

Fairmont State University: Academic Integrity Policy

Date of Current Revision: November 2023

Primary Responsible Officer: Associate Provost of Academic Affairs

Authority

The Faculty Welfare Committee was charged by the Faculty Senate to share in responsibility for defining academic integrity and establishing procedures for investigating, hearing, and adjudicating alleged violations of academic integrity. The Student Hearing Board of the Faculty Senate investigates and makes final recommendations to the Provost on alleged violations of academic integrity policies and appropriate sanctions as stipulated by Fairmont State University's policy on academic integrity.

Statement Concerning Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a fundamental principle upheld at all educational institutions to ensure students uphold ethical standards in their academic work. Fairmont State University regards academic integrity as an essential element of its educational mission, ensuring students acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become life-long learners, successful in the workplace and contributing members of their communities. Academic integrity means that all work submitted by a student for evaluation must be that student's own work, completed with integrity and observing proper scholarly practices.

Fairmont State values highly the integrity of its student scholars. All students and faculty members share in the responsibility for removing situations which might permit or encourage academic dishonesty. This document represents the Academic Integrity Policy of Fairmont State University. The policy outlines the definitions, expectations, as it pertains to students and to the responsibility of instructors in handling cases of alleged academic dishonesty.

Student Responsibility. At Fairmont State University academic integrity is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, academic transactions and records. Students must be aware that the consequences of violating standards of academic integrity are extremely serious, costly, and may result in the loss of academic and career opportunities. Students found to have committed violations against academic integrity may face grade penalties, removal from university classes, and/or university degree programs, and/or suspension or dismissal while remaining fully responsible for payment of current and any past due tuition and fees.

Instructor Responsibility. Instructors have the responsibility to promote and enforce academic integrity, clearly communicate expectations regarding academic integrity, and take appropriate actions when violations occur.

University Responsibility. The university is responsible for providing guidance, support, and resources to promote academic integrity; and informing both students and faculty of their rights and responsibilities regarding important matters as academic integrity and professional ethics. Most of what is considered dishonest or unethical behavior can be avoided if faculty and students clearly understand what constitutes these practices and their consequences.

SECTION I: CATAGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty is defined as an intentional act of cheating, deceiving, defrauding or related offense to promote or enhance one's academic standing. Academic dishonesty also includes knowingly or actively assisting any person in the commission of a violation of the academic integrity policy. When the term 'academic dishonesty' is used in this document, it means the intent to commit a violation of the academic integrity policy was present.

Cheating on Quizzes, Tests, and Examinations

Individual or group activity for the purpose of obtaining and/or distributing unauthorized exam information prior to, during, or after an examination. Examples of dishonest activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Looking at an examination paper or answer sheet of another student.
- Sharing or obtaining unauthorized information during an examination.
- Using any unauthorized books, notes, internet, cell phones, or other sources of information prior to or during an examination.
- Possessing or distributing unauthorized examination materials in physical or digital form, without the express permission of the instructor.
- Cooperating or aiding in any of the above.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the submission of the ideas, words (written or oral), or artistic productions of another, falsely represented as one's original effort or without giving due credit. Students and instructors should examine proper citation forms to avoid inadvertent plagiarism. Examples of such activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using ideas, facts, or opinions from any source without properly acknowledging and documenting the source of that information. These can be written, visual (image, film, internet stream) or verbal (interview, live presentation, or lecture) sources.
- Using more than four consecutive words from any source without placing quotation marks around those words and documenting the source.
- Submitting any academic work for a course (written papers, drawings, or any other form of composition) that is not your own individual work or in the case of team or group assignments, acknowledging all contributors to the project.
- Multiple submissions of one's own original work.

Alteration of Academic Records

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Creating or altering transcript, diploma, enrollment verification, or any other official university document (In this case the student(s) may also face prosecution for violation of Federal and State statutes).
- Altering or tampering with any university academic documents or records (by computer or any other means), wither before or after coming to Fairmont State University.
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of official academic documents (e.g., appeal documents, advising forms, internship forms).

- Changing answers to an already-graded exam after it has been returned.
- Falsifying or altering records related to fieldwork, praxis, clinical hours, patient client records, or other course-related activities.

Collusion

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Collaborating on an assignment that is meant to be an individual submission.
- Turning in individual work as a result of working together in labs, homework, discussion boards, or any other type of assessment without the explicit permission of the instructor to share results, interpretation, or working.

Note: The student must acknowledge to the instructor all individuals who have assisted the student in completing the work being evaluated. If students doubt whether their activities might constitute academic dishonesty, they should consult their instructor for course guidelines.

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Knowingly helping or attempting to assist another to violate any provision of the academic integrity policy.
- Allowing another student to copy one's work.
- Taking an exam or completing an assignment for another student
- Uploading exams, assignments, answers to a website could potentially be a violation of the policy. Consult with the instructor before posting course material online.

Sabotage

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Stealing, destroying or altering another's academic work (e.g., artwork, computer program, lab experiment or report, paper).
- Hiding, misshelving, damaging or otherwise abusing library materials to keep others from using them.

Substitution

Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using a proxy, or acting as a proxy, in an academic exercise.
- Taking an examination for another student
- Doing homework assignments for another student.

Other Violations:

Breach of Professional Ethics Standards. Students may be responsible for adhering to the professional code of ethics and practices in certain degree programs (e.g., Nursing program, Education program, Engineering Technology program) or disciplines. Students may be responsible for the health, safety or ethical requirements in lab(s), clinical assignments, or internships. Under specific circumstances, if it has been determined a student has violated the professional code, that violation could be considered a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy.

If a student questions whether an activity they are engaged in or witnessed might constitute academic dishonesty, it is their responsibility to contact the instructor for consultation. Some instructors may have different guidelines listed in the course syllabus for students to follow.

SECTION II: INFORMATION FOR FACULTY

Important Guidelines for Reporting Suspected Violations

All members of Fairmont State University are strongly encouraged to report suspected violations of academic integrity. While most violations will be course related and subject to reporting by instructors; teaching assistance, students, and staff should report suspected violations to the relevant course instructor of the College where the suspected violation occurred.

Suspected violations of the academic integrity must be reported promptly to the Provost Office and Student Conduct Office by completing an [Academic Integrity Alert Form](#). Generally, this means no more than 30-days after the suspected violation was discovered. An instructor seeking to report a suspected violation more than 30 days after its occurrence should contact the Office of the Provost to request an extension of the deadline. All suspected violations discovered during final course grades must be reported no more than three-weeks after semester grades are due. If a student is found to be in violation of the academic integrity after graduation and the sanctions imposed make the student ineligible to earn his/her degree, the degree may be revoked.

Definitions

Academic Evaluation: Any academic assignment, project, paper, performance, quiz, exam, comprehensive exam, candidacy exam, thesis, clinical or internship experience, or other evaluation assigned or offered for credit (including extra or optional credit), intended to fulfill an academic requirement, or considered by the University to provide an academic or research experience.

Advisor: An individual selected by the student to assist him/her during the academic integrity process. The advisor may be a faculty or staff member, student, or another representative of the student.

Day: University business day, not including Saturday, Sunday, any officially recognized university employee holiday, or day the University is closed.

Student Hearing Board: Hearing board of the Faculty Senate charged with reviewing and making recommendations to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Success on student disciplinary cases, including academic integrity appeals.

Academic Integrity Investigations and Procedures

If an instructor has sufficient evidence (e.g., term paper, plagiarized article, exam, or other material) a student has committed an academic integrity infraction, the procedural due process steps listed below should be followed.

1. **Instructor-Student Meeting.** The instructor of the course notifies the student through written communication of the suspected violation to initiate the investigative process. The student will have 5-days after the notice was sent to respond on his/her own behalf to the allegation. The response should include all relevant information and witnesses the student wishes the instructor to consider. If the student fails to respond to the instructor, the instructor's academic integrity violation decision shall be final.
2. **Instructor Fact-Finding.** The instructor shall explore all information provided by the student and facts relevant to the suspected violation. The instructor shall respect the privacy of any students involved when making inquiries, including not sharing any unnecessary information when interviewing involved parties.
 - a. **Multiple Students.** When two or more students have been accused of cooperating in an academic infraction, any fact-finding inquiries should establish their independent responsibility, and the sanctions for each individual should be determined separately.
 - b. **Timeline.** The instructor will work to resolve the matter within 30 days from the date of the student notification if possible. If a determination has not made within 30 days after the date of student notice of suspected violation, the College or Office of Provost may choose to close the case administratively.
3. **Instructor Decision.** After considering of all information provided by the student, the instructor will determine whether a violation of the Academic Integrity policy occurred. Once the investigation is complete, the instructor will report the incident and recommended sanction to the student, *Associate Provost of Academic Affairs* and the *Student Conduct Officer* by completing an [Academic Integrity Alert form](#)
 - a. **No Violation** - If the instructor determines no violation of the Academic Integrity Policy occurred, the instructor will complete the *Academic Alert Form* that will notify the student of the no-violation findings.
 - b. **Violation** – If the instructor determines it is more probable true than not true that an academic integrity violation HAS occurred, the instructor shall complete an *Academic Alert Form* and upload supporting documentation relative to finding (where appropriate). The alleged violation shall contain a statement of the finding; the provision of the policy violated; and consistent with the severity of violations, specify the sanction(s) imposed for academic dishonesty which may include:
 - i. Formal warning;
 - ii. Provide the student the opportunity to resubmit academic evaluation where violation occurred;
 - iii. Assign a reduced grade for an academic evaluation;

- iv. Assign an 'F' grade or reduced grade for academic evaluation affected by the violation;
 - v. Assign a reduced grade for the course;
 - vi. Assign an 'F' grade for the course; or
 - vii. Recommendation to the College Dean the student be removed from degree program.
4. The student will also be notified of their right to appeal to the Dean of the College. The student must file their appeal no later than 10 days after the date the notification was sent. If the student does not file a timely appeal, the sanction is final.
 5. A student charged with a violation of this policy shall not be barred from attending class, completing assignment, or taking quizzes, tests and/or final examinations until the final outcome is administered and case is closed.
 6. In any case, if the Associate Provost and Student Conduct Officer find evidence of multiple or grievous violation(s) of academic integrity by the student, the complaint may be directly referred to the Student Hearing Board for appropriate action.
 7. In any case, violations of academic integrity could result in dismissal from Fairmont State University.

SECTION III: OTHER COMPLAINTS AND ALLEGATIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Any member of the University community that believes a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy should report the incident to the Office of Provost and the Office of Student Conduct by completing an [Academic Integrity Alert Form](#) as soon as possible following the alleged violation or date on which the individual knew or should have known of academic dishonesty.

SECTION IV: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Important Guidelines for Students

The student academic integrity appeal process is designed to encourage a fair and structured process for students to appeal decisions and sanctions imposed as a result of an academic integrity violation. This process ensures students have an opportunity to challenge the decisions, present their case, and seek a review of the initial outcome. At any point during the appeal process, the student may be accompanied by an Advisor. This Advisor is not permitted to participate directly or speak for the student.

Grounds for Appeal

With supporting evidence, students may appeal a decision on valid grounds, which include, but not limited to:

1. **Procedural Errors.** Students may appeal if there were significant procedural errors during the investigation process which may have affected the fairness or outcome of the case.

2. **New Evidence.** If new evidence becomes available that was not previously considered during the investigation or disciplinary process, the student may appeal to present such evidence and its potential impact on the decision.
3. **Claims of Unfair Treatment.** Students may appeal if they believe they were treated unfairly or subjected to bias during the investigation or disciplinary process.

Appeal Decisions

The written appeal should include any supporting documentation, videos, witness testimonies or written statements. After a thorough review of the appeal and supporting documentation, a decision will be made regarding the appeal which include, but not limited to the following:

1. **Uphold the Original Decision.** If it determined the instructor's decision was fair, reasonable, and appropriate, the appeal will be denied, and the original sanctions will be upheld.
2. **Modify the sanctions.** If it is determined the sanctions imposed were excessive or inappropriate, the sanctions may be modified accordingly.
3. **Reverse the Decision.** If it is determined the initial academic integrity decision was flawed or unjust; or new convincing information was made available to support the case, a decision may be made to reverse the decision entirely and remove any imposed sanctions.

Appeal Procedures

1. Appeal to the College Dean

- a. **Appeal Submission.** With supportive evidence, the student may appeal the decision of the instructor, by submitting a formal appeal to the Dean of the College within 10 days following the instructor's decision. The appeal should include (a) a description of the alleged academic integrity violation, (b) factual narrative of events and times of occurrences, (c) reasons why the sanction should not be imposed, (d) names of persons having information about relevant circumstances or events, and, (e) the general description of any supporting documentation.
- b. **Dean's Review.** The Dean will review the written appeal, along with any supporting documentation or evidence provided by the student. The Dean may also review the previous investigation report, the decision of the instructor, and relevant records.
- c. **Dean's decision.** Based on the review, the Dean may choose to uphold the original decision, modify the sanctions, or reverse the decision. The Dean will communicate the decision to the student in writing, providing clear reasons for the decision reached.

2. Appeal to the University Student Hearing Board

- a. Appeal Submission. With supportive evidence, the student may appeal the decision of the Dean, by submitting a formal appeal to the Student Hearing Board within 5 days following the Dean's decision.
- b. Scheduling the Hearing. Once the student submits a formal written notice to appeal to the Student Hearing Boards, the board will schedule a face-to-face hearing within a reasonable timeframe.
 - i. Notification. The student will be notified of the hearing date, time, and location in writing.
 - ii. Selection. The Student Hearing Board will be composed of faculty members, administrators, and/or student representatives who have not been directly involved in the initial decision or investigation related to the appeal.
- c. Conduct of Hearing Proceedings:
 - i. The Student Hearing Board Chairperson will commence the hearing by providing an overview of the purpose, format, and rules of the proceedings. The student and the instructor may each be accompanied by an advisor if desired, but the advisor shall not be permitted to address the Board directly except as the Board Chair deems appropriate.
 - ii. The Instructor or representative shall have the burden of showing it is more likely than not that the student engaged in Academic Dishonesty. The instructor or representative must explain the reason for the sanction. If the student accepts responsibility for Academic Dishonesty, then the Board may focus the hearing on a recommendation of appropriate sanction(s).
 - iii. Information regarding prior violations or informal resolutions of previous allegations may not be used as proof of a current violation, but may be admitted for other purposes, such as to show that the student had prior experience relevant to the allegations or to show that the student had been informed previously that the conduct was unacceptable. The Board may also consider information regarding prior violations in determining an appropriate sanction.
 - iv. A student who fails to appear or refuses to participate at the hearing will be deemed to have abandoned his/her appeal, unless the student can demonstrate that extraordinary circumstances prevented his/her appearance or participation.
 - v. Presentation of Evidence. The instructor shall proceed first followed by the student with an opening statement, presentation of evidence, and supporting documentation relevant to the appeal. This may include witness testimonies, written statements, or any other relevant information. Members of the Board may ask questions to seek clarification or further information from the instructor, student, university representative, or any witness present during the hearing. The instructor and student will have the chance to make closing statements summarizing their position and information presented.

- vi. After closing statements, the chairperson will adjourn the hearing, signaling the conclusion of the oral proceedings.
- d. Deliberation and Decision
- i. The Student Hearing Board members will deliberate privately to review the information presented, discuss the appeal, and reach a decision. The deliberation should be impartial, fair, and based solely on the evidence and arguments presented during the hearing.
 - ii. Student Hearing Board Recommendation. Based solely on the information presented, the Student Hearing Board will formulate a recommendation to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee and Student Conduct Officer within 5 days of the hearing as to whether the student more likely than not engaged in academic dishonesty and the appropriate sanction. Recommendations must be supported by a Board majority.
 - iii. Review and Decision of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee. After reviewing of the Board's Recommendation, the Provost will render a written decision which affirms, reverses, or accepts with modifications the College/School Board's recommendation. The Provost will provide written notice of the final decision to the student, instructor, Dean, Student Hearing Board within 20 days following the Board's recommendation. A delay may occur if further investigation is necessary. The Provost or his/her designee will make a final determination regarding the appeal.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Throughout the appeal process, the University will maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy of all parties involved. Access to information and records related to the appeal will be limited to those directly involved in the appeal review.

Timeliness

The University will strive to complete the appeal process in a timely manner, ensuring students receive a decision within a reasonable timeframe from the submission of their appeal.

Note: It is important for the student to abide by Fairmont State's official policies and procedures in the Student Life Handbook or the Academic Affairs webpage to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on the academic integrity institutional appeals process.