

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic integrity is an essential component of a Worcester State University education. Education is both the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills that lead to further intellectual development. Faculty are expected to follow strict principles of intellectual honesty in their own scholarship; students are held to the same standard. Only by doing their own work can students gain the knowledge, skills, confidence and self-worth that come from earned success; only by learning how to gather information, to integrate it and to communicate it effectively, to identify an idea and follow it to its logical conclusion can they develop the habits of mind characteristic of educated citizens. Taking shortcuts to higher or easier grades results in a Worcester State University experience that is intellectually bankrupt.

Academic integrity is important to the integrity of the Worcester State University community as a whole. If Worcester State University awards degrees to students who have not truly earned them, a reputation for dishonesty and incompetence will follow all graduates. Violators cheat their classmates out of deserved rewards and recognition. Academic dishonesty debases the institution and demeans the degree from that institution.

It is in the interest of students, faculty, and administrators to recognize the importance of academic integrity and to ensure that academic standards at Worcester State University remain strong. Only by maintaining high standards of academic honesty can WSU protect the value of the educational process and the credibility of the institution and its graduates in the larger community.

What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty?

Academic dishonesty includes intentional violations of accepted standards of ethics and academic integrity as well as negligent violations of standards that the individual reasonably should have known and followed. The following is not an exhaustive list of violations but provides guidelines for evaluating common areas of concern, such as cheating, plagiarism and falsification of information. Violations of academic honesty include:

1. **Cheating**, including but not limited to:
 - a. traditional cheating methods including copying on exams or assignments, letting other students copy one's own work, using crib sheets in quizzes and tests, glancing at other students' work, or giving answers to other students
 - b. giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in exams, laboratory exercises or other academic assignments or attempting to do so, or using unauthorized materials or information sources on tests or assignments, including communication via cell phones or computers or use of materials stored on or accessed by computer or other digital media, or collaboration between or among more than one student on an assignment that is supposed to be done individually
 - c. submitting someone else's work as one's own or allowing others to claim one's own work as theirs, including misrepresenting one's identity in an online course or allowing others to do so
 - d. obtaining from any source an unauthorized copy of a test or assignment or portion of a test or assignment, and/or disseminating such material through any means, including cell phone or computer.
2. **Plagiarism**, including but not limited to:
 - a. use of other people's ideas, words, research or artistic creations without giving credit
 - i. submitting any work, including homework, not done by the person who hands it in and whose name is on it
 - ii. submitting papers or other work purchased, copied or obtained free in whole or part from another source, including papers from the internet or from another person, including a friend or a relative
 - iii. using another person's unpublished ideas without permission, taking credit for another person's unpublished ideas, or taking sole credit for the product of joint efforts with another person.
 - b. improper or inadequate citation of material from books, professional periodicals, magazines, websites, unpublished reports, personal communications, images, graphic materials or other citable sources
 - i. use of facts, data, or specific ideas without citing the source
 - ii. inaccurate or incomplete citation of sources
 - iii. quoting another's words without indicating it is a quotation
 - iv. using extensive quotations in place of one's own ideas, even when cited.

Note: standards and forms for citation vary among disciplines and even among teachers. Students should ask their teachers about the expectations for any particular course or project.
1. **Misrepresentation** or falsification of information, including but not limited to:
 - a. intentionally misrepresenting information to help make a point not supported by the work, including misquoting or taking ideas out of context
 - b. falsifying the collection or interpretation of data in a research project
 - c. citing sources not used
 - d. falsifying one's qualifications, including academic background or other experience.
2. **Seeking credit for the same work** in more than one course, including but not limited to:
 - a. submitting the same paper or project, or significant parts of the same paper or project, to two or more different courses without getting permission from the professors who give the grades
 - b. using the same internship or fieldwork experience for two or more different courses without prior permission from the professors and internship supervisors involved.
3. **Other academic misconduct**, including but not limited to:
 - a. forging, damaging or changing examinations, grades or other academic material or records including written and/or electronic material and records
 - b. interfering with or damaging another student's work including homework, papers, laboratory assignments, artistic creations or research projects
 - c. removing or damaging academic material or equipment, including electronic data, belonging to Worcester State University or any other member of the Worcester State University community
 - d. deliberately making a false report of academic misconduct or covering up an incident of academic misconduct.

What Are Possible Sanctions?

If the instructor chooses to resolve this issue without referring it to the Academic Judicial Board, he or she has the power to give the student penalties such as a warning, a new assignment or test to replace the one which was not done honestly, or a failing grade on the work in question or in the class. Instructors do not have the power to assign community service or to expel the student: those penalties are in the power of the Academic Affairs Office/Academic Judicial Board only.

Typically, instructors will use these powers to deter the student from cheating in the future without branding the student as dishonest in any official record; they may warn the student that they will come forward with proof of this infraction if they hear that the student has repeated the offense. Instructors may choose to give warnings, require new work, and/or give failing grades on assignments will do so the first time a student turns in dishonest work; a failing grade in the class is usually reserved for repeat offenders and serious, deliberate offenses such as turning in work done by another student as one's own, using electronic means to get answers during in-class exams, or stealing exams or answer keys before a test.

The student has the right to appeal any instructor's decision to the Academic Judicial Board, which may uphold or change the instructor's decision.

The Judicial Board may assign penalties ranging from a warning to expulsion. Comprised of faculty, students, and administrators, its membership is designed to be aware of the differences between different kinds of academic dishonesty and of the strains and temptations that may lead to bad decisions.

Unless it is dealing with repeat offenders, the Judicial Board will probably respond to minor infractions with failing grades on the particular assignment in question or in the course. Deliberate dishonesty, such as use of answer keys or electronic aids during exams, theft of examination papers prior to the test, submission as one's own of work done by another student or found or purchased online, etc. should be grounds for a failing grade in the course, with community service hours in addition as a possibility.

Repeated infractions would put offenders at risk of expulsion, as would extremely serious offenses, like stealing an examination and sharing it with other students before the test or having another student take a test in one's place in an online course.

Students at risk of expulsion will be given a written warning, which they will be required to sign and return within 10 working days.

Acts that are not only dishonest, but criminal, like changing a grade through illegal access to Worcester State University computers, can be punished by expulsion without prior warning.

Undergraduate Policies and Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty

1. Students' Rights

- a. Students will have the presumption of innocence until proven guilty.
- b. Students will continue their student status unless and until sanctions are imposed at the conclusion of judicial sanctions which would limit or remove this status.

- c. Students are allowed to have an advisor of their choosing at hearings of the Academic Judicial Board. The advisor may counsel the student during the hearing but may not address the Board.
- d. Students are allowed to view evidence against them.
- e. Hearings at the Academic Judicial Board will proceed even if the student does not appear. However, the student's absence cannot be the reason a student is found guilty.
- f. Students will be notified by a message to their Worcester State University email address if a report is being made concerning them in the Central File.
- g. Students may review their records in the Central File within 45 days of the day Worcester State University receives a request for access, as stated in FERPA.
- h. Students may ask Worcester State University to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading.
Students should submit to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs written requests that identify that they wish to view their record(s) in the Central File. The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
If the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs decides not to amend the record as requested by the student, Worcester State University will notify the student of the decision and advise the student of his or her right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.

2. Initiation

In cases involving the violation of academic integrity, students and faculty are strongly encouraged to resolve matters without resorting to official judicial proceedings. If the faculty member and student are unable to resolve the issue themselves, the chair of the department in which the course was taken should be asked to mediate. If resolution is not possible at this level, the case will go to the Academic Judicial Board (refer to 3 below).

Faculty members and appropriate administrators are strongly urged to report any violations of academic integrity to the Academic Central File.

3. Academic Central File

An Academic Central File of students proven to have violated Worcester State University's Academic Honesty Policy will be kept in the Office of Academic Affairs. Only the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs or his/her designee will have direct access to the Central File. A file will only be created for a student upon a case's final resolution with a faculty member, with a department chair, or with the Academic Judicial Board.

Faculty members have the option of reporting students to the Academic Central File. Reports, which are statements of resolutions of cases and not allegations, that are sent to the Academic Central File must be supported with proof of some kind. For example, the instructor may submit a copy of a plagiarized paper along with a printout of the same paper from the Internet. A faculty member who reports a student for the kind of cheating that can't be proved without a camera (copying from the person in the next chair, sneaking a peak at the book in a closed-book test, asking a classmate for an answer)

must provide the reasons for the accusation in writing. Students who are added to the Academic Central File will be informed of the fact in writing.

Reporting a student is not necessarily linked to a disciplinary action; the faculty member still has discretion over whether to take the case to a judicial hearing. In special cases, when the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs notices that a student has two or more significant violations in the Central File, he or she can refer the case to the Academic Judicial Board, which may then initiate disciplinary proceedings against this student.

Faculty members who provide evidence that a student in their course has violated the Academic Honesty Policy may make an inquiry to the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs or his/her/their designee to find out if a student has a file, and if so, how many times he/she has been reported to the Academic Central File. Relevant information limited to the student's name and number of times he/she has been reported to the Central File may be disclosed to a faculty member to assist in making decisions regarding cases of academic honesty. The procedures by which students access these files will be the same as those for accessing their academic records. The Academic Judicial Board, in the course of deciding a case of academic dishonesty, may access a student's file. A student's files are purged according to current FERPA rules. Students' files are purged upon graduation, withdrawal, dismissal or transfer from Worcester State University. A student may confirm that his/her/their file has been deleted by writing to the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs or his/her/their designee.

4. Academic Judicial Board

At any point beyond the departmental level, either the student or the faculty member may elect to take the issue to the Academic Judicial Board following the procedures outlined below.

- a. A student may request an Academic Judicial Board hearing
 - i. because she or he has been unable to resolve an accusation of academic dishonesty with a faculty member or the chair of that faculty member's department
 - ii. in response to a notice that an Academic Central File posting is to be made.
The student makes this request, in writing, to the Chairperson of the Academic Judicial Board, in care of the Office of Academic Affairs.
- b. Any member of the Worcester State University community may report any student to the Academic Judicial Board for violations of the Academic Honesty Policy. Reports shall be prepared in writing, directed to the Chairperson of the Academic Judicial Board (in care of the Office of Academic Affairs), and submitted as soon as possible after the incident takes place, preferably within 30 days. The Chairperson has the authority to extend this timeframe on a case-to-case basis.
- c. The Chairperson will determine if the complaint lacks merit and/or if it can be disposed of by mutual consent of the parties involved on a basis acceptable to the Chairperson. Such disposition shall be final, and there shall be no subsequent proceedings. If the case cannot be disposed of by mutual consent, the matter will proceed to the Academic Judicial Board.
- d. All charges shall be presented to the accused student in writing via certified mail with return receipt requested; the same letter will also be sent by first class mail to the student's current address as registered with Worcester State University. The hearing shall be scheduled not less than seven or more than fifteen calendar days after the student has been notified. All parties shall receive

at least seven days advance written notice of the date, time and place of the hearing. Maximum time limits for scheduling of hearings may be extended at the discretion of the Chairperson.

- e. The Chairperson will schedule an Academic Judicial Board hearing.
 - i. The hearing will be conducted by the Chairperson of the Academic Judicial Board, chosen by the board members.
 - ii. The Academic Judicial Board is comprised of two faculty members, one administrator and two students. The faculty members are appointed by the MSCA. The administrative member is appointed by the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs. The student members are appointed by the Student Government.
 - iii. A quorum of three members must be present to convene a hearing.
- f. Hearings shall be conducted by the Academic Judicial Board according to the following guidelines:
 - i. All procedural questions are subject to the final decision of the Chairperson of the Academic Judicial Board present at the hearing.
 - ii. Hearings shall be conducted in private.
 - iii. In hearings involving more than one accused student, the Chairperson of the Academic Judicial Board, at his or her discretion, may permit the hearings concerning each student to be conducted separately.
 - iv. The complainant and the accused each have the right to be assisted by an advisor from the Worcester State University community. Advisors may counsel their respective party during the hearings, as permitted by the Academic Judicial Board. Advisors are not permitted to participate directly in the hearing.
 - v. The complainant, the accused and the Academic Judicial Board shall have the privilege of presenting witnesses to any violations of academic integrity. The accused and the complainant shall have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses presented by the other. Members of the Academic Judicial Board shall have the right to question any witnesses.
 - vi. All hearings are closed to friends and relatives of the accused unless they were actual witnesses to the violation of academic integrity. Witnesses are excluded from the hearing except when called to testify.
 - vii. Pertinent records, exhibits and written statements may be accepted for consideration by the Academic Judicial Board at the discretion of the chairperson.
 - viii. After the hearing, the Academic Judicial Board shall determine by majority vote whether the student has violated Worcester State University's standards of academic honesty.
 - ix. The Academic Judicial Board's determination shall be made on the basis of whether it is more likely than not that the accused student violated the rules of academic honesty in the manner charged against him or her.
- g. A written record of Academic Judicial Board proceedings shall be made by the Board or its secretary. This record shall be the property of Worcester State University and will be housed in the Office of Academic Affairs. The record will state the final decision of the Board, a statement of the Board's findings of fact, its determination of the provision(s) of the Academic Honesty Policy, if any, that the student violated and the sanction(s), if any,

imposed. The record may also include a summation of witness testimony. A copy of the final decision shall be given to the complainant and the accused.

- h. Students may not be found to have violated the Academic Honesty Code solely because they fail to appear before a judicial body for a scheduled hearing. In all cases, the materials and information in support of the charges shall be presented and considered, as the hearing will be held in the absence of the student, should he/she fail to attend.
- i. In the absence of a functioning Academic Judicial Board or Academic Board of Appeals, such as during exams or during the summer and semester breaks, disciplinary hearings (under this Section 3, and the following Section 4) will be the responsibility of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs or his/her designee. When he/she deems it appropriate, a hearing may be postponed until the beginning of the new semester.
- j. Possible sanctions that the Academic Judicial Board could impose would depend upon the severity of the offense; however, the Board could choose to uphold the original faculty decision or impose another punishment, which might include failing the course, expulsion from the major or program, or expulsion from Worcester State University.

5. Academic Judicial Board of Appeals

The purpose of the Academic Judicial Board of Appeals is to conduct procedural reviews of cases. It is not intended as an evidentiary panel. It is not the job of the Academic Judicial Board of Appeals to hear new evidence.

- a. A decision reached by the Academic Judicial Board may be appealed by the accused student(s) or the complainant to the Academic Judicial Board of Appeals within five working days of the date of the decision letter. Such appeals shall be in writing and shall be delivered to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs or his/her designee.
- b. The Academic Judicial Board of Appeals will consist of one administrator, two students and two faculty members and will be chosen in the same manner as the members of the Academic Judicial Board (see 4.e.ii. above). The administrator in this case, will be the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs or his/her designee.
- c. In cases where the student files an appeal, the complainant, and, in cases that were decided by Academic Judicial Board hearing, the Chairperson of that Board, shall be notified. In cases where the appeal is not initiated by the student, the student shall be notified.
- d. An appeal is not a new hearing but is a review of the summation/record of the initial hearing and supporting documents for one or more of the following purposes:
 - i. to determine whether the original hearing was conducted fairly in light of the charges and evidence presented, and in conformity with prescribed procedures
 - ii. to determine whether the finding of responsibility or no responsibility is supported by the weight of the evidence
 - iii. to determine whether the sanctions imposed were inappropriate.
- e. When the appellant wishes to introduce new evidence, sufficient to alter a decision, or other relevant facts not brought out in the original hearing, because the person appealing did not know such evidence and/or facts at the time of the original hearing, the Chairperson of the Academic Judicial Board of Appeal (the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs) will decide

whether to instruct the Academic Judicial Board to convene a new hearing of the case. If a case is returned to the Academic Judicial Board for consideration of new evidence, all parties shall have equal opportunities to submit new material.

- f. Upon completion of the appellate hearing, the Academic Judicial Board of Appeals shall promptly notify the accused student, the complainant and the chair of the Academic Judicial Board of the outcome of the appeal. Said decision(s) shall take one of the following forms:
 - Appeal Upheld:** the appellant's request for relief has been honored. In the case of an upheld appeal, the new findings/sanctions shall be stated;
 - or
 - Appeal Denied:** the appellant's request for relief is denied and the finding(s) and/or sanction(s) stand.
- g. In extraordinary circumstances, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs or his/her designee may waive the deadline for filing an appeal. The decision to waive or not to waive a deadline shall be final and shall not be subject to any appeal.
- h. No disciplinary sanction shall be imposed while an appeal is pending unless the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs determines that such action would be in the best interest of the Worcester State University community.

6. Administrative Failing Grade

In cases where the sanction for academic dishonesty is determined to be a failing grade for the course, the Registrar will be informed immediately. The Registrar will record an administrative failure. Such a grade is not subject to withdrawal or appeal. A student who receives a failing grade for a course due to a violation of academic honesty cannot eradicate that failure through the normal grade appeal process or by withdrawing from the course.