

What Happens If I Am Accused Of Academic Dishonesty?

Hopefully, the information you have received so far in this chapter will ensure that you maintain the highest level of academic honor. However, if you ever find yourself in a situation where you are accused of academic dishonesty, it is important to know your rights and responsibilities as a student at Stony Brook University.

How Will I Know If I Have Been Charged?

The official charge of academic dishonesty will come from either one of two committees—the Academic Judiciary (AJ) or the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences—Committee on Academic Standing and Appeals (CEAS-CASA). The AJC oversees all cases involving courses from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), College of Business (COB), and School of Journalism (SOJ), and School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences (SOMAS). CEAS-CASA oversees all cases involving courses offered through the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. For all offenses not directly related to a specific course (such as tampering with computer records), the AJ oversees all cases involving students with majors in CAS and COB, SOJ, and SOMAS and CEAS-CASA handles all cases involving students with declared majors within CEAS.

Once an accusation is received, a student is notified by email, SOLAR, or by mail. They will be given a copy of the accusation, the proposed penalty, and the policies and procedures.

What Should I Do Once I Have Been Notified of the Accusation?

Once a student receives notice that s/he has been accused of academic dishonesty, the student has two options. If a student feels that they have been rightfully accused, one option is to plead guilty. If a student feels they have been wrongfully accused, then they may appeal the accusation to the appropriate committee and ask for a hearing. An appeal can be filed from the Academic Judiciary website or by written report to the relevant judiciary office. While the case is pending, the student will receive a grade of “I” in the course and a notation that reads “Academic Judiciary Action Pending” will appear on the student’s transcript.

What Can I Expect If I Request a Hearing?

Students who appeal an accusation and request a hearing will be assigned a date for a hearing. All parties involved in the situation will be invited to attend the hearing and speak on their own behalf. A panel of five individuals from the University community made up of faculty, staff, and students will consider the statements and evidence brought before it by you and your accuser and will make a majority vote, of whether you are guilty or not guilty.

If you request a hearing, it will proceed as follows. The accuser(s) will make his/her/their specific accusation and will present evidence, which you have the right to know of before the hearing. You should come to the hearing prepared to answer the accusation. Bring any relevant documentation that you think will support your case. After the accuser makes an initial statement, you will make a statement. Following this, questions may be asked, by you, your accuser, and members of the hearing board to anyone present. For this purpose, both you and the accuser may bring witnesses who can be asked questions by anyone present.

Please note that if you request a hearing and the hearing board finds that you have provided it with false information concerning your case, you are liable for a second accusation of academic dishonesty. Students found guilty of more than one instance of academic dishonesty are subject to additional penalties, including suspension, expulsion, and permanent marks on their academic record.

Can I Choose to Withdraw or G/P/NC the Class Before or After an Accusation Has Been Made?

Students accused of academic dishonesty cannot withdraw or G/P/NC from the course in question. If you have withdrawn from this course, you will be reinstated into the course until the matter is resolved. If you are found not guilty, then your withdrawal or G/P/NC will be processed. If you are found guilty of academic dishonesty, this decision will nullify any previous withdrawals and G/P/NC options.

What Happens if I Plead Guilty or Am Found Guilty?

A student who pleads guilty or is found guilty of a first offense will typically be given the letter grade Q which signifies that s/he has committed an act of academic dishonesty. The Q is computed in the student's GPA as an F. However, Stony Brook University gives students an opportunity to have the Q as well as the remark of academic dishonesty removed from their academic record entirely. This opportunity comes in the form of a course called the Q course.

There are rare cases, depending on the severity of the accusation, that first offenses may incur permanent remarks, suspension or expulsion.

What Is the Q Course?

The Q course is the University's course on academic integrity. It includes such topics as ethics, effective work habits, and time management skills. This 10-week course is offered in both the fall and spring semester and meets on Wednesdays during Campus Life Time. A student must attend all the sessions and complete all the assignments in order to satisfy the requirements of the course. Upon successful completion of the Q course, the Q is removed from his/her transcript and replaced with the earned grade including any penalty assigned by the committee.

What Happens If I Am Accused of Academic Dishonesty More Than Once in the Same Semester?

If accusations come in close together but are different types of offenses, for example plagiarism and copying off another student, they will be treated as 2 separate offenses and are penalized more severely.

What Do You Think?

Are some of the above behaviors of academic dishonesty more serious than other ones? Which are the most serious and which are the least? How did you make the determination?

(Adapted from Melora A. Sundt based on materials for E. Nuss—"Academic Integrity: Comparing Faculty and Student Attitudes." *Improving College and University Teaching*. 3:32, 1984.)