

## 7.12 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 Code of Student Conduct and will follow the same conduct process (see Article VII.B.1.a.). If the charge occurs close to the end of an academic semester or term or in the event of the reasonable need of either party for additional time to gather information timelines may be extended at the discretion of the Department of Student Community Ethics (DSCE).

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. Faculty members have the right to determine the appropriate sanction(s) 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) 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 proposed sanction(s).
2. The Faculty member will meet with the student to inform him/her orally and in writing of the allegation and the sanction(s) imposed within ten (10) days of knowledge of the alleged violation. If the student is part of a distance learning program and does not have face-to-face interaction with the faculty member, the meeting may take place over the phone. Should either the student or faculty member feel uncomfortable about this

meeting, either party may bring an advisor to this meeting. Prior to this meeting, the faculty member will contact the DSCE (227-7234) 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.

3. If the case is a first offense, the student can choose to accept the allegation and proposed sanction(s) from the faculty member by signing a Mutual Resolution or can choose to have a hearing with the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board). Prior to the meeting with the student, the faculty member will complete the Academic Integrity Violation Form ([dsce.wcu.edu](http://dsce.wcu.edu)). Once complete, the faculty member will present it to the student, who must choose to either accept the proposal or go to a hearing. After the student has made a decision the faculty member is responsible for submitting copies to the student, the faculty member's department head, and the DSCE. The DSCE should also receive any supporting documentation such as the assignment in question, the course syllabus, etc. Mutual Resolutions are final and are not subject to further review or appeal. The DSCE will maintain these files and provide the faculty member and department head confirmation of receipt.

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. The date of the hearing will not be fewer than ten (10) days after receipt of written notice. 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, the DSCE will assign a hearing date.

5. Hearings shall be conducted by the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) according to the following guidelines:

- (a) Hearings shall be conducted in private.
- (b) Admission of any person to the hearing shall be at the discretion of the chair of the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) 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 (faculty member) and the accused each have the right to be assisted by any adviser they choose, at their own expense. The complainant and the accused are both responsible for presenting their own cases. Advisers are not permitted to speak or to participate directly in any hearing before the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board)
- (e) The DSCE and the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) 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 chair of the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board).
- (i) During the closed deliberations of the hearing, the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) shall determine by majority vote whether the student has violated each section of the code with which the student has been charged.
- (j) The Academic Integrity Board's (Graduate Academic Integrity Board'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 chair of the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board).

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 Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) will then go into closed deliberations. The accused student, complainant, and all witnesses, unless released by the chair, are required to remain in close proximity to the hearing, should the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) need to recall.
6. When deliberations are complete, the accused student and complainant are recalled and the chairperson verbally delivers the finding of the hearing body. If the student is found not-responsible the hearing is then complete. If the student is found responsible for the violation(s) the board will once again go into closed deliberations to determine sanctioning.

6. There shall be a single verbatim record, such as a recording, of all hearings before the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board). 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 Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) 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 sanction(s) as outlined in Article VIII of the Code of Student Conduct. After a finding of responsibility and before determination of sanction(s), 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) days and transmitted in writing to the student within ten (10) 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) 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 DSCE faculty fellow the third faculty member on any Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) will be chosen from the pool. The Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) may impose any sanction(s) as outlined in Article VIII 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. In the event the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) assigns a sanction which requires review, the faculty member bringing the charges and the chair of the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) will determine if the sanction is satisfactory. These educational sanctions are independent from course work and do not have any bearing on a student's evaluative grade.

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 in writing. 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 College Academic Action Committee. If the student does not file an appeal within five (5) days of the hearing, the sanction(s) from the hearing body will be imposed. The appeal is limited to the following rules, procedures, and existing verbatim record.

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(s).

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 eight (8) years from the date of final adjudication. These records are available to prospective employers and other educational institutions in accordance with federal regulations. Students may inspect their conduct files in accordance with University Policy #72 – Student Records.

*Grounds for Appeal:*

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:

- A violation of due process
- A material deviation from Substantive and Procedural standards adopted by the Board of Governors.

*Process for Appeal:*

- Based on the grounds listed above, any decision reached or sanction(s) imposed by the Academic Integrity Board (Graduate Academic Integrity Board) shall be afforded at least one level of appeal. In cases that do not result in University suspension/expulsion the decision made by the College Academic Action Committee is final and there will be no further appeals.
- Cases that result in a sanction(s) of university suspension/expulsion can be appealed to the College Academic Action Committee, 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) days of the decision.

*Timeline for Appeal:*

- A formal written appeal is due to the College Academic Action Committee within five (5) days of the hearing, or receipt of the hearing findings letter, whichever is first.
- Upon receipt of the appeal, the College Academic Action Committee must render a decision within five (5) days, and notice of the appellate decision must be communicated within ten (10) 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) 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) days of the receipt of the hearing findings letter.
- At all times the DSCE reserves the authority to make exceptions to timelines on a case-by-case basis (e.g. university closures, holidays, ends of semester, etc.)

*Outcomes for 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 sanction(s) 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 sanction(s).
- Students are not expected to complete any assigned sanctions during this process until they have exhausted their appellate process and the case is completed.