

Academic Integrity Code

Section I: Standards of Academic Conduct

Academic integrity stands at the heart of intellectual life. The academic community is bound by a fundamental trust that professors and students alike undertake and present their work honestly. As a community of the mind, we respect the work of others, paying our intellectual debts as we craft our own work.

The Academic Integrity Code (“Code”) for American University defines honorable conduct, outlines attendant rights and responsibilities, and describes procedures for handling allegations of academic misconduct.

American University views academic integrity as integral to its mission, treating it as far more than a disciplinary matter: All members of the university must join in educating students about the value of integrity and the ways in which intellectuals acknowledge their debts. In each course, faculty should remind students of the standards of integrity, and faculty may ask students to include with their submissions a signed statement pledging adherence to the Code in completing the assignment.

By enrolling at American University and then each semester when registering for classes, students acknowledge their commitment to the Code. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their rights and their responsibilities. In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, examinations of whatever kind, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Students are responsible for learning the conventions of documentation and acknowledgment of sources. American University expects students to complete all examinations, tests, papers, creative projects, and assignments of any kind according to the highest ethical standards, as set forth either explicitly or implicitly in this Code or by the direction of instructors.

Section II: Definition of Academic Integrity Violations

Violating standards of academic conduct is a serious matter subject to discipline. Types of violations are listed and defined below. This section provides explanations and illustrations but does not exhaust the scope of these violations. Academic integrity is not merely a matter of conforming to rules; it must be understood in terms of the broader purposes of a university education.

A. Violations Adjudicated under the Academic Integrity Code

1. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else’s words, ideas, or work as one’s own without attribution. Plagiarism may involve using someone else’s wording without using quotation marks—a distinctive name, a phrase, a sentence, or an entire passage or essay. Misrepresenting sources is another form of plagiarism. The issue of plagiarism applies to any type of work, including exams, papers, or other writing, computer programs, art, music, photography, video, and other media.

2. Inappropriate Collaboration

Inappropriate collaboration occurs when work that the professor presumes is original to the student is in fact the product of collaboration so close that the originality is no longer individual to the student. Professors often expect students to study together, to brainstorm together, and to read and criticize each other's work; group projects also require much collaboration. However, these forms of appropriate collaboration become inappropriate when the originality of the work is lost. In addition, for many assignments, such as take-home examinations and some homework assignments, professors specifically limit or restrict collaboration, requiring that all of the work is entirely the student's own. Before submitting work, students should clarify with their professors what forms of collaboration are appropriate for that assignment.

3. Dishonesty in Examinations (In Class or Take Home)

Dishonesty or cheating in examinations is the use of inappropriate or unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in a test. Unless the instructor directs otherwise, an examination is assumed to be solely a student's own work. No communication is allowed among students either through voice, written, electronic, or any other form of transmission, nor are students permitted to consult books, papers, study aids or notes without explicit permission. Dishonesty in examination includes but is not confined to copying from another's paper, giving or receiving unauthorized assistance, obtaining unauthorized advance knowledge of questions on an examination, and using mechanical or marking devices or procedures to achieve false scores on machine-graded examinations. Specific policies regarding examinations may vary with individual professors.

4. Dishonesty in Papers

Dishonesty in papers covers but is not limited to submitting material obtained from another person or company or purchased from either. All papers and materials submitted for a course must be the student's original work unless the sources are cited.

5. Work Done for One Course and Submitted to Another

This category of violation covers the presentation of the same work in more than one course at any time during a student's academic career without prior consent from both instructors. When incorporating their own past research into current projects, students must cite previous work. This requirement applies even when the work submitted had been originally for a project for another institution. When the previous instructor cannot be consulted, faculty may permit such a submission.

6. Fabrication of Data

Fabrication is the falsification, distortion, or invention of any information or citation in academic work. Examples include, but are not limited to, inventing a source, deliberately misquoting, or falsifying numbers or other data.

7. Interference with Other Students' or Scholars' Work

Interference with the work of others covers but is not limited to acts that deny others access to scholarly resources, or deliberately impede the progress of another student or scholar. Examples include sabotaging laboratory experiments or research, giving misleading information, knowingly deceiving other members of a

project team or group, disrupting class work, making library material unavailable to others, or altering the computer files of another.

8. Bribes, Favors, and Threats

Students may not bribe, offer favors to, or threaten anyone with the purpose of affecting a grade or the evaluation of academic performance.

9. Other Academic Misconduct

No specific set of rules or definitions can embrace every act of academic misconduct. A student who employs any form of academic deceit has violated the intellectual enterprise of the university.

B. Violations Adjudicated Elsewhere

1. Copyright Violations

Copyright laws must be observed. These laws govern practices such as making use of printed and electronic materials, duplicating computer software, photoduplicating copyrighted materials, and reproducing audio visual works. The Student Conduct Code prohibits theft and the unauthorized use of documents and requires adherence to local, state, and federal law. These provisions will be enforced through the Student Conduct Code.

Section III: Adjudication of Academic Integrity Offenses

A. Jurisdiction

1. The Academic Integrity Code applies to all students enrolled at American University, except students at the Washington College of Law (“WCL”). WCL has a separate Honor Code and process for handling academic misconduct.

2. In cases where a combination of violations of academic and nonacademic regulations is alleged, students are subject both to the Academic Integrity Code and the Student Conduct Code.

3. Most charges of Academic Integrity Code violations are brought by the university faculty. Staff, students or others wishing to bring charges must identify themselves and work through the faculty member in whose course or academic activity the alleged Code violation has occurred. In unusual circumstances, students, staff, or others may bring suspected charges to the dean’s office. At the discretion of the dean, the dean’s office may initiate charges.

4. Each major teaching unit (“School or College”) will have an Academic Integrity Code Administrator (“AIC Administrator”) designated by the dean to manage the adjudication process. An AIC Administrator is usually a member of the dean’s staff.

5. To advise the dean in evaluating certain charges and determining actions to be taken, each School or College has an Academic Code Review Panel (“Panel”) with a minimum of two faculty and one student. The

Panel may be a standing or ad hoc committee of the major teaching unit.

B. The Adjudication Process

The adjudication process assigns specific roles and jurisdiction to the faculty and to the dean's office.

1. Faculty Jurisdiction

When convinced that a possible violation was an honest mistake rather than purposeful dishonesty, a faculty member may use the occasion to educate the student about acceptable standards for academic work. In such cases, the faculty member could, for example, require the student to rewrite or correct the original assignment, or to submit a substitute assignment. A faculty member may not, however, fail or level other grading penalties against the student for the assignment or for the course, but must send the case to the dean when seeking these sanctions. Referring the case to the dean's office ensures that the student receives due process for potential disciplinary action and allows the university to check for repeat offenses. In all cases, the faculty member is encouraged to consult with the AIC Administrator, who can provide guidance on the Code and can help evaluate and locate evidence of a possible violation.

2. Administrative Jurisdiction

In all other circumstances, when the faculty member believes that a case may be due to purposeful dishonesty, the following procedures will be observed:

- a. Faculty members reporting an allegation of dishonesty to the AIC Administrator should do so normally within 10 business days from the date of discovery of the alleged dishonesty, supported by appropriate documentation.
- b. At their discretion, faculty members may discuss the alleged misconduct with the student before the case is adjudicated. Faculty members, however, may not submit grades for the work in question or for the course until the case has been adjudicated. If the semester grades must be submitted before the adjudication process is complete, the faculty member should consult with the AIC Administrator about the proper grade notation.
- c. After consulting with the faculty member, the AIC Administrator will promptly notify the student of the charge in writing and will arrange to discuss the charge with the student at a preliminary meeting. The AIC Administrator also will report the complaint to the chair of the department in which the alleged violation occurred. If the student is a member of another teaching unit, the AIC Administrator also will report the complaint to the student's dean.
- d. At the preliminary meeting, the student will be presented with the charge and the evidence, advised of the Code procedures, apprised of sanction options, and given the opportunity to respond. Either at the meeting or within five (5) business days, the student must submit a written statement that (i) accepts or denies responsibility for the charge, (ii) explains what occurred and why, and (iii) elects to resolve the case through a decision by the AIC Administrator or through a Panel hearing. The student's signed statement will become additional evidence in the case. If the student fails to attend this preliminary meeting, the AIC Administrator may proceed with the process as appropriate.

e. By electing a decision by the AIC Administrator, students waive the right to a hearing before the Panel. The AIC Administrator will arrange a meeting as soon as possible. If both the student and the AIC Administrator agree, a preliminary meeting may proceed directly into the next phase of adjudication. If the issue cannot be resolved in one meeting, the AIC Administrator may request additional meetings with the student.

f. The AIC Administrator may refer the case to a panel for decision, even if the student has elected decision by the AIC Administrator.

3. Decision by AIC Administrator

a. If the AIC Administrator adjudicates the case, the AIC Administrator will impartially gather evidence from the student, the complainant, and other appropriate parties and sources.

b. The AIC Administrator will review the evidence and findings with the student. The student will have an opportunity to respond to the evidence and may call witnesses. If the student fails to attend any part of this phase of the case, the AIC Administrator may proceed as appropriate.

c. At the conclusion of the process, the AIC Administrator will submit a written recommendation with supporting rationale for the findings and sanctions to the dean of the major teaching unit in which the alleged offense occurred.

d. The dean may affirm or modify the AIC Administrator's recommendation or remand the case with instructions for further action. The dean's decision is final and may not be appealed unless the sanctions include a permanent notation to the student's academic record (III.C.2.b-d).

4. Academic Code Review Panel

The following procedures will be observed by the Academic Code Review Panel:

a. Upon determining that a case should proceed to a Panel, the AIC Administrator will convene a Panel, convey the charge and the evidence, give guidance about the hearing process, and serve as a resource during the panel proceedings. The AIC Administrator may remain present during the Panel's closed sessions. A faculty member will chair the Panel proceedings.

b. All Panel hearings will be closed to the public.

c. All Panel decisions related to the hearing process are by majority vote.

d. In cases in which a Panel member has a conflict of interest, the member will be excused from participation and replaced by a new member.

e. The student charged will have the opportunity to answer the charges.

- f. The faculty member making the charge should be given the opportunity to be present or available to support the charge.
- g. Witnesses may be called by the parties or by the Panel. The Panel may limit the number of witnesses for such reasons as redundancy or irrelevancy. Witnesses will be excluded from the hearing until testimony is to be presented. All parties present may question the witnesses.
- h. During the proceeding and prior to the Panel's closed session, any relevant party may submit evidence or suggest an appropriate sanction.
- i. At the end of the hearing, the Panel will meet in closed session and decide whether the student is responsible for the Code violation.
- j. If the student is found responsible, the Panel will proceed to the sanction phase, at which point the AIC Administrator will disclose the student's prior record of academic violations, if any.
- k. The Panel will submit a written recommendation with supporting rationale for its findings and sanctions to the dean of the major teaching unit in which the alleged offense occurred.
- l. The dean may affirm, modify, or reject the Panel's recommendation. The dean's decision is final and may not be appealed unless the sanctions include a permanent notation of the AIC violation to the student's academic record (III.c.2.b-d).

5. Other Adjudication Issues

- a. The standard of proof for any instance of academic dishonesty will be clear and convincing evidence—a measure of proof that produces a firm belief in the allegations presented. It is more than the standard of “preponderance of the evidence” and less than the standard of “beyond a reasonable doubt.”
- b. If the student fails to attend any scheduled meeting, the time and place of which have been made known in advance, the Panel or the AIC Administrator may hear the case in the student's absence.
- c. Because the purpose of this adjudication process is to provide a fair review of alleged violations of this Code rather than a formal legal proceeding, participation of persons acting as legal counsel is not permitted.
- d. A student may be accompanied by a supporter throughout the process. The supporter's role is limited to personal consultation. The supporter may not represent the student, speak in adjudication meetings or hearings, or question witnesses. The supporter must be a current American University student, faculty, or staff member who is not involved in the alleged violation.
- e. All participants must provide truthful testimony. Participants who fail to do so may be subject to disciplinary charges.
- f. Any participant whom the AIC Administrator deems disruptive to the adjudication process will be removed from the proceedings for their duration.

C. Sanctions

1. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will be treated seriously, with special attention to repeat offenders. In assigning a sanction, the dean will take into account the seriousness of the offense, the particular circumstances of the case, and the student's class year (freshman, sophomore, graduate, and so on). Cases involving repeat offenders or especially serious offenses will result in suspension or dismissal in combination with other sanctions.

2. Sanctions for an AIC violation may include one or more of the following:

- a. A failing grade of F or ZF for the course in which the offense occurred.
- b. A failing grade of F or ZF for the course in which the offense occurred. A notation of the Code violation will be entered on the student's permanent record.
- c. Suspension for one or more academic terms, including the term in which the offense occurred. A notation of the Code violation will be entered on the student's permanent record.
- d. Dismissal (for a specified term or permanently) from the university. A notation of the Code violation will be entered on the student's permanent record.
- e. Other sanctions as appropriate, including, for example, remedial work, a lower course grade, and so on.

3. Before implementing sanctions, the dean may consult with the faculty member, the student's dean, and other relevant university officials or parties. For sanctions applied to a student enrolled in another major teaching unit, the dean handling the case will seek concurrence of the student's dean before implementing sanctions. Concurrence need not be sought if the student is a double major.

4. For suspensions and dismissals, the appropriate academic action will be taken by the dean of the major teaching unit to which the student belongs.

5. Withdrawal is not permitted either from a course in which a suspected AIC infraction has been discovered or from the university in such instances. No refund or cancellation of tuition or fees will be permitted in such cases.

6. Students receiving a failing grade for a course due to a Code violation will not be eligible to receive Freshman Forgiveness for that course.

D. Notifications and Appeals

1. The dean or the AIC Administrator will notify the student in writing of the findings and sanction, if any. The results of the case will be shared with other university officials determined to have a legitimate need to know in accordance with the Confidentiality of Student Records policy.

2. In cases concerning notation to the permanent record, students will be notified in writing of their right of

appeal. Appeals must be made in writing to the Provost within ten (10) business days after the date of written notice is delivered to the address on record for the student. Appeals are limited to the following grounds: new evidence that was not available at the time of the adjudication of the case and that may affect the outcome of the case, improper procedure that materially and adversely affected the earlier outcome of the case, and excessive sanction. Appeals will be reviewed by the Provost who may consult the written record of the case, the appeal request, and any person involved in the adjudication process or other appropriate party. The Provost may affirm, modify, or remand the case to the dean with instructions for further action. The Provost's decision is final.

3. The implementation of a suspension or dismissal will be deferred while an appeal is pending, unless the Provost finds that the continued presence of the student on campus poses a substantial threat to himself or herself, to others, or to the stability of normal university functions. During the appeal a restriction will be placed on the student's record that will prevent registration for classes or requests for transcripts.

E. Suspension and Dismissal

The decision as to whether suspension or dismissal is appropriate depends on the circumstances of each case.

1. Suspension is effective for not less than the session in which action is taken or for not more than one calendar year. The length of a suspension will be specified at the time the action is taken. A suspended student is ordinarily entitled to resume studies in the same School or College at the end of the suspension provided the student has satisfied all requirements that were imposed by the dean.

2. Dismissal is reserved for serious violations of rules and regulations, and when circumstances indicate that a student's association with the university should be terminated in the interests of maintaining the standards of behavior and conduct normally expected in a university community. A student who has been dismissed but who has not been denied the privilege of returning to the university may apply for readmission after one calendar year. The calendar year begins on the final day of the session during which the dismissal was implemented. Readmission applications are evaluated based on the total record of the student and consistent with the admission practices in effect at the time of application. A readmitted student is governed by the academic requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

Section IV: Records of Disciplinary Actions

A. When a case is referred an academic disciplinary file will be created.

1. If the case results in a finding of "not responsible," the file will be voided. A voided file will be so marked, will not constitute academic disciplinary records, and will not be kept with the student's academic files. Voided files that are retained will be for administrative purposes.

2. If the case results in a "responsible" finding, the file will be retained as an academic integrity disciplinary record.

3. The dean's office will maintain voided files and most academic disciplinary files for five (5) years after the student's last registration at American University. If sanctions become part of the student's permanent record, the record and files will be maintained indefinitely by both the dean's office that handled the case and the University Registrar.

B. Records relating to the Code adjudication process are subject to university regulations concerning the confidentiality of student records. Upon written request, students may access their records in accordance with the Confidentiality of Student Records Policy.

Section V: Interpretation

The Provost or the Provost's designee is the final interpreter of the Academic Integrity Code.

Senate action and Provost approval, October 1990. Effective spring 1991. Revised 1994: Senate action, April 1994, Provost approval, May 1994. Revised 2007: Senate action and Provost approval, April 2007. Effective fall 2007.