

The College of the Liberal Arts Academic Integrity Information for Students

This information is for students who are completing work in Liberal Arts courses or programs. [Graduate students](#) and [Schreyer honors students](#) should also consult graduate or honors program information.

What academic integrity is, and how it is maintained and enforced, varies across cultures, schools, colleges, and universities. At Penn State, students are responsible for understanding how to avoid academic misconduct and academic dishonesty. Copying from online or prohibited sources, collaboration (working with another person), hiring someone to complete your coursework, and plagiarism (misrepresenting another person's words, images, or ideas as your own) are often prohibited in Penn State courses. If you have questions about academic integrity, you should seek guidance before you submit work for evaluation. Often, you can find helpful information in your course syllabus. You may also seek guidance from your instructor and from our Academic Integrity Office (laai@psu.edu; (814-863-4297)). For an overview of University procedures, please read the information at <http://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/G-9-academic-integrity.html>

Academic Integrity Resources for Students

Websites/Documents

- [Academic Integrity Training for Students](#)
- [Academic Integrity and The Penn State Principles](#)
- [Academic Tutoring and Learning Support](#)
- [Citation and Writing Guides](#)
- [What counts as a violation of Academic Integrity?](#)
- [Recording and Sharing Class Information](#)
- [List of Academic Integrity Contacts for Students](#)

Videos

- [What is Academic Integrity?](#)
- [Why Is Academic Integrity Important at Penn State?](#)
- [Academic Integrity Brief Welcome](#)
- [Facing the Consequences](#)
- [What Happens When You Commit a Violation?](#)
- [Navigating the Academic Integrity Process at Penn State](#)
- [Using Social Messaging Apps with Classmates](#)
- [Using the Internet for Classwork-Make Sure It's OK](#)
- [Academic Integrity Violation Example: Copying](#)

Why do Penn State Educators Care So Much About Academic Honesty?

For many students, a Penn State education is a serious investment of time, effort, and money, and they appreciate knowing that their investment is meaningful and that educators respond actively to students who try to gain an advantage dishonestly.

When students join the Penn State Community, they commit to the [Penn State Principles](#), which say "Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at Penn State University, allowing the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner..."

When students participate in Liberal Arts courses and programs, [The College of the Liberal Arts Honor Code](#) applies. This code says, "I pledge to conduct myself with honor and integrity in all academic, personal, and professional pursuits. I will be responsible for the academic integrity of my work and encourage my peers to do the same. I will carry these values with me as I graduate from this college."

How to Avoid Common Academic Integrity Problems

- 1) Read your course syllabus. Pay attention to what you may and may not do.
- 2) Unless you have clear and explicit permission, do not use outside or online sources, do not collaborate, do not share any class information or materials with anyone else, and do not upload or share any course information to an online vendor, repository, tutoring site, or quizzing site.
- 3) When in doubt, ask your educator - Everyone makes mistakes, loses track of deadlines, and gets confused. If you cannot meet a deadline or are not sure if something is permissible, the best thing to do is ask.
- 4) Avoid plagiarism -- If you use another person's words, images, **or ideas**, you need to cite the source both in the body of your text AND in a reference/bibliography/works cited section at the end of your paper. If you use someone else's words, you must put them within quotation marks unless directed otherwise by your instructor. If you rephrase someone else's words, you should change the wording substantially and cite the original source. Small changes (e.g., a few synonyms) are not enough to make someone else's words or ideas your own. When in doubt, ask.

What to Do If You Face Allegations of Academic Misconduct

1. **Try not to take it personally.** Penn State policies direct faculty members to report suspicions of academic misconduct to the College Academic Integrity Office, even when students engage in academic misconduct because they "made a stupid mistake" or misunderstood something. Faculty members who do not do this could put themselves in jeopardy.
2. **Do not panic.** Allegations of academic misconduct are a beginning, not an end. As part of this process, students may indicate that they challenge, or contest, the allegations and/or the penalties (also called sanctions) proposed by the educator. Students who contest have an opportunity to voice their concerns to an independent committee of students and faculty. That committee determines if there is evidence of academic misconduct and, if there is, if the sanctions/penalties recommended by the educator are appropriate. When educators submit allegations of academic misconduct, students receive specific information about their rights. Read this information and ask your educator questions, if needed. You are welcome to contact the College Academic Integrity Office with questions (laai@psu.edu).
3. **Talk with the faculty member.** Ask about the evidence that led the faculty member to believe that you violated instructions or policies. If you have a reasonable explanation for the evidence, share that explanation with the faculty member.
4. **Remain in the course.** Once you are notified of allegations of academic misconduct, you **may not drop the course** unless those allegations are dismissed. If you do, the College Academic Integrity Office will ask the Office of the Registrar to return you to the course, and you could be responsible for the consequences of missing work/assessments. In the event of a serious, non-academic reason to drop the course (e.g., medical or trauma), please contact the College Academic Integrity Office (laai@psu.edu; (814-863-4297)).
5. **Check your PSU email regularly** and look for correspondence from our Academic Integrity Office.

6. **Complete and return the form.** When the Academic Integrity Office receives an academic integrity form from an educator, we notify the student facing the allegations by PSU email. Students must complete and return the form within 5 business days. Otherwise, the process moves ahead with the acknowledgement that the student has chosen not to contest either the allegations or the proposed sanction(s). To complete the form, you must make a decision. The options are:

Accept the allegations(s) and sanction(s): This will end the academic integrity process and the faculty member will apply the proposed academic sanction(s). If the student has a previous academic integrity violation on record, the Academic Integrity Committee may decide to add educational sanctions and/or request a disciplinary sanction (also called a conduct sanction) from the Office of Student Conduct. If the faculty member requests a disciplinary sanction, the Academic Integrity Committee will review the case to determine if it supports that request. That information will be passed on to the Office of Student Conduct for their consideration. That office makes its own determinations based on its own policies and procedures.

Contest the allegation(s) of misconduct, the proposed sanction(s), or both: When students choose this option, they have an opportunity to submit a statement to the Academic Integrity Committee explaining why the suspicious behavior(s) was/were not evidence of academic misconduct. Essentially, students should share their side of the story. If desired, students may also submit supporting information. The College Academic Integrity Office will send everything students submit to the educator, who will have a chance to review and comment. If students want to submit private information (e.g., sensitive medical documents), they should contact the Academic Integrity Office. The Academic Integrity Office can share a summary of that information with the instructor (e.g., the student provided medical information) while striving to honor the student's confidentiality request (e.g., without sharing symptoms or a diagnosis). If the educator chooses to comment on the student's statement, the student will have an opportunity to respond before information goes on to the committee for review.

If the committee determines there is evidence of an academic integrity violation, the committee will review the sanction(s) proposed by the educator, consider the student's history of academic misconduct (or lack thereof), and then determine outcomes. Our Academic Integrity Committee will not escalate academic sanctions beyond the educator's recommendation. Thus, the student will not put themselves at risk for harsher sanctions if they choose to contest.

If a student accepts responsibility or a contesting student is found responsible for an academic integrity violation, our committee will consider asking the Office of Student Conduct for a disciplinary sanction. Regardless of the student's decision to accept or contest, the Academic Integrity Office will share outcomes with the student, the educator who submitted the academic integrity form, and, when appropriate, the Schreyer Honors College.

Information Collection and Review Process

The College relies on a text-based process to collect information for the Academic Integrity Committee to review. It is extremely unlikely that this process will include a face-to-face meeting with the student. If a student wants the committee to consider information, they should include that information in the text-based materials they submit with the academic integrity form. Students with questions about this process should contact the Academic Integrity Office. In the unlikely event that the committee decides a face-to-face meeting is necessary, information will be provided.

Sanctions for Academic Misconduct

- Once an educator sends a notification to a student about their suspicions of academic misconduct, **the student may not drop the course** until those allegations are dismissed. Students who disregard this information and drop the course will be returned and could be responsible for the consequences of missed work/assessments. If there is a serious, non-academic reason to drop a course (e.g., medical), the student should contact the College Academic Integrity Office (laai@psu.edu or 814-863-4297).
- Students who accept responsibility for an academic integrity violation or who are found responsible for a violation face automatic consequences: They lose the opportunity to drop/late drop/withdraw from the course and the opportunity to make Dean's list that semester. In response to COVID-19, Penn State allowed students to select alternative grades, except in courses with an academic integrity violation.
- Often, consequences also include academic sanctions: These impact progress in a course or program. These sanctions include a reduced grade on the exam, assignment, or paper, a reduced course grade, or an 'F' for the course. For students with repeated offenses or for very serious offenses, including cases involving graduate students, the College or graduate program may consider removing the student from their degree program, impacting graduation. The magnitude of the sanction depends on many things, including how much of the academic work was affected by the prohibited behavior(s), how important that work was for the course grade or academic evaluation, how important that work was for the identity of the course or educational program, and if the student has engaged in academic misconduct previously.
- Sometimes, the College Academic Integrity Committee assigns an educational assignment to help students learn how to avoid academic misconduct. Students assigned an educational assignment must complete and submit the assignment correctly to avoid other consequences.
- Sometimes, consequences include a request from the instructor or from the Academic Integrity Committee to the Office of Student Conduct for a disciplinary sanction. Disciplinary sanctions might include a warning or probation and can include a transcript notation. For egregious or repeated violations, the sanction might be an "XF," which includes both an 'F' for the course and a transcript notation. The Office of Student Conduct uses their own process to consider these requests.
- To track repeat offenders, the University keeps a record of students who accept responsibility for academic misconduct and who are found responsible for academic misconduct. The College Academic Integrity Office does not share this information with those who are not part of the academic integrity process. Academic misconduct is not noted on a student's transcript unless a transcript notation is an explicit part of a disciplinary sanction. Currently, the University does not report academic misconduct to other organizations unless the academic misconduct results in a disciplinary sanction.

Information for Parents and Guardians

Penn State expects students to take responsibility for their own progress and to navigate academic and educational processes as part of their learning path. Students who would like us to talk with their parent or guardian should contact the Academic Integrity Office. Parents or guardians with students whose condition prevents this may contact us directly.

We are available to talk with parents and guardians about our academic integrity policies and procedures, however, Federal law and University policy prohibit us from discussing the details of a student's situation with a parent or guardian unless the student completes and submits the *Student Consent For Release Of Information To Third Parties* form found at <https://www.registrar.psu.edu/confidentiality/forms/student-consent-release-information-third-parties-form.pdf>. This form should be submitted to the Academic Integrity Office and requires the student's written signature (not an electronic signature), but the student may submit a scanned copy or digital photo of the completed form.

Parents and guardians should also consider the information at <https://www.registrar.psu.edu/confidentiality/>.

To contact the Liberal Arts Academic Integrity Office, send email to laai@psu.edu or call 814-863-4297.

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