

Academic Integrity

Introduction

The University Faculty Senate's Academic Integrity Policy (Spring 2000) emphasizes the importance of high standards for academic honesty at Penn State and strengthens the role played by faculty in reinforcing the expectations for academic integrity as a major element of the teaching and learning processes. The following policy delineates the College of Nursing's guidelines for academic and/or disciplinary procedures.

NOTE: Academic integrity is a campus issue. These guidelines refer to the University Park and Hershey campuses.

Academic Integrity: Definition and Expectations

As defined by [Faculty Senate Policy 49-20](#), academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner, serving as a basic guiding principle for all academic activity. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others. To protect the rights and maintain the trust of honest students and to support appropriate behavior, faculty and administrators should regularly communicate high standards of integrity and reinforce them by taking reasonable steps to anticipate and deter acts of dishonesty in all assignments (Senate Policy 44-40, Proctoring of Examinations). *At the beginning of each course, it is the responsibility of the faculty member to provide students with a statement clarifying the application of University and College of Nursing academic integrity policies for that course.*

Academic Integrity Committee Membership

The Academic Integrity (AI) Committee consists of three faculty members, one of whom will serve as chair; one undergraduate student; and one graduate student. The College of Nursing dean appoints the members of the AI Committee for a two-year term and designates the chair. The Academic Integrity Coordinator (Steve Koths, 201F NURS SCI), appointed by the dean, assists the committee and serves as its liaison to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC).

The committee shall:

- promote expectations for academic integrity consistent with the definition in this policy;
- ensure fairness and consistency in processes and outcomes;
- review and settle all contested cases in which academic sanctions are applied;
- refer cases to OSC for disciplinary action;
- record all cases of academic dishonesty within the SON and report them to OSC.

Sanctions (ACUE Policy G-9)

In all cases, the charge and recommendation for sanction(s) originates with the faculty member. Sanctions may be academic and disciplinary, or only academic. Before proposing a sanction, the faculty member should read the University's [Sanctioning Guidelines for Violations of Academic Integrity](#). The faculty member may withdraw the charge(s) of academic dishonesty any time prior to the AI Committee's decision.

If the faculty member recommends disciplinary sanction(s) in addition to academic sanctions, the AI Committee reviews the case. If the AI Committee determines that disciplinary sanctions are warranted in addition to the academic sanctions, the student is notified by the college that he/she has been found responsible for the charge, and that the sanctions will be put into place. The student's case will be referred to the OSC for consideration of specific disciplinary sanction. The OSC will review the committee's recommendations and determine the appropriate disciplinary sanction to assign.

General Procedure

The College of Nursing has developed the following guidelines to assist both students and faculty in understanding their rights and responsibilities regarding procedures related to possible academic integrity violations. These procedures are consistent with those set forth by the Penn State Faculty Senate.

When Academic Dishonesty is Suspected

1. The faculty member should notify the student of the alleged charge as soon as possible.
 - a. Arrange a meeting with the student; e-mail is acceptable only when distance precludes a face-to-face meeting (e.g., an online course).
 - b. This is the opportunity to resolve issues between the faculty member and the student(s).
 - c. If more than one student is involved in the same violation, a separate meeting should be held with each student.
 - d. The faculty member should articulate the specific charge—place, time, and circumstances of alleged violation.
 - e. Review the specific expectation for academic integrity associated with the class or activity.
 - f. Allow student to explain the behaviors and review any evidence of violation.
2. If the faculty member determines at this point that academic dishonesty has not occurred (e.g., a case of poor academic performance or misunderstanding), the process is concluded and no records related to the event should be maintained.
3. If the faculty member determines that academic dishonesty has occurred, inform the student. Present or send (certified mail) the Academic Integrity Form (see Academic Integrity Form link in this section) to the student with an entry briefly describing the alleged violation, proposed academic sanction, and indication as to whether the faculty member will recommend a disciplinary sanction.

4. Keep a copy of the completed form in case the student does not sign and return it.
5. The student has up to five business days to respond and return the form to the faculty member.
 - a. The student may choose to **not contest** (accept the charge[s] and/or assigned sanctions) or **contest** (disagree with the charge and/or sanctions).
 - b. The student's failure to respond or refusal to sign and return the form within the appropriate time frame will be interpreted as acceptance of the charge and sanction(s).
 - c. The faculty member will notify the AI Coordinator and submit the copy of the AI form.
 - d. Students in the Schreyer Honors College should consult its [guidelines concerning academic integrity violations](#). The honors college may impose additional sanctions on its students.
 - e. Consistent with University policy ([G-9, Academic Integrity](#)), students are not permitted to withdraw from a course following an allegation of academic misconduct. Students who choose to do so will be reinstated.
6. The faculty member forwards the signed/unsigned form to the AI Coordinator, who then contacts OSC to ascertain whether the student has prior violations, convenes the AI Committee when required according to the AI procedure, and provides the OSC information to the committee at the appropriate time.
7. If a final grade needs to be submitted, a deferred grade (DF) should be entered pending fact finding and a decision on the appropriate sanction.

If the student “does not contest” the charges and/or the proposed sanction(s)

If no prior violation(s) is on record with the OSC:

1. The academic sanction is applied.
2. The AI form is forwarded by the AI Coordinator to the OSC for record keeping.

If a prior violation(s) is on record with the OSC:

1. AI Coordinator will notify the AI Committee and forward all documents to the committee members.
2. The committee will review the documents and determine whether further sanctions are warranted.
3. A new AI form will be created and provided to the student. The student has the right to accept or contest new sanction(s).
 - a. If the student contests the new sanctions, the AI Coordinator will forward copies of the signed AI form and documentation to the faculty member, the students, and the AI Committee members.
4. If the AI Committee wants to keep the original academic sanction and add disciplinary sanction(s), the academic sanction is implemented by the College of Nursing and the case is sent to the OSC for disciplinary sanctions only.

If a disciplinary sanction(s) is requested by the faculty member in addition to an academic sanction(s):

1. The AI Committee will conduct a paper review to establish whether the faculty member's intended or recommended disciplinary sanction is within the appropriate sanction range.
2. If the AI Committee finds that a **disciplinary sanction is *not* warranted**, the academic sanctions are imposed by the College of Nursing and the disciplinary sanction process is concluded. The parties are informed.
3. If the AI Committee finds that a **disciplinary sanction *is* warranted**, then academic sanctions are imposed by the College of Nursing and the case is forwarded to the OSC for disciplinary sanctions.

If the student contests the charge(s) and/or sanctions

1. The student will prepare a statement of the case from his/her perspective.
2. All documentation is submitted to the AI Coordinator.
3. The AI Coordinator notifies the AI Committee.
4. The AI Committee reviews the documents.
5. If the committee finds the student responsible for the current charge, the AI Coordinator will provide information from the OSC regarding any recorded prior violations that might affect the committee's decision regarding academic sanctions and recommendations for disciplinary sanctions.
6. The AI Committee's decision is final.
7. Academic sanctions are imposed by the College of Nursing.
8. If the AI Committee is also recommending disciplinary sanctions, the case is forwarded to the OSC for disciplinary sanctions.
9. The student and faculty will be notified of the decision and all documentation will be sent to the OSC for record keeping.
10. No records will be kept in the college.

AI Committee Review Procedure

1. The minimum number of committee members to review a case is four, three of whom must be faculty. In the case of a split decision, the committee will consult with the associate dean for undergraduate programs or the associate dean for graduate education and research (or a designee if the position is vacant) to render a final decision.
2. The committee will normally conduct a review of paper records.
3. A hearing will be scheduled only when there may be a significant educational loss resulting from the sanction (e.g., delayed graduation or removal from the program).
4. If a committee member is the faculty member presenting the charge, she/he will not serve on the review/hearing committee. The dean will appoint an alternative faculty member.
5. The review or hearing will occur as soon as possible and no later than fifteen business days after submission of the signed integrity form.
6. The faculty member and the student will forward to the AI Coordinator all relevant documentation and evidence to be reviewed.
7. The AI Coordinator will distribute copies of all documentation to the faculty member, the student, and members of the committee no later than three business days prior to the paper review or hearing.

8. The committee chair directs the review or hearing; rules on procedures; and ensures that questioning is fair, evidence is relevant, standards are enforced, and confidentiality is maintained. The chair will maintain order and reasonable time limits.
9. Neither the student nor the faculty member will be present during the paper review meeting.
10. If the committee determines a hearing is warranted:
 - a. The AI Committee chair will provide a written notice of the hearing date and time to the faculty member, student, and committee members.
 - b. The student and faculty member may attend all meetings of the hearing except the meeting when the committee renders its decision. If the student and/or faculty member do not appear for the meeting, the AI Committee will proceed with the hearing and make a final decision based on the materials submitted.
 - c. The student and faculty member may bring witnesses that are relevant to fact finding. 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.
 - d. The student will explain behaviors and submitted evidence and the faculty member will explain his/her accusations.
 - e. The committee may question both parties and witnesses.
 - f. Both the student and faculty member may question witnesses and comment on the evidence.
 - g. To maximize confidentiality, all witnesses will be present at the hearing only during their questioning.
 - h. The student has the right to have a [Student Conduct Advisor](#).
11.
 - i. Only those members of the University community participating in the hearing or appropriate non-community witnesses may be present in the hearing.
 - j. No audio or video recording of any part of the hearing proceedings is permitted.
12. Following the review or hearing, the complete committee will examine all evidence/testimony and decide by majority vote (all committee members vote) whether the student was in violation and if the assigned sanction(s) is/are appropriate. The standard of proof employed is "clear and convincing evidence" to the committee. The faculty member bears the burden of proof.
13. If the student is **found not responsible** for charge(s), all incident records are destroyed.
14. If the student is **found responsible**, prior violations may be used in determining the sanction(s) to be applied. The AI coordinator contacts the OSC to determine whether prior violations are on record and provides any information to the AI Committee prior to sanctioning. The committee may maintain, increase, or decrease the proposed sanction(s) based on this information.
15. The decision by the AI Committee regarding the violation and the academic sanction(s) will be final and imposed by the College of Nursing; recommended disciplinary sanctions are forwarded to OSC for sanctioning.
16. The chair of the committee will write the final report, including (1) the accusation, (2) a summary of accepted testimony, (3) evidence leading to the decision as supported by fact finding, and (4) the committee's decision, sanction(s), and rationale(s), accompanied by

the documentation. The AI Coordinator will send the report to the student, the faculty member, and the OSC within three business days.

17. No records are kept in the college.

See also:

- [Statement by the Council of Academic Deans](#)
- [G-9 Academic Integrity Statement](#)
- [Faculty Senate Policy 49-20 Academic Integrity](#)
- Academic Integrity Flow Chart (see link in this section)