Of scholarship, service, leadership, and character.

President: “Thank you. You may be seated. And now, as your name is called, please step forward onto the stage to receive your token(s) of membership and sign the official chapter register.”

After the completion of the new-member presentation, the president returns to the lectern:

President. “And now, please welcome our principal, [insert full name] who will offer congratulatory remarks to the new members.”

Following the principal’s remarks, the president returns to the podium for closing remarks:

President: “I’d like to thank our adviser(s), [insert adviser(s) name] and the members of the induction ceremony committee [insert names] for their hard work in organizing this year’s induction ceremony. Please join me in thanking them with a round of applause.”

President continues: “Thank you all for attending our NHS induction ceremony. In just a moment, the new inductees will recess, after which you are all invited to join us in the cafeteria [or other location] for a reception in their honor. But before doing so, please join me once again in applauding all of our new Honor Society members. Thank you. And now, will everyone please stand as our newest members of the National Honor Society recess?”

Music begins; new members are escorted off the stage by the president and four criteria presenters and led to the reception area with the chapter adviser and principal taking up the end of the line.

\*If additional dignitaries or special guests have been invited and are present (for example, the superintendent or members of the Board of Education), consider recognizing them among the first names in this list as well.

\*\*Quotations. In addition to the many sources for quotations available online, the national office offers two books —*Well Said* and *The Induction Ceremony Guide*—that include a variety of quotations, many of which were submitted by chapter members and advisers. Both books are available at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store).

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## CMT 5.2 Four Sample Pledges



The national office prescribes no definite pledge for use by the chapters. Several sample pledges are provided below, and references to pledges are made in the other sections of the handbook that describe typical induction ceremonies. Use of a pledge is a decision left to the local chapter. To assist new inductees in reciting the pledge, print the pledge in the ceremony program for easy reference.

Note: The national office has received calls from students and parents questioning the inclusion of a pledge in the induction ceremony or the signing of a pledge sheet as a prerequisite for membership. Several prominent religious groups prohibit their members from taking any such pledges.

Local chapters should always take into consideration the religious convictions and cultural traditions of their school population when considering the use of a pledge. Clearly identify that the taking of the pledge is not a requirement. Statements explaining that pledges are optional can be included in both the student handbooks and general information regarding your chapter so as to prevent students from perceiving that this is a prerequisite of membership. This matter concerns protecting a student's constitutional rights, and thus is a responsibility of the chapter as part of its efforts to preserve and protect our democratic society.

\*\*\*\*\*

I pledge to uphold  
The high purposes of the National Honor Society  
to which I have been selected;  
I will be true to the principles for which it stands;  
And will maintain and encourage  
High standards of scholarship, service, leadership,  
and character.

\*\*\*\*\*

I pledge myself to uphold  
The high purposes of the National Honor Society  
To which I have been selected.  
Striving in every way  
By word and deed  
To make its ideals  
The ideals of my school  
And of my life.

I pledge to maintain high scholastic standing,  
To endeavor intelligently and courageously  
to be a leader,  
To give of myself freely in service to others, and  
To hold as fundamental and worthy  
An untarnished character.  
In so doing, I shall prove myself worthy  
Of a place in the National Honor Society.

\*\*\*\*\*

I pledge myself  
Always to seek the light of truth,  
To hold scholarly habits,  
To engage in worthy service,  
And to lead forward in all things  
That shall advance the welfare of the school.

# INDUCTION OF MEMBERS

## CMT 5.3 Supplies and Ordering Procedures



### Supplies

All items listed below can be found in the *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* sent to all chapters in the fall and also viewable online at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store) (login required).

#### For Members (new inductees):

Membership pins  
Membership cards  
Membership certificates  
Certificate folders, paper  
Certificate folders, vinyl  
Medallions

#### For the Induction Ceremony:

Gavel  
Stoles  
Honor cords  
Chapter banner  
Registry

Candles  
Candle holders  
Banquet kit  
Podium banner  
Table drape  
Balloons  
CD of induction ceremony music  
*Induction Ceremony Guide* (publication)

#### For Parents of New Inductees:

Decal  
Car magnet  
Window clings  
Brochures  
Fine jewelry  
Clothing (for students and parents)

Additional items bearing the official logo for NHS can be found in the *Adviser Resource Guide* or through the online store.

### Ordering Procedures

Every year, the national sales office receives calls from advisers who have waited until the last minute to place their Honor Society orders. The following suggestions are offered as you plan your supply orders for the coming year.

- Order early: Allow between 3 and 4 weeks for delivery. Services are available to handle rush orders (for an additional fee), but it is best to plan in advance for the placing of all orders from the national sales office. Orders can be placed by phone, fax, or online. Sales staff members are available from 8:30 to 4:30 ET, Monday through Friday (we are not open for extended hours). Overseas chapters are encouraged to email [sales@nhs.us](mailto:sales@nhs.us) or order online at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store).
- Always use the current *Adviser Resource Guide* and order form. You can also view products and pricing online at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store). The current *Adviser Resource Guide* and order form are available at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us)—see instructions for obtaining a replacement guide in the FAQ. Be sure to replace your *Adviser Resource Guide* when the new issue arrives.
- Online orders. The fastest method for ordering and receiving your supplies is to order online using a credit card. The online store includes a tool to help you review your order history. This record is organized through the school record,

thus new advisers can quickly see what the previous adviser ordered for the ceremony. To place an order online, be sure to have available your adviser ID number for login purposes.

- Please carefully follow the ordering instructions found in the catalog or online in the FAQ at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store). These instructions are designed to facilitate the fastest possible handling of orders.
- It is always helpful to have on hand your Adviser ID number and School ID number (found on the mailing labels of all mailings from the national office) anytime you place an order with the national sales office. Keep it handy or with your *Adviser Resource Guide* in your files.
- Allow a minimum of 3 weeks (longer in spring) from time of order to delivery.
- Use the toll-free phone number: 866-647-7253. If you reach our voice mail, please leave your name, title, school name, city and state and a phone number (complete with area code) where you can be reached at school. Our goal is to respond to the inquiry within one business day, pending your availability at school.

Problems with your order? Please follow the ordering instructions in the *Adviser Resource Guide* or contact a member of our sales staff at 866-647-7253, or email [sales@nhs.us](mailto:sales@nhs.us).

# 6. CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

In addition to the selection procedure, induction ceremony, and officer installations, chapters of the National Honor Society are obligated by the National Constitution to engage in a limited number of specific activities each year. Each of these activities, whether required by national guidelines or of local design, should be organized to support the purposes of the organization as outlined in Article I. This chapter reviews some of the activities fundamental to all chapters.



PHOTO BY LIFETOUCH

## 6.1 Meetings

Holding chapter meetings is not a specific requirement for NHS, but meetings do provide a means for planning, teaching leadership skills, communicating to the membership, and generally making the adviser's job a little easier. Chapter bylaws should outline member responsibility for meeting attendance and the procedure to follow when an absence is necessary. All chapter meetings should be well-planned with a well-thought-out agenda and be operated according to some recognized method of procedure (e.g., *Robert's Rules of Order*). It is the responsibility of the chapter officers, with support of the chapter adviser, to plan and conduct all meetings in such a manner that members believe their time is well spent.

The national office, while recognizing the importance of attending meetings, cautions against dismissal of members simply for poor meeting attendance. A member who fails to attend meetings should be counseled by the chapter adviser before disciplinary action is taken.

### 6.1.1 Sample Meeting Agenda

As you plan meetings for your chapter throughout the year, consider using the model provided below for your meeting agenda. Always have a written agenda developed and distributed prior to the meeting so that your chapter members know what their responsibilities are if they appear on the agenda, and what topics will be discussed at the meeting so that they can prepare ahead of time. Chapter officers, particularly the chapter president, are encouraged to work with the chapter adviser to prepare each meeting's agenda. Be sure to consult the agendas and minutes from previous meetings to determine those issues that merit continued consideration.

Prior to the meeting, the following should take place:

- A copy of the agenda is distributed to all members, or made available for viewing.
- A presiding officer is identified for the meeting and consults with the chapter adviser to review the agenda items.
- Individuals with specific responsibilities at the upcoming meeting (e.g., secretary, treasurer, committee chairs, project chairs, etc.) are notified indicating the nature of their duties for the meeting and when they appear on the agenda.
- Members are notified about the meeting time and place.

# CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## Sample Agenda Outline

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call/attendance procedures
- III. Minutes of the previous meeting (review and approval)
- IV. Treasurer's report\* (review and approval)
- V. Committee reports\*
  - A. Standing committee reports
  - B. Special committee reports
- VI. Old/unfinished business\*\*: Carried over from the last or previous meetings
- VII. New business\*\*
- VIII. Other reports, announcements, and reminders of events or responsibilities, including but not limited to the announcement of the date and time of the next regularly scheduled meeting.
- IX. Guest presentation or program topic for this meeting (location of this segment of the meeting agenda may depend on the nature of the content and the scheduling needs of the guest presenter, e.g. the principal who may need to speak at the beginning of the meeting instead of the end).
- X. Adjournment

\* It is recommended that all reports be submitted in writing to the secretary by the end of the meeting, and that a time limit and/or format be given to each report-giver to assure consistent and informative reporting.

\*\* In sections VI and VII above (old and new business), when motions are presented for consideration by the membership, it is strongly recommended that the chapter utilize the fundamental principles of meeting management from *Robert's Rules of Order* or other established systems of meeting management to consider each topic.

A practice script that utilizes this sample agenda is available in the adviser section of [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

## 6.1.2 Meeting Management Links

Looking for resources to help use and understand parliamentary procedure? Consider purchasing a copy of *Parliamentary Procedure Without Stress* (revised edition) by Roberta M. McDow, available from the NHS Store.

Below are several useful web links. (Note: These references, listed in alphabetical order by site name, are for general information purposes only; their listing here does not constitute an official endorsement by NHS or NASSP.)

### ■ [www.jimslaughter.com](http://www.jimslaughter.com)

Site sponsored by Jim Slaughter, parliamentarian, attorney, and parliamentary procedure consultant (and former student leader).

### ■ [www.parli.com](http://www.parli.com)

Robert McConnell Productions offering resources for training in Parli Pro.

### ■ [www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org)

Run by the National Association of Parliamentarians (NAP), this site has some basic, helpful "how to" information.

### ■ [www.parliamentaryprocedure.org](http://www.parliamentaryprocedure.org)

Official site of the American Institute of Parliamentarians (AIP) that includes book links and information on becoming a certified parliamentarian.

### ■ [www.parlipro.org](http://www.parlipro.org)

Some general information including some quizzes and mind benders to keep your meetings in order.

### ■ [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com)

The official site of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

## 6.2 Projects

A well-thought-out and organized approach to projects is a key to chapter success and to maintaining the standards of NHS. The National Constitution mandates that each chapter conduct a chapter service project each year (Article XIV). In addition, the national office suggests that chapters choose one or more additional major projects for the school year. Each member would be expected to contribute to those projects.

As stated in the Constitution, all National Honor Society projects must:

- Fulfill a need within the school or community
- Have the support and approval of the administration and faculty
- Be appropriate and educationally defensible, and not in conflict with the activities of other school organizations
- Be well planned, organized, and executed.

Needs of the school and community can be identified in a variety of ways. Conducting a needs survey with students, faculty and staff, parents, and community representatives is one place to start. Also consider asking your local chamber of commerce, the social services offices, and the representatives of the faith-based communities about their needs. Conduct a needs analysis at least once a year because needs will change over time and emergency needs can arise quickly.

Once projects (and other chapter goals) are developed, seek the support of the administration and faculty. Determine whether each project is required to be submitted for formal approval by the principal or even the local school board. Publishing a calendar of proposed activities for the school year for the faculty to review may solicit comments as well as resources for the chapter to use when undertaking the project, including volunteer helpers.

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Having a rationale for undertaking any project is always helpful. Clearly identifying the nature of the need that the project is responding to and then determining the goal(s) of the activity to share with others will prove valuable. See that the project chairpersons are well-versed in this rationale in case questions arise.

Some additional questions to consider are included in the “Twelve Ws of Project Planning”—a helpful tool to use whenever starting the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating your activities.

## 6.2.1 Twelve Ws of Project Planning

Planning any activity requires careful thought and preparation. Before stepping into action, be sure that you can answer the following questions.

1. What are you planning to do?
2. Why do you want to do this project?
3. When and where will the activity take place?
4. Who will benefit from the project?
5. What staff member(s) will need to approve the project?
6. What funds are needed?
7. When will the basic planning be done?
8. What committees are necessary?
9. What kind of publicity is needed?
10. Who deserves a special thank you?
11. Was the project worthwhile?
12. What's next? Where do we go from here?

## 6.2.2 Individual Service Projects

Individual members also have the responsibility to choose an individual service project (ISP) in line with their particular talents and interests. This approach emphasizes the need for cooperative effort in service to the community while providing an opportunity for individuals to discover and develop their unique contributions.

Many chapters regularly complete their chapter service project obligations, but often overlook this additional mandate. Below are a few suggestions for making this individual service component a prominent part of your chapter.

1. The Constitution indicates that the project should reflect the “particular talents and interests” of the member. The individual member is given the responsibility of choosing and participating in the project, and he or she should be held accountable for reporting this in an official manner to the local chapter.
2. Generally, when choosing the projects, it is best to steer away from activities that directly benefit a member's family.

3. Service projects done for financial or other compensation are often viewed as contrary to the common definition of “service,” though unique programs may be appropriate exceptions to this rule when the compensation, such as a small gift, is small relative to the amount or quality of service provided.
4. When tabulating the individual service projects of members, chapter advisers should establish a definite deadline or schedule for completion that concludes at least one month prior to graduation to avoid the end-of-senior-year rush.
5. If the local chapter so chooses, individual service can be performed while participating in a project planned and implemented by another group on campus or in the community. “Individual service project” does not necessarily imply that these projects must be completed alone, merely that it be beyond the activity undertaken through the required chapter service project.
6. Guarantee that all chapter members fulfill their responsibilities in an appropriate manner by asking for an adult's signature from a supervisor or chaperone.
7. Chapter advisers are encouraged to set up a system where chapter members seek approval for the ISP prior to completing the project. A master list of already approved projects can be developed to save the adviser time. Project preapproval avoids circumstances where the chapter might be unwilling to accept the service provided, e.g., a project being done for the member's family if that would run contrary to the local chapter guidelines.
8. Advisers can delegate the record-keeping components of ISPs to chapter officers as part of their duties of office. A central record file should be kept and advisers should regularly counsel their officers regarding the maintenance of this aspect of chapter activity.
9. To facilitate your chapter members finding appropriate service project ideas, the chapter can consider setting up a bulletin board (standard or electronic) of project opportunities for members to review. Notifying social service and community organizations of the existence of this feature may bring in a large number of ideas for your chapter and other students in the school.
10. Regular reminders: In addition to listing this service obligation in the “new member obligations” list for all candidates prior to selection, it is recommended that friendly reminders about completing this important service obligation be part of the meeting agenda throughout the year.

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Policy note: The chapter's executive committee is encouraged to see that chapter projects are scheduled or arranged so those members who have jobs or family responsibilities are able to participate. No member who sincerely wishes to fulfill the service obligation should be prevented from doing so because of scheduling conflicts. In some cases, scheduling conflicts will be unavoidable for 100 percent of the chapter. The chapter leadership can consider multiple projects to allow members to choose from a menu of events in order to fulfill their service obligation in a timely manner.

## 6.2.3 Additional Project Ideas

The NHS website includes the National Student Project Database, containing project ideas submitted regularly by members. Visit [www.nhs.us/projects](http://www.nhs.us/projects) and share this link with your chapter officers or committee chairs as a resource. The national magazine is another source of project ideas. Schools that complete particularly noteworthy projects should consider entering them in the annual Outstanding Service Project Award competition.

## 6.2.4 Graduation Activities for NHS

High school graduation is often the most public of school ceremonies of the year. Before planning on any recognition or involvement of NHS members, please consult with the principal or senior class sponsor regarding these intentions. As with your induction ceremony, make certain to uphold the dignity and solemnity of the graduation ceremony.

Take time at the beginning of the new calendar year or at the latest, the beginning of second semester to speak with senior members of the chapter about the chapter's expectations and the importance of their fully living up to their obligations of membership. Seniors can be excellent role models of responsibility, but for even the best of classes, providing friendly reminders that membership in NHS is only retained as long as the chapter's standards are maintained will allow you to hold senior members accountable for their actions at the conclusion of their high school careers.

Here are some points to consider as graduation nears:

- Verify active senior membership and remind seniors that they must be in good standing to represent the chapter at graduation (this should be in writing in the chapter bylaws or member obligations lists to facilitate enforcement; see Article XV, Section 3 of the National Constitution for support). The phrase "in good standing" generally is taken to mean the member is maintaining the standards by which he/she was selected, has fulfilled or is fulfilling all obligations of membership (dues, meeting attendance requirements, service obligations,

etc.), and has not gotten into trouble where school rules or the law are concerned.

- Validate that all membership obligations have been met (dues, service hours, etc.).
- Order/organize insignia for members in good standing (see suggested supplies below or at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store)).
- Determine a schedule for disseminating insignia items to senior members who are found to be in good standing. Publish or disseminate this schedule to all seniors.
- Arrange for seals to be affixed to diplomas of active senior members. (Please check with your principal to determine if there are any local or state prohibitions against using such stickers on the official diploma; this is an optional chapter activity.)
- Confirm with the graduation supervisor (senior class sponsor, administration, etc.) the names of senior members (often these individuals are noted with an asterisk [\*] in the graduation program and a footnote indicating that these are members of the National Honor Society chapter at the school). The programs may be printed days or weeks prior to the ceremony, so please be aware of the schedule of events.

Graduation supplies: Consider using some or all of the following for graduation:

Membership stoles (worn over graduation gowns)

Membership tassels for graduation caps

Membership honor cords

Medallions

Member seals for diplomas

For descriptions and pricing information on these products, please consult the *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* or the online store at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store).

## 6.2.5 Fundraising Activities

NHS and NJHS chapters are not required in any national guidelines to raise money for any reason or cause. Each chapter is required, as noted in the Constitution, to pay an annual affiliation fee to the national office, but even that payment is not required to come from the chapter's treasury—hoping instead that the school is providing that payment each year.

Even in the case of chapter dues, no required fee is called for (see Chapter 1 for more information on dues). The National Constitution indicates that chapters may charge dues, but that the amount is not to exceed \$20 per member per year.

Many chapters engage in fundraising to purchase supplies for their induction ceremonies or to pay for insignia. In addition, a large number of chapters participate in fundraising activities to collect donations for a local, national, or interna-

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tional charity of their choice. It is crucial that every chapter adviser consult with the principal, school bookkeeper, or activities director regarding the policies and regulations that exist regarding fundraising activities by the chapter. Many states have very specific rules for school-based fundraising. The safe handling of all monies collected in these activities is a perpetual concern for the school and local officials can provide the best guidance in this area. Generally speaking all projects that involve the raising or collection of money should have the formal approval of the school principal, at a minimum, before being undertaken.

The national office provides suggestions for groups that we find to be of merit, along with guidance for how to check on charities to determine whether they are legitimate. While it has been suggested that NHS adopt one national charity each year for chapters to support, such decisions have, to date, been left to the local chapters when determining where their monies are to be donated.

The annual surveys completed by advisers report that millions of dollars are raised each year in support of charitable causes. This ongoing service from member chapters often goes unnoticed, but has a significant impact with service-providers all over the world.

Many chapters come from small communities or areas where the socioeconomic status of the students and their families prohibit making large financial donations to charity. Alternative ways of giving exist through service projects at school and in the community, where all chapters can fulfill their constitutionally mandated annual chapter service project without having to be concerned with collecting monies for donations. This tradition of service has existed from the beginning for both NHS and NJHS and continues to be a source of pride for all involved in the programs.

Whether raising money for charity or in support of the chapter and its activities, fundraising is generally recognized as an essential part of every chapter's calendar. With more schools calling upon all student groups to be self-supporting combined with larger goals for charitable contributions, consider the following points as you examine your chapter's ability to raise funds:

- Evaluate your financial needs—don't do fundraising unless there is a supportable goal for the activity, especially since your members are probably already booked with fundraising activities through other organizations to which they belong.
- Visit the National Student Project Database at [www.nhs.us/projects](http://www.nhs.us/projects) for ideas from the field.
- Collect fundraising ideas and resources from back issues of the magazine and other groups on campus.

- Consider raising money to give as scholarships to deserving senior members.
- Establish a financial goal for your service projects through which you also contribute an amount in support of the organization (for example, the local food bank, soup kitchen, homeless shelter, etc.) in addition to the work your members undertake on their behalf each year.
- Establish a student store or concession stand with staff from the chapter to provide ongoing revenue.
- Sell things—but make sure there is a demand in school or the community, that the products are of good quality, and that you're not competing for the same market with other groups on campus.
- Do a web search for "fundraising" and see what you find.
- Create an advisory committee of businesspersons and parents to develop creative and enterprising alternatives to candy sales (seek administrative support prior to pulling the group together).

### 6.3 PR: Public Relations for the Chapter and Its Activities

Today, when people are questioning the value of just about every facet of education, public relations is more important than ever. Public relations leads to understanding and support for youth, your school, and your chapter. It is no longer enough to merely operate any school program; it is essential to demonstrate its value, inform all interested audiences, and evaluate the program's effectiveness. This is all part of a quality public relations effort.

According to Patrick Jackson, a former president of the Public Relations Society of America, public relations "develops attitudes which change behaviors." That's a good working definition for NHS chapters. Your goal through PR is to identify audiences that need to hear your message, determine the best ways to reach those audiences, and deliver a message that will help them understand the importance of NHS and support your chapter.

The first opportunities you have for promoting good public relations are through your student handbook, at new student orientation programs, and through parent newsletters in which you describe the chapter and the fundamental procedures and traditions associated with it. Clear and informative pieces will establish your PR program firmly in the school and community.

Other key audiences might include teachers who could either encourage or discourage students from participation in the NHS, administrators and school boards who will provide resources for successful chapters, students who are candi-



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dates to become active chapter members, local business and civic leaders who could provide recognition for your chapter, and even state legislators who will enact laws influencing student activities.

Communication vehicles might include editorials or columns in the school newspaper; invitations to business leaders to attend a chapter event; face-to-face meetings with administrators or school boards reviewing your chapter's past achievements and plans for the future; and a public listing of former NHS members from your school showing their success as adults.

The more support you can obtain from these individuals the more likely you will have the necessary adult support, financial resources, community understanding, and student involvement to run a high quality chapter program.

Each NHS chapter should develop a public relations plan that should:

- Identify the four or five important audiences to communicate with in your school and community
- Determine the three or four key messages those audiences should understand
- Select the communication vehicles to best deliver your messages
- Define a budget (which does not have to be extensive), naming a person or persons or committee to head your PR efforts, setting timelines and deadlines
- Determine how to evaluate your PR activities.

## Specific Public Relations Activities

Any or all of these activities could help you recognize chapter members, projects, and philosophies:

- News releases about new members, new officers, or chapter projects for the school and local community newspapers.
- A guest column (by the chapter president? PR committee chair?) for the school newspaper or a local community newspaper about the value of your NHS chapter.
- A presentation at a school staff meeting outlining what students gain from NHS and calling for faculty support.
- A question-and-answer sheet about NHS chapter issues to distribute to school staff members, student leaders, parents, or other audiences. (Determine questions these people may have by interviewing members of key audiences beforehand.)
- A presentation to your school board about recent successful projects. (Coordinate this through your principal and/or superintendent.)
- A speech at a civic club about the value of NHS and what your chapter has recently contributed to the community. There may be adults at the school or parents of chapter members who are members of civic clubs and could arrange for an invitation.
- An annual newsletter or report that highlights the various achievements of your chapter. Distribute this to people you hope to influence—school staff, local legislators, business leaders, school board members.
- A website and/or social media presence to provide pertinent details about your chapter.
- Finally, look for ways to involve members of key audiences in your projects. (There's no better way to develop a positive belief in an organization than to see firsthand the positive things it does.)

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## CHAPTER MANAGEMENT TOOLS—CHAPTER 6

### CMT 6.1 Planning for the Year



Here are a few events on the national calendar that we hope all NHS advisers will keep in mind as their chapters prepare for the coming year.

**August/September.** Arrival of your back-to-school mailing from the national office, including information on the upcoming conferences and workshops. If you haven't reviewed your local chapter policies and procedures and the *National Handbook* in a while, this would be a good time.

**October.** National Character Counts! Week will be celebrated in mid-October. Use this week to emphasize character in your school. National Principals Month is also celebrated in October.

**November.** Advisers should expect to receive NHS Scholarship information during the month.

**December.** This is a great time for holiday service projects for special groups in your community.

**January.** Mid-year performance review for your chapter members. Be sure your plans for spring inductions have been outlined and approved.

**February.** This is a great time to sponsor a faculty appreciation effort. In addition, plans for your spring selection and induction should be underway.

**March.** It's time to finalize your orders of NHS supplies for your spring inductions. Annual renewal notices arrive addressed to the principal. Get the renewal process underway before the June 30 deadline.

**April.** National Student Leadership Week (NSLW) will take place this month. Using the NSLW poster from the recent magazine, plan to recognize your chapter leaders and other student leaders.

**May.** As the school year comes to a close, get those new chapter officers elected and plan for next fall, setting up some summer planning meetings if necessary. Complete your annual survey online for the national office before you leave for the summer.

One of the best ways to keep up with upcoming special events is to read the magazine and your monthly e-newsletter, Honor Society News, and visit [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us) every month. Pass on copies to your chapter members so they can help you remember important activities during the school year.

### CMT 6.2 Public Relations



There are several ways you can promote NHS news in your local community. The most traditional and still-effective way to reach a large audience is to send a press release to local media outlets by email. (See page 82 for a press release template.) Local outlets—especially small newspapers—are always on the lookout for good photos, so including a picture or two will increase the chances of your news being picked up. Be sure to include a caption that identifies everyone in the picture, and a photo credit that identifies the photographer. Your district office should have a handy list of local media outlets and contact information.

#### Social Media

Of course, social media allows you to send your message directly to the community. So consult with whoever manages your school's social media channels to see about getting your NHS news posted. Here again, images will do wonders to invite readers into the entry, especially on image-driven platforms like Instagram and Pinterest.

There is no need to limit NHS news to official school accounts. Many people in your local community have extensive networks all their own. If you can identify a few social media influencers (those with an abundance of followers), approach them directly about posting your news. You can also ask your colleagues, board members, and others in the community to share the news via their networks.

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## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “A”— Induction Ceremony Notification**

(To be typed, double-spaced)  
(To be released before new members are selected)

For Immediate Release

Contact: (NHS Adviser)  
Date:  
Phone:

(Name of school) High School’s annual induction ceremony for the National Honor Society will be (day, date) at (time) in the (location).

To be eligible for membership consideration, students must have a cumulative grade point average of (Insert GPA). Additionally, candidates must meet high standards of service, leadership, and character. Members of the (insert relevant classes) classes were evaluated and selected by the faculty council of the chapter.

Leadership is based on the student’s participation in two or more community or school activities, or election to an office [or other relevant standard established by your chapter]. To meet the service requirement, the student must have been active in three or more service projects in the school and community office [or other relevant standard established by your chapter]. Character is measured in terms of integrity, behavior, ethics, and cooperation with both students and faculty [or other relevant standard established by your chapter].

Students are reviewed by a faculty council consisting of five members of the faculty appointed by the principal. This year (insert total new inductees number) students are being considered for membership.

## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE “B”— Post-Induction Ceremony**

(To be typed, double-spaced)  
(To be released after new members are selected)

For Immediate Release

Contact: (NHS Adviser)  
Date:  
Phone:

(Number) students from (School name) High School were inducted as new members of the National Honor Society in a ceremony held at the school yesterday.

Members were selected by the chapter’s faculty council for meeting high standards of scholarship, service, leadership, and character.

Students inducted were: (insert list of new members)

“We are very proud to recognize these outstanding members of our student body. National Honor Society members are chosen for and then expected to continue their exemplary contributions to the school and community,” said (insert name), chapter adviser.

The (insert school name) High School chapter has been active since (insert year). Each year the chapter sponsors several service projects for the school and community which in the last few years have included [insert chapter service activities].

The National Honor Society ranks as one of the oldest and most prestigious national organizations for high school students. There are chapters in more than 16,000 high schools and, since 1921, millions of students have been selected for membership. Millions of dollars in scholarships have been awarded to senior members since 1945 by the sponsoring organization, the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

# 7. DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL



## 7.1 Introduction

Chapter advisers may find that members occasionally fall below the standards by which they were selected. To preserve the integrity of the chapter, it may become necessary to discipline members. The National Constitution (Article X) and the local chapter bylaws are the key resources for these efforts.

As in the case of selection, all discipline and dismissal procedures must be clearly described in writing. This description, usually incorporated into the local chapter bylaws, should be available to anyone who requests it. The faculty council is responsible for developing all discipline and dismissal procedures (Article VI, section 4) and these must be consistent with the NHS Constitution and handbook.

It is the responsibility of the chapter adviser to periodically review the standing of members for compliance with Honor Society standards and for fulfillment of chapter obligations as described in the chapter bylaws. When a member falls below any of the standards by which he or she was selected or fails to fulfill chapter obligations, the adviser should inform the errant member in writing of the nature of the violation, the time period given for improvement, and provide warning of the possible consequences of nonimprovement, i.e., consideration of dismissal or additional disciplinary measures. It is helpful to both the student and the adviser to follow the letter with a conference. If the student does not improve in the specified time, that student is subject to whatever disciplinary measures are considered appropriate by the faculty council.

Disciplinary measures other than dismissal are acceptable for minor offenses. For example, the faculty council may

suspend certain chapter privileges, remove the student from chapter office, request that the student perform additional school or community service activity, or receive special counseling. The goal of disciplinary measures should be to reeducate the student to more appropriate behavior. If the discipline is constructive, there is a greater likelihood that the student will improve in the particular area in which there is a deficiency.

## 7.2 No Automatic Dismissal

A member can never be dismissed automatically for failing to maintain standards, not meeting member obligations, or even being found guilty of violating school rules or the law. A written notification and hearing are called for in Article X, Section 4 and the hearing must be conducted by the faculty council to dismiss a member. Note: By definition, a member is a student who has successfully completed both the selection process and the induction ceremony; consequently, the process for discipline and dismissal of members differs significantly from the process used for selection in that due process rights are clearly defined for members that do not exist for candidates. In addition, chapters can indicate that certain violations will lead to immediate consideration of dismissal by the faculty council, but they can never describe such as violations warranting automatic dismissal under any conditions.

Members of the chapter should understand fully that they are subject to dismissal if they do not maintain the standards of scholarship, service, leadership, and character that were used as a basis for their selection. Faculty councils can discipline a

# DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

member by placing them on warning (sometimes referred to as probation) during which time they are considered to be “not in good standing” with the chapter, although the student still retains membership. Such warning periods are for a specific duration of time after which regular membership is restored. Article XV, Section 3 notes that only members who are in good standing will be allowed to wear the society’s emblem, unless the local chapter bylaws indicate to the contrary. Chapter advisers are encouraged to remind senior members of the chapter of this condition throughout the members’ senior year and include it in the written list of chapter member obligations.

Members can be informed that they are allowed limited warnings during their membership and that in the case of a flagrant violation of school rules or the law, a warning is not required for consideration of dismissal, but a hearing will still be held. The hearing is identified in the NHS Constitution as a right of membership; is guaranteed as due process; and requires the chapter to notify the member of the action being contemplated, the reasons for the action, the date and time of the hearing, and the opportunity for the member to respond either in writing or orally. As stated in Article VIII, Section 7, a student who is dismissed or who resigns is never again eligible for membership in NHS (see [www.nhs.us/constitutions](http://www.nhs.us/constitutions)).

Faculty councils should use dismissal sparingly. Prior to any vote on dismissal, the faculty council should investigate thoroughly before any action is taken. If the council determines that the facts warrant consideration of dismissal, the member must be notified in writing of the violation, the possibility of dismissal, and the need to attend a scheduled hearing with the faculty council. (See sample letters in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.) The member should appear before the faculty council and explain his or her view of the circumstances. A parent/guardian may be present with the member; however, it should be noted that the primary purpose and focus of the hearing is to allow the member to present his or her case. (See model agenda for an Article X, Section 4 Hearing in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.)

## 7.3 Dismissal Procedures Overview

In all matters of dismissal, local chapter advisers should first review the National Constitution (at [www.nhs.us/constitutions](http://www.nhs.us/constitutions)) and *National Handbook*. The most relevant section of the Constitution for these matters is the full text of Article X.

Additional commentary on disciplinary procedures is found in the NASSP *Legal Memorandum* found in Appendix 3 at the end of the handbook.

Next, a review of the existing guidelines for the local chapter should be undertaken. It is important that all local guidelines conform to those found in the National Constitution.

Questions regarding conformance can be directed to the national office.

To avoid confusion, always use the term “dismissal” regarding removal of a member from the chapter and not “expulsion.” Expulsion is a term that bears legal connotations in some states when it is used to refer to the removal of a student from the school. In most cases, it is safe to refer to dismissal from the chapter (and not expulsion) when removing a member from your rosters.

The following points should also be taken care of in all dismissal cases:

1. Procedures for dismissal are to be determined by the local school’s NHS faculty council (with review by the principal, superintendent, school board, school system attorney, etc. when necessary). Student input on these procedures can be sought; however, the final say on the procedures is always left to the faculty council.
2. There should be a written description of the discipline and dismissal procedures and it should be reviewed with your chapter members and/or officers. Student handbooks can include the procedures. In addition, chapter members should be reminded regularly of the standards that they are expected to maintain.
3. A member can be considered for disciplinary action when performance falls below the acceptable levels of any of the standards by which he or she was selected, when the member fails to fulfill chapter obligations, or when the member is found guilty of violating school rules or the law.
4. A student should be warned in writing whenever he or she falls below any standard (except in cases of flagrant violations of school rules on the law). Copies of this correspondence should be sent to the parents and a copy of the letter, including the date it was sent, should be maintained by the adviser. Some schools prefer the presentation of written warnings in person; others are utilizing registered mail to guarantee receipt of the letters at home. This is a matter of local precedent and worth checking on with the principal. A sample warning letter is found in the Chapter Management Tools at the end of this chapter.
5. The faculty council determines when an individual has exceeded a reasonable number of warnings, thus warranting consideration of dismissal.
6. In all cases of pending dismissal, a chapter member has a right to be notified in writing of the offenses and to a hearing before the faculty council. This is the due process guaranteed to all chapter members under the NHS National Constitution (Article X, Section 4). Please note that this hearing is always prior to any vote or decision

# DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

on dismissal. **Under no circumstances is there automatic dismissal from the Honor Society.**

7. Appeals of dismissal are to be handled first by the school principal and, thereafter, in the same way as disciplinary appeals in the student's school district.

If a member is dismissed, written notice of the decision should be sent to the member, with copies recommended for his or her parents, and the principal. The member must then surrender the NHS emblem and membership card to the chapter adviser. If the member is unwilling to do this, the matter is to be treated as a school disciplinary matter.

## 7.4 Appeals of Dismissal Cases

The dismissed member may appeal the decision of the faculty council first to the principal and then as indicated under the local school district's policies governing disciplinary appeals in the school district, following the normal channels for an appeals process. If the faculty council acts professionally with due care and fairness, then there should be few occasions for such appeals. It is in the best interest of the chapter that decisions concerning the chapter and its membership be made by those most familiar with Honor Society goals and procedures, i.e., the faculty council.

In the case of dismissal appeals, the principal is generally the first recipient of the appeal. The national guidelines provide no formal structure for appeals; consequently the best advice is for principals to follow the local district appeals procedures as a model. Decisions should be based on adequacy and fairness of the faculty council procedures. In the rare instance in which dismissal cases are successfully appealed by a member, the principal is encouraged to share the rationale for reversing the initial decision, and the faculty council is requested to accept and implement the decision.

NASSP does not have the authority to hear or make any decisions regarding appeals in dismissal cases. (See Article X, Section 7.)

## 7.5 Resignation

A member who resigns from the National Honor Society will never again be eligible for membership or its benefits.

Resignation from the Honor Society should involve the submission of a written statement by the resigning member that is dated and signed by both the student and his/her parent(s). Verbal resignations are generally insufficient to end membership. Students contemplating resignation should be informed of the consequences and permanent nature of their resignation as stated at the beginning of this section.

Members cannot be forced to resign. This would be interpreted as a dismissal order for which the process, as outlined in Article X of the National Constitution, must be followed.

Advisers, upon receiving a letter of resignation, should present the letter to the faculty council for a vote to approve the resignation, and follow up by informing the principal of this action and notifying the student that the resignation has been approved.

## 7.6 Chapter Disciplinary Records

Once a student has been dismissed or resigns, the chapter adviser should be sure to annotate the official chapter roster. The date of the disciplinary action is probably the most relevant information to insert in the record next to the former member's name. It is advisable to retain the resignation letter or a copy of the dismissal notification letter in the adviser's confidential files until such time as the student graduates or leaves the school. This will prove helpful in particular if the student transfers to another school and attempts to become an active member at the new school. Advisers are discouraged from conveying to any new school personnel the confidential information behind any cases of dismissal or resignation, but can readily indicate that the student was removed from membership, and—per Article VIII—can never again be a member.

As a reminder, students who may be dismissed from NJHS while in their middle grades do not carry over to high school the prohibition from membership. Such students are provided a clean slate upon enrolling in high school and can be considered for NHS membership based on their experiences beginning in ninth grade (if that is a part of the high school grade structure). Questions arise when senior members of a chapter are dismissed and have already been accepted for enrollment at a college or university in the fall. It is not recommended that any chapter adviser, faculty council member, or principal initiate communication with the postsecondary institution regarding the change in status of a dismissed member. On the other hand, if the institution contacts the school and requests an update on the student's status, and presuming that NHS membership is included on the official transcript or was incorporated in the college application, the chapter can consider updating the record with a factual annotation of the disciplinary actions taken. Advisers are encouraged to consult with the school counselor and/or the school principal before unilaterally providing such statements.

The inclusion of NHS membership on the official school transcript, or pertinent to this chapter, an indication of dismissal, is not a process mandated by the national guidelines and generally falls under local and/or state jurisdiction. Advisers should consult with the principal or central office regarding whether this information can or should be included in the student's permanent file.

# DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

## CHAPTER MANAGEMENT TOOLS—CHAPTER 7

### CMT 7.1 Sample Warning Letter (Notification of Probationary Status)



School Name and Contact information (or school stationery)

Title: Notification of Warning

Date:

Dear [insert student's first name]:

This is to notify you and your parents that you have fallen below the standard(s) for [identify the criterion or criteria in which the student has fallen below standard, e.g. "Service" "Leadership" "Character" or "Scholarship"] as set forth in Article \_\_\_\_ of the bylaws of the [school name] chapter of NHS.

Specifically: [Outline the nature of the deficiency referenced in the first paragraph.]

The nature of this deficiency requires that we place you on warning. You will remain on warning until \_\_\_\_\_, at which time your progress will be evaluated again [or include alternative language as situation requires]. During this time you must [insert terms of warning here], and while you remain a member, you are not considered in good standing with the chapter at this time.

Due to this status, you may not [insert restrictions here, i.e. serve as a chapter officer, etc. If the student is a senior, recognition, including honor cord or stole, may be withheld at graduation.] If you have not resolved the deficiencies noted above by the conclusion of the warning period, you may be considered by our chapter's faculty council for dismissal.

If you have any questions about this warning, your ongoing responsibilities to the chapter, or your current membership status, please see [insert adviser name here] at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

[Insert adviser name(s)]

Please make a copy for your records, sign below and return this letter to the chapter adviser by \_\_\_\_ [insert date by which the signed copy should be returned].

We have reviewed this letter, understand its contents, and will abide by the provisions outlined herein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature and date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature and date

### CMT 7.2 Dismissal Hearing Notification Letter



School Name and contact information (or derived from use of school stationery)

Member name

Member address

City/state/zip

Date

Dear [insert student's first name]:

This is to notify you and your parents that you have fallen below the standards for [identify the criterion or criteria in which the student has fallen below standard, e.g. "Service"] as set forth in the Constitution of NHS, Article VIII, Section 1 and Article X, Section 2. [If additional charges are being brought against the student, e.g., violating school rules or codes of conduct, they should also be listed in this paragraph, by completing the sentence, "In addition, ....."]

Specifically: [Outline the nature of the charges referenced in the first paragraph. This should be sufficient to indicate to the readers that there is professional substantiation for the charges being brought against the student, e.g., reference to disciplinary actions by the school, reports by teachers, etc.]

The nature of your conduct warrants consideration for dismissal from the National Honor Society. As called for in Article X, Section 4 of the National Constitution, a written notification and hearing are called for and must be conducted by the faculty council. The *NHS Handbook* states that, "in the case of a flagrant violation of school rules or the law, a warning is not required for dismissal, but a hearing will still be held. The hearing is identified in the constitution as a right of membership, is

guaranteed as "due process" and requires the chapter to notify the member of the action being contemplated, the reasons for the action, the date and time of the hearing, and the opportunity for the member to respond either in writing or orally."

Your hearing will be conducted [insert day and date] at [insert time] in [insert location of the meeting]. A parent/guardian may be present with you, but the primary focus of the hearing is to allow you to present your case before the council.

If you wish to explain your case in writing, you should present the written statement by [insert deadline date] to [identify chapter adviser and place where statement should be submitted]. The letter will be considered in lieu of the face-to-face hearing and will fulfill the chapter's obligation outlined in Article IX, Section 4.

Finally, you and your parents are requested to sign below to signify you have reviewed this letter and return it to the NHS adviser by [insert date]. If you have questions regarding the contents of this notification letter, please consult with the chapter adviser immediately.

Sincerely,

[Insert adviser names or, as an alternative, the principal's name]

Please sign below and return to the chapter adviser.

We have reviewed this notification and understand its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature and date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature and date

# DISCIPLINE AND DISMISSAL

## CMT 7.3 Notification of Dismissal Letter



School name and contact information (or school stationery)

Date

Member name

Member address

City/state/zip

Dear [insert student's first name]:

After careful review of the facts involved in your case, and taking into consideration the content of the information provided by you at the recent hearing, the faculty council of the [insert chapter or school name] chapter of NHS regrets to inform you that you are being dismissed from the chapter at this time.

As a consequence of this decision, please return your membership card, certificate, and member pin (or relevant insignia items) to the chapter adviser within the next two

weeks. In addition, we must inform you that members who are dismissed are never again allowed to become members of the National Honor Society nor make claims to membership in the future.

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you can do so by contacting the school principal, [insert principal's name], within the next two weeks [or alternative time limit established to be fair and appropriate by local school personnel] to set up an appointment to discuss your position.

Sincerely yours,

Adviser signature

Adviser Name

cc: Principal, Chapter Files

## CMT 7.4 Model Agenda for an Article X, Section 4 Hearing



The following model agenda for a hearing for the consideration of dismissal of a member is derived from the various policies and recommendations found in the constitution and the handbook. Advisers are encouraged to review this agenda with the principal prior to use to ensure that the process conforms to local guidelines.

Note on location: To preserve the confidentiality of the member when attending the hearing, careful consideration should be given to the location of the hearing.

At the beginning of the hearing, the chapter adviser, serving as facilitator of the hearing, can proceed according to the following agenda:

1. Introductions of attendees, facilitated by the chapter adviser.
2. Explanation of the proceedings (adviser). This is a good place to quote the handbook that indicates "the primary focus of the hearing is to allow the member to present his or her case." Following the statement of purpose, a review of the "charges" being brought against the member is made. Then read excerpts from the hearing notification letter that outlined the charges and was sent to the member.
3. Statement of case. This provides the opportunity for the member to respond to the charges.
4. Question-and-answer period: Opportunity for the faculty council members to seek clarification from the member regarding his position or actions.
5. Statement by parent (optional: refer to "primary focus" position above). No right to be present exists for any parent or other party representing the accused

member; however, nothing specifically prohibits their sitting in on the sessions. Whether or not such individuals are allowed to speak is left to precedent per the standard operating procedures of the chapter, and to the discretion of the presiding adviser.

6. Final statement by the member before conclusion of this portion of the meeting.
7. Excusing of the member (and parents and others), indicating that a decision regarding the case in question would be forthcoming. If possible the chapter adviser gives an indication of the timing and method of notification that will be used.

Following this portion of the hearing, the faculty council, still facilitated by the chapter adviser, engages in discussion, and, if all the pertinent information has been provided, they can make a decision by voting (a majority vote is all that is needed for dismissal). If additional clarification is needed, the council should set a meeting date for coming back together for purpose of concluding the case.

As previously stated, the results of the faculty council's decision should be shared first with the principal prior to notification of the member and/or the parents.

If a member is dismissed, written notice of the decision should be sent to the member, his or her parents, and the principal. The member must then surrender the NHS emblem and membership card to the chapter adviser. If the member is unwilling to do this, the matter should be treated as a school disciplinary matter.

*Thanks to former NHS Adviser Jeff Hagers from Bentonville (AR) High School for providing a model agenda for all chapter advisers to consider.*





# 8. SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARD PROGRAMS



## 8.1 The NHS National Scholarships

National Honor Society seniors who are members in good standing of an active chapter are eligible to apply for the NHS Scholarship Program. This scholarship program celebrates outstanding achievement in scholarship, service, leadership, and character.

Complete information about the NHS Scholarship Program can be found at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

This scholarship must be used to pursue a course of study leading to a degree in an accredited university, college, or junior/community college in the United States. Millions of dollars in scholarships have been awarded since the National Honor Society Scholarship Program was established in 1946. The program is sponsored by NASSP.

## 8.2 NASSP Awards Programs Rynearson Adviser of the Year

It takes tremendous energy and a high degree of commitment to be a National Honor Society adviser.

Each year we honor the memory of Edward Rynearson, the founder of NHS, and the important work he began by presenting the Rynearson Award, which recognizes the National Adviser of the Year for NHS and NJHS.

Nominees come from chapters throughout the nation. The Student Leadership Advisory Committee reviews all nominations and selects the national winner.

The annual deadline for submitting nominations for the Rynearson Award is February 15.

Any NHS or NJHS adviser with at least three year's experience as an adviser can be nominated. Selection is made by the Advisory Committee at its spring meeting, and the winner is announced in May. Ideal candidates will have demonstrated professional commitment to their chapter and the purposes of the Honor Society as evidenced by successful chapter functions at the local level.

## Outstanding Service Project Awards

Created in 1994, the Outstanding Service Project (OSP) awards recognize NHS and NJHS chapters that make significant community service contributions at the local level. Each project is judged based on its goals and organizational efforts; service impact; involvement; and the quality and clarity of the written summary.

Applications are due in late-January. Awards are presented to the top five NHS and top five NJHS chapters chosen from among the submissions. Projects must have taken place with-

# SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARD PROGRAMS

in a year of the application, and chapter projects that have been award winners within the past five years are not eligible for consideration. Through this award, the national office hopes to provide a resource and motivation for all Honor Society chapters nationwide. For program updates, see [www.nhs.us/osp](http://www.nhs.us/osp).

## Kyker Award for Outstanding State Service Projects

In 2000, NHS and NJHS created an award to recognize the outstanding work of state Honor Society associations. Each year we honor one of these associations with the Kyker Award. Named for Ardis Kyker, a retired executive director from Minnesota whose hard work, dedication, and friendship contributed to not only the development of an outstanding state association, but also to the national conference. She hosted the 1996 conference in Minneapolis that celebrated the 75th anniversary of NHS. Every state association is eligible to submit an application for this award. The annual deadline for submission is February 15. For more information visit [www.nhs.us/kyker](http://www.nhs.us/kyker).

## 8.3 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

These awards recognize students in grades 5 through 12 who have demonstrated exemplary community service. Schools and participating organizations may select one local honoree for every 1,000 students (or portion of). Local honorees are then judged at the state level. One high school and one middle level student in each state and the District of Columbia are named "state honorees" and each receives \$1,000, a silver medallion, and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., with one of their parents/guardians. The runners-up in each state receive bronze medallions as distinguished finalists, and other top applicants receive certificates of excellence. At the national recognition events in Washington, D.C., 10 state honorees (five high school and five middle level students) are named national honorees and each receives an additional \$5,000, a gold medallion, and a crystal trophy for their school or organization.

Information and application packets are mailed each fall to principals and counselors in every middle level and high school in the country and to the following organizations: Girl Scouts; 4-H; American Red Cross; YMCA and Affiliates of HandsOn Network. Applications are also available at [www.nassp.org/spirit](http://www.nassp.org/spirit).

- |                |                                                                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fall</b>    | Awards packet mailed to principals, counselors, and participating organizations |
| <b>October</b> | Student deadline to schools or participating organizations                      |

- |                 |                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>November</b> | Deadline for schools and officially designated organizations to certify local honoree application(s) to state judges |
| <b>February</b> | NASSP notifies state honorees through their schools or participating organizations                                   |
| <b>May</b>      | National recognition events in Washington, D.C.                                                                      |

## 8.4 ACA and PEAP

NASSP administers two additional student recognition awards, the American Citizenship Awards and the President's Education Awards Program.

### American Citizenship Award

This award honors any student in elementary, middle, or high school who has shown by their words and actions that they possess the qualities and characteristics we hope to instill in all of our students. This award is presented by NASSP and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

### President's Education Award Program

This award was developed to help principals recognize and honor those students who have achieved high academic goals by their hard work and dedication to learning. The program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with NASSP and NAESP.

Additional information about both of these programs is available at [www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org).

## 8.5 General Scholarship Resources

Students, advisers, and parents should consider the following resources when searching for financial resources to support their postsecondary education plans.

### Guidance Department at school

Many scholarship and award program opportunities are available through guidance counselors at school. Each year NASSP provides high school principals with the NASSP List of Approved Contests, Programs, and Activities for Students. This list serves as a school guide to approved student programs and activities, many of which are scholarship opportunities. See [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us) as well as [www.nassp.org/contests](http://www.nassp.org/contests).

### School and public libraries

Both school and public libraries feature books and software that allow students to search through a large database of scholarships to find those that are suited to the needs and the characteristics of the individual student.

# SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARD PROGRAMS

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## College/university financial aid offices

If a student has been accepted to a specific college or university, the financial aid office is usually more than willing to help parents search for available scholarship funds.

## Internet

Many sites offer financial aid and scholarships.

## Bookstores

Many major bookstores and newsstands sell financial aid and scholarship resource guides.

## Commercial entities

Many commercial entities offer their services in locating scholarship resources for a fee. Though many of these consulting services are legitimate business enterprises, be aware that in September of 1996, the Federal Trade Commission issued a warning concerning “bogus scholarship search services” which have allegedly bilked students and their families of millions of dollars every year.

Because school, library, and Internet sources are free, it is recommended that these resources be exhausted before accepting any offers that claim, “we’ll do all the work ... for a fee.”

## 8.6 NASSP List of Approved Contests, Programs, and Activities for Students

For more than 70 years, NASSP, through the NASSP National Committee on Student Contests, Programs, and Activities, has produced a list. The purpose of the NASSP list is to provide information to assist principals in guiding students and parents in making decisions regarding participation in a wide variety of program opportunities.

The National Committee assists principals in protecting students from exploitive programs and to identify programs that have educational benefits. The National Committee’s Standards and Guidelines also provide information on scholarship search services, personal recognition programs, and educational student travel.

Although each school will and should determine the contests and activities in which it chooses to take part, the NASSP List of Approved Contests, Programs, and Activities for Students is a guide that it is the result of careful screening and review of information submitted to the National Committee. Inclusion on the NASSP list indicates the program was found to meet the standards set by the committee and does not imply endorsement by NASSP.

See the current list at [www.nassp.org/contests](http://www.nassp.org/contests).



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**Remember:** Advisers can download the entire *NHS Handbook* from the adviser section of [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us). Login required.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 2. History of NHS

Edward Rynearson, founder of the National Honor Society, made the remarks (at right) in support of forming a new national honor society. At the time, Rynearson was principal of Fifth Avenue High School in Pittsburgh, PA, which later was awarded charter number one of the National Honor Society.

Many educators were concerned that the growing emphasis on athletics in schools, combined with a focus on activities that only recognized academic achievement, overshadowed programs designed to encourage leadership and character.

At the time, only local and regional honor societies required standards of citizenship, leadership, and scholarship. Other groups included service as a criterion for membership. But until March 1, 1921, when NASSP formed the National Honor Society (NHS), there was no national organization whose objectives were to create an enthusiasm for scholarship, to stimulate a desire to render service, to promote worthy leadership, and to encourage the development of character in the students of the nation's secondary schools.

In its founding resolution, NHS stated that "The chief business of high schools is to make the greatest possible contribution to the realization of the American ideal of democracy... Whatever interferes with this function is an obstruction to education and inimical to the public welfare." The resolution also indicated that organizations should not only satisfy a social need but also "be devoted to the purposes of worth to the individual and of profit to the school."

The National Honor Society promotes high academic standards, a means of ensuring the continuation of democracy, and an instrument for the betterment of the individual student and the school. Today there are more than 16,000 active chapters, found in every state and in many territories and countries overseas. The National Junior Honor Society, founded in 1929, has more than 7,000 chapters. In 2008, NASSP, in cooperation with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) established the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS) which recognizes outstanding students in the elementary grades.

The National Honor Society was designed to permit a high degree of flexibility for local chapters to undertake a variety of activities. Each chapter is required to conform to the National Constitution. Chapters are encouraged to exercise initiative, resourcefulness, and ingenuity in promoting Honor Society standards.

The Board of Directors of NASSP serves as the governing board of the National Honor Society. The day-to-day administration of NHS is coordinated by NASSP staff members in Reston, VA.

If a society with many chapters commends itself to the schools of a certain district because each is helped by the other, a nationwide society ought to be a stronger organization and receive the support of all of the schools that believe in such a society. Will not one common badge for the entire country be more valuable than many different local badges? In other words, if the fundamental principle of the honor society is sound, it should be national in its application; a national honor society of secondary schools is a logical outgrowth of the wisdom and experience of the past fifteen or twenty years.



**Edward Rynearson,  
1867–1932**

*Principal*

Fifth Avenue High School,  
Pittsburgh, PA

Founder and first president of  
the National Honor Society

## Highlights in Honor Society History

- 1916 The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is formed.
- 1921 The National Honor Society is formed by NASSP; the first chapter established at the Fifth Avenue School, Pittsburgh, PA.
- 1923 First edition of the *NHS Handbook* published by NASSP.
- 1929 Formation of the National Junior Honor Society by NASSP.
- 1934 Creation of the first student activities publication from NASSP, *Student Leader*
- 1946 Ten winners are announced for the first National Honor Society Scholarships.
- 1973 NASSP opens its new headquarters in Reston, VA, in the new Center for Educational Associations.
- 2008 Formation of the National Elementary Honor Society by NASSP and NAESP.

## Appendix 3 Legal Memorandum

*NASSP Legal Memorandum: Selection, Dismissal, and Discipline: Legal Guidelines for NHS® and Other Selective Organizations*

© 2003 NASSP. First published Fall 2003 and distributed to all NASSP members along with excerpts in *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine during the 2003–04 school year.

### INTRODUCTION

Grades, competitive school activities, selective course placement, and selective honors encourage and reward students for their work and avail them of opportunities in higher education and employment. However, students, or more often the parents of students, who do not receive the results they desire will often demand explanations and adjustments. When conflict arises, the first inclination of school officials may be to abandon the practice of distinguishing students, or to reduce their standards, but this would be a mistake. Instead, those entrusted with the duty to oversee selective activities must continue to evaluate students and should use well-defined procedures and professional practices to place themselves and the process beyond reproach. The National Honor Society (NHS) may serve as a model of such procedures and practices for not only its own chapters, but for selective student activities in general. This edition of *A Legal Memorandum* uses NHS to explore the legal issues facing selective student activities.

### Membership: Whose Right Is It Anyway?

In the handful of legal challenges to selection decisions by NHS chapters, courts have consistently held that membership in NHS and other selective organizations is a privilege, not an entitlement. As such, there has been no recognition of a property or liberty interest in membership selection that would give rise to constitutional due process rights. In *Miller v. Goldberg* (1991), a New York trial court analogized non-selection for NHS to the non-renewal of a untenured teacher; like the untenured teacher, the nonselected student has only “an abstract need or desire” to be offered membership and not a legitimate claim. In *Karnstein v. Pewaukee School Board* (1983), a U.S. District Court in Wisconsin endorsed this view noting that though membership in NHS was “a valuable medal ... when applying ... to some colleges,” it is an “honor” rather than a legal “entitlement” and therefore does not warrant “the requirements of due process of law.” This rule is so well established that in *Dangler v. Yorktown Central Schools* (1991), a U.S. District Court in New York not only rejected a student’s challenge to his non-selection, it sanctioned the plaintiff with a \$60,000 penalty for bringing a frivolous lawsuit.

Since the NHS selection process does not involve a liberty or property interest, the due process clauses of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments do not apply. However, once a student has been inducted, they gain a limited property right to membership; the U.S. Constitution notwithstanding, the NHS handbook entitles NHS members to due process if they are going to be deprived of their membership. Due process is a very broad concept. At a minimum it requires the individual whose liberty or property is in jeopardy to be provided notice and an opportunity to be heard (*Fuentes v. Shevin*, 1994). Returning to the untenured teacher analogy used by the court in *Miller v. Goldberg*, as tenured teachers are entitled to certain due process before dismissal, so too are NHS members. (Also see *Warren v. National Assoc. of Secondary Sch. Principals*, 1974; and *Ector County Independent School District v. Hopkins*, 1974.)

### Discriminating Without Prejudice

School officials should remember that selective organizations are meant to be selective. Schools must avoid using inappropriate criteria when determining which students should be invited to join a team, enroll in advanced courses, or be offered membership into honorary groups. However, schools also should not abandon their duty to differentiate and distinguish students to provide them with appropriate education and to recognize and encourage student achievements. When standards are reduced to avoid conflict, programs and honors lose their value. Therefore, appropriate selectivity is essential to any useful selection process.

### The Target: Identifying the Criteria

Every decision to select, discipline, or dismiss a student from a selective student activity must be based on the standards for membership. The only way that such decisions can be fair is if they are based on clearly defined standards that are published and presented to the students. Though subjectivity may play an important part in the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members, making the selection process as objective as possible will make the selection process less vulnerable to criticism.

The NHS Constitution identifies four criteria to be used in the selection of its members: scholarship, leadership, character, and service. Each of the four factors naturally involves subjective assessments. Thanks to student cumulative grade point averages, scholarship requires the least subjective review by the faculty council; while leadership and service are more subjective, they can still be quantified and considered with relative objectivity. However, character judgments are subjective by nature; therefore, it is not surprising that most controversies result from issues involving character.



The faculty council may reduce the subjectivity of their character evaluation by relying on documented evaluations of student performance. Such evaluations may include school records, character or conduct ratings on report cards, professional records of individual faculty members, comments based on professional evaluations and action, discipline actions, and faculty evaluation forms.

## How Far Back?

While NHS honors outstanding scholarship, leadership, character and service, it is important to remember that students are growing and learning—they will make mistakes and are expected to mature. This raises the question of how far the faculty council should look when examining a student's past. Courts will likely leave this question to the discretion of the faculty council as long as the council's decision is applied consistently. However, the *NHS Handbook* prevents the faculty council from reviewing students' behavior prior to high school. [2] When making its assessment, the faculty council should consider the severity of prior shortcomings and evidence of improvement. Most importantly, the council must apply the same standard to all students.

## Beyond the School: Is Good Character Homework?

NHS is meant to honor exceptional students for their achievements. In doing so, the faculty council will often consider achievements—both in and outside of the school—when making selection, discipline, and dismissal decisions. Courts have consistently recognized NHS's right to consider students' behavior in the community outside of school when selecting, disciplining, and dismissing members. Whether or not to consider students' behavior outside of school is left to the discretion of the local chapters. If chapters choose to consider students' behavior beyond the school walls, then schools should make it known to both students and parents that student behavior in and outside of school will be evaluated.

In *Farver v. Board of Education* (1999), students were suspended from participation in school activities, including NHS, when they were caught attending a weekend party where alcohol was being served to minors. The U.S. District Court in Maryland held that alcohol abuse was of sufficient concern to school officials, and thus refused to prevent the suspensions from school activities. There have been several cases like *Farver*, dealing with students' off-campus alcohol consumption; in each case, the court recognized underage drinking as an offense reasonably within the scope of NHS punishment. In *Warren v. National Association of Secondary Sch. Principals* (1974), a student was dismissed from NHS after a faculty council member witnessed him drinking alcohol off-campus at a non-

school-related social outing. Though the court held for the student, it did so not because the offense was not punishable, but because there were inconsistencies and procedural faults in the faculty council's response to under-age drinking.

A less-clear legal issue arises when juvenile criminal records are used when assessing a candidate or member's character. Because juvenile records are generally confidential, their use by the faculty council raises interesting concerns. While the legality or illegality of using juvenile records by the council is unsettled, because such records are generally confidential it is prudent for principals to refrain from allowing their use and base decisions on information that can be legitimately accessed.

## Drug Testing?

In an effort to fight drug abuse, some school districts have instituted mandatory, suspicion-less drug testing for students participating in student activities. In *Board of Education v. Earls* (2002), the U.S. Supreme Court found that drug testing of students who participate in competitive student activities does not violate students' Fourth Amendment protection from unreasonable search and seizure. Allowing drug testing of students in all student activities, *Earls* expanded the earlier Supreme Court ruling that allowed student athletes to be tested (see *Veronia Sch. Dist. 47J v. Acton*, 1995). The rules regarding drug tests for students are likely to continue to develop in light of *Earls*. NHS chapters should not implement drug-testing programs independent of school policies; before establishing a drug-testing program, school officials should engage legal counsel.

## Bad Discrimination: Selection Should Not Be Based on Rumor, Racism, Sexism, or Other Capricious Grounds

Prejudice has no place in the NHS selection process, nor should it be a factor in the selection process of other student activities. A student's race, gender, ethnicity, political persuasion, socioeconomic background, family, disability, or any other characteristic unrelated to the criteria for NHS should never prevent a student from obtaining or maintaining membership. The faculty council should also not base its decisions on rumor or hearsay. The council should rely on students' official school records, information submitted by students (generally not school records), and, whenever possible, firsthand observations from the faculty.

## Free Expression

Where the Constitution protects students' expression, schools must not prevent their expression or retaliate against students for engaging in free speech. Courts have given schools enormous leeway with regard to restricting speech in order to facilitate order. However, when expression is not disruptive, it is generally protected; for example, the Supreme Court has decided that the Constitution protects students who choose not to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This protection extends to protect students' participation in school-sponsored organizations.

The application of First Amendment protections to student activities was illuminated by the U.S. District Court in New Haven, Connecticut, in a case regarding a student's refusal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. There, the court ordered a student's induction into NHS when evidence led the court to believe that the student's nonselection was in retaliation for her refusal to pledge allegiance to the flag (*Greenberg, 1997*). The case involved a high school senior who refused to recite the Pledge of Allegiance because she believed that there was no justice for black Americans. The faculty council responded to claims of retaliation by citing disciplinary issues, but the court concluded that the limited incidents cited by the committee were directly related to the school's policy of sending students who refused to recite the Pledge to the principal's office. The court cited the student's exemplary record and school involvement, and noted that prior to her nonselection, neither she nor her parents were ever informed of any problems with her conduct. The court concluded that the concerns cited by the committee were pretextual and that the student's nonselection was based on her refusal to recite the Pledge.

Plaintiffs, however, do not always find such success. In *Dangler v. Yorktown*, the plaintiff claimed that he was denied membership in NHS in retaliation for his father's outspoken criticism of the school. The court rejected the claim when the plaintiff was unable to provide evidence that the father's comments were part of the faculty council's consideration after the council provided other reasons for his nonselection. Selection, discipline, and dismissal should never be used to suppress students' constitutional rights or to retaliate for the exercise of those rights. The best defense against false claims of retaliation is to have well-defined procedures and criteria for selection and to be willing and able to provide reasonable, constitutional explanations for nonselection.

## Special Education

Students with disabilities may not, and should not, be excluded from consideration because of their disability; nei-

ther must they be given an unfair advantage. When a student meets NHS standards in every way except that prevented by a disability, they should not be disqualified from consideration for honorary membership (Article VIII, Section 3 of the NHS Constitution). As the *NHS Handbook* explains, honorary membership is available to students who represent the ideals of NHS but who are disqualified from consideration through no fault of their own. Examples of individuals who should be considered for honorary membership include students with disabilities that prevent their qualification and foreign exchange students who, because of their exchange program, fail to meet the attendance requirements. Honorary membership should still be selective.

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) investigated a parent's claim that his son was denied induction into NHS on the basis of his disability (*Hopewell, 1999*). The student received a letter sent to academically eligible students inviting him to submit the appropriate information forms to be considered for membership. At the start of the selection process, the parent submitted a letter to the faculty council explaining that his son was being treated for "abnormalities in the thoracic spine" and, as a result, his activities would be limited. After reviewing the student's activities and teacher surveys, the faculty council elected not to offer him membership. The student was given a letter from the adviser congratulating him on his scholastic accomplishments, but informing him that he did not meet all of the standards for selection.

In response to inquiries by the father, the principal interviewed members of the faculty council and relayed to the father the student's failure to satisfy the leadership and service requirements. After further inquiry, the father was informed that his son "refused to participate in any class discussions, would not sit in the circle for seminar discussion, and would not make any oral presentations." It was also explained that the student was absent from club meetings without providing reasons and had listed membership in the Chess Club though he had attended only one meeting. The OCR interviewed school officials and concluded that the faculty did not consider the student's disability during the selection process and, did not even realize his condition until they received the father's letter. In addition, the faculty council considered the student for honorary membership, but found that he did not meet the service, leadership, and character criteria. The father claimed that his son was unable to meet the NHS criteria because of his disability, but he was unable to provide OCR with a list of "relevant activities that the student was unable to perform that would meet the NHS criteria." Therefore, the OCR concluded

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that the student was not denied membership on the basis of his disability. The OCR did ask the school officials to include a non-discrimination disclaimer<sup>3</sup> in letters to parents to inform them that the process did not involve discrimination. Schools should include the nondiscrimination disclaimer in all letters regarding NHS and may consider honorary membership for students whose disability prevents them from satisfying the standards for selection despite the student's representation of the virtues advanced by NHS.

## Gender

Throughout the history of NHS, females have generally been offered membership in NHS at a higher rate than males. This sometimes gives rise to parent complaints of gender discrimination against boys, but looking at the criteria for selection should quickly quiet such claims. The factors that guide the NHS selection process are gender neutral. The difference in eligibility rates may be explained by differences in the pace of adolescent development between boys and girls, by different social norms and related peer pressure, or by other gender differences during adolescence. Schools must avoid considering gender or using gender-biased factors when considering selection and all students—regardless of gender, race or ethnicity—should be held to the same standards for scholarship, leadership, character, and service.

## Pregnancy

Schools must be especially careful to avoid any inadvertent gender bias when considering character. It has been clearly decided that while premarital sex may be considered a character deficiency, schools that choose to consider it should do so very carefully if at all. Pregnancy is the most easily accessible evidence of premarital sex, but to use pregnancy as a measure without also making efforts to penalize paternity outside of marriage creates a gender bias against female students. Courts have consistently upheld this rule. In Arizona, a U.S. District Court determined that a pregnant female student was not admitted into NHS because she was pregnant while a male student who was an unwed father was admitted. Finding this to violate Title IX, the court ordered that the NHS induction ceremony not take place without the student. The school authorities then cancelled the entire induction ceremony to avoid admitting her; subsequently, holding that the school acted in bad faith, the court ordered the school to pay the plaintiff's attorneys' fees (*Schweitzer*, 1999).

In another case, a high school junior with a GPA well above the locally required 3.5 was not selected for NHS due to pregnancy. Finishing her junior year with a 3.9 GPA, her scholarship in the classroom, including two advanced placement

classes, was exemplary. She was also very active in school activities including the band and Brothers and Sisters in Christ (BASIC)—a group that raised money to assist people in need. She acted as business manager for a media class that published a school paper and produced a television news show. In addition to these school activities, she regularly worked part-time and traveled 40 minutes to assist her mother in caring for her elderly grandfather two nights a week.

The student became pregnant in the fall of 1997. Subsequently, she and another pregnant student whose GPA qualified her for consideration were not offered membership into NHS. The students brought a Title IX action against the school district. Finding that the students' nonselection was based on their pregnancy, the Federal District Court of Kentucky ordered the NHS chapter to admit the students on a preliminary basis until a final judgment by the court could be made regarding selection. However, the parties settled their suit before a final judgment was made by the court. The court held that premarital sex was a legitimate issue of character, but that using pregnancy as a proxy when paternity was not considered was a violation of Title IX (*Chipman v. Grant County Sch. Dist.*, 1998). The *NHS Handbook* does not encourage chapters to consider pregnancy when evaluating character, but leaves the question of values to local chapters. The courts have made it clear that if chapters wish to consider premarital sex against students' character, then there must be enforcement for males as well as females.

## PROCEDURE: IT'S THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DESTINATION THAT COUNTS

Courts are generally reluctant to intervene in school matters when intervention means second-guessing the evaluations of professional educators (*Schweitzer*, 1999). However, courts are more likely to intervene when the procedure used is challenged. Therefore, the three most important legal considerations for selective school organizations are process, process, and process.

As with most selective activities, induction into NHS is a privilege, not a right, and as such does not warrant due process. However, students and parents will expect, and should receive, fair treatment. Fair treatment can be achieved through the thoughtful creation and professional execution of procedures designed to ensure fairness. Once a student becomes a member, the issue of fairness becomes one of constitutional importance; after a student is inducted, they are then entitled to due process should their membership become jeopardized. Both during and after the selection process, transparency and clarity are central to the integrity of the process. Access to the

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procedures allows parents and students to understand the reasons for nonselection and helps keep the selection process honest.

The NHS Constitution and *Handbook* provide certain procedures for the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members that must be followed by every chapter. The *Handbook* also provides guidance regarding possible additional procedures. The principal, adviser, and faculty council should read these materials carefully and conform their practices to the NHS Constitution.

## Information Forms

A simple but extremely important step that chapters should take to prevent complications is a matter of terminology. The term “application” can carry with it many complex legal implications that are inappropriate in the context of NHS membership. To avoid binding themselves to unnecessary restraints, chapters should more accurately identify the information provided by students being considered by using the term “information forms.”

## Teacher Evaluations

Courts have consistently upheld the professional use of teacher evaluations in the selection process. A U.S. district court in Arkansas has held that teacher evaluations, including anonymous evaluations, do not violate the Constitution (*Bull v. Dardanelle*, 1990; *Price v. Young*, 1983). In states where anonymous evaluations pass judicial scrutiny, courts will generally defer to the discretion of school officials. Because anonymous evaluations raise questions about the integrity of the selection process and may make explaining selection decisions more difficult, the *NHS Handbook* prohibits their use. Moreover, in states such as Texas, by law evaluations may not be anonymous. The Texas Commissioner of Education ruled in 2002 that because anonymous evaluations prevent parents from receiving full information regarding their child’s activities—which they are entitled to by the Texas Education Code—such evaluations are in violation of the Code and therefore not allowed (*Byard v. Clear Creek Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 2002).

## Information: Revelation Breeds Resolution

NHS is not a secret society. Its selection process should be publicized. Under the NHS Constitution, the selection process must be published and available to parents, students, and faculty. To the greatest extent possible, the criteria and process for selection should be printed in the student handbook. Including a description of NHS, its standards, and the selection process in school newsletters, newspapers, or other publications that are available to schools can further reach interested parents

and students. The better informed about the expectations parents and students are, the less surprising the results should be.

Though in many states it is not legally required, fairness and professionalism requires, and NHS encourages, chapters to provide students and their parents with reasons for non-selection when requested. By providing students with explanations, NHS may facilitate students’ improvement in areas where they fail to meet criteria and help to improve their chances for selection in the future. Disclosure also protects the integrity of the decision by demonstrating valid reasons for nonselection. By responding to requests for explanation by students and their parents, schools can assuage concerns of discrimination and capriciousness. With few exceptions, federal law does not mandate explanation, but many states do. For example, both New York and New Jersey have policies that require school officials to provide reasons for students’ nonselection when parents request them. Faculty councils and principals should determine what level of information to disclose in accordance with state and local laws and their chapter bylaws. It can be as simple as telling the student and parent which of the four criteria was not met, or more substantive information may be shared. Here again, it is important that their decision be consistently applied.

## Writing: If You Write it, Do It; And If You Do It, Write It

Often courts look to the governing documents of NHS to determine the responsibilities of the adviser, faculty council, and principal. Therefore, when chapters document their procedures they are binding themselves to their own expectations. For example, in *Warren v. NASSP*, a teacher caught a student drinking outside of school and led the faculty council to dismiss the student from NHS. However, the faculty council did not follow the procedures outlined in the NHS Constitution and in their own chapter bylaws. Because of this, the court found that the student’s dismissal violated his right to due process. Thus, schools should be deliberate when establishing and changing bylaws, because what is written will often bind them.

The binding nature of NHS documents might lead some to consider putting very little of their procedure in writing. Though writing may at times constrain the chapter, it also serves as one of the chapter’s greatest protectors. Given that courts generally avoid questioning the judgment and discretion of school officials, the bulk of courts’ review is concentrated on whether or not the school followed procedures. Just as courts look to NHS documents for guidance as to what should have been done when they are not followed, they also may look to the documents as the rule of law that the chapter must follow. In such cases, if the chapter follows its own procedures

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and the procedures are fundamentally fair then the court will not intervene. Further, having clear procedures may legitimize decisions and avoid the actualization or appearance of capricious and arbitrary decision making.

## Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the handling of education records. FERPA entitles students and their parents access to most school records and requires schools to maintain the confidentiality of student information in these records. However, in most cases, NHS records—such as teacher evaluations and faculty council notes—are not, and should not be, education records as contemplated by the federal law. The Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has ruled that NHS documents that are not made part of the permanent school record are not covered by FERPA (letter regarding Complaint #04-01-1034, March 27, 2001). Therefore, the applicability of FERPA will depend on how and where the records are maintained.

Because NHS records generally do not, and should not, become permanent school records, FERPA has limited application to the retention of NHS records. The Department of Education’s Family Policy Compliance Office has held that it is not a violation of FERPA to destroy evaluations if there are no pending requests for review of them at the time of destruction. (Letter to Coleman, Family Policy Compliance Office, August 7, 1998). Therefore, so long as state and local laws and policies do not require the school to retain such records, school officials may destroy teacher evaluation forms used in the selection process if there are no pending requests for the documents. If chapters choose to do this, they should maintain a record sufficient enough to assist the principal or other authoritative body in any review of the faculty council’s decision. This may include a tally of points if a point system is used or a summary of the areas of deficiency that prevented admission. It also may be worthwhile for schools to put a timeframe on appeals. For example, if no appeal is filed within a reasonable time after notice of nonselection, then the school may destroy documents used in the selection process. Students and parents should be informed of such a policy before selection decisions are made.

While FERPA does not necessarily protect documents accumulated in the selection process, state laws and local school system policy requiring record retention and disclosure vary. For example, Texas law considers NHS records, including evaluations, as education records; therefore, NHS records must be retained by the school (Tex. Att’y Gen. OR 90-244, 1990). In Texas, parents may even have access to notes that members of the faculty write to themselves about a parent or student. In *Lett v. Klein*, the school system was ordered to deliver to a

father a teacher’s notes regarding complaints concerning his child’s grade. Texas is not the norm, but principals and faculty councils should consult state law and local policy to determine how to handle records.

## Due Process for Discipline and Dismissal

The NHS Constitution gives the chapter the power to discipline and dismiss members for failing to maintain the standards of conduct required for membership in NHS. Unlike selection, discipline and dismissal require at least minimal due process. The NHS Constitution provides members due process by requiring that members receive notice of dismissal proceedings and an opportunity to be heard prior to the faculty council’s vote on the case in question. While many of the rights associated with criminal or even civil due process do not apply to the discipline or dismissal of members [4], the faculty council must exercise basic elements of fairness that include: written notice of the reasons for the proposed action; time to prepare an explanation of any mitigating circumstances; and an opportunity to present that explanation to the faculty council. Written notice of a final decision to dismiss should be sent to the student, or their parent, and to the principal. After being dismissed, a student may appeal the decision first to the principal and thereafter under the same rules pertaining to any other disciplinary action used in the school district.

Dismissal from NHS is never automatic. Even if a student falls below the criteria for selection, dismissal does not automatically follow. The right to a hearing, as outlined in Article X Section 4 of the NHS Constitution, must be applied. Once dismissed, a former member may never be reconsidered for admission. It is important to remember, however, that NJHS members do not automatically become NHS members. Thus, the faculty council may elect to not select a student despite their membership in NJHS; in such a case, the student would remain eligible for future admission into NHS.

The adviser should periodically review the standing of members for compliance with NHS standards. Any member who falls below the standards should be warned in writing of the nature of the violation and the possible consequences of nonimprovement. If a student’s behavior is deteriorating, advisers are encouraged to inform students of their concerns and allow them time to improve. However, a single infraction, if serious, may warrant consideration of dismissal without providing an opportunity for improvement. The NHS Constitution in no way prevents a chapter from dismissing a student after a single infraction when the student’s behavior is a gross violation of NHS standards, school rules, or the law. To be fair, advisers should make students aware of what is expected of them. This is best achieved by discussing expectations

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with members and informing members' parents, in writing, of the expectations and obligations placed on members.

For minor offenses, the adviser or faculty council may choose to discipline a member rather than pursue dismissal. Discipline measures may include suspension from NHS activities or restriction of member privileges. For example, members may be denied the privilege of wearing the NHS cord at graduation. Certain NHS benefits may not be denied to members even if they are not in good standing. For example, NHS members must be recognized at graduation as members of NHS and include NHS membership on applications and resumes. These benefits may only be revoked by a member's dismissal or the member's resignation.

## Liability

Public school officials are generally entitled to limited immunity from liability under the doctrine of sovereign immunity. However, because the doctrine of sovereign immunity for state and local government employees is a matter of state law, the extent of this immunity varies. In most states, government employees are immune from liability for acts involving the exercise of their judgment or discretion performed within the scope of their employment; however, malicious and reckless acts are usually not protected. Though sovereign immunity may prevent liability, it will not always prevent the cost of litigation. There is also the danger that a court will misconceive the nature of NHS as a Montana court did when it concluded that teachers participating in the NHS selection process were not acting in their capacity as employees of the school district (*Becky v. Butte*, 1995). Because sovereign immunity only applies when the defendant acted in their capacity as a government employee, this case may jeopardize immunity for school officials. However, sovereign immunity was not at issue in *Becky*, and had it been, the court may have been more cautious in analyzing the role of the teachers involved. It is unlikely that a court considering sovereign immunity would come to the same conclusion. For all schools, both private and public, the best way to avoid litigation is to make your procedures beyond reproach and your practices professional.

## RULES TO REMEMBER

The good news is that contrary to popular perception, frivolous lawsuits usually fail in court. Therefore, if school officials follow the procedures detailed in the NHS Constitution and *Handbook* and create and implement procedures conforming to state and local laws, then matters of selection, discipline, and dismissal will generally be left out of the courts and remain in the school. Courts typically understand that school officials know students and issues in education better than

judges do; therefore, if school officials avoid constitutional issues and abide by federal, state, and local laws, courts will usually defer to the discretion of those in the school. Schools should simply strive for fundamental fairness—and the best way to ensure fairness is through the establishment and execution of fair procedures.

If principals are interested in creating a National Honor Society in their school, or if principals or NHS advisers have questions regarding the NHS Constitution, *Handbook*, or other NHS issues, they should contact NHS via email at [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us) or visit the NHS website at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

## Questions?

Questions or comments regarding the content of this legal memorandum can be directed to the national office staff for NHS at:

Phone: 703-860-0200

Fax: 703-476-5432

Email: [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us)

Website: [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us)

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- *Price v. Young*, 580 F. Sup. 1 at 2 (E.D. Ark. 1983).
- *Schweitzer, Thomas A. 'A' Students Go To Court: Is Membership In The National Honor Society A Cognizable Legal Right?*, 50 *Syracuse Law Rev.* 63 at 69 (May 1999) citing *Cazares v.*

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*Barber*, No. CIV-90-0128-TUC-ACM, slip op. (D. Ariz. May 31, 1990); See also *Chipman v. Grant County Sch. Dist.*, 30 F. Sup. 2d 975 (E.D. Kentucky 1998); *Pfeifer v. School Bd.*, 917 F.2d 779 (3d Cir. 1990); and *Wort v. S.D. of Brown County* (Case about pregnancy).

- ❑ U.S. Department of Education, Letter regarding Complaint #04-01-1034, March 27, 2001.
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Prepared by the staff of the NASSP Legal Counsel's office, 2003; Andrea Bell, Esq., (Former) general counsel, and Michael Brooks, intern (2003).

## Endnotes

1. National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) guidelines parallel those of NHS. For simplicity, this memo references only NHS.
2. For NJHS, review is limited to the years during which the student was a middle school student.
3. Sample nondiscrimination disclaimer: NHS maintains policies and practices that are designed to prevent discrimination against any qualified candidate on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, and disability. This policy of nondiscrimination applies to all practices, including the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members.
4. For example, students do not have the right to cross-examine witnesses or to a public hearing.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 4. Logos and Logo Usage Guidelines for NHS

The National Honor Society (NHS) is a program of NASSP. The NHS emblem is registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and this registration, or trademark, prohibits exploitation by persons or companies attempting to use, manufacture, or distribute the emblem without special authorization from NASSP. All rights to the trademarks and service marks as well as other intellectual property and copyrights relating to NHS are reserved by NASSP. The names and abbreviations of the Honor Societies and the insignia design are also protected.

Please refer to official insignia and logo usage information on the pages that follow, adapted from Chapter 1 and also found at [www.nhs.us/logo](http://www.nhs.us/logo).

### ARTICLE XV: OFFICIAL INSIGNIA (from the NHS National Constitution)

**Section 1.** This organization shall have an official emblem. The emblem shall be uniform and its distribution and rules for its use shall be determined by the NASSP Board of Directors.

**Section 2.** Each active, honorary, or alumni member in good standing with the chapter shall be entitled to wear this emblem.

**Section 3.** Any member who resigns or is dismissed shall return the emblem to the chapter adviser.

**Section 4.** All insignia must be procured from the national office of the National Honor Society, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA, 20191. All insignia are registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office and may not be copied by anyone without written permission of the NHS and NJHS national office. (See Logo Usage Guidelines at [www.nhs.us/logo](http://www.nhs.us/logo).)

**Section 5.** The motto of the National Honor Society shall be *Noblesse Oblige*.

**Section 6.** The official colors of the National Honor Society shall be blue and gold.

**Section 7.** An alumni member may purchase a replacement for a lost emblem by verifying membership to the national office.

#### Official Insignia

The distribution of National Honor Society emblem is controlled exclusively by NASSP. All orders for insignia items bearing this emblem must carry the approval and signature of the principal or the chapter adviser. Only principals or advis-

ers can order insignia items. All official insignia are listed in the *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* sent annually to all member schools and also available at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store).

#### NHS Trademark Policy and Logo Usage Guidelines

All local chapter and state association advisers are responsible for protecting the use of all NHS trademarked items (official insignia). The NASSP policy concerning the use of trademark materials follows:

- Local NHS chapters and state associations are permitted to use trademarked items without obtaining approval from the national NHS office (NASSP) on printed materials (paper or published materials), promotional pieces, and displays that are not sold.
- Chapters must obtain approval in writing from NASSP (the national office) for any item that will be sold by local or state NHS chapters, or that utilizes a commercial vendor for production.

Chapters seeking permission for having a commercial vendor use the logo must complete the Logo Usage Request Form found at [www.nhs.us/logo](http://www.nhs.us/logo).

- Commercial vendors are not permitted to use the NHS name, abbreviation, or trademarks on any goods offered for production or sale or otherwise unless they have been officially licensed or approved in writing by NASSP.
- Any and all uses of the official logos should always include the relevant “TM” or ® symbols as evidence of ownership for the marks.

#### Websites

Local chapters may use the NHS logo on their websites for a period of three years as long as the following conditions are met:

- a. The “TM” or ® (trademark) or ® sign should appear next to the name “National Honor Society” or initials “NHS” or logo when it first appears on the page.
- b. A footnote is added to the page where the “®” first appears stating: “National Honor Society” and “NHS” are duly registered trademarks of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Unauthorized copying or use of said trademarks is strictly prohibited.
- c. A link to the webpage or email a sample of the usage described in “a” and “b” is sent to the national office at [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us).

#### Website Logo Usage

Local chapters may establish links to the national NHS site at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).



## APPENDICES

### Use of Official Emblems

The purchase of an emblem (insignia item) by members is not an obligation of membership. Emblems are often purchased through the school activity fund and presented to new members at the induction ceremony. Community organizations (the PTA, Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions Club, for example) sometimes provide funds for the purchase of the emblems. In a school where no financial provisions are made, individual members may purchase the emblem through the adviser.

**Ownership:** Regardless of who pays for the emblem, the title to the emblem remains with the chapter until the member is graduated. Each member should have a clear understanding of this stipulation. Members who resign or are dismissed for any reason must surrender the emblem to the chapter adviser. If the dismissed member refuses to do this, that individual should be reported through normal school disciplinary channels. If the emblem was paid for by the member, the chapter should reimburse the student for the original cost of the emblem.

**Rights to wear the insignia:** The emblem and other insignia should always be worn with dignity and pride. Members may not design their own clothing or jewelry featuring official Honor Society insignia. In some schools, the Honor Society pin is worn on the graduation gown. Other schools recognize the Honor Society members by having them wear the official stole over the academic gown. In many instances, Honor Society members are designated in the printed program. If chapters indicate through their local bylaws or guidelines that all members have a right to wear the pin, stole, honor cords,

etc., then this right cannot be removed without first dismissing the member. If, on the other hand, chapters indicate that such insignia are privileges of membership and will only be allowed among members in good standing, the chapter may revoke such privileges in the event the member's good standing is questioned. (See Article XV, Section 3 of the NHS National Constitution for reference.)

**Engraving:** Pins and charms may be engraved with the member's initials, but the engraving is not done through the national office.

**Lost insignia:** Alumni members who lose emblems should contact the principal of the school where induction took place. If the principal certifies in a letter to the national office that the individual was selected for membership and is a bona fide alumni member, a price list and order form will be sent. Unless membership can be so verified, additional emblems cannot be supplied.

**Catalog/Adviser Resource Guide:** The *NHS Adviser Resource Guide* is sent to each chapter annually. Only current order forms should be used when ordering. Emblems and other chapter supplies are available at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store).



Electronic versions of the logo in various formats are available at [www.nhs.us/logo](http://www.nhs.us/logo).

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 5. Frequently Asked Questions

Each FAQ answer below includes a reference at the end to additional information on the topic at hand. Readers are warned not to take responses, or portions thereof, out of context and to review the additional information referenced prior to rendering an opinion or raising a concern regarding local chapter policies.

### 1. How does a school establish a chapter of the National Honor Society?

Any secondary school, public or private, that is accredited by its state department of education or by an accrediting agency approved by the national office may apply to the national office for a chapter. After submitting an application form and fee, upon approval from the national office, the new chapter becomes an official chapter of the Honor Society. The chapter is then expected to follow the National Constitution, formulate its own bylaws, submit an annual adviser survey, and maintain annual affiliation with the national office. (Visit [www.nhs.us/start-a-chapter](http://www.nhs.us/start-a-chapter).)

### 2. What is the basis of NHS membership?

Membership is open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have attended the school for the equivalent of one semester (or as accepted by the local faculty council per powers granted in Article IX, Section 1) and who have a cumulative scholastic average of 85 percent, B, 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale), or the equivalent standard of excellence. Individual schools may require a higher cumulative GPA and also designate the eligible grade levels of members. Students who meet the attendance and scholastic requirements are then evaluated by the faculty council on the basis of leadership, service, and character. Once selected and inducted, members must maintain these standards. (See Chapter 4, Selection of Members.)

### 3. Where is the national office of the National Honor Society?

The national office is located at NASSP national headquarters, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, VA 20191-1537. Website: [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us). Email address: [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us). Fax: 703-476-5432. Phone: 703-860-0200.

### 4. What can the national office do for chapters and state organizations?

The national office is responsible for providing all National Honor Society materials, including the magazine, the *NHS Adviser Resource Guide*, the e-newsletter (Honor Society News), the annual survey, and the materials for the National Honor

Society Scholarship. It also assists state associations arrange conferences and workshops. The national office also administers leadership conferences throughout the year. The national office collects and studies the annual surveys, answers questions about the Honor Society's operation, and provides assistance to chapters. Periodical publications on issues related to NHS and student activities are provided to chapters by the national office along with regular updates as they appear in the magazine and on [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

### 5. Who is the final authority on chapter affairs—selection, projects, disciplinary action, etc.?

As stated in the Constitution, Article V, Section 1, the principal has the right to approve all activities and decisions of the chapter and has the final say in such matters, except where a dismissal case has been appealed beyond the principal's office through normal school procedures.

On a day-to-day basis, the adviser is responsible for the operation of the chapter. If there is a question that must be resolved at the local school level, the principal will serve as the arbiter. (See Chapter 3, Personnel.)

### 6. How can chapters learn what other chapters are doing?

Conferences provide excellent opportunities for sharing ideas and networking. Chapter activities are also shared in the magazine, the e-newsletter Honor Society News, and through the National Student Project Database on [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

### 7. What is the relationship between NHS and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)?

NASSP established the National Honor Society in 1921. Staff members from NASSP have administered the Honor Society from the beginning. NASSP is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization operating out of the state of Virginia (see question 3 above). NHS, along with NJHS, NEHS, and the National Association of Student Councils (NASC), operate as programs of NASSP. The NASSP Board of Directors governs the Honor Society with advice submitted annually from the NHS and NJHS national staff.

### 8. If a student was a member of the National Junior Honor Society, is that individual automatically eligible for the National Honor Society?

No. The National Junior Honor Society and the National Honor Society are separate societies, both at the local and national level. Members of the National Junior Honor Society must be selected for membership in the National Honor Society in the same manner as all other candidates at the school. Similarly, disciplinary actions taken against an NJHS

member should not affect that student's candidacy for NHS membership. (See Chapter 3, Membership section.)

## **9. What explanation is owed to nonselected students, i.e., those students not selected for membership in NHS by the local faculty council?**

Each chapter determines the appropriate method of notifying candidates who do not meet the chapter's standards for selection. The student can be sent a written note saying he/she was not selected and no further explanation is generally required. On the other hand, nothing prevents a local chapter from counseling with nonselected candidates regarding the circumstances that led to their nonselection. Nonselected students should be informed as to whom they can contact if they have questions concerning their nonselection. Local chapters should check with local and state authorities to determine if other requirements exist that would dictate steps that must be taken by their chapter in this regard.

There is no right to membership, it is a privilege bestowed upon a student by the faculty of the school. However, some may disagree with the decision of the faculty council and need to have the selection procedure explained. Chapter advisers are encouraged to become familiar with the sections of the handbook that deal with the selection process and the nonselection issues. (See Chapter 4.)

## **10. Can quotas or percentages be used to limit chapter size?**

No. As stated elsewhere in the handbook, quotas or percentages may not be set to limit membership or chapter size. If it is determined that the size of the chapter is unworkable, then the cumulative GPA or other standards can be raised. (See Chapter 4.)

## **11. Does a chapter have to have its own set of bylaws?**

Yes. Article XVII of the Constitution requires written bylaws for each local chapter. Written bylaws help individuals understand what is expected of them and help avoid problems and misunderstandings. All chapter bylaws are expected to conform to the National Constitution of the National Honor Society. If you have a question about your bylaws, submit them to the national office for review. (See Chapter 3.)

## **12. Can grades earned in Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes be weighted when calculating the cumulative grade point average?**

Yes, weighted grades are permitted only when the weighting is already figured in to the method of calculating the cumulative GPA by the school. If weighting is used, this should be refer-

enced specifically in the local selection procedure guidelines as required by Article IX, Section 4 of the Constitution. Local chapters should take steps to ensure that the grades for all candidates are considered carefully and in a fair manner. It is generally recommended that the GPA, as calculated for official school purposes such as report cards and transcripts, be used for purposes of determining scholastic eligibility for candidacy. (See Chapter 4.)

## **13. How do I obtain membership pins and other items to support and motivate the members of our chapter?**

Each chapter is sent annually a copy of the *NHS Adviser Resource Guide*. An updated version can be found at [www.nhs.us/store](http://www.nhs.us/store). Orders are placed with the national sales office. For all orders, schools must provide the school affiliation number. Only advisers and principals may place orders for NHS insignia items for the chapter. (See Chapters 4 and 9.) A limited selection of insignia items is available in the NHS Family Store for purchase by students and families.

## **14. How does a chapter dismiss a member?**

Before proceeding with any dismissal, advisers should review Article X of the National Constitution and the segments of the handbook that refer to dismissal. Appropriate notice must be provided and a hearing must be scheduled for the member to present his or her case prior to the vote of the faculty council. Once the member is given notice and the hearing is held to allow the member to respond to the charges, the faculty council may vote to dismiss a member. (See Chapter 7.)

## **15. Do I have to provide a copy of our local selection process to a student or parent who requests this information?**

Yes. All chapters must have their selection process published and available for review. NHS is not a secret organization and the Constitution speaks clearly about making this information available in a timely fashion (see Article IX, Section 4). It is recommended that schools include this information in the student handbook and that they also have separate sheets conveying all relevant information about the selection process, and that these be kept on hand in the school office to field such requests in a timely manner.

## **16. Can an NJHS chapter be set up in a high school with grades 9–12?**

No. The Constitution does not allow for this circumstance (see Article IV and Chapter 3). Only in mixed level schools (K–12, 6–12, etc.) can two chapters coexist on one campus. Since the

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Constitution indicates that ninth graders cannot be members of NHS, this does mean that students coming from a middle school (6–8) with an NJHS chapter will have one year when they will be active in neither an NHS nor an NJHS chapter. In the opinion of the founding officers of NHS, ninth graders need to focus on making a smooth transition from middle school to high school, establishing a firm academic foundation and “learning the ropes,” and should not be encumbered with the pressures of selection procedures. This is a time, however, to orient those ninth graders to the criteria for membership in NHS and encourage their involvement in activities that would assist their attaining membership once they reach the appropriate grade. (See Chapter 3.)

## **17. Can faculty input about students be used in the selection process?**

Yes. The handbook provides some commentary on its use. Under no circumstances should this input be considered a vote of the faculty. In addition, faculty members should sign all input forms submitted and base their evaluation on sound, professional judgments of the candidates. These evaluations serve to supplement the candidate forms and to assist the faculty council in making the best decisions regarding membership. (See Chapter 4.)

## **18. How can NHS members obtain leadership training?**

Students and advisers can register to attend leadership conferences administered by NASSP and held throughout the year. In some states, state associations also provide conferences and workshops for training student leaders. (See [www.nhs.us/events](http://www.nhs.us/events).)

## **19. Must all chapters perform service?**

Yes. Article XIV of the National Constitution mandates service projects as one of the main chapter activities each year. In addition, members must participate in individual service projects to continue to maintain their service criterion. Since its beginning, NHS has supported the participation in service projects as a way for students to learn the value of service, provide needed resources for the school or community, help the school maintain a positive image in the community, and to reinforce the curriculum through involvement. (See Chapter 6.)

## **20. What are the basic necessities of any NHS chapter?**

See Chapter 3 for specific information.

## **21. What should new advisers do to begin receiving all publications and services from the national office?**

Every year, nearly 20 percent of schools identify a new person to serve as chapter adviser at their school. If the new adviser’s name is known in the spring prior to their taking over, it can be added to the annual renewal form submitted by the principal. Otherwise, a new adviser can contact the national office and provide his or her name and contact information to the membership department (see contact information at the conclusion of the FAQ). The two most important pieces of information needed are the adviser’s name and email address. Changes in advisers that occur during the school year can be reported at any time using the Adviser Change Form online.

## **22. Why does the national office spell adviser with an ‘e’ instead of with an ‘o’ (i.e., advisor)?**

We get asked this a lot. Any national organization which maintains a publication or communications office generally operates using a particular editorial style. In the case of NASSP, the *AP Stylebook* is been the guide for all communications. It is from that guide that our use of “adviser” originates. At the local level there is no legal differentiation made in terms of the adviser’s official capacity. Alternatively, some chapters refer to their advisers as “sponsors” or “facilitators.” We recommend that all chapters use the same terminology that is found in the national guidelines to avoid misunderstanding by those seeking information about the local chapter.

## **23. Where can chapter advisers obtain training?**

All activity advisers should receive professional development training in all of their areas of assigned responsibility. To support this position, the national office makes a variety of conferences available. Many local school districts provide annual training sessions for advisers in the schools within their district, as well. Information on all professional development opportunities provided by the national office appears in the magazine and in the adviser section of [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

## **24. What steps should a chapter take if it is going to be disbanded due to school consolidation or for some other reason?**

The membership department of the national office should be notified of this situation. See contact information at [www.nhs.us/contact](http://www.nhs.us/contact).

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## 25. How do I get more information or assistance at the local, state, or national level regarding policies and procedures of the Honor Society?

Do you have a person complaining about nonselection? Are you considering dismissing a member? Is it time to revise your bylaws because they haven't been touched in 20 years? There is help available from a variety of sources.

- *NHS Handbook*. When in doubt, start with the source. Find the copy of your chapter handbook and review the information found therein. If you can't locate your copy, order a new one from the NASSP sales department at 800-253-7746.
- Local chapter bylaws. Your locally developed guidelines may provide you some assistance—even if you aren't currently aware of their content. Should you find that there are no local bylaws, it is time to write them! Consult your *National Handbook* for some guidelines on bylaws construction or visit online Adviser Resource Center at [www.nhs.us/advisers](http://www.nhs.us/advisers) for a downloadable template.
- Other advisers of chapters in the area. There is a wealth of information to be found from advisers at nearby schools. Though their chapter procedures may not mirror yours, you can glean information from their experiences. Be sure to keep a list of this valuable local network.
- Call your state honor society organization. More than 20 states now have active NHS organizations. The state executive director may be able to put you in contact with an expert nearby who can assist you.
- Consult your principal. In any situation where you are contacted by a lawyer representing a student or parent with a concern about your chapter, go immediately to your principal with this information and consult with your school system's attorney—someone in the superintendent's office will have contact information for you.
- Contact the national office. Our staff is ready to work with you to assist in clarifying the procedures or policies of NHS. With more than 16,000 chapters to tend, we encourage you to exhaust some of your local resources prior to calling. But don't let a situation escalate—give us a call. Matters that don't need immediate attention can be sent to [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us).
- Consult the NHS and NJHS websites. Access to the NHS Constitution as well as previous magazines and relevant excerpts from this handbook are included. We hope you will check in regularly at [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us).

## Contact us!

National Office  
Policy and Procedures  
National Honor Society  
1904 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 20191-1537  
P: 703-860-0200  
F: 703-476-5432  
Email: [nhs@nhs.us](mailto:nhs@nhs.us)  
Website: [www.nhs.us](http://www.nhs.us)

## Sales Department

866-647-7253

## Membership Department

800-253-7746, press "4"

## Appendix 6. NASSP Position Statement on Student Activities

### Issue

Beyond the standard curriculum of required and elective courses, schools enhance student learning and development by offering a range of cocurricular student activities. Activities can be classified into four distinct categories:

- Direct extensions of required or elective courses (e.g., science club, math club, dance club, etc.), including opportunities for recognition of achievements in those areas through honorary organizations (e.g., National Honor Society, Quill and Scroll, Spanish Honor Society, Tri-M Honor Society [music], etc.).
- Clubs or activities that are expressions of student interest that may be interdisciplinary in nature or not have a direct curricular link (e.g., popular music club, skateboarding club, etc.).
- Student council or student government that serve as opportunities for students to engage in the democratic process and have a voice in the life of the school to the extent allowable by law, policy, or tradition.
- Interscholastic and intramural athletics that provide students opportunities for development through sport (e.g., football, track, tennis, cheerleading, etc.).

### NASSP Guiding Principles

- Secondary schools properly provide for social and personal needs, as well as for those that are strictly academic. Student activities are integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support and extend academic learning.
- The term “student activities” is preferred to “extracurricular” since “extra” connotes activities that are peripheral to a school’s main mission. Student activities are educational in nature and should be thought of as cocurricular.
- Student Activities support the goal of teaching students to be responsible and fulfilled human beings, providing them with opportunities that develop character, critical thinking, sociability, and specific skills.
- Research has shown a strong relationship between participation in student activities and academic achievement.
- Membership in national and state student activities organizations adds value to programs sponsored at the local level by providing training and other services, unique opportunities for networking, and additional recognition for those involved.

### Recommendations

- Recognize all activities carried out under the aegis of a secondary school in terms of their potential contribution to the school’s overall goals for young people.
- Encourage secondary schools to engage as many students as possible in student activities and offer sufficient variety to appeal to a wide range of student interests.
- Encourage administrators, educators, student activity advisers and the general public to use the term “student activities” instead of “extracurricular activities.” Student handbooks, school documents, and other communication should reflect this more current terminology.
- Ensure that activities are age-appropriate; non-discriminatory; well planned, organized, and implemented; supervised by professional staff; and evaluated on a regular basis.
- Ensure that participation in events sponsored by state and national organizations for youth be subject to identifiable minimum standards for the quality of the program, its content, and its practices regarding participant supervision and safety.
- Ensure that staff directing student activities receive professional development in the area of responsibility, and appropriate compensation for the work provided while fulfilling this supervisory duty.

Approved by the NASSP Board of Directors, November 9, 2002.



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Item#: 7319708

