

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is the foundation of the pursuit of knowledge. All members of the academic community are expected to be dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge in an honest, responsible, respectful, and ethical manner. Every violation of academic integrity is an affront to the academic community. Violations of academic integrity make fair evaluation impossible and cast doubt upon the seriousness with which students accept the responsibility of acquiring an education.

Members of the academic community are expected to report all instances of those violations which come to their attention. Both faculty and administration consider it their duty, as guardians of academic standards and intellectual honesty, to enforce the following policy by prosecuting all cases of violation of academic integrity to the fullest extent. Students are urged to consider that it is the toleration of violations of academic integrity, and not the reporting of it, that is dishonorable.

## **Definitions**

A violation of academic integrity includes any act which portrays a member of the academic community as having acquired knowledge through legitimate study or research which, in fact, has been stolen. Violation of academic integrity includes also any act which gains one member of the academic community an unfair advantage over another. This includes any act hindering the academic accomplishment of another.

Violations of academic integrity are classified by Plymouth State University into two categories: intentional and unintentional. Intentional violations involve a deliberate attempt to deceive in order to gain unfair advantage. Unintentional violations are associated with poor academic practice stemming from ignorance or misunderstanding of requirements.

Examples of intentional violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Providing or using unauthorized books, notes, or other sources of information during an examination
2. Submitting another person's work as one's own, that is, plagiarism. This includes, for example: copying during examinations; purchasing papers or taking them from Internet/World Wide Web resources; copying papers, reports, laboratory results, or computer work; quoting or paraphrasing library or Internet/World Wide Web sources without proper citations.
3. Doing work for which another person will receive credit. This includes, for example, allowing one's examination answers, reports, laboratory results, or computer work to be submitted by another person as his or her own work.
4. Falsifying, through forgery or other alteration, academic documents such as transcripts, registration materials, withdrawal forms, or grade reports
5. Reading, removing, or copying, without authorization, or stealing any academic document, exam, or academic record maintained by any member of the faculty or administration
6. Using unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, at the computer terminal, or on field placement
7. Stealing, copying, or destroying another person's computer program or file, deliberately preventing or depriving another's access to the University computer system or resources, or impeding the system's performance
8. Stealing, or removing without authorization, books or periodicals from the library, or mutilating library materials
9. Falsifying or fabricating data or results of research or field work
10. Lying in connection with an academic integrity hearing.

Unintentional violations are often associated with plagiarism. Examples of unintentional violations include, but are not limited to: paraphrasing, citing, or quoting poorly or incorrectly.

## **Procedure**

In cases where a violation of academic integrity in course work is suspected, or in other cases of suspected violations, the individual making the discovery must initiate proceedings as prescribed in the following list of required actions.

### **I. Action within the department – Examination of the suspected violation**

1. Any violation of academic integrity, whether intentional or unintentional, should be examined by at least two people:
  - a In the case of a violation of academic integrity associated with a class, these people shall include the

- instructor and the chair of the department.
- b. In other cases, these people shall include whoever is making the complaint and whoever is in charge of the area of complaint.
  - c. In the case of stealing, removing, or mutilating library materials, in conjunction with a course, the library shall notify the course instructor of the violation. The course instructor shall pursue the complaint. Library personnel may be asked to appear as witnesses.
2. The examination shall be thorough enough to establish with reasonable confidence whether a violation of academic integrity occurred, who the parties involved are, and that accusations can be justly made and are supportable. The examination shall proceed as quickly as possible and will generally be complete within one week.
  3. The student, or students, shall be made aware of any accusations, be given a copy of this policy, and have the opportunity to meet with both examiners and respond. Any supporting evidence shall be gathered and verified as thoroughly as possible. All of this shall be done in a non-threatening manner.
  4. There are three possible outcomes of the examination:
    - a. Insufficient evidence of a violation: If the examiners are not reasonably confident at this point that a specific student violated the Academic Integrity Policy and that the evidence of that violation is substantial, the matter shall be dropped, except that the department shall take steps to remedy any procedures or conditions that may have led to the violation or to the lack of evidence, e.g., an exam which has been compromised may be canceled and/or readministered by the department.
    - b. Unintentional Violations: If the examiners are reasonably confident that a specific student violated the Academic Integrity Policy, the evidence of that violation is substantial, but the violation is judged to be unintentional, the Chair shall notify the student by letter of the violation and recommendations for remediation. Because the violation was deemed to be unintentional (e.g., a result of poor academic practice), the student and instructor shall work together to give the student the opportunity to learn the correct academic practice. As with all grades, instructors will evaluate the assignment in question and may account for the violation in their evaluation. If the student disagrees with the judgment of the examiners, s/he can request that the chair notify the Vice President for Academic Affairs of the violation so that the Panel on Academic Integrity can be convened.
    - c. Intentional Violations: If the examiners are reasonably confident that a specific student violated the Academic Integrity Policy and that evidence of that violation is substantial and the violation is deemed to be intentional, the chair shall notify the student by letter of the specific violations of academic integrity of which the student stands accused. If not already provided, a copy of this policy shall be enclosed. The chair shall notify the Vice President for Academic Affairs that a potential violation has occurred and request that the Panel on Academic Integrity be convened. A copy of the letter to the student and all supporting evidence shall be sent to the vice president for academic affairs. If the instructor thinks that a lesser or greater penalty than an F in the course is warranted, a statement of recommendation, with explanation, may accompany the supporting evidence. The complainant (or his/her representative) shall attend the panel hearing.

## **II. Actions by the student**

Students shall:

1. Honor any requests by complainants and/or department chairs for interviews concerning any alleged violations of academic integrity. This is the first and best opportunity for the student to present ameliorating evidence and/or arguments of innocence.
2. Continue to attend the course until notified otherwise.
3. Read the Academic Integrity Policy. If the student has not received a current copy by the time of the vice president's letter (see III.), it should be requested of the vice president's office.
4. If the student wishes to attend the hearing of the Panel on Academic Integrity, they shall notify the vice president for academic affairs within 72 hours of receipt of the vice president's letter. A student may choose not to attend the hearing and instead may submit a written statement to the vice president for academic affairs for consideration by the Panel on Academic Integrity. Any supporting evidence for the student's case may be presented by the student at the hearing. If the student wishes additional witnesses to be called, the Office of the vice president must be notified so that those witnesses may be called for the hearing. If the student fails to notify the vice president for academic affairs of their intent to attend the hearing or submit a written statement to the Panel on Academic Integrity, and the vice president's office has confirmation that the student has been properly notified of the hearing, the allegation of a violation of academic integrity is sustained, and the hearing

will be conducted to determine the sanction.

5. A student wishing to appeal a judgment of the panel may do so to the vice president for academic affairs within one week of the hearing. The appeal should be in writing, stating all reasons that the student has for appealing the decision of the panel. If the penalty involves failure in a course, the student should continue to attend until a decision is rendered at the appeal hearing.
6. If found guilty, the student must comply with all requirements of the panel.

### **III. Actions within the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs**

1. Upon receipt of the letter (I.4.c.) the vice president shall officially notify the student of the charges and shall refer the matter to the Panel on Academic Integrity:

The Panel on Academic Integrity will consist of:

- a. The chair of the Faculty Academic Affairs Committee, or his or her designee, who will chair the panel;
- b. A Plymouth State University faculty member selected from a faculty pool;
- c. The associate vice president for undergraduate studies;
- d. Two student members.

The two student members and four student alternates will be elected by the voting members of the Student Senate. Students on disciplinary probation and those not in good academic standing are not eligible to serve on the panel. All elected student members must agree to be available to serve on the panel during the academic year and the months of January and June. In the event that members or alternates are unable to serve on the panel for a specific case, the chair of the panel will appoint members to serve for the case. If this is not possible, the panel may meet with as few as four members present.

2. The panel hearing shall be arranged as soon as possible. The student panel members, witnesses, and the person making the complaint shall be notified. (The student may choose not to attend.)
3. Regardless of the outcome of a hearing or appeal, a record of the proceedings and supporting evidence will be kept for the prescribed time (see Records).
4. The vice president shall hold an appeal hearing as soon as possible upon receiving a written appeal. The vice president may call upon any person involved when the appeal is considered. After the appeal, action referred to in Section III.3. is modified if appropriate.
5. The record of each student found guilty by the panel shall be checked for prior convictions. If this is a second conviction, the panel will be reconvened no sooner than eight days, nor later than 14 days, from the date of the second conviction to decide whether to expel the student from the University, to suspend the student for a period no less than one year, or to assign some other penalty as appropriate. If the student has appealed the second or later conviction to the vice president, however, the panel will be convened no later than seven days after the failure of the appeal.
6. The judgment of the panel shall then be carried out. In cases when the penalty is:
  - a. an F on an assignment, the instructor shall be responsible for implementing that sanction as part of his/her regular record keeping for the course. The chair of the Panel on Academic Integrity shall notify, in writing, the vice president for academic affairs of the sanction.
  - b. an AF for a course, or a suspension or an expulsion, the chair of the Panel on Academic Integrity shall notify, in writing, the vice president for academic affairs of the sanction. The vice president shall then be responsible for notifying the vice president for student affairs, the registrar, and the director of financial aid, in writing, of the sanction. For a grade of AF, the registrar shall enter this grade on the transcript. For a suspension or an expulsion, the registrar shall enter a notation of academic suspension or expulsion on the student transcript. If the sanction in question is a suspension, it shall be considered effective at the beginning of the next full semester. A student shall have the right to petition the vice president for academic affairs for removal of the notation of academic suspension from the transcript. At the time of graduation or two years after the academic suspension, whichever comes first, the student may petition for the removal of the suspension. Pending an appeal, an expulsion shall begin on the date of conviction.

### **IV. Actions by the Panel**

1. Upon being notified of an impending hearing by the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, each panel member will, prior to the hearing, visit the vice president's office and examine the materials for the case.
2. The panel will, at the hearing:

- a. hear the complaint by the instructor or person making the complaint;
  - b. hear any explanation or expression of mitigating circumstances the student may wish to give, if present;
  - c. question both the student and the person making the complaint as necessary;
  - d. decide the case and any penalty;
  - e. tell the student the result of the hearing, explain the consequences, and inform the student about the right of appeal if found guilty.
3. The chair of the panel will inform the student in writing of the panel's action. Copies of this letter will be sent to the vice president for academic affairs and to the person making the complaint. All documents shall be returned to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
  4. If the panel is reconvened because of a student's second or later conviction, the chair of the panel will obtain from the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs the files from the panel hearings. The panel will then decide what further penalty to assess (see Penalties). The chair will write a letter to the student, with a copy to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, informing the student of the further penalty and of the right of appeal.

### **Penalties**

Students found guilty of unintentional violations will have the opportunity to learn to correct their mistake. No further penalty shall be assigned by the instructor other than their evaluation of the assignment.

In most cases when students are found guilty of an intentional violation of academic integrity for the first time, whether by admission of guilt or by the findings of the Panel on Academic Integrity, and where the incident occurs in connection with a specific course, the panel will decide that they be excluded from further participation in the course, receiving a grade of AF on their transcripts. An AF signifies administrative failure, signifying that the course has been failed for administrative reasons; the impact is the same as an F in all other regards. In those cases where, in the judgment of the Panel of Academic Integrity, the offense is unusually serious, the panel may also decide to suspend the students from the University for no more than one year, or expel the students. In those cases where in the judgment of the Panel on Academic Integrity there are extenuating circumstances, such as cases where the incident clearly occurred because of ignorance rather than intention, or in cases of plagiarism where the amount of material plagiarized was extremely small, the panel may decide on a lesser penalty than AF in the course: an AW in the course or a grade of F on the assignment. If the faculty member in whose class the offense occurred recommends a penalty, the panel may take this into account in reaching its decision.

In cases where a first conviction for a violation of academic integrity occurs apart from a particular course or where it has a minor or tenuous impact on a course, the penalty may be simply having a record of conviction (see Records). Here too, however, in cases where the offense is unusually serious, the panel may decide to suspend the students from the University for no more than one year, or expel the students. A record of conviction is, at any rate, a serious consequence of a first offense. The second conviction for violating academic integrity will normally result either in suspension for no less than one year or expulsion. Also, if the second offense occurs within a particular course, an AF will be posted on the transcript as the final grade for that course.

If a violation of academic integrity involves damage to University property or otherwise violates the law, legal or disciplinary action may also be taken.

### **Records**

In cases where a student has been found to have unintentionally violated the Academic Integrity Policy, no official records shall be kept.

If the student is referred to the Panel and is found not guilty of violating academic integrity, all evidence will be retained by the vice president for academic affairs for a period of three years. The vice president for academic affairs shall be the only person with access to these records. After three years, all evidence shall be destroyed. A record shall be retained of the action taken by the panel, only accessible to the vice president for academic affairs.

Whenever students have been convicted by the Panel of violating academic integrity, a record of the conviction shall be retained permanently by the vice president for academic affairs. The vice president for academic affairs, all faculty and principal administrators with legitimate need to know, and the student in question shall have the privilege of access to the record. The vice president for academic affairs shall retain all evidence related to the case

until three years after the student has left the University. A record of the conviction shall be reportable to the panel if the student is convicted of a subsequent violation of the Academic Integrity Policy and to any outside agencies legally requesting this information until the student graduates or five years after the conviction.