

Academic Integrity Policy and Process

This policy addresses academic integrity violations of undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate students should read inside the parenthesis below to identify the appropriate entities in charge of that step of the process.

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators of Western Carolina University (WCU) strive to achieve the highest standards of scholarship and integrity. Any violation of the Academic Integrity Policy is a serious offense because it threatens the quality of scholarship and undermines the integrity of the community. While academic in scope, any violation of this policy is by nature, a violation of the student code of conduct (see Article IV.B.1.a.)

Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy include:

Cheating - Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.

Fabrication – Creating and/or falsifying information or citation in any academic exercise.

Plagiarism - Representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise.

Facilitation - Helping or attempting to help someone to commit a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy in any academic exercise (e.g. allowing another to copy information during an examination)

The procedures for cases involving allegations of academic dishonesty are:

Undergraduate (Graduate) Process

Graduate students should read inside the parenthesis to identify the appropriate entities in charge of that step of the process.

1. Instructors have the right to determine the appropriate sanction or sanctions for violations of the Academic Integrity Policy within their courses up to and including a final grade of "F" in the course. Within five (5) calendar days of the instructor's knowledge of the alleged violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, the instructor will inform his/her department head (Associate Dean of the Graduate School) in writing of the allegation and sanction.
2. The department head (graduate program director) will meet with the student to inform him/her orally and in writing of the allegation and the sanction imposed by the instructor within ten (10) calendar days of written notice from the instructor. Prior to this meeting, the department head (graduate program director) will contact the Department of Student Community Ethics (DSCE) to establish if the student has any record of previous academic integrity violations. If a previous academic integrity violation exists, the matter must be referred directly to the DSCE. In instances where a program does not have a department head (graduate program director), the Dean or Associate Dean of the college will assume the duties of department head (graduate program director) for alleged violations of the Academic Integrity Policy.
3. If the case is a first offense, the student can choose to accept the allegation and sanction from the instructor by signing a Mutual Agreement with the department head (graduate program director) or can choose to have a hearing with the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board). Within ten (10) calendar days of the meeting with the student, the department head (graduate program director) will 1) report the student's choice of action in writing to the DSCE, 2) file a copy of the Mutual Agreement (when applicable) with the DSCE, and 3) inform the student of the sanction or sanctions to be imposed under the Mutual Agreement or inform the student of the procedure for requesting a hearing with the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) if the Mutual Agreement is not accepted. Mutual Agreements are final and are not subject to further review or appeal.
4. In instances of second offenses, or when the student chooses a hearing, the DSCE and student will schedule a hearing orientation meeting to: discuss the hearing process and schedule a hearing date no less than ten (10) and no more than fifteen (15) calendar days from the hearing orientation meeting. The student can waive minimum notice of a hearing; however, extensions are at the sole discretion of

the DSCE. Should the student choose not to attend his/her hearing orientation meeting, a hearing date will be assigned to the student.

5. Hearings shall be conducted by a judicial body according to the following guidelines:
 - (a) Hearings normally shall be conducted in private.
 - (b) Admission of any person to the hearing shall be at the discretion of the hearing body and/or the DSCE.
 - (c) Charges against multiple students involved in the same incident may be heard in a single hearing only if the accused student(s), complainant(s), and the DSCE consent to such a proceeding.
 - (d) The complainant and the accused have the right to be assisted by any adviser they choose, at their own expense. The complainant and/or the accused is responsible for presenting his or her own case. Advisers are not permitted to speak or to participate directly in any hearing before a hearing body.
 - (e) The DSCE and the hearing body must assure that the accused student has the capability to present his/her information and defense at the hearing. The method for assuring this capability may vary depending on the nature of the case. Upon a determination of incapability, the DSCE must advise the accused to seek assistance or may assign an adviser to the accused.
 - (f) Prior to the hearing, the complainant, and the accused have the right to review any written information that will be used at the hearing and to obtain a list of witnesses intended to be called.
 - (g) Pertinent records, exhibits, and written statements may be accepted as information for consideration by a hearing body to the extent that the information is relevant, credible, not prejudicial to the fairness of the proceedings, and does not otherwise infringe upon the rights of other students.
 - (h) All procedural questions are subject to the final decision of the chairperson of the hearing body.
 - (i) During the closed deliberations of the hearing, the hearing body shall determine by majority vote (if the hearing body consists of more than one person) whether the student has violated each section of the code with which the student has been charged.
 - (j) The hearing body's determination shall be made on the basis of whether it is more likely than not (a preponderance of the information) that the accused student violated the code.
 - (k) The following order of presentation is recommended for use in formal hearings. The order may be changed at the discretion of the chairperson.
 1. Presentation of formal charges.
 2. Opening statements by the complainant and by the accused.
 3. Presentation of information and witnesses, and cross-examination by the complainant and by the accused.
 4. Closing statements by the complainant and then by the accused.
 5. The hearing body will then go into closed deliberations. The accused student, complainant, and all witnesses, unless released by the chairperson, are required to remain in close proximity to the hearing, should the hearing body need to recall.
 6. When deliberations are complete, the accused student is recalled and the chairperson verbally delivers the finding of the hearing body. The hearing is then officially complete and all persons are released.
6. There shall be a single verbatim record, such as a recording, of all hearings before a hearing body. The record shall be the property of the university.
7. In all cases, the information in support of the charges shall be presented and considered. Thus, if the accused student chooses not to be present at his/her hearing, the hearing will continue in absentia. A student's absence at his/her hearing is not a violation of the code; however it prevents that student's voice from being heard.
8. During the closed deliberations of the hearing, the hearing body shall deliberate to determine if the accused is responsible for violations of the code. If responsibility for a violation is found, the hearing body will impose appropriate sanctions as outlined in Article V, Section B. After a finding of responsibility and before determination of sanctions, the hearing body may review the disciplinary history of the accused student and/or victim-impact statements. If the hearing body determines that expulsion is an appropriate sanction, that finding must be in the form of a recommendation to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, who makes the final administrative decision in all expulsion cases. Final administrative decision must be reached within forty-five (45) calendar days and transmitted in writing to the student within ten (10) calendar days of the decision.

9. In cases other than those which result in a recommendation of expulsion, the final administrative decision must be transmitted to the student in writing within ten (10) calendar days of the date the decision is made, and it must contain a brief summary of the information upon which the decision is based and appeal rights must be specified by the DSCE.
10. The Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) will consist of two (2) students from the DSCE Student Hearing Board (Graduate Student Representatives) and three (3) faculty members (Graduate Faculty Representatives). The DSCE faculty fellow may be one of the faculty members and may serve as the chair. The other two (2) faculty members will be chosen by the DSCE from a pool of twelve (12) faculty hearing officers. Each academic year, each college dean will appoint two (2) faculty members from his/her college to comprise the pool of twelve (12) faculty hearing officers. In the event that there is no Department of Student Community Ethics faculty fellow the third faculty member on any Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) will be chosen from the pool. Hearings will be held in a student's absence when a student fails to attend the hearing for any reason. Refer to Article V.A.7 for additional information. The Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) may impose any sanctions as outlined in Article V.B. in the Code of Student Conduct. Students given a sanction of probation for a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy will remain on probation at WCU until graduation.
11. Following a decision from the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board), the DSCE will inform the student of the outcome of the hearing. If a student is found responsible, the DSCE will inform him/her of the sanction(s) to be imposed and of his/her right to file an appeal with the University Academic Problems Committee (Graduate Council). If the student does not file an appeal within five (5) calendar days the sanction(s) from the hearing body will be imposed. The appeal is limited to the following rules, procedures, and existing verbatim record.

Grounds for Appeal:

Except as required to explain the basis of new evidence, an appeal shall be limited to review of the verbatim record of the initial hearing and supporting documents for one or more of the following purposes to be included in the letter of appeal:

- to determine whether the original hearing was conducted fairly: in light of the charges and evidence presented, in conformity with prescribed procedures, and giving both parties a reasonable opportunity to prepare and to present a rebuttal of allegations
- to determine whether the decision reached regarding the accused student was based on substantial evidence: whether the facts in the case were sufficient to establish that a violation of the code occurred
- to determine whether the sanction(s) imposed was (were) appropriate for the violation(s) of the code which the student was found responsible
- to consider new evidence: sufficient to alter a decision, other relevant facts not brought out in the original hearing, evidence and/or facts that were not known to the person appealing at the time of the original hearing.

Process for Appeal:

- Based on the grounds listed above, any decision reached or sanction imposed by the hearing body shall be afforded at least one level of appeal. In cases that do not result in university suspension/expulsion the decision made by the Academic Problems Committee (Graduate Council) is final and there will be no further appeals.
- Cases that result in a sanction of university suspension/expulsion can be appealed to the Academic Problems Committee (Graduate Council), and then to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, and then to the Chancellor.
- Cases can be appealed by the accused student or the complainant.
- A formal notice of appeal shall be in writing and shall be delivered to the appellate body within five (5) calendar days of the decision.

Timeline for Appeal:

- A formal written appeal is due to the Academic Problems Committee (Graduate Council) within five (5) calendar days of the hearing, or receipt of the hearing findings letter, whichever is first.
- Upon receipt of the appeal, the Academic Problems Committee (Graduate Council) must render a decision within five (5) calendar days, and notice of the appellate decision must be communicated within ten (10) calendar days of the decision.
- Should the student have the ability and wish to appeal that decision, a formal written appeal is due to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs within five (5) calendar days of the receipt of the hearing findings letter.
- Should the student have the ability and wish to appeal to appeal that decision, a formal written appeal is due to the Chancellor within five (5) calendar days of the receipt of the hearing findings letter.
- At all times, the DSJA reserves the authority to make exceptions to timelines on a case-by-case basis (e.g. university closures, holidays, ends of semester, etc.)

Outcomes of Appeal

- If an appellate body upholds the findings of the hearing body, the review of the case may result in reduced or adjusted sanctions, but may not increase the sanctions imposed by the original hearing body.
- Procedures for appeals are determined by the appellate body and shall be communicated to the appealing student in advance of the appeal.
- If the appeal is denied, the student must comply with the original sanctions.
- If the imposed deadlines for the sanctions need modification, in light of the duration of the appeal process, the students must make the request for an extension in writing to the DSCE within forty-eight (48) hours of the notification of the appeal findings.

12. Upon final resolution of a case involving suspension or expulsion, the DSCE will inform the appropriate dean, department head (Graduate Program Director), and the administrator in the One Stop Office who is responsible for University Withdrawals of the sanction.

Any violation of the Academic Integrity policy, including a first offense, may place the student in jeopardy of suspension from the university. A repeated violation or more serious first offense may result in expulsion. Disciplinary records for any act of academic dishonesty are retained by the DSCE for at least seven (7) years from the date of final adjudication, or one (1) year after the student graduates, whichever is longer. These records are available to prospective employers and other educational institutions in accordance with federal regulations.

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