

Addressing Academic Misconduct: Introduction

Faculty: Central to Building a Culture of Academic Integrity

Although academic integrity in higher education is a shared responsibility among all stakeholders, faculty are on the front lines of upholding the importance of learning as the fundamental basis in which academic credentials are earned.

Disciplinary measures should not be the prevailing strategy upon which our academic integrity standards are upheld. Rather, academic integrity is best approached by first understanding why students violate principles of academic integrity and then developing methods to minimize incidents of misconduct. Curriculum development, assessment design, communication of academic integrity values and standards, connecting these standards to learning outcomes and clearly setting out our expectations are critical approaches to building a culture of academic integrity on our campuses and in our programs.

The Centre for Academic Excellence will continue to provide faculty with [resources and professional development seminars](#) to ensure we remain focused on pedagogical strategies in building a culture of academic integrity.

This manual provides guidance starting at the point where those other measures have been unsuccessful: addressing academic misconduct when it occurs.

Instructors who do not do their part in addressing academic misconduct create an unfair playing field for other students and do a disservice to all stakeholders, including other faculty. Not addressing academic misconduct sends mixed signals to students and rewards bad behaviour. Addressing academic misconduct helps ensure that cheating is never a winning proposition. How we, as educators, handle academic misconduct can be one of the most important learning experiences a student has before going forth on their professional and vocational journeys.

The [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) mandates faculty to address instances of academic misconduct. Reporting academic misconduct using the student conduct database is a necessary step in this process.

This manual is designed to assist faculty with a comprehensive guide in navigating this important responsibility.

Academic Integrity: Through the Learning Lens

Faculty have responsibility to address academic misconduct not because it is a violation of policy but, rather, because it violates the teaching-learning process. Academic integrity should be approached not by asking “is my student cheating” but by asking “is my student learning”.

Students are required to demonstrate their learning through the assessment process. Faculty’s responsibility to address academic misconduct is founded upon faculty’s role in assessing a student’s learning. Academic misconduct is the attempt to gain unfair academic advantage in this process.

Offences classified as academic misconduct are detrimental to the College's learning environment. These offences diminish the trust that is essential in the teaching-learning process. If a student falsifies their side of this process, learning is compromised and the foundation upon which knowledge is built is put at risk.

While students may be more concerned about the penalties that may come from an incident of academic misconduct, the more serious consequence is that they will lack needed knowledge and skills that we say they have when we award them credit. To gain understanding and advance learning, students must engage in the learning process honestly.

Academic Penalties vs. Administrative Penalties

The distinction between an academic penalty and an administrative penalty in the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) is predicated on the different roles instructors and academic administrators have in holding students accountable.

Faculty are the issuing authority of an academic penalty because instructors hold students accountable for their conduct in relation to the learning process in their course. The purpose of an academic penalty signifies that learning is the basis upon which grades are earned.

Academic penalties provide a [range of measures](#) that can be assigned by the instructor, at their discretion. In determining how to exercise this discretion, faculty should base their decision on the conduct of the student only in relation to their course. It is for this reason that the student's prior record of academic misconduct is not relevant in determining whether an offence was committed in this instance or in determining, in most instances, the appropriate academic penalty.

Academic administrators, on the other hand, are the issuing authority of an administrative penalty because they hold students accountable for student conduct in relation to the college policy more broadly. After an academic penalty is imposed, academic administrators review the incident, the seriousness of the misconduct as well as the student's prior record of academic misconduct to determine, at their discretion, whether the incident calls for an administrative penalty.

Academic misconduct should be treated as a continuation of the learning process. Generally, missteps and poor choices by students present us with teachable moments. In most cases, approaching academic misconduct from a developmental lens provides us with the best opportunity to correct behaviour and avoid future incidents. This does not mean that the misconduct should not be reported. Reporting the academic misconduct is the only way to ensure the process works in the manner intended.

Holding students accountable for academic misconduct when it does occur, by reporting it and assigning appropriate academic and/or administrative penalties, helps get the student back on the proper track (including being required to take the Academic Integrity Workshop). And if they don't get back on the right track, we need to know about that too.