

College of the Liberal Arts Graduate Student Academic Integrity Interim Policy Version November 5, 2024

I. Policy Summary

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. It is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the College of the Liberal Arts community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Academic misconduct is prohibited from a student's time of accepting admission, registration, or enrollment (whichever occurs first) to the awarding of a degree or complete withdrawal.

All students involved in graduate education are expected to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards as scholars and professionals in their respective fields. Academic misconduct is a violation of these expectations and may lead to processes and actions in addition to those described in this policy including the GCAC-800 Student Conduct and Performance Policies. The procedures associated with this policy are designed to promote fairness and consistency in processes and outcomes when addressing allegations of academic misconduct utilizing an evidence-driven focus. This policy applies to students enrolled in a graduate degree program or certificate, non-degree students enrolled in graduate courses, and undergraduate students completing work in a graduate-level course. As described in Penn State policy G-9 (<https://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/G-9-academic-integrity.html>), violating undergraduate students and Schreyer Scholars may face outcomes beyond those described in this policy.

This policy is adopted by the College of the Liberal Arts on an interim basis until the Pennsylvania State University Graduate School issues its final policy. All graduate students and departments within the College of the Liberal Arts are expected to abide by this policy. Students in IUG programs should expect to have this policy apply to the graduate-level components of their program while undergraduate academic policies and procedures are applicable to undergraduate courses, exams, and conduct. In the case of students in a dual-title program, the program(s) where the alleged violation occurred will take the lead, and process and outcomes may apply separately or jointly to the programs (e.g., if a violation is in a course in one program, the outcome would be relevant to that course or program, but if a violation is in a joint exam, then outcomes might be determined by and affect both programs).

II. What is an Academic Integrity Violation?

An academic integrity violation is an intentional, unintentional, or attempted violation of course or assessment policies to gain an academic advantage, or to advantage or disadvantage another student academically. The following actions reflect the most common types of academic misconduct and therefore are prohibited behaviors in any academic context unless specified by the instructor, including both courses and academic assessments that are not associated with credit-bearing courses such as qualifying exams, comprehensive exams, dissertations, other milestone assessments, and SARI training. These descriptions illustrate the range of academic misconduct; there may be academic misconduct that falls outside these categories.

- 1) Unauthorized collaboration and/or accessing or using prohibited materials, information, tools, technologies, or study aids. This includes allowing another person to submit work or participate in academic requirements on one's behalf (sometimes called 'ghosting') or assisting another to engage in any form of academic misconduct (e.g., facilitating academic misconduct).
- 2) Misrepresenting another's words, results, processes, or ideas in whole or in part without giving appropriate attribution, citation, or credit. Includes submitting another person's work as one's

own (e.g., plagiarism). Other categorical examples include copying and tampering with another student's work.

- 3) Providing false information in fulfillment of an academic assignment, exercise, publication, or another requirement, including making up data, sources, efforts, events, or results, and recording, reporting, or using them as authentic. Also includes altering or adjusting graded work to receive a favorable regrade.
- 4) Using the same academic work, in part or entirely, for credit more than once, unless specifically authorized by the instructor receiving the reused work.
- 5) Retaining, recording and/or disseminating instructional content when prohibited, including course exams, or other intellectual property, without the express written permission of the instructor(s) or intellectual property owner, or as permitted by their Campus Disability Coordinator.

Given the nature of graduate education, on occasion a determination must be made as to whether an action involves research misconduct, academic misconduct, or both as described below. Actions involving research misconduct should be addressed according to [RP02 Addressing Allegations of Research Misconduct](#).

- 1) The following fall under the purview of academic misconduct policies: Alleged plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification in a thesis or dissertation in draft form or in work completed for a course (other than a finalized and submitted thesis or dissertation) or a non-course-based assessment that is not published.
- 2) The following fall under the purview of RP02: Addressing Allegations of Research Misconduct (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/rp02>).
 - Plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification in a thesis or dissertation which has been finalized, signed, and submitted to a school or college to fulfill a degree requirement.
 - Alleged plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification in a research report, manuscript, or other scholarly work not related to a thesis, dissertation, or other work undertaken in fulfillment of a course requirement.
 - Allegations of plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification in sponsored research proposals.
 - Allegations of plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification related to sponsored research.
- 3) If there is a question as to whether the violation involves an Academic Integrity violation or research misconduct, the Office for Research Protections should be contacted to determine how to proceed. Please see <https://www.research.psu.edu/orp>, <https://www.research.psu.edu/researchmisconduct> and <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/rp02> for more information.

III. Expectations – Rights and Responsibilities

A. College

1. To resolve academic integrity claims for graduate students, The College of the Liberal Arts will use the Academic Integrity Committee, which will include at least one graduate student and two members of the graduate faculty, all of whom will be representatives from college programs.

B. Instructors

1. Each member of the academic community should be familiar with the principles and procedures of this policy.

2. Instructors should foster in their classes an environment that encourages adherence to the principles of honesty. At the beginning of each course or assessment, it is the responsibility of the instructor (or instructors if a team-taught course) to provide students with a statement clarifying the application of academic integrity policies to that course. Instructors should give specific directions concerning the nature of examinations and assignments, stating, for example, when collaboration is permissible, when students may consult sources in “open book” exams, which technologies and tools are/are not permitted, and the conditions and settings in which exams can be taken.
3. Instructors **must engage with the formal academic integrity process when they suspect or have evidence of a violation**. Reporting affords opportunities for a student to deepen their understanding of the importance of the academic integrity process as a remediation process and provides a mechanism to detect repeated instances of academic misconduct.
4. Per PSU Policies AD11 (Confidentiality of Student Records) and G-9 (Academic Integrity), information regarding academic integrity violations must remain confidential, with limited disclosure. After an instructor (which may include those individuals involved in administering a milestone activity, e.g. a comps exam) brings forward a case to the academic integrity process, the graduate program head should be notified. Any further discussion must follow guidelines below under “Graduate Programs.”

C. Graduate Programs

1. Programs are strongly encouraged to create and/or offer materials, training, opportunities, and activities that support a stronger understanding of the importance of and the proper procedures for maintaining academic honesty in the discipline.
2. Graduate programs must provide academic integrity statements for academic assessments that are managed by the graduate program and are not part of a credit-bearing course. These assessments include those that are part of milestone exams, and other assessments that are part of the academic program but are not administered as part of a course. Expectations of academic integrity for the assessment should be clearly outlined and cover actions that could lead to academic integrity violations such as receiving assistance from others, appropriate source attribution, and use of technological and editorial assistance. This information must be included in the program’s graduate student handbook and in materials provided to students and faculty regarding the academic assessment.
 - i. A default statement to this effect which may be used (inserted into the department’s graduate handbook) is:

“The department of <X> follows the College of the Liberal Arts Graduate Student Academic Integrity Interim Policy. All students in any of the department’s graduate programs are subject to that policy. The policy is located at <location>.”
 - ii. The College also recommends that the paragraphs above under “What is an Academic Integrity Violation” be inserted verbatim into the graduate handbook. The entire policy may be inserted, recognizing that it is subject to updating.
 - iii. If the Department is changing any of the default provisions of the College Interim Policy, the Graduate Handbook must clarify what elements of the policy are being modified, and how. A sample statement to this effect could be:

“The department of <X> follows the College of the Liberal Arts Graduate Student Academic Integrity Interim Policy with the following modifications:

 1. Change 1 (reference section numbers along with giving modified policy)
 2. Change 2

All students in any of the department's graduate programs are subject to that policy. The policy is located at <location>."

3. Academic integrity violations can vary in severity. Programs should consider the [Sanctioning Guidelines for Violations of Academic Integrity](https://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/sanctioning-guidelines.html) (currently <https://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/sanctioning-guidelines.html>). Programs may choose outcomes that are more stringent or detailed, provided they are fully detailed in both the program handbook and in materials associated with a given assessment. Reasoning for more stringent outcomes may need to be shared with the College's Academic Integrity Committee, whose role is in part to promote consistent outcomes for students with similar violations.
4. Additional guidelines may be established and included in the program handbook to help graduate students and faculty members in the program understand differences between "minor," "moderate," and "major" academic integrity violations and the associated consequences. The default for the College of the Liberal Arts is:
 - i. A minor violation: an error in judgment or a clear lack-of-intent to violate academic integrity policies.
 - ii. A moderate violation: an unpremeditated dishonest act that only affects the student.
 - iii. A major violation: a premeditated dishonest act or acts that may also affect other students.
5. After the conclusion of the academic integrity process, programs may follow GCAC 800-series policies and procedures, or the policies and procedures in their graduate student handbook, to consider a loss of funding or removal from the graduate program.
6. For assessments not associated with a credit-bearing course that are evaluated by a committee (e.g., qualifying exam, comprehensive exam, dissertation, other milestone assessments), programs must establish mechanisms for committee members to reach a collective decision to determine whether an action by a student constitutes an academic integrity violation and, if so, to propose an appropriate sanction. In the absence of different rules by the program, it is the expectation that this mechanism will be a majority vote of the members of the committee; if the student's research advisor, thesis advisor, or dissertation chair is on the committee, they should be recused from this vote. The number of faculty voting on the alleged violation must be odd; if the committee consists of an even number of members after any required recusals, the graduate program Director, Program/Department Head, Associate Head, or another faculty member appointed by the Head (in that order) should be appointed for purposes of voting on the allegation.
7. Per PSU Policies AD11 (Confidentiality of Student Records) and G-9 (Academic Integrity), information regarding academic integrity violations must remain confidential, with disclosure limited to University Officials with a Legitimate Educational Interest. This includes the Dean of the College; Liberal Arts considers the instructor (or individual who identified the allegation of misconduct), graduate program Director (DGS/PIC), Program/Department Head, and the student's advisor/dissertation chair/thesis chair as designees of the Dean with a Legitimate Educational Interest.
 - i. Information regarding *alleged* academic integrity violations and outcomes *must remain confidential* among those involved including those overseeing the assessment (e.g. the instructor, or a milestone exam committee), and supervising academic administrators in the department (student advisor/dissertation chair, graduate program Director, department Head).

- ii. Academic integrity violations that have been *validated* through the academic integrity process may also be shared with a special committee established for purposes of evaluating funding and continuation decisions for the student, after the academic integrity process is complete. This special graduate committee has a Legitimate Educational Interest on behalf of the Department or Program.
 - iii. In all cases, appropriate support personnel (e.g., program staff) may be involved.
8. It is the expectation that if an academic administrator directly involved in rendering a judgment on an alleged academic integrity violation (e.g., DGS, PIC, department or program head) is also the student's direct research advisor, thesis advisor, or dissertation chair, they should be recused from the part of the process where they render judgment (e.g., they should not vote on the allegation). In such cases, they should be replaced by another administrator (e.g., the DGS should be replaced by the Head, or the Head should be replaced by a faculty member appointed by the College's Associate Dean for Graduate Studies).

D. Students

1. Students must familiarize themselves with this policy and the academic integrity requirements of their graduate programs. Students are responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with these policies.
2. Students have the right to have allegations of academic misconduct resolved in the format outlined in this policy, including the option to accept or contest allegations of academic misconduct and/or proposed sanctions, whether in a course or in an assessment not associated with a credit-bearing course.
3. Students have the responsibility to provide honest responses to inquiries regarding potential academic integrity violations and materials for consideration by the College Academic Integrity Committee.
4. Students have the responsibility to participate in this process to resolve allegations. Students should not ignore communications from the program, an academic integrity administrator, or the College on these matters. If a student fails to sign and submit their portion of an academic integrity form before the response deadline, their claim will be handled as if they did not contest either the allegation(s) or the outcome(s) proposed by the educator.
5. Any student assigned a developmental or educational outcome as part of this process has the responsibility to complete the outcome as assigned.
6. During the academic integrity process, students may seek counsel from individuals of their choice including the graduate ombudspersons.

IV. Possible Additional Department/Program Guidelines

Programs are encouraged to highlight this information in new faculty training/mentoring, during new student orientations, at the start of each academic year for continuing students, on course syllabi, and when students are preparing for a milestone academic assessment not associated with a course. Programs are strongly encouraged to share information on academic integrity in multiple ways and should remind both faculty and students about this information on a regular basis.

The College of the Liberal Arts sets initial standards for the following items in this document. Programs may consider and modify these items by outlining any differences in the program handbook.

- Sanctioning guidelines for graduate students may be modified by the graduate program. By default, graduate student sanctions should generally follow those for undergraduate students (<https://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/sanctioning-guidelines.html>).
- If the assessment is reviewed by a committee, a procedure must be established to determine the course of action in the absence of a consensus about the evidence of an academic integrity violation. Will the committee decide by a majority vote? Is consensus required? Can a single member initiate the academic integrity process?
- Who from the graduate program leadership (the Graduate Program Head (GPH), Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)/Professor in Charge (PIC), or both) will review the evidence and faculty sanction recommendations (that is, the sanction recommended by the relevant faculty member) to ensure consistency within the program?
- The procedure for choosing a designee to replace the GPH or DGS/PIC, should one of these individuals be the student's research advisor.
- Expectations of confidentiality for students facing allegations and amongst those who decide to submit an Academic Integrity form, which must be consistent with the current policy.
- Reporting procedures and expectations that are consistent with this policy for students and faculty who suspect an Academic Integrity violation but who are not directly involved in the supervision of the assessment.
- Recommendations for graduate students about ways to find information, resources, and guidance on navigating the Academic Integrity process. This may include pointers to the chair of the College Academic Integrity Committee or an ombudsperson with the Graduate Ombudsperson program.
- A preview of the academic integrity statements that will appear on non-course-based assessments.
- Guidelines to help students and faculty members understand differences between "minor," "moderate," and "major" violations.
- Guidelines to help students and faculty members understand when a violation could lead to the consideration of GCAC 800 Student Conduct and Performance Policies, particularly regarding termination from the degree program for failure to make academic progress (GCAC-803) and termination of an assistantship (GCAC-804).

V. Academic Misconduct Procedures

Process when Academic Misconduct is Suspected

1. The instructor or appropriate committee member who will complete the academic integrity form will notify their graduate program head (GPH) and/or DGS/PIC of the alleged violation and sanction(s) which they propose.
2. The GPH and/or DGS/PIC will conduct an initial review of the allegation and recommendation to ensure that it is aligned with program and Graduate Council guidelines.
 - a. If the GPH/DGS/PIC is the instructor, one of the committee members alleging the violation, or the advisor of the student facing the allegations, then a designee must be appointed to review the claim (per point 7 under "Graduate Programs" above).
3. If it is determined that no violation occurred, the inquiry will end, and the student will not be penalized in any way.
4. If an individual other than the instructor or assessment committee member becomes aware of activities that could be considered academic misconduct, that individual should discuss their concerns with the instructor or assessment committee chair.

5. If initial evidence suggests that academic misconduct has occurred, then
 - a. If the suspected misconduct occurred in a course, then the instructor should consider university sanctioning guidelines (<https://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/sanctioning-guidelines.html>) and program guidelines to determine an appropriate sanction to recommend.
 - b. If the suspected misconduct occurred in an assessment that was supervised by a committee (whether a team-taught course or assessment not associated with a course), then the committee member with the concern should alert other committee members as soon as possible. If the committee agrees that a violation could have occurred, they should consider university sanctioning guidelines (<https://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/sanctioning-guidelines.html>) and program guidelines to determine an appropriate sanction to recommend. Any disagreements among the committee members will be resolved according to procedures established by the program. By default, this will be a majority vote; but see above discussion of recusal of advisor and requirement for an odd number of members.
 - c. In coordination with the GPH and/or DGS/PIC, the instructor or committee member who will submit the academic integrity form will share their concerns, the information motivating those concerns, and the recommended sanction(s) with the student.
 - i. The instructor or committee member should consider both the confidential nature of the information and the goal of maintaining an environment that supports teaching and learning.
 - ii. If multiple students are involved, each should have separate confidential conversations.
 - iii. If the instructor or committee member no longer believes there is a violation after discussing the allegation with the student, then the situation is resolved. The student, GPH, and/or DGS/PIC will be notified by the instructor or committee member. No report will be filed, the inquiry will end, and the student will not be penalized in any way.
 - iv. If the instructor or committee member still believes the student violated academic integrity policies after discussing the allegation with the student, then they will complete and submit the Academic Integrity form.
 1. If the student fails to sign and submit their portion of the academic integrity form by the required deadline (determined the College), the academic integrity process will continue as if they have accepted responsibility for the violation and the proposed outcome(s).
 2. Students should continue to participate actively in an affected course, as the final decision on outcomes may differ from those proposed by the instructor.
 3. Students who dropped the course before the academic integrity form was submitted or during the academic integrity process will be returned to the course.
 4. This drop policy may be superseded in exceptional circumstances. In these cases, the student should contact the academic integrity office.
 5. The process may continue even if a student is allowed to drop an affected course. Although course-specific outcomes may be moot, the violation can be noted and may be considered if the student violates again. Also, the student's home program and the Office of Student

Accountability and Conflict Response may follow their policies and procedures to respond to the violation.

If the Student Accepts Responsibility for the Violation and the Proposed Outcome(s) on the Academic Integrity Form

1. The claim is closed, and the recommended outcome(s) may be applied unless the submitter recommended the grade of “XF” (the grade of “F” and a notation to indicate the “F” is a consequence of an academic integrity violation) or removal from the degree program. An “XF” may be considered only when the student has multiple violations in the same course or when the violation is egregious. Then, the academic integrity committee will convene and follow the committee adjudication procedures below to determine if they support these outcomes.
 - a. If the committee supports the request for the “XF,” then the committee will determine the duration of the “XF” grade and conditions for the removal of the “X” notation (leaving the grade of “F”). Students will have an opportunity to appeal that outcome to the appropriate Associate Dean.
 - b. If the committee does not support that request, then the academic outcome will be the grade of “F” only.
 - c. The committee’s support/lack of support for removal from the degree program will be shared with the student’s program leadership, which may consider removing the student outside of the academic integrity process and through the application of departmental review policies (below).
2. The academic integrity administrator will notify the student and the submitter.
3. The academic integrity administrator will coordinate with the Office of Student Conflict Response and Accountability to learn if the student has violated academic integrity policies previously.
4. The academic integrity administrator will share all information submitted through the academic integrity process with the Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response. That office will follow its own policies and procedures to determine if additional outcomes are appropriate.

If the Student Contests Responsibility for the Violation, the Proposed Outcome(s), or both on the Academic Integrity Form

1. The recommended sanction(s) cannot be applied until the College Academic Integrity Committee reviews the case and makes a determination.
2. The College Academic Integrity Committee will review the information submitted through the academic integrity process. If either the student or the submitter thinks that there has been a procedural problem, they should bring that concern to the attention of the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies.
3. If the submitter recommended the grade of “XF” or removal from the degree program, the College Academic Integrity Committee will follow the committee adjudication procedures below to determine if they support these outcomes.
 - a. If the committee supports the request for the “XF,” then the committee will determine the duration of the “XF” grade and conditions for the removal of the “X” notation (leaving the grade of “F”), and the student will have an opportunity to appeal that outcome to the appropriate Associate Dean.
4. At the conclusion of the College Academic Integrity Committee’s review, the academic integrity administrator will notify the student and the submitter.
5. The academic integrity administrator will coordinate with the Office of Student Conflict and Accountability to learn if the student has violated academic integrity policies previously.

6. The academic integrity administrator will share all information submitted through the academic integrity process with the Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response. That office will follow its own policies and procedures to determine if additional outcomes are appropriate.
7. Students who believe that the academic integrity committee made a procedural error may ask the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies for a new review.

VI. Additional Department Actions

Once the academic integrity process is complete with a finding that the student has committed academic misconduct, the graduate program may consider additional actions consistent with GCAC-800 and as articulated in the graduate program handbook. Departmental review practices on these actions are outside of the academic integrity process and rest with a separate department review committee.

- Within the College of the Liberal Arts, academic misconduct may result in loss of funding, loss of good standing within the department, or removal from the program. Departments may specify additional detail on these practices.
- In cases of a major academic misconduct violation, the department Head may convene a special review committee to make a determination whether or not the student will 1) remain in good standing in the department, 2) continue to receive any funding, rights, and responsibilities that accompany this status and the student's offer to pursue a degree at Penn State, and/or 3) be allowed to continue in the program. This committee should be as small as possible without compromising the needs of the department, and the basis for determining committee composition should be shared in the graduate program handbook. The review committee may include the student's academic advisor, thesis advisor, dissertation committee chair, or research advisor as appropriate. However, if the committee decision is made by voting, those listed and any other members with a direct supervisory or academic committee leadership role should be recused from voting. Although faculty members connected to the academic integrity claim or to the student's progress generally may respond to the review committee's request for information, they should not serve. The content of the deliberations and the finding of academic misconduct are to remain confidential, although it will be clear to others if funding is terminated or the student is removed from the program.
- The chair of the College's Academic Integrity Committee will be available to offer information to the special review committees if requested.
- Any recommendations for termination of funding or removal from the graduate program should be discussed with the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies.