

# Academic Integrity at Washington State University

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*A Reference Guide for Faculty*



*World Class. Face to Face.*

Academic Integrity at Washington State University  
Tri-Cities  
A Reference Guide for Faculty

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Academic integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and violations can disrupt the educational process for faculty and students. While as a faculty member, you are at the frontline when these violations occur; adjudicating academic dishonesty is not an issue that rests solely on the shoulders of faculty; it has complex roots, requiring a comprehensive culture change toward integrity as a primary institutional value.



Dishonest acts by students complicate faculty work life by creating a culture of surveillance instead of scholarship. The classroom is not only a place for learning a subject but also learning a culture and faculty members are the cardinal force to influence culture while producing knowledge. By placing the needed value on academic integrity in your classroom you help facilitate a culture of scholarship and integrity at WSU.

The transition from high school or community college to a residential scholarly community provides many challenges and learning opportunities for our students. Understanding the value of ideas, thoughts and how that becomes intellectual property

proves to be a difficult, often abstract concept for new students.

Our challenge is to educate our students to understand that academic integrity violations are not simply against the rules but against the greater philosophy of higher education. The Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Services aims to promote personal responsibility by taking advantage of the teaching moments that these violations create. We expect our students to have a clear understanding of the Standards of Conduct for Students and to live, work, and play within the perimeters defined by life in a scholarly community. By partnering with faculty, we believe a needed culture change toward integrity will empower our students to take pride in their individual work and add a greater value to their personal educational career here at WSU.

This reference manual is designed to: 1) clearly define academic integrity violations and offer sample language for documents; 2) assist you with reporting and protocol procedures; and finally 3) provide clarity on the appeal process and the rights and responsibilities of members of our community.



## Definitions of Academic Integrity Violations (WAC 504-26-010)

The following definitions include the various types of academic dishonesty in which a student at WSU can be held responsible for violating. These definitions are found in the [Standards of Conduct for Students](#) (WAC 504-26-010).

### **Cheating**

Use of unauthorized materials in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations, or giving or receiving unauthorized assistance by any means, including talking, copying information from another student, using electronic devices, or taking an examination for another student.

### **Unauthorized Sources**

Use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments.

### **Stealing Tests**

Acquisition or possession of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university faculty or staff when acquired without the permission of the university faculty or staff member.

### **Fabrication**

Fabrication is the intentional invention or counterfeiting of information in the course of an academic activity. Fabrication includes, but is not limited to:

Counterfeiting data, research results, information, or procedures with inadequate foundation in fact; counterfeiting a record of internship or practicum experiences; submitting a false excuse for absence or tardiness or a false explanation for failing to complete a class requirement or scheduled examination at the appointed date and time.

### **Unfair Advantage**

Engaging in any behavior for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion.

### **Scientific Misconduct**

Falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, or other forms of dishonesty in scientific and scholarly research are prohibited. Complaints and inquiries involving cases of scientific misconduct are managed according to the University's policy for responding to allegations of scientific misconduct. A finding of scientific misconduct is subject to sanctions by the Office

Student Standards and Accountability. The policy for responding to allegations of scientific misconduct may be reviewed by contacting the vice provost for research.

### **Collaboration**

Unless otherwise explicitly stated by the faculty member or outlined in the syllabus, the expectation is that all academic work be conducted on an individual basis.

### **Unauthorized Knowledge**

Intentionally obtaining unauthorized knowledge of examination materials.

### **Plagiarism**

Presenting the information, ideas, or phrasing of another person as the student's own work without proper acknowledgement of the source. This includes submitting a commercially prepared paper or research project or submitting for academic credit any work done by someone else. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of

## Definitions continued...

## Syllabus Statements

another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

### Multiple Submission

Unauthorized multiple submission of the same work.

### Sabotage

The sabotage of others' work.

### Records

Tampering with or falsifying records.



It is helpful if you clarify academic and behavioral expectations at the beginning of the semester, and reach an agreement with students on standards for classroom conduct. When establishing guidelines for behavior in your course, ***it is important that you only articulate the standards you are willing to enforce.*** You have broad authority to manage your classroom, exercise that authority with compassion and self-restraint. Apply standards fairly and consistently, as students will recognize and resent perceived unfairness.

Emphasizing the importance of academic integrity in the course syllabus will assist you in addressing it on the first day of class. Information should specify what academic behaviors are prohibited, how you will manage academic integrity violations, and any consequences that may result. The following are suggested syllabus statements:

*Academic integrity will be strongly enforced in this course. Any student caught cheating on any assignment will be given an F grade for the course and will be reported to the Office Student Standards and Accountability. Cheating is defined in the Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). It is strongly suggested that you read and understand these definitions:*

<http://tricitities.wsu.edu/conduct/know-the-code/>

*I encourage you to work with classmates on assignments. However, each student must turn in original work. No copying will be accepted. Students who violate WSU's Standards of Conduct for Students will receive an F as a final grade in this course, will not have the option to withdraw from the course and will be reported to the Office Student Standards and Accountability. Cheating is defined in the Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3). It is strongly suggested that you read and understand these definitions:*

<http://tricitities.wsu.edu/conduct/know-the-code/>

*Academic integrity is the cornerstone of the university. Any student who attempts to gain an unfair advantage over other students by cheating, will fail the assignment and be reported to the Office Student Standards and Accountability. Cheating is defined in the Standards for Student Conduct WAC 504-26-010 (3).*

<http://tricitities.wsu.edu/conduct/know-the-code/>



## Addressing a Violation: The Initial Hearing

When you believe a violation has occurred in your classroom it is important to address the violation in the following manner:

- 1) Assemble the evidence, including; the offending work, statements by any witnesses, and original sources if plagiarism charge. The standard of proof in cheating cases is “preponderance of evidence”—that is, more likely than not.
- 2) Notify the student about your concerns privately as soon as possible and provide a date, time and place for a face-to-face meeting to discuss the situation. Communicate your concerns through email or phone if the student is DDP or will not agree to a meeting.
- 3) Show the evidence to the student and allow him or her to respond. This meeting is your chance to provide a learning opportunity for the student and the student’s opportunity to respond in a responsible manner. Notify the student that you are required to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards and Accountability and you will provide them with a written summary of the meeting, academic sanction and appeal information.
- 4) There are two parts to the penalty process in academic integrity violations; the academic sanction and the university sanction. Notify the student in writing of the academic sanction you will assign in keeping with your statement included in your syllabus. For example, assigning a failing grade for the assignment or course.

- 5) Provide the student with the written statement (email is acceptable) outlining the evidence, summarize your meeting with the student including the academic sanction, and notify the student of the 21 day appeal period. *A sample letter will be provided later in this document.*
- 6) According to the faculty manual you must notify the Office of Student Standards and Accountability by completing the electronic reporting form at [Report Academic Integrity](#), along with the online form, please submit a copy of the offending work, any original sources if plagiarism, and a copy of your syllabus.

### Why should I report the violation to the Office of Student Standards and Accountability?

Reporting the violation to the Office of Student Standards and Accountability insures three main things. First, that the student will receive a university sanction that has been tailored to their particular offense with the goal of providing education about approaching academic work with integrity while promoting personal responsibility for their educational experience. Our goal is to support the student toward a successful career at WSU and provide the needed education to prevent a second violation from occurring. Secondly, reporting the violation to the Office of Student Standards and Accountability insures a central reporting location to monitor repeat offenders. Lastly, reporting the student gives them the opportunity to pursue an appeal (see page 10).

## Sample Letter

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October 30, 2011

John Doe  
123 George Washington Way  
Richland, WA 99354

Dear John:

On Tuesday, October 15, 2014, you and I met in my office to discuss my concerns that you plagiarized internet sources in the paper you submitted for credit on October 4, 2014. I showed you that four pages from your paper that were identical (word-for-word) to materials found at [www.easytermpapers.com](http://www.easytermpapers.com). I also showed you that the remaining two pages contained substantial excerpts from “The American Response to Civil Disobedience,” an article by John Smyth (published at [www.Smythondisobedience.net](http://www.Smythondisobedience.net)).

You told me that you had no idea why your paper was so similar to the materials found at these two sites and that you had not used them in writing your paper. In my judgment, the preponderance of the evidence proves that you plagiarized. Therefore, in keeping with the policy printed in the course syllabus, I am assigning you a failing grade for the course.

I will forward a copy of this letter, a copy of my syllabus, and copies of the evidence to the Office of Student Standards and Accountability. You have the right to request a review of my decision. If you wish this decision to be reviewed, **you must make your request within 21 days of the date of this letter**. Use the online form available at: <http://tricity.wsu.edu/conduct/for-students/>. I recommend you contact the Office of Student Standards and Accountability at 372-7141 or [conduct@tricity.wsu.edu](mailto:conduct@tricity.wsu.edu) if you have questions about the appeal process.

Sincerely,

Your Name  
Instructor, Class-Section

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## Academic Sanctions

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You have authority in your classroom to assign the academic sanctions of your choosing as long as they are outlined in your syllabus. ***It is important that you only articulate the standards you are willing to enforce.*** Suggested sanctions include but are not limited to:

- ☐ Warning
- ☐ Failing grade on the assignment
- ☐ Failing grade for the course
- ☐ Unable to withdraw from the course if receiving a failing grade as sanction
- ☐ Extra assignments



## University Sanctions

The University has the authority to assign sanctions for academic integrity violations as outlined in WAC 504-26-405. The most common sanction assigned for first offenses is an educational assignment. The list of university sanctions available for academic integrity violations includes:

- ☐ Warning
- ☐ Probation
- ☐ Loss of privileges
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Community Service
- ☐ University suspension
- ☐ University expulsion
- ☐ Revocation of admission and/or degree
- ☐ Withholding degree
- ☐ Hold on transcript or registration

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Disciplinary records are kept separate from academic records. If a student is suspended or expelled a letter may be sent with their transcript if a conduct board rules the offending behavior is particularly egregious.

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## The Appeal Process

The appeal process at WSU is guided by the framework of due process rights provided by the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The amendment states, "...nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law..." The courts have continually upheld, without actually defining, that education is considered a property interest of the student.

### The Academic Integrity Hearing Board

The Academic Integrity Hearing Board is a quorum of teaching faculty and a chairperson recommended by the faculty senate and appointed by the university president. The board members serve a term of three years.

The function of the board is to make a separate and independent determination of whether or not the student is responsible for violating the academic integrity policy and/or whether the academic sanction is in keeping with the instructor's syllabus statement on academic integrity.

### Once an appeal has been received...

The student has 21 days from the date of your letter to file an appeal with the Office of Student Standards and Accountability. Once the appeal is received, the office will convene the Academic Integrity Hearing Board to hear the case.

### The Hearing

Prior to the hearing, the student will be notified by mail of the date, time, and location of the hearing. The letter also

provides instruction for witnesses, statements, and lists the evidence to be reviewed. During the hearing, the student will be asked to provide a statement of events and to answer questions the board has about the case. The faculty member will be called as a university witness and will be asked to be available for any questions the board may have about the case. Once the board is satisfied with the responses the hearing will be adjourned. The chairperson of the board will notify the student by mail of the outcome within ten days of the hearing. The faculty member will be sent a copy of the letter by email.

### If the student is found responsible...

The Office of Student Standards and Accountability will continue with the regular academic integrity process and assign the appropriate university sanction.

### If the student is found not responsible...

The Office of Student Standards and Accountability will contact the student notifying them that their case is closed and the university no further action is required on their part.

The written decision of the academic integrity appeal board is the university's final decision. There is no appeal from findings of responsibility or outcomes assigned by the Academic Integrity Hearing Board.



## Second or Egregious Offenses

If the reported violation is the second offense recorded with the Office of Student Standards and Accountability the student is ordinarily required to appear before the University Conduct Board. The University generally makes a recommendation of expulsion to the board for second offenses.

If a first offense is determined to be particularly egregious by the instructor or the Academic Integrity Hearing Board, the student will be required to appear for the University Conduct Board. Expulsion can be the recommendation, even though it is the student's first recorded offense.

In accordance with the above mentioned due process rights, any student who appears before the University Conduct Board is given the option to appeal the board's decision. Similar to the Academic Integrity Hearing Board the student has 21 days from the date of the board's decision letter to file an [appeal](#).

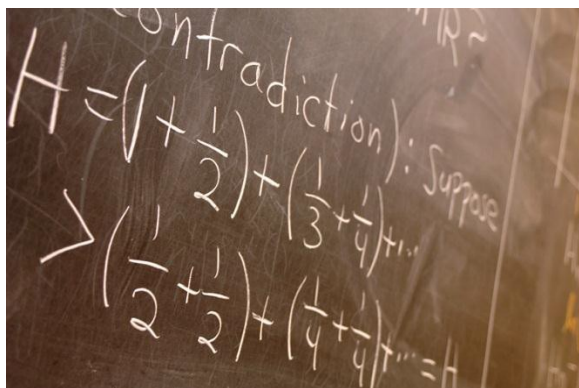
The appeal is a review of the file. The student and/or the university will not have the opportunity to address the appeal board. The student will be notified by mail within twenty days of the appeal board's decision.



## The Accused Student's Rights and Responsibilities

As always, in situations involving students, you should observe appropriate confidentiality. FERPA protects the privacy of student education records (including disciplinary records). Disciplinary records are kept separate from academic records. If a student is suspended or expelled a letter may be sent with their transcript if a conduct board rules the offending behavior is egregious. It is prudent to communicate only with those directly involved with the situation.

WSU expects our students to act as independent, responsible, and adult members of the university community. Students are afforded due process rights during the academic integrity violation process. A student who believes that he or she has been treated improperly in the aftermath of an incident may seek assistance through established university grievance procedures (University Ombudsman) or contact the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Services.



## **The Faculty and Staff Members Rights and Responsibilities**

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When you report academic integrity violations to the Office of Student Standards and Accountability, you will be advised of the outcome because you have a legitimate educational interest as defined by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

As a faculty member acting in good faith, you have certain assurances when reporting academic integrity violations. The risk of liability for making such a report is minimal. There are strong public policy reasons to support and protect individuals who make good faith reports of wrongdoing to appropriate officials, even if those reports later prove to be mistaken. Common law (or statutes in some states) gives people who report misconduct to proper authorities a “qualified privilege.” Simply stated, that means they cannot be held liable for defamation unless the report was made in bad faith, with knowledge the information they provided was false, or in reckless disregard of its truth or falsity.



### **Documentation**

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Resolving dishonesty cases can be helped if you document problem behavior, including dates, times, brief descriptions of what happened, and the names of witnesses who may have observed the behavior. Such documentation should always be factual, and not include personal interjections.

### **Consultation**

The Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Management and Student Services aims to be a transparent reference and resource for all issues regarding students at WSU. Please call us regarding any questions you have about the academic integrity policies at WSU. Further, if you would like to have us speak to your department or colleagues about the process we would be happy to provide that service as well.

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## Important Contact Information

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Note: Brief sections of this document are adapted from the University of Southern California document, “*Disruptive & Threatening Student Behavior*” and Washington State University – Spokane Campus document “*Classroom Management*.”