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FAQs About NHS & NJHS

Frequently Asked Questions About NHS & NJHS

The following information serves as a quick reference guide for individuals seeking information about Honor Society policies and procedures. Additional information on the topic is found in the current national handbook.

Readers of this FAQ are cautioned not to take these responses, or portions thereof, out of context and to review the additional information from the handbook or elsewhere in this website 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 or National Junior 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 Council may apply to the national office for a charter. If the charter is granted, including the submission of a complete application form and payment of the chartering fee, the new chapter is placed in the database of official chapters of the Society. The chapter is then expected to follow the national Constitution, formulate its own bylaws, complete the annual E-Survey, and maintain annual affiliation with the national office. See "Starting a Chapter" on www.nhs.us.

2. What is the basis of NHS or NJHS membership?

For NHS, 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. For NJHS, the grade levels are second semester sixth grade through ninth grade. Local chapters set the eligible grades from within these grade levels for their chapter. Individual schools may also require a higher cumulative scholastic average and as well as designating 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, citizenship (NJHS only) and character. Once selected and inducted, members must maintain these standards.

3. Where is the national office of the National Honor Society?

The Honor Societies were established by and are sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). NASSP is a federally registered 501.c.3. not-for-profit educational association. The national office for NHS and NJHS is located at NASSP national headquarters, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, VA 20191-1537. Web site: www.nhs.us, E-mail address: nhs@nhs.us. Fax: 703-476-5432. Phone: 703-860-0200. All correspondence to NHS or NJHS should be sent via one of these contacts. Note: Additional information about NASSP can be found at www.nassp.org. NASSP also sponsors the National Association of Student Councils (NASC), for high school and middle level student councils (see: www.nasc.us).

4. What can the national office do for chapters and state organizations?

The national office is responsible for providing all Honor Society materials, including *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine, the NHS & NJHS Catalog (the official insignia catalog), the annual E-Survey, and the materials for the National Honor Society Scholarship. The national office also assists state associations with planning conferences and workshops. The national office collects and studies the annual E-Survey, answers questions about the Society's operation, and provides assistance to chapters. Periodical publications on issues related to NHS, NJHS and student activities are provided to chapters by the national office along with regular updates as they appear in *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine and on www.nhs.us.

5. Who is the final authority on local 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 chapter adviser (a member of the faculty assigned to this duty) is responsible for the operation of the chapter. If there is a question that must be resolved at the local school level, the principal generally serves as the arbiter.

Note: The national office cannot intervene in the selection or discipline of an individual member, per provisions of the national constitution. If the chapter can be shown to be out of compliance with the national policies, the national office does step in to offer assistance.

6. Are all NHS members automatically eligible for the NHS Scholarship?

In high school, all senior NHS members in good standing with the chapter are eligible to compete at the school level to become one of the two (2) nominees that every chapter can submit. Local school personnel determine their own method of identifying the two nominees from the chapter. The nomination forms for this program are evaluated by a national scholarship board on the basis of scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Awards are given to students in all 50 states, D.C. and to chapters found in US territories and overseas, consequently nominees only compete with other students from their same state or locale. Only chapters in schools that are actively affiliated

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with the national office receive the scholarship nomination forms.

7. How can chapters learn what other chapters are doing?

LEAD Conferences and state conferences provide good opportunities for sharing ideas and networking. Also, regular columns of NHS & NJHS news and Q&A's appear in *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine. Chapters also share ideas on the Message Boards and via the "Idea Sharing" section of www.nhs.us.

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 separately 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.

9. What explanation is owed to non-selected students?

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 non-selected candidates regarding the circumstances that led to their non-selection. Non-selected students should be informed as to whom they can contact if they have questions concerning their non-selection. 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 non-selection issues.

10. Can quotas or percentages be used to limit chapter size?

NO. As stated 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 grade point average or other standards can be raised. Historical note: In the early history of NHS, quotas in the form of percentages of grade level populations did exist in the selection criteria. These guidelines were ruled as fundamentally unfair in decisions made by the National Council (the governing body for the Honor Societies), and thus are no longer valid and acceptable guidelines for chapter selection procedures.

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 Honor Society. It should be noted that some chapters refer to their bylaws as a "local /Content.aspx?topic=5293" or "chapter guidelines." These terms are acceptable. If advisers have questions about their local bylaws, they can submit them to the national office for review.

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 by the school to the method of calculating the *cumulative Grade Point Average*. If weighting is used, this should be referenced specifically in the local selection procedure guidelines as required by *Article IX, Section 4*. 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 (report cards, transcripts, etc.) be used for purposes of determining scholastic eligibility for candidacy.

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 NHS & NJHS catalog of products and services. An updated version also can be found on www.nhs.us (see the yellow tab marked "NHS & NJHS 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 official insignia items for the chapter.

14. How can we start a state association for NHS or NJHS?

A list of those states that currently maintain a state association can be found on www.nhs.us ("State Organizations" link). In addition, guidelines for starting a state association are located in the reference sections of the national handbook. Simply put, local chapters can join together to assure each other of their intent and then notify the national office. The state group should seek approval from the state principals association (contact persons can be provided by the national office) prior to formally establishing an association. Once approved, the new state Honor Society organization should proceed with developing bylaws that identify the purposes, administrative structure, and functions of the new organization. With such in place, meetings, workshops, and conferences can be set up to meet the needs of the state members.

15. How do we dismiss a member from the chapter?

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 opportunity to respond to the charges, the Faculty Council may vote to dismiss a member.

16. Do chapter advisers have to provide a copy of the local chapter 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 and NJHS are not secret organizations and the constitution speaks clearly about making this information

available in a timely fashion. 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.

17. Can an NJHS chapter be set up in a 9-12 high school?

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 co-exist on one campus. Since the 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 National Council, 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.

18. Can faculty evaluations be used in the selection process?

YES. The handbook provides some commentary on their use. Under no circumstances should these evaluations be considered a vote of the faculty. In addition, faculty members should sign all evaluations submitted and base their evaluations on sound, professional judgments of the candidates. These evaluations serve to supplement the Student Activity Information Forms and to assist the Faculty Council in making the best decisions regarding membership.

19. How can NHS or NJHS members obtain leadership training?

Several opportunities exist. Students can be delegates to the LEAD Conferences in the spring, where specific leadership training takes place. In some states, state associations also provide conferences and workshops for training student leaders.

20. 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 their beginning, NHS and NJHS have 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.

21. What are the basic necessities of any NHS or NJHS chapter?

See the Appendices of the national handbook for an article that covers this concern. Also found in the "Adviser Zone" elsewhere on this website.

22. Where can chapter advisers obtain training?

All advisers of student activities should receive professional development training in all of their areas of assigned responsibility. To support this position, the national office makes a variety of experiences available. Advisers can attend LEAD conferences or state conferences for special adviser training each year. Many local school districts provide annual training sessions for advisers in the schools within their district, as well. Resources for those advisers unable to attend these meetings are also found in the publications section of the national catalog and on the Web site. Similarly, information on all professional development opportunities provided by the national office is presented in the annual Adviser Updates, in *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine, and in the Adviser Zone found on www.nhs.us.

23. Are homeschooled students eligible for membership in NHS or NJHS?

NHS and NJHS are school-based organizations with chapters established on campuses of secondary level schools. Students who are enrolled in those schools, whether full time or part time, and who meet the requirements for initial review, can be considered for membership.

However, students who are not enrolled in a school with a chapter, i.e., those who are fulltime homeschool students, are not eligible for consideration. The national office cannot review and select individual members, this is accomplished only through the local chapter selection process. Homeschool students and their parents are encouraged to seek alternative means of recognition for their students.

24. 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 non-selection? 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 or NJHS 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.
- Other advisers of chapters in the area. There is a veritable wealth of information awaiting your call in the form of advisers from chapters at nearby schools. Though their chapter procedures may not mirror yours, there certainly is information that you can glean from their experiences. Give them a call and then keep a list of this valuable local network.
- Call your state honor society organization. More than 20 states now have active NHS or NJHS 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 and NJHS. With more than 20,000 chapters to tend, we encourage you to exhaust some of your local resources prior to calling. But in all cases, don't let the trouble brew—give us a call. Matters that don't need immediate attention can be sent in writing to NHS/NJHS, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1537 or faxed to 703-476-5432.
- Consult the NHS & NJHS homepage. Access to the NHS and NJHS constitutions as well as previous sets of Questions and Answers from *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine and relevant excerpts from the national handbook are regular components of this site. We hope you will begin to check in regularly at the site located at www.nhs.us.

Contact us!

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ARTICLE VI
SELECTION OF MEMBERS

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Section 1. The NJHS consists of seventh and eighth grade students. To be eligible for membership the candidate must be a member of one of those two classes. After the second marking period a seventh grade student who meets the GPA requirements may be invited to submit profile forms, which go before a faculty committee. A student who does not meet the scholastic requirements during the seventh grade year may be considered the following year if the student attains the required GPA in eighth grade.

Section 2. Candidates must have a cumulative scholastic average of 95% or higher. Candidates may not have a subject grade below 85%. Candidates shall then be evaluated on the basis of service, character, leadership, and citizenship.

Section 3. The selection of each member to the chapter shall be by a majority vote of the faculty council.

Section 4. A description of the selection procedure shall be published in an official school publication which 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 the NJHS.

Section 5. The National Council and the NASSP shall not review the judgment of the faculty council regarding selection of individual members to local chapters.

ARTICLE VII
DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL

Section 1. Each member is responsible for acting in a way representative of the National Junior Honor Society. This involves excellence and consistence in scholarship, an honorable character, and a desire to display leadership qualities and perform service.

Section 2. Members who fall below the standards, which are the basis for their selection, shall be promptly warned (in writing) by the chapter adviser and given a reasonable amount of time to be determined by the faculty council to correct the deficiency. In the case of flagrant violation of school rules or civil laws a member does not, necessarily, have to be warned to be dismissed and void membership.

Section 3. When a member accumulates three written warnings within the same school year he/she will be required to appear before the faculty council, which possesses the authority for immediate dismissal. Once a member has been dismissed or resigns from the NJHS, the national rules state that he/she may never be considered for membership again.

Section 4. The faculty council and the adviser shall agree upon all written warnings. The disciplinary systems of written warnings will consist of the following:

a. Absence from a scheduled meeting or activity with a legitimate excuse--*One (1) written warning.* Two absences from a scheduled meeting or activity--*Second (2nd) written warning and/or referral to NJHS faculty council for possible dismissal.*

b. Receiving a disciplinary referral and/or detention for lack of adherence to necessary rules.
-First disciplinary referral: *a verbal warning*
-Second disciplinary referral: *a written warning*
-Third disciplinary referral; *appearance before the Faculty Council*