

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic Integrity Policy

Any situation involving a violation of academic integrity is of major concern to the University. Faculty members preserve and transmit the values of the academic community through example in their own academic pursuits and through the learning environment that they create for their students. They are expected to instill in their students a respect for integrity and an understanding of the importance of honesty within their chosen profession. Faculty must also take measures to discourage student academic dishonesty.

Commitment to maintaining and encouraging high standards of academic integrity is demonstrated in many ways. One way is through the establishment of policies and procedures governing violation of the standards of academic integrity. The following policies, procedures, and definitions are intended to help faculty meet these responsibilities.

First, the instructor has both the right and responsibility to demand academic honesty if a student is to remain in good standing in the course and is to be evaluated fairly by the instructor. A grade certifies both knowledge and a standard of academic integrity. It is essential that the instructor retain the right to set the minimum academic penalty for academic dishonesty in a course, subject to the appeal rights of a student.

Second, cheating is not just a matter between an instructor and student in a specific course. While it is the right and duty of the instructor to set minimum penalties for dishonesty in a particular course, the University is responsible for the minimum standards of academic integrity and achievement on which degrees are based. It is the University that permits students to remain members of the academic community and finally certifies that students have attained sufficient academic credit and exhibited acceptable standards of conduct to entitle them to a degree.

Third, students accused of academic dishonesty have the right to have their case heard in a fair and impartial manner, with all the safeguards available within the bounds of due process.

Violations of Academic Integrity

Violations of the academic integrity standards of West Chester University fall into six broadly defined categories listed below:

1. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's words, ideas, or data as one's own work.
2. **Fabrication:** Fabrication is the use of invented information or the falsification of research, information, citations, or other findings.
3. **Cheating:** Cheating is an act or an attempted act of deception by which a student seeks to misrepresent their mastery of the information or skills being assessed. It includes, but is not limited to, using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
4. **Academic Misconduct:** Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, other academically dishonest acts such as tampering with grades; or taking part in obtaining or distributing any part of a test that has not yet been administered; or disrupting or interfering with the ability of others to complete academic assignments. It also includes violations of the Student Code of Conduct, as they relate to the academic environment.
5. **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:** Facilitating academic dishonesty includes helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.
6. **Breach of Standards of Professional Ethics:** In certain degree programs, students will be instructed on and provided with that particular profession's code of ethics (e.g., the American Nurses Association Code for Nurses). Under some circumstances, if a student is found to have violated that professional code, that violation may be considered a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy.

Procedures for Handling Cases

Faculty are responsible for determining the grades earned in their courses, and they are the first step in determining if a violation of academic integrity has occurred. They are also the first individuals to determine what penalty should be levied. A faculty member responsible for assigning final grades in a course may acquire evidence, either directly or through information supplied by others that a student violation of academic integrity may have occurred. After collecting the evidence available, the faculty member will meet with the student to present the evidence of an alleged violation and request an explanation.

If the faculty member accepts the student's explanation, no further action is taken. If the faculty member determines that a violation has occurred, the faculty member informs the student, within five class days of their decision, using the appropriate form, of the penalty that will be imposed. The faculty member will also inform the student of their rights to file an appeal within 10 class days of the faculty member's decision.

Once a faculty member has charged a student with academic dishonesty, the student may not withdraw from the course to avoid a grade penalty or to prevent the filing of the Report of Violation of Academic Integrity. Any student who withdraws from a course before the charge is made may be re-registered for the course so that appropriate action can be taken.

The faculty member fills out and forwards a copy of the Report of Violation of Academic Integrity, together with any additional supporting documentation, to their department chairperson. In departments that have a departmental Academic Integrity Board, the faculty member will forward the information to the departmental board. The department chair (or chair of the departmental board) will forward the information to the Dean of The Graduate School. If the faculty member is the department chair and there is no departmental board, the report will be sent directly to the Dean of The Graduate School.

The report includes:

- The nature of the charge/evidence against the student
- A brief summary of the meeting with the student
- The faculty member's decision
- The right of appeal to the department chair (or departmental board)

If the student is subsequently found not guilty of the charge, the student may either:

- Remain in the course without penalty, or
- Withdraw from the course regardless of any published deadlines

If the student is found guilty of violating the student Academic Integrity Policy, the student may not withdraw from the course and will receive the sanction imposed by the instructor or other academic authority.

Penalties

All acts of academic dishonesty violate standards essential to the existence of an academic community. Most offenses are properly handled and remedied by the faculty member teaching the course in which they occur. The penalties that may be assessed by the faculty member include the following:

- Completion of alternative work, with or without a grade reduction
- A reduced grade (including "F" or zero) for the assignment
- A reduced grade (including "F") for the entire course

A grade of "F" for the course, due to a violation of academic integrity, will result in automatic dismissal from the University. Students dismissed under these circumstances are considered ineligible for readmission to another academic program at West Chester University.

Whatever the penalty, the report describing the incident and recording the decision will be kept by the Dean of The Graduate School until the student has graduated and the degree has been awarded. Individual departments may establish a "zero tolerance" policy for their

majors. Students must be clearly informed of such a policy by those departments.

The purpose of this record keeping is to ensure that students who violate the University's student Academic Integrity Policy a second time are dealt with appropriately. A second violation will result in automatic expulsion from the University.

Appeal Procedures

A student may appeal the instructor's unilateral imposition of a reduced or failing grade. A student who files an appeal within 10 class days of the faculty member's determination will suffer no worse penalty as a result of the appeal than they would have suffered if they had not appealed the instructor's unilateral action.

A student who files an appeal to the next level must do so within 10 class days. The request for appeal should contain any and all information that the student believes is relevant to their case. After the initial appeal to and decision by the department chair, the student will have five days to appeal the decision to the next level, if they so wish.

The progression of the appeal is as follows:

1. Chair of the department in which the course is housed (or departmental board) - appeal must be filed within 10 class days of faculty decision
2. College dean - appeal must be filed within five class days of the department's decision
3. Graduate dean - appeal must be filed within five class days of the college dean's decision
4. West Chester University Academic Integrity Board - appeal must be filed within five class days of the graduate dean's decision

If the faculty member who has brought the charges is also the chair of the department, the appeal moves directly to the graduate dean.

Information on the composition and functioning of the Academic Integrity Board and sanctions is located on the University's website at www.wcupa.edu (<http://www.wcupa.edu>).

Academic Integrity Board

The Academic Integrity Board may be requested by an accused student as part of the appeal process.

Membership of the Academic Integrity Board

1. The Provost (or Provost's designee) shall appoint faculty and administration members of the Academic Integrity Board. The Dean of The Graduate School serves as nonvoting chairperson. If the Dean of The Graduate School is not available to serve, the administration will appoint a substitute.
2. A faculty dean not involved in the charging process. A substitute may be appointed as given in paragraph 1.
3. Two faculty members. At the beginning of each academic year, the Office of the Provost (or Provost's designee) shall randomly select two full-time faculty from each academic department in order to constitute the pool. Two faculty members from different departments will be randomly selected from this pool to serve on the Academic Integrity Board. In the case of charges brought against graduate students, the faculty members must be involved in teaching graduate-only courses (double-numbered courses do not count) or in directing graduate research projects.
4. Two graduate students. Such students will be appropriately trained in procedures relating to this policy and the need for confidentiality pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Hearing Procedures for Academic Integrity Board

The chair will provide notice to all parties which shall include a summary of the matter for disposition, as well as the time and place of the hearing. The student charged will also be advised as to the identities

of Academic Integrity Board members and witnesses that will be presented by the charging party. Hearings shall proceed to the extent possible according to the following form:

1. The chair shall open the proceedings by reading the statement of charges.
2. The charging party shall then present the case against the accused party, including the presentation of witnesses. This shall be done by the submission of written, physical, and testimonial evidence. The accused party and the board shall have the right to conduct reasonable questioning of the charging party and the charging party's witnesses; hearsay evidence is not acceptable since it denies the opposing party the opportunity to cross-examine unless such is a business record of the University.
3. At the conclusion of the charging party's presentation, the accused party may present a defense, including the presentation of witnesses, or may plead to the charges. This shall be done by the submission of written, physical, and testimonial evidence. The charging party shall have the right to conduct reasonable questioning of the accused party and the accused party's witnesses; hearsay evidence is not acceptable since it denies the opposing party the opportunity to cross-examine unless such is a business record of the University.
4. After both cases have been presented, the board shall allow rebuttal evidence.
5. At the close of the hearing, the board shall allow closing arguments by the parties.

The board chair shall have authority and be responsible for maintaining an orderly procedure throughout the hearing. All hearings are closed proceedings; witnesses may be excluded from the room until the appropriate time for their testimony. The burden of proof rests on the individual bringing charges. All matters upon which the decision will be based must be introduced into evidence at the hearing.

Both parties shall have the right to be assisted by advisors, who may be attorneys, and who may be present at hearings. The board chair must be notified in advance of the hearing as to whom the advisors will be. The advisors may only consult and interact privately with their advisees, and may not address the board. advisors who are disruptive to the process will be asked to leave the proceedings, and the matter will go forward absent their involvement.

All hearings will be tape-recorded. The audiotape record of the hearing will be archived in the Office of the Provost or the Office of the Dean of The Graduate School, or their designee for five years. A written transcript of the hearing will be provided at the expense of the University pursuant to a validly issued subpoena.

A written recommendation based on a preponderance of evidence, arrived at by majority vote, in which the facts and reasons for the recommendation are set forth shall be issued within 15 calendar days after the close of the board proceedings. That report shall be sent to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, with copies to all parties, including the Vice Provost and Dean of The Graduate School and the appropriate department chair. The copy to the accused will be sent certified mail, return receipt requested, and first-class mail. Within 15 calendar days the Provost shall implement the recommendation of the board, or shall provide a written response containing their decision, and explaining to all parties their reasons for declining to implement the board's recommendation. In the event that the Provost finds inadequacies in the record, the matter can be remanded back to the board for additional testimony.

Any party who fails without appropriate reason to appear at the hearing consents to the hearing being conducted in their absence and to a final decision to be made based on the facts presented.

The board retains the right to continue a hearing whenever necessary and appropriate.

Either party may express its reaction in writing regarding the recommendation of the board to the Provost or their designee within

seven calendar days of receipt of the recommendation. If the seventh day falls on a weekend or holiday, the seventh day will be the first day that the University is open for business. Written submissions should be submitted to the Provost. Any stay of sanction shall be granted only upon application to and at the sole discretion of the Provost or their designee. The decision of the Provost shall be final. If the penalty being levied is an "F" in the course, the Provost will direct the registrar to enter the grade of "F" in the student's record.

NOTE: A written statement of the decision and relevant materials shall be placed in the student's academic file and sent to the student's academic advisor. In the absence of a student appeal, the recommended sanctions from the department and dean's level should be forwarded from the Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of The Graduate School to the Provost for action.

Sanctions

At the conclusion of the appeals process, a student may be exonerated or subject to any combination of the following range of penalties. If the student is found in violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, the board will not impose a penalty that is more severe than the one recommended by the faculty member for that infraction. The board shall have no knowledge of any record of previous acts of academic dishonesty when making its initial adjudication of the case. Any actions taken by the Provost will be sent to the director of the Office for Judicial Affairs and Student Assistance. A disciplinary file will be established as a permanent record of these actions.

1. The board may agree with the instructor and apply a penalty to the student's grade, including failure in the course. Further, the board may agree with the faculty member's recommendation that the student receive a more severe penalty than failure in the course and apply one of the sanctions listed below:
 - a. Expulsion: The student is informed in writing that they are being expelled from the University. This action is one of involuntary separation from the University. The relationship between the student and this University is permanently terminated. The student is not permitted on University property. There will be no adjustment of fees. The assignment of grades shall be in accordance with University policy. The fact of the expulsion and the reason for it will be entered upon the student's official transcript and upon all copies thereof. A student who has been expelled for academic dishonesty will not be awarded a degree from West Chester University.
 - b. Restitution: Restitution may be imposed on students whose violation of these standards has involved monetary loss or damage. Restitution as imposed by the board will be regarded by the University as a financial obligation to the University.
2. Hold on records: The University may withhold transcripts, grades, degrees, diplomas, or other official records pending the disposition of cases.
3. A written statement of the decision and relevant materials shall be placed in the student's academic file and sent to the student's academic advisor. In the absence of a student appeal, the recommended sanctions from the department and dean's level should be forwarded from the Dean of The Graduate School for action.

Notes

1. If the complainant is not on contract or in residence on the campus, they shall have the right to defer the procedure until their return. Similarly, if the procedure would normally occur during the summer and the student is not enrolled in any summer session, the procedure may be deferred until the fall semester at the student's request.
2. Each department must submit to the college dean and the Dean of The Graduate School its written process for hearing appeals. Likewise, the academic dean and graduate dean must submit to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs their written process for hearing appeals. These processes must, as a minimum, provide notice to all involved parties and must provide an opportunity for all parties to be heard by a neutral fact finder or body who will render a decision and permit the accused to have an advisor. Such policies and procedures should be readily available to all students of the department.