

Westfield State University Policy

Policy Title: AP004: Plagiarism Detection and Consequences **Effective Date:** 2022-08-15 **Policy Number:** AP004

1.0 Purpose and Overview

Westfield State University is committed to fostering a community of academic integrity and intellectual honesty. This policy, AP004, defines plagiarism, outlines the procedures for its detection, and specifies the consequences for violations. The university believes that upholding the principles of academic integrity is the responsibility of every member of the academic community. This policy aims to provide clear guidelines to students, faculty, and staff to ensure that all academic work is original and properly attributed.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Westfield State University community, including all undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff, in all academic programs and courses. It covers all academic work submitted for credit or as part of any university-related activity, including but not limited to, essays, research papers, theses, dissertations, presentations, creative works, and examinations.

3.0 Policy

3.1 Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, words, or work as one's own without proper acknowledgment or citation. It is a serious academic offense that undermines the principles of intellectual honesty and the value of a university education. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Direct Plagiarism:** Copying text, verbatim, from a source without quotation marks and a proper citation.
- **Mosaic Plagiarism:** Interweaving one's own words with phrases and sentences from a source without proper citation.
- **Self-Plagiarism:** Submitting one's own previously submitted work for a new assignment without the prior written permission of the instructor.
- **Improper Paraphrasing:** Restating someone else's ideas in one's own words without providing a proper citation.
- **Uncited Sources:** Failing to cite sources for data, images, or other materials used in academic work.
- **Collusion:** Unauthorized collaboration with another person on an assignment. This includes sharing answers, working together on an individual assignment, or submitting work that is substantially similar to that of another student.

3.2 Detection of Plagiarism

Westfield State University is committed to detecting and deterring plagiarism. The university employs a variety of methods to detect plagiarism, including:

- **Turnitin:** The university subscribes to Turnitin, a plagiarism detection service that compares student work to a vast database of academic and online content. All written assignments may be subject to submission to Turnitin.
- **Faculty Vigilance:** Faculty members are trained to recognize the signs of plagiarism and are expected to be vigilant in reviewing student work.
- **Manual Checks:** Faculty may use search engines and other tools to manually check for plagiarism. They may also review a student's previous work to check for inconsistencies in writing style.

3.3 Consequences of Plagiarism

The consequences for plagiarism are serious and are intended to be educational and restorative, as well as punitive. Sanctions are determined based on the severity of the offense, the student's intent, and the student's prior record of academic dishonesty. The following are the general categories of sanctions:

- **Minor Offenses:** These typically involve unintentional or first-time offenses, such as improper citation or a small amount of unattributed text. Sanctions may include a requirement to revise and resubmit the assignment, a grade reduction on the assignment, or a grade of zero on the assignment.
- **Moderate Offenses:** These include more substantial instances of plagiarism, such as submitting a paper with significant portions of unattributed text or a second offense of a minor nature. Sanctions may include a failing grade in the course, a formal written warning, and a requirement to complete an academic integrity workshop.
- **Major Offenses:** These are the most serious cases of plagiarism, such as submitting a purchased paper, a third offense, or a case involving a thesis or dissertation. Sanctions may include suspension or expulsion from the university, and a permanent notation on the student's academic record.

In addition to the above penalties, students who are found to have plagiarized may also be subject to other disciplinary actions, including but not limited to, loss of scholarships, removal from leadership positions, and a permanent notation on their transcript.

3.4 Appeal Process

Students who are accused of plagiarism have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal process is as follows:

1. The student must submit a written appeal to the instructor within ten (10) business days of being notified of the alleged plagiarism.
2. The instructor will review the appeal and provide a written response to the student within five (5) business days.
3. If the student is not satisfied with the instructor's decision, they may appeal to the department chair.
4. If the student is not satisfied with the department chair's decision, they may appeal to the Dean of the college.
5. The student may appeal the department chair's decision to the Academic Appeals Committee, which is composed of faculty and students. The Committee will review all materials and provide a final, binding decision.

4.0 Procedures

Faculty members who suspect a student of plagiarism must follow these procedures:

1. Meet with the student to discuss the alleged plagiarism.
2. If the faculty member determines that plagiarism has occurred, they must impose the appropriate penalty as outlined in this policy.
3. The faculty member must report the incident to the Office of Student Conduct.

5.0 Responsibilities

5.1 Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to this policy. They are expected to:

- Complete all academic work with honesty and integrity.
- Properly cite all sources used in their work.
- Seek clarification from their instructors if they are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism.
- Report any suspected cases of academic dishonesty to their instructor or the Office of Student Conduct.

5.2 Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty members are responsible for promoting academic integrity in their courses. They are expected to:

- Clearly define their expectations for academic integrity in their syllabi.
- Design assignments that discourage plagiarism.
- Be vigilant in detecting plagiarism.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy when they suspect a student of plagiarism.

5.3 University Responsibilities

The university is responsible for providing a fair and consistent process for addressing allegations of plagiarism. The university is expected to:

- Educate students and faculty about the importance of academic integrity.
- Provide resources to help students avoid plagiarism.
- Ensure that all allegations of plagiarism are investigated thoroughly and fairly.

6.0 Related Policies

- AP001: Academic Integrity Policy
- STU002: Student Code of Conduct

6.0 Contact Information

Office of Student Conduct Westfield State University 123 University Drive Westfield, MA 01086 (413) 555-1234 studentconduct@westfield.edu

7.0 Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
1.0	2022-08-15	Office of the Provost	Initial version
1.1	2023-09-01	Office of the Provost	Updated contact information and minor clarifications