

# Academic Integrity Policy

Fairmont State University: Academic Integrity Policy

Primary Responsible Officer: Associate Provost of Academic Affairs

Date of Current Revision: August 2024

---

## Policy Form

Report Incidences of Academic Integrity – [Incident Report Form](#)

## I. Policy Statement

Academic integrity is a fundamental principle that ensures 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 the responsibility for removing situations which might permit or encourage academic dishonesty.

## II. Scope

The academic integrity policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students at Fairmont State University. The policy outlines 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 are responsible for promoting and enforcing academic integrity, clearly communicating expectations, and taking appropriate

action 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.

### **III: Academic Dishonesty Categories and Definitions**

Academic dishonesty includes intentional acts of cheating, deceiving, or defrauding to 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 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.

## **IV: Other 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.

**Appeals Committee:** The Appeals Committee of the Faculty Senate is charged with reviewing and making recommendations to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs or his/her designee on academic integrity appeals.

## **V: 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 electronically reported to the Provost Office by submitting 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 (3) weeks after semester grades are due. If a student is found to be in violation of academic integrity after graduation and the sanctions imposed make the student ineligible to earn his/her degree, the degree may be revoked.

### **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 following procedural steps listed below should be followed.

- 1. Instructor-Student Meeting.** The instructor of the course must send a written notice to the student of the suspected violation and request a synchronous meeting to discuss the matter. The student has five (5) days from the date of the notice to respond and provide relevant information or witnesses they wish the instructor to consider. If the student does not respond within this timeframe, and there are no extraordinary circumstances, the instructor's finding and any resulting sanction will be considered final.
- 2. Instructor Fact-Finding.** The instructor will examine all information provided by the student and relevant facts related to the suspected violation. The instructor must respect the privacy of all students involved and avoid sharing unnecessary information when interviewing involved parties.

- a. **Multiple Students.** If two or more students are accused of cooperating in an academic infraction, any fact-finding inquiries should determine each student's independent responsibility. Sanctions should be assigned separately for each student.
  - 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 been 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. Decision and Reporting.** After considering 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 and *Associate Provost of Academic Affairs* 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 the [Academic Integrity 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. A student may appeal against the finding and/or sanction of a charged violation of the Academic Integrity Policy by responding to the electronic notification. Absent extraordinary circumstances, appeals must be submitted within ten (10) days of transmission of the finding to the student. If the student does not submit a timely appeal, the finding and 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 outcome is administered, and case is closed.
6. In any case, if the Associate Provost finds evidence of multiple or grievous violation(s) of academic integrity by the student, the complaint may be directly referred to the University Appeals Board for appropriate action.
7. In any case, violations of academic integrity could result in dismissal from Fairmont State University.

## **VI: 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 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.

## **VII: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

### **Student appeal rights and responsibilities**

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.** There were significant procedural errors during the investigation process which may have affected the fairness or finding of the case.

2. **New Evidence.** New evidence becomes available that was not reasonable available through the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time of the scheduled meeting with the faculty member that could affect the outcome of the alleged violation. Where an appeal is sought on this basis, the student must present the new evidence and explain its potential impact on the outcome.
3. **Claims of Unfair Treatment.** The faculty member treated the student unfairly or subjected to bias during the investigation or disciplinary process.
4. **Inappropriate Sanctions.** The academic sanction imposed was grossly disproportionate based on the student's academic record and the alleged violation in the course.

### **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 Appeals Committee**

- a. **Appeal Submission.** With supportive evidence, the student may appeal the decision of the Dean, by requesting a formal appeal to the University Appeals Committee within 5 days following the Dean's decision. This request must be made to the Office of the Associate Provost at [AcademicAffairs@fairmontstate.edu](mailto:AcademicAffairs@fairmontstate.edu)
- b. **Scheduling the Hearing.** The Chair of the Appeals Committee will schedule a face-to-face hearing within a reasonable timeframe after receiving the notice of appeal from the student.
  - i. **Notification.** The student will be notified of the hearing date, time, and location in writing.
  - ii. **Selection.** The Appeals Committee 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 Appeals Committee Chairperson will begin the hearing by explaining its purpose, format, and rules. The student and the instructor may each have an advisor. However, the advisor cannot address the Committee directly unless permitted by the Chair.
  - ii. The instructor or representative must prove it is more likely than not that the student engaged in academic dishonesty and explain the reason for the sanction. If the student accepts responsibility, the Committee may focus on recommending appropriate sanctions.

- iii. Prior violations or informal resolutions of previous allegations cannot be used as proof of the current violation but may be considered to show a history of similar allegations or that the student had been previously informed their conduct was unacceptable. Prior violations can also be considered when determining sanctions.
- iv. A student who fails to appear or refuses to participate in a hearing will be deemed to have abandoned their appeal, unless they can prove extraordinary circumstances prevented their participation.
- v. Presentation of Evidence. The instructor 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 Committee 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 University Appeals Committee 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. University Appeals Committee Recommendation. The Appeals Committee will formulate a recommendation to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee 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 the Committee majority.
- iii. Review and Decision of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs or designee. After reviewing the Committee's Recommendation, the Provost will render a final written decision which affirms, reverses, or accepts with modifications the Appeals Committee recommendation. The final decision will be sent to the student, instructor, Dean, and University Appeals Committee within 30 days following the Appeals Committee recommendation. A delay may occur if further investigation is necessary.

## **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 Academic Catalog and Student Life Handbook to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on the academic integrity institutional appeals process.

## **Authority**

The Appeals Committee 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.

*Endorsed by the Faculty Senate on March 19, 2024*

*Effective August 19, 2024*

*Updated on August 15, 2024*