

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Undergraduate Student 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. Incidents of academic dishonesty, especially when they recur and become patterns of dishonest behavior, require that the University be in position to use more severe disciplinary measures than those available to the professor, including expulsion of the student from the University. It is therefore imperative that individual instances of academic dishonesty, accompanied by details concerning penalties, become a part of the student's academic record.

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.

As responsible members of the academic community, students are obligated to comply with the basic standards of integrity. They are also expected to take an active role in encouraging other members to respect those standards. Should a student have reason to believe that a violation of academic integrity has occurred, they are encouraged to make the suspicion known to a member of the faculty or University administration. Students should familiarize themselves with the University's policies, procedures, and definitions of types of violations, as provided in the Undergraduate Catalog.

Violations of Academic Integrity

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

1. Plagiarism
 - a. Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's work as one's own work, which can include but is not limited to words, ideas, data, visual representation of ideas, audio, video, and digital materials. When a student submits work for credit that includes the work of others, the source must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. Likewise, the sources and creators of images, videos, audio clips and other digital sources should be acknowledged through caption or direct reference. By placing their name on work submitted

to meet an academic requirement, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments. Plagiarism covers unpublished as well as published sources.

2. Fabrication
 - a. Fabrication is the use of invented information or the falsification of research, results, information, citations, or other findings.
3. Cheating
 - a. 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
 - a. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, other academically dishonest acts such as tampering with grades; or submitting false evidence or documentation; or taking part in obtaining or distributing any course content, including but not limited to tests, without the instructor's approval; 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
 - a. Facilitating academic dishonesty includes helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.
6. Breach of Standards of Professional Ethics
 - a. 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 present the evidence of an alleged violation and request an explanation from the student, both in writing within 10 business days. If the student accepts the initial charges by the faculty, and the faculty member accepts the student's explanation, no further action is taken. If the student denies the charges, or the student's explanation suggests some corrective action may be necessary, the faculty member is required to initiate within 10 business days a follow-up meeting with the student. In this case, the faculty shall communicate with the student to determine a mutually agreeable date and time for a meeting, which could take place face to face or virtually. The student will be required to respond to the meeting request within 10 business days of the initial request. Each party can bring a mutually agreed upon advisor or support person to witness the meeting. The faculty member has 10 business days to make a decision immediately following the meeting with the student. The faculty member will also inform the student of their right to file an appeal within 10 days of the faculty member's decision. In a situation where the semester runs out before the process is completed, due process will still be followed.

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.

In an event where the matter is not resolved between the faculty and the student, 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 college dean. If the faculty member is the department chair and there is no departmental board, the report will be sent directly to the dean. The dean will then forward the information to the Vice Provost or their designee. 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 faculty member who accuses the student and files the report is the department chair, and there is no departmental board, the college dean is the first step in the appeal process.

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

- Remain in the course without penalty
- 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

The faculty member may also request that their department chairperson contact the appropriate dean and request that an Academic Integrity Board be convened, for the purpose of imposing further sanctions. See below for a list of possible sanctions.

Whatever the penalty, the report describing the incident and recording the decision will be kept by the Vice Provost's designee until the student has graduated and the degree has been awarded. In addition, the Vice Provost will forward a copy of the report to the student's major department chairperson. 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 purpose is to deter students from repeating offenses. A record of the first-offense is kept in the student's academic file in the Office of the Vice Provost as an internal record and is not available to faculty who may be bringing charges against a student. Information as to whether or not such a file exists is available to individuals or committees who are writing letters of reference for students, when the form asks if the student has ever been sanctioned for academic dishonesty. The file is destroyed once the student's degree is awarded.

A second violation of the Academic Integrity Policy may result in formal charges being brought against the student. In addition to the sanctions listed above, sanctions for a second or subsequent violation may include:

- Suspension from the University for a designated period of time
- Expulsion from the University
- Any sanctions listed in the Student Code of Conduct

In the determination of penalties, the following factors may be considered:

- The nature and seriousness of the offense
- The injury or damage resulting from the misconduct
- The student's prior academic file

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 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 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 ten days to appeal the decision to the appropriate dean, if they so wish.

The progression of the appeal involves the following:

1. Chair of the department in which the course is housed (or departmental board). The appeal must be filed within ten days of the faculty decision. The chair will submit a written response to the student within ten class days after receipt of the student's appeal.
2. Dean of the department in which the course is housed. The appeal must be filed within ten days of the department's decision. The dean will submit a written response to the student within ten class days after receipt of the student's appeal.
3. WCU Academic Integrity Board. The appeal must be filed within ten days after the dean's decision. The Provost (or Provost's designee) will convene the Academic Integrity Board as soon as possible, but no later than 10 class days after the receipt of the written request.

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

Academic Integrity Board

The Academic Integrity Board may be convened under any of three sets of circumstances.

1. It may be requested by an accused student as part of the appeal process.
2. It may be requested by the faculty member who believes that a penalty that is more severe than an F in the course is warranted.
3. It will be convened automatically by the Vice Provost or their designee if a student has a second or subsequent Report of Violation of Academic Integrity placed on file.

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 Vice Provost serves as nonvoting chairperson. If the Vice Provost 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 Vice Provost 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.
4. Two undergraduate students. The undergraduate students will be selected from a list of names provided by the Office of Student

Conduct, or who are tutors at the LARC, or who are enrolled in the Honors College, or who are members of a WCU Honors Society. The director of the LARC, director of the Honors College, or the appropriate society advisor will provide the Office of Academic Affairs with a list of students who are willing to serve. Such students will be appropriately trained in procedures relating to this policy and the need for confidentiality pursuant to the Family Education 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 identity of those sitting on as part of the Academic Integrity Board 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 who 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 recorded. The audio recording of the hearing will be archived in the Office of the Provost, 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 deans 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 conduction of the hearing in their absence and for 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 and department chair. In the absence of a student appeal, the recommended sanctions from the department and dean's level should be forwarded from the dean's office to the Provost for action. 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.

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.

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. If any of the following sanctions are imposed by the Provost, they will be sent to the director of the Office of Student Conduct. A disciplinary file will be established as a permanent record of these actions.
 - a. Disciplinary probation: The student is informed in writing that they are being placed on disciplinary probation for a specific period of time. This action is a period of official censure. A probation action may specify any conditions with which the individual must comply or any privileges which may be withheld. Probation may include, but not be limited to, the loss of privilege to represent the University in official capacity including but not limited to varsity and non-varsity intercollegiate events, plays, and holding office in campus government or related organizations. If at any time during their probationary period the student violates University regulations, they may be subject to further disciplinary action from the University up to and including expulsion from the University.
 - b. Suspension: The student is informed in writing that they are being involuntarily suspended from the University for a designated period of time. A student shall lose student status and may not attend classes, take exams, receive grades, or be on University property except for authorized University business during the suspension period. Authorized University business must be approved in advance by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee. After the designated period of time, the student must seek approval from the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee

- to reapply to return through the Office of Admissions. The board may establish additional requirements which must be fulfilled to the satisfaction of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee prior to reinstatement. There will be no adjusting of fees. The assignment of grades shall be in accordance with University policy.
- c. Expulsion: The student is informed in writing that they are being expelled from the University. The 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 adjusting 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.
 - d. 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. If the student has a record of past violations of the Student Academic Integrity Policy, that student is subject to additional sanctions based upon the fact that they have a prior record of dishonesty. After the board recommends the penalty for the case in question, the board will be provided with the student's past record, if any exists. The board shall review that record and consider imposing a more stringent penalty, to include any of the penalties listed above.

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 academic dean its written process for hearing appeals. Likewise, each academic 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.
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 and department chair. In the absence of a student appeal, the recommended sanctions from the department and dean's level should be forwarded from the dean's office to the Provost for action.