

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity Policy

On August 29, 2000, the Council of Academic Deans adopted “A Statement on Academic Integrity at Penn State,” stating:

Academic integrity mandates the pursuit of teaching, learning, research, and creative activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. An academic community that values integrity promotes the highest levels of personal honesty, respect for the rights, property, and dignity of others, and fosters an environment in which students and scholars can enjoy the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment neither to engage in acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception, nor to tolerate such acts by other members of the community.

Academic integrity is a fundamental value at Penn State. It must be at the heart of all our endeavors and must guide our actions every day as students and as members of the faculty, administration, and staff. Because we expect new and continuing members of the University community to meet the high standards that are the foundation of a Penn State education, this message must be clear and reinforced frequently.

The College of Communications, in agreement with these principles, seeks to foster an environment of academic trust and integrity within its student body. Consistent with Senate Policy 49-20, the College shall establish a Committee on Academic Integrity to be comprised as follows: Three faculty members (at least one tenured member with graduate faculty status who will serve as Chair) appointed by the Dean; two students chosen by the Dean from a list of nominees provided by the College; and a Department Head from within the College. The Associate Dean will provide administrative support. The faculty members shall serve two-year terms. The student members may be appointed for one or two years and should be declared majors within the College.

The Committee is charged to develop and maintain a statement of principles of academic integrity suitable for inclusion in course syllabi and consistent with Senate and administrative policies. The faculty shall be asked to include that statement of academic integrity in all course syllabi and review that policy with students during the first week of classes.

The Chair of the Committee (or designate) shall participate in all orientation programs held for new students at the beginning of each semester to review the academic integrity policies and procedures.

The Associate Dean shall ensure that all full-time and part-time faculty members are informed of the College’s statement on academic integrity and that the statement and associated policy are part of the faculty orientation and faculty development procedures.

The Committee shall hear all cases involving violations of academic integrity formally brought to its attention. The starting point for all such cases is the faculty member bringing the charge. To formally process the complaint, the faculty member shall notify the Coordinator of Undergraduate Education in the office of the Associate Dean. The Associate Dean shall convene the Committee once a formal complaint has been contested.

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATIONS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY PROCEDURES

The process for adjudicating a formal complaint shall be as follows:

A. When Academic Dishonesty is Suspected

- (1) The faculty member must communicate the specifics of the charge to the student, while taking into account the need to respect each student's privacy and the goal of maintaining an environment that supports teaching and learning;
- (2) The faculty member must explain to the student the specific academic integrity policies at issue;
- (3) The faculty member may provide a cooling-off period after presenting a student with the allegation that she or he violated academic integrity;
- (4) The student must be provided an opportunity to explain the conduct or respond to the faculty member's charge;
- (5) The faculty member must convey to the student the action to be taken (reduction in assigned grade, reduction in course grade, etc.) and ask the student to sign the College's Academic Integrity Disposition Form;
- (6) The faculty member must explain the options to the student (i.e., accept or contest the charges) and sanction.
- (7) It is preferable that the faculty member and student meet to discuss the charges, relevant academic integrity policies, proposed disciplinary action and student options. When circumstances prohibit such a meeting, however, the instructor may communicate the relevant information by email to the student's PSU access account.
- (8) Following the faculty student meeting or email communication, the student will have five business days to respond and to sign the Academic Integrity Disposition Form, accepting or contesting the charges and sanction(s). If the student fails to sign the form within that time period, the process will move forward as if the student had accepted responsibility for the allegation.

B. If the Student Accepts Responsibility for the Violation and the Proposed Academic Sanction

- (1) If the student accepts the charges and the faculty member's sanction or fails to respond within the allotted time period, the Disposition Form will be considered complete, and will be delivered to the Coordinator for Undergraduate Education for transmittal to the Office of Student Conduct. This closes the academic sanction element of the case;
- (2) In all cases, before submitting the Academic Integrity Form to the Office of Student Conduct for recording, it is the responsibility of the Office of the Associate Dean to determine through consultation with Student Conduct if the student has prior academic integrity violations.
- (3) If a prior recorded violation is discovered after the Form has been submitted to the Coordinator for Undergraduate

Education, a new academic sanction may be considered. Information concerning prior academic misconduct may not be used as a basis for judging a student's guilt, but it may be used as a basis for imposing additional academic sanctions or deciding whether disciplinary action is also warranted.

(4) The faculty member may opt to pursue disciplinary action in conjunction with the College Academic Integrity Committee and the Office of Student Conduct.

(5) Throughout the academic integrity process, grading authority remains the responsibility of the instructor.

C. If the Student Does Not Admit Responsibility for an Academic Integrity Violation

(1) If the student contests the charges and/or academic sanction(s), then the faculty member forwards the case to the Academic Integrity Committee, which shall be convened to hold a hearing on the charges;

(2) Bringing the case is the responsibility of the instructor of record. If the charges are based in whole or in part on evidence or reports provided by a teaching assistant, the instructor must have reviewed the evidence or report and be willing to personally stand behind it, and it becomes part of his or her case;

(3) The student shall have the right to at least ten days notice of the hearing. The student shall have the right to appear before the Committee to contest the charges and/or to provide additional relevant information. Such information must be submitted to the Committee at least five business days in advance of the hearing. The student will have the right to be accompanied by an advisor; to examine all relevant documents; to take notes; and to be heard in response to witnesses or evidence presented;

(4) The student may waive his or her right to attend the hearing, in which case the Committee may proceed with an administrative review based on the written record, including submissions by the student, to reach a conclusion;

(5) The faculty member shall have the right to appear before the Committee to discuss the charge.

(6) In reaching its conclusion with respect to a violation, the Committee shall be guided by the standard of clear and convincing evidence;

(7) The Committee will reach its conclusion and issue its report within ten days of the conclusion of the hearing and the submission of all relevant evidence;

(8) The student may at any time during this process revoke his or her decision to contest the allegation and accept the academic sanction imposed by the instructor, at which time the hearing process will terminate;

(9) The Committee may concur in the academic sanction proposed by the instructor or it may suggest a different sanction. In case of the latter, the Committee may meet with the instructor to discuss its suggestion. If the Committee does not find sufficient evidence to support the allegation of a violation of academic integrity, it shall recommend that no sanction be applied.

(10) The results of that hearing (and any sanction imposed) shall be reported to the Associate Dean who will, in turn, transmit the information to the Office of Student Conduct.

D. Disciplinary Sanctions and the “XF” Grade

(1) In any instance in which the instructor believes disciplinary sanctions are warranted, and whether or not the student has admitted responsibility, the case is forwarded to the College Academic Integrity Committee for administrative review and determination of possible academic sanctions. The case then is forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct for appropriate fact finding and judgment and possible disciplinary action, including the XF grade;

(2) An “XF” grade is a formal University disciplinary sanction;

(3) “XF” sanctions are only recorded with the concurrence of the instructor, the College Academic Integrity Committee, and the Office of Student Conduct. Reliance on the “XF” should be a rare occurrence and reserved for the most serious breaches of academic integrity;

(4) If an “XF” grade has been given and placed on the student’s permanent transcript, the student may subsequently appeal to the Committee for its removal (and replacement with an academic “F”) based on additional information not reasonably available to be provided at the original hearing. The Committee will receive and review such information, and will forward it to the Office of Student Conduct with its recommendation.

Nothing in this Policy or Procedure shall be contrary to the policies and procedures outlined in Research Administration Policy RA-10 or Administrative Policy AD-47 which set forth statement of general standards of professional ethics within the academic community, and which provide procedures to follow in cases of alleged misconduct in research or other scholarly activities that are normally handled through research administration channels.

College of Communications

Adopted Language on Academic Integrity

For College of Communications’ Syllabi

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly and creative activity in an open, honest and responsible manner, free from fraud and deception, and is an educational objective of the College of Communications and the University. Cheating, including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in someone else’s work, or passively allowing others to copy your work, will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor. In serious cases it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the university or in the grade of “XF” (failed for academic dishonesty) being put on your permanent transcript.

As students studying communication, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own). A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at:

<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/plagiarism/tutorial/cutpaste/>

The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20, and in the College of Communications document, “Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures.” Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to

discuss it with his or her instructor.

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