

College of Engineering
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY COMMITTEE
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

In the Spring of 2000, the University Faculty Senate adopted a new Academic Integrity Policy that is intended to emphasize the importance of high standards for academic honesty at Penn State. The policy strengthens the role played by faculty in reinforcing the expectations for academic integrity as a central element of the teaching and learning process. The following procedures spell out, for the College of Engineering, the roles played by the faculty, administration and College Academic Integrity Committee in addressing instances of academic dishonesty, as well as providing due process for students alleged to have committed violations, consistent with the University's policy and procedure G-9.

Procedures for incidents involving academic misconduct

1. On becoming aware of a possible violation of academic integrity (see violation categories in attached "Precedent Guidelines"), an instructor or supervising faculty member shall, at the earliest time possible, advise the department/program head of the incident and correspond with the student that a violation is suspected or has been witnessed. Teaching assistants, proctors or other responsible parties should likewise notify the course coordinator or faculty supervisor of such incidents, who shall then notify the department head and student as above. In making any allegations and informing appropriate parties, care should be taken to respect each student's privacy and the goal of maintaining an environment that supports teaching and learning.
(Note: The procedures that follow pertain primarily to violations committed by students enrolled in credit-bearing courses in the College of Engineering; actions taken in regard to academic misconduct on graduate or honors thesis research or related scholarly activities shall proceed in consultation with the Graduate School or Schreyer Honors College, respectively. The Schreyer Honors College maintains authority over alleged breaches of academic integrity related to thesis research or other work not connected with a specific course. If the student involved is not enrolled in the College of Engineering but is taking an engineering course, some consultation with the "home" college, school or division may also be advisable.)
2. The responsible instructor or faculty member should investigate and compile as much information as possible concerning the witnessed or suspected violations in order to convey an accurate picture of the allegations to the student, either when the student is first notified or at a subsequent meeting with the student to review the circumstances of the alleged violation. If a meeting is scheduled with the student, it should occur as soon as practicable, but preferably no later than two to three days after notifying the student as per item #1 above. In general, if more than one student is involved in the same incident or violation, a separate meeting should be held with each student.

3. On notifying the student, or at a subsequent meeting, the faculty member should:

- Review the specific expectations for academic integrity associated with, and particular to, the class or activity
- Spell out the College/Penn State process for handling cases of academic misconduct
- Articulate the specific accusation – place, time and circumstances of the alleged violation
- Allow the student to explain the behaviors and review and “evidence” of the violation
- Advise the student about the next step(s) in the process

(Note: For very minor infractions, it may be possible to resolve the matter informally with the student, in which case no further steps are required. If the infraction is determined to have resulted from a misunderstanding of the expectations or other understandable error (*examples*: mistakenly assuming that collaboration was permitted on a homework assignment or preparing an exam “help sheet” that did not strictly follow the instructor’s guidelines), the instructor may give the student a warning, offer a retest or an opportunity to redo an assignment, or come to some other agreement with the student on how to address the issue. The instructor may choose whether or not to formally document warnings or other resolutions to very minor infractions as described above. To document the agreement and action taken, the instructor can complete and ask the student to sign an Academic Integrity Form (see item #5) and forward it to the Academic Integrity Committee. **It is recommended that for more serious infractions, the imposition of a sanction should be delayed until a second meeting with the student as described in items #4-6.**)

4. After the initial notification or meeting with the student, the faculty member should review and evaluate the circumstances of the incident again, in light of the student’s explanation and any other available information. It is advisable, also, to inquire of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Judicial Affairs as to the student’s discipline history. Information on prior acts of dishonesty may not be used as a basis for judging a student’s guilt, but it may be taken into account when imposing sanctions or deciding whether disciplinary action is warranted. Consideration and selection of an appropriate sanction should be based on the attached “Precedent Guidelines for Academic Integrity Violations” by determining the *appropriate violation category*, the severity or seriousness of the infraction by referencing the *sanction considerations*, and choosing from among the *sanction ranges* taking into account the severity (minor/moderate/major) level of the violation and the history of prior offenses in this or other courses. Consultation with the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies or with the chair of the Academic Integrity Committee in regard to the selection of an appropriate sanction is encouraged.

In general, minor offenses will incur sanctions ranging from a reduced or failing assignment/exam grade to a reduced course grade; moderate offenses will involve sanctions from exam/assignment failure to course failure; and major offenses will involve assignment of an “F” for the course to an “XF” grade and/or additional disciplinary sanctions imposed by Judicial Affairs. Academic sanctions are those imposed by the instructor through the assignment, test or course grade, while disciplinary sanctions include the “XF” grade and other actions that may be taken only by Judicial Affairs, as recommended by the faculty member and Academic Integrity Committee. Only in the limited instances in which faculty believe that disciplinary, as well as academic, sanctions are called for should the process move from the realm of faculty member and student to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Note:

A recommended sanction could also involve removal from an academic program based on a violation of academic integrity, but this would be an unlikely option unless the student were a degree candidate in the program offering the course. In this case the Dean would have to recommend to the President of the University that a student be removed from degree candidacy under Senate Policy 54-56.2, essentially maintaining that the student is “not adaptive to the work of the college.”

(Note: If an “F” grade is assigned by the instructor, or an “XF” grade is recommended, the student will not be allowed to drop the course nor will the symbol “W” be reported for the course if the student withdraws from the University. For lesser sanctions, it is the instructor’s decision as to whether a drop or an assignment of “W” is permitted. If a student were to drop the course or withdraw from the University anytime after the time at which the violation is to have occurred, the drop or withdrawal may be reversed if the violation is upheld and a sanction imposed.)

5. If a follow-up meeting is necessary to impose an academic, and/or recommend a disciplinary sanction, it should be arranged for during the first meeting and should occur no earlier than one day (to allow for a “cooling-off “ period) and preferably within three to four days after the initial meeting. At this meeting, the instructor should briefly review the allegations and the decision on academic and/or disciplinary sanction. The latter involves conveying to the student the way in which the violation will be reflected in the assignment, test and/or course grades and whether disciplinary action will be recommended in addition.

(Note: This discussion between the course instructor and student may involve others, such as the student’s advisor, the department/ program head, or the undergraduate or graduate program director. The student shall have the right to bring someone as counsel, but this should be only one individual and is restricted to University personnel [faculty, staff or another student].)

6. The student is presented with an Academic Integrity Form with an entry briefly describing the alleged violation, proposed academic sanction and indication as to whether the faculty member will recommend a disciplinary sanction.

(Note: The most severe academic sanction that can be imposed by the instructor is a failing grade for the course. If the instructor intends to recommend to the Academic Integrity Committee that a further request be made to Judicial Affairs for assignment of an “XF” grade or other disciplinary sanction, this should be explained to the student and noted on the Academic Integrity Form before the student signs. If the instructor is recommending an “XF” grade or other disciplinary sanction, then all relevant case materials must be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies as in (b) below.)

At this point, the student may choose *not to contest* the accusation and academic sanction (to accept responsibility for the violation) or *to contest* the accusation.

If the student accepts responsibility for the violation and the proposed academic sanction:

- a. The faculty member has the student sign the academic integrity form. This closes the *academic* sanction element of the case. The form is then forwarded, through the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, to the Office of Judicial Affairs for record keeping.
- b. When the student has a history of two or more previous academic integrity violations, or the faculty member recommends consideration by Judicial Affairs of disciplinary sanctions, the student is informed at this time and it is indicated on the form that the *disciplinary* issues remain open.
- c. In the case of (b) above, the signed admission of responsibility is forwarded to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies for administrative review. The

associate dean forwards the faculty member's recommendation of a disciplinary sanction to the Academic Integrity Committee for review (without formal fact finding). If the Committee agrees with the recommendation, the request for a disciplinary sanction is forwarded to the Office of Judicial Affairs for consideration. When a record of previous violations exists, the case will be forwarded to the Office of Judicial Affairs, which may levy a disciplinary sanction based on the cumulative record of repeat offenses.

(Note: On forwarding a recommendation for an "XF" grade to Judicial Affairs, the Committee may identify conditions under which the "X" grade, if applied, could be removed by Judicial Affairs.)

If the student does not admit responsibility for an academic integrity violation:

- d. When the instructor does *not* recommend disciplinary sanctions, and the student does not have a record of two or more previous academic integrity violations, the Academic Integrity Committee will conduct fact finding in accordance with due process procedures described in items #7-11 below. If the Committee finds that the student violated standards of academic integrity, it will establish that the academic sanction is within the appropriate sanction range and notify the faculty member of its decision. The Office of Judicial Affairs will be notified of the decision for record keeping purposes.
- e. When the student has a history of two or more violations or the Academic Integrity Committee, after *administrative review*, agrees with the instructor that disciplinary action is warranted, the case will be forwarded to the Office of Judicial Affairs for formal fact finding.

If the student declines to sign the Academic Integrity Form, it should nevertheless be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies. The Associate Dean will forward the case to the Academic Integrity Committee for administrative review. The Committee will forward its decision on the academic sanction and/or recommendation for disciplinary sanction to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

- 7. When a student wishes to contest an accusation and/or proposed academic sanction, presuming he or she has less than two prior violations and no disciplinary sanction has been recommended by the instructor, the student should be advised that a request for a Committee review/hearing and an explanation of his/her side of the incident must be submitted, in writing, to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies within two weeks (fourteen days) after being advised of the sanction and signing the Academic Integrity Form. The instructor will also immediately forward all relevant case materials to the Associate Dean for forwarding to the Committee. By submitting the above written request, the student exercises his or her right to further review of the case. The student may choose to have the Committee conduct a paper review or to present his/her case in person at a hearing with the Committee as specified in item #8 below. In the absence of a request from the student, the Committee will conduct a "paper" review using any materials submitted or at its disposal.
- 8. The Associate Dean will review all materials submitted by the instructor and student and verify that all appropriate measures and avenues have been taken at the department level to resolve and close the case. The Associate Dean may, at this

point, work with the instructor, student and department head to seek a resolution that will be fair and acceptable to all parties. If the use of “good offices” is unsuccessful, the Associate Dean will convey the materials immediately to the Chair of the Academic Integrity Committee who will commence arrangements for a review/hearing. Every attempt should be made to find an acceptable date and time for the hearing within three weeks of the receipt of the student’s request (see item #7) by the Associate Dean.

9. When contacted about the review/hearing, the student will be given the opportunity to request a “paper” review or a full hearing. If the student requests a “paper” review, he or she is, in effect, waiving the right to appear in person, and the Committee will conduct its fact-finding and decide the case based on the materials submitted by the instructor and student with neither party present. If the student requests a full hearing, it will be scheduled as specified in item #10 below. Once scheduled, if either party subsequently waives the right or fails to appear without an acceptable excuse, the decision of the Committee will nevertheless be final and binding for both parties. If both parties are absent at the time of the hearing, the Committee will conduct a “paper” review and the decision will be final and binding. Proxies for either party will not be permitted at the hearing.
10. Written notice of the meeting date and time will be provided to both the instructor and student and to all Committee members, and all evidence and documentation will be provided or made available to the above persons at least one week prior to the hearing date.
11. The instructor and student may each bring an adviser and as many witnesses as may be relevant to fact-finding (all subject to the same restrictions as in #5 above). The names of these participants and a brief explanation for each person’s presence will be provided to the Committee chair in advance of the hearing. The Chair may limit the number of witnesses who will repeat the same information, but if witnesses will offer different types of information that will support a finding, their testimony will be allowed. No audio or video recording of the proceedings will be permitted, but participants may take notes. The following procedures will apply to the hearing:
 - The Committee chair will convene the meeting and give instructions or entertain any discussion among the members prior to inviting the instructor, student and any other participants to join the meeting.
 - The chair will explain the function of the committee and purpose of the hearing to all participants.
 - The student and instructor will each be given an opportunity to summarize their positions, provide clarifications and offer the testimony of witnesses. The chair will preside and have the authority to limit the time for comments by any participant and to hold the discussion to matters pertinent to the case. The student will be given an opportunity to question any evidence/testimony against him or her.
 - Each Committee member will be given the opportunity to ask questions.
 - The student and instructor will be given the opportunity to make summary remarks. After all participants except the Committee members have been dismissed, the Committee will meet in closed session to deliberate. The Committee will consider

the evidence and testimony and determine first whether a violation occurred. If so, the Committee will evaluate whether the sanction originally applied by the instructor is consistent with the “precedent guidelines” and, if not, determine what modification in the sanction is warranted. Each decision shall be reached by a majority vote, with the chair serving to resolve any ties. If the committee does not concur that sufficient evidence exists for the violation, it shall consult with the instructor to insure that an appropriate course grade will be determined and assigned that does not reflect the commission of dishonest behavior. If it concludes that a violation was committed, the Committee will review the sanction and make modification only in cases where the originally imposed sanction is clearly outside the guidelines.

- The decision by the Committee regarding the violation and the academic sanction will be final and communicated to the instructor and student by the end of the day following the hearing. The decision will be prepared by the chair in the form of a brief report that includes the accusation, a summary of the accepted testimony and evidence leading to the decision, and the Committee’s decision on the contested violation and assigned sanction with corresponding rationales. The results will be forwarded to Judicial Affairs for record keeping.

Appendix A

General statement of student rights in the hearing process

- the right to contest the allegation and request a review/hearing and the right to change his or her mind concerning the decision to contest an allegation (but once the student has signed the form indicating he/she waives the right to a review/hearing or fails to submit a request for review/hearing within the specified time limit, the instructor’s decision is final and the sanction is binding, respectively)
- the right to choose between a “paper” review and a full hearing, and the right not to attend if a hearing is requested
- the right to information on the allegations leveled against him or her in advance of the review/hearing (however, no proxies will be allowed at the hearing in the student’s place)
- the right to reasonable time to prepare for the review/hearing or to waive the time in order to expedite the process as much as possible
- the right to have an advisor (university affiliated)
- the right to question the witnesses and evidence presented against him or her
- the right to present evidence and testimony from witnesses in his/her defense
- the right to have only the evidence and testimony presented at the hearing considered in the decision on whether a violation occurred
- the right to take notes, but not to make an audio or video recording
- the right to a written report stating rationales for the Committee’s findings and sanctions

Appendix B

Guidelines for recommending removal of the “X” of an “XF” grade

- (1) The “X” prefix may only be removed by Judicial Affairs (the “F” grade would not be altered) and would occur only in extraordinary circumstances.
- (2) Circumstances under which the Committee might ultimately recommend the removal of the “X” are not to be interpreted as pre-conditions under which a student could expect to work off the “X” prefix for the failing grade.
- (3) In general, the Committee would review cases only after all degree requirements have been met and would take into account the student’s record of academic integrity during the elapsed time since the violation. Students who committed violations and were assigned “XF” grades early in their academic careers and had maintained clear records thereafter would be looked on more favorably for removal of the “X” prefix than students who commit violations and receive sanctions late in their studies towards a degree.
- (4) A student wishing to have the Committee review the “XF” grade for possible removal of the “X” must take the initiative to contact the Associate Dean.

Appendix C

Burden of Proof

The following shall constitute the burden to proof necessary for the Committee to find a student responsible for a violation:

Clear and convincing evidence supported by the instructor’s or others’ testimony, documents or other materials that a student has engaged or behaved in a dishonest fashion will constitute sufficient proof that a violation of academic integrity has occurred. The evidence may be either circumstantial or tangible as long as it points directly to the student as the responsible party. The concept that there must be a preponderance of evidence to establish beyond a reasonable doubt that a violation occurred (as in court) does not apply.

Appendix D

Academic Sanctioning

In addition to being consistent with the attached “Precedent Guidelines for Academic Integrity Violations” and taking into account a student’s prior discipline history, the assignment of a sanction within the range for the category and level of seriousness may be consider:

- whether the violation was premeditated
- student attitude and prospect for student growth
- the weight of the assignment in terms of the overall grade
- impact on the class or program (potential victims)
- special considerations or ethical issues that affect the precedent