



WPI

Faculty Guide to

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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A Message from the Dean of Students Office

The Dean of Students Office, with support from the Faculty Committee on Advising and Student Life (CASL), has developed this guide to help faculty members create an atmosphere where academic integrity is recognized, and appreciated, as a core value of the institution.

The guide is intended to assist the community in understanding the subject of academic honesty and to orient faculty to WPI's specific policies and procedures. It also provides suggestions of how to minimize the occurrence of academic dishonesty in the classroom.

Topics include:

- WPI Aspirations for Academic Integrity
- Academic Honesty at WPI
- What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty at WPI
- Responsibilities of Faculty Members
- What If I Suspect Academic Dishonesty?
- Academic Dishonesty Flow Chart
- Facts and Myths about Academic Dishonesty at WPI
- Suggestions to Discourage Academic Dishonesty

The Dean of Students Office welcomes comments and suggestions from faculty on ways to enhance this guide and/or make the inquiry process as easy as possible. Please feel free to contact us at 508-831-5201 or dean-of-students@wpi.edu.

WPI Aspirations for Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a fundamental principle of learning and a necessary foundation for all academic institutions, particularly those dedicated to independent project-based education, such as WPI. Students who engage in academic dishonesty lose the opportunity to use the material they are credited with knowing, cheat their classmates out of deserved rewards and recognition, and demean the degree that WPI awards. It is, therefore, imperative that a concerted effort be made to maintain high standards of integrity, both to protect the value of the educational process in which we are engaged and to maintain the credibility of the institution.

Academic Honesty at WPI

Over the years, WPI has collected data about attitudes and practices associated with academic dishonesty at the university.

The following is a sampling of data from students.

Students feel that faculty members are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students. Students have a strong sense that WPI's disciplinary procedures are fair, primarily because faculty follow the procedures outlined on the following pages.

Data indicates that...

- *Students reported that academic dishonesty is a problem at WPI.*
- *More than half of the students saw another student cheat during an exam.*
- *A quarter of the students reported feeling indifferent when they witnessed cheating and feel that reporting a friend who is cheating is as bad as, or worse than, cheating.*
- *Almost half of the students reported that they had worked with one or more students on a homework assignment when not allowed.*
- *Two-thirds of all students believe that "collaboration on individual assignments" is not academic dishonesty.*

What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty at WPI

Individual integrity is vital to the academic environment, as education involves the search for and acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Evaluation of each student's level of knowledge and understanding is an essential part of the teaching process, and requires tangible measures such as reports, examinations and homework. Any act that interferes with the process of evaluation by misrepresenting the work being evaluated (or the resulting evaluation) and the student's actual state of knowledge is an act of academic dishonesty.

The following acts provide a broad overview, but not an all-encompassing definition, of what constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Using and submitting purchased papers
- Using unauthorized materials or sources of information, such as a cheat sheet, preprogrammed calculator, phone, illegally posted course materials (i.e. material from sites such as Course Hero, etc.).
- Copying another student's academic work
- Unauthorized communication during an examination.
- Submitting the same paper for more than one course without explicit permission from the instructor(s)

Fabrication: Falsification, misrepresentation, or the invention of any information, data, or citation in an academic exercise.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Inventing or changing laboratory data and/or research
- Altering grades or other official records
- Citing a source in a bibliography that was not used
- Changing exam solutions after the fact

Facilitation: Helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Sharing test questions or answers from an exam, homework or lab with another student
- Doing any academic work for another student, such as homework or tests
- Allowing another student to copy a solution to a homework problem, exam or lab
- Making available previously used academic work for an individual who intends to resubmit the work for credit
- Uploading any WPI course material without the written permission of the faculty member (i.e. CourseHero)
- Assisting in any act of academic dishonesty of another student

Plagiarism: Using as one's own the words, ideas, data, code, or other original academic material of another without providing proper citation or attribution.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Misrepresenting the work of another as one's own
- Inaccurately or inadequately citing sources
- Paraphrasing (using the ideas of others in your own words) without citation

Responsibilities of Faculty Members

Faculty members should outline their policies concerning evaluation procedures and their expectations pertaining to academic integrity at the beginning of each course and frequently thereafter. Because of the differences in disciplines and the type of work involved, faculty interpretation regarding what constitutes academic dishonesty may vary across campus. Since project-based education places a strong emphasis on group work, faculty members should be particularly attentive to the distinction between group work and individual performance expectations. Faculty members are responsible for knowing and understanding WPI's policy and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty, and are encouraged to implement measures designed to minimize or prevent academic dishonesty.

What If I Suspect Academic Dishonesty in Coursework?

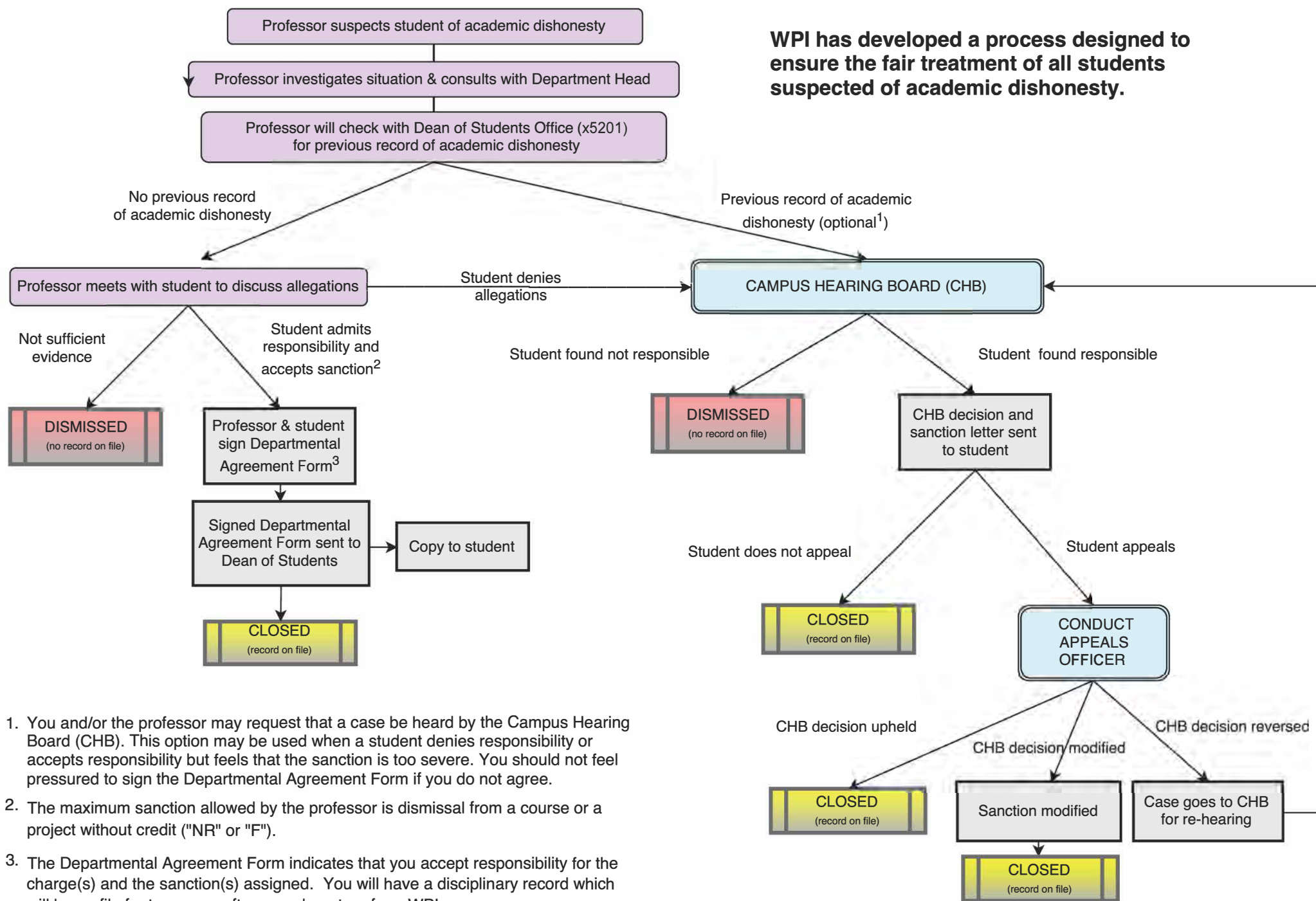
The WPI faculty and administration have developed a set of procedures designed to ensure consistent (and fair) treatment of undergraduate or graduate students suspected of academic dishonesty. Faculty are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office (x5201) with any questions.

1. Faculty should report to the department head any suspected act of academic dishonesty.
2. The department head will review cases referred to him/her to determine if dishonesty may have occurred.
3. Faculty must allow the student to continue in the course without prejudice, pending resolution of the case.
4. The department head or faculty member must check with the Dean of Students Office to determine if the student has any record of prior offenses involving academic dishonesty.
5. The faculty member will meet with the student involved. If the academic dishonesty is admitted and is the first violation of that nature, the faculty member may resolve the complaint using the Departmental Agreement Form template, provided the academic penalty is accepted in writing by the student. The maximum penalty that can be applied at the department level is failure of a course or a project without credit. Generally there is a lowering of a grade.

In all cases, a signed Departmental Agreement Form on the matter, including the action taken, will be sent to the Dean of Students Office.

6. Faculty and/or students may request that a case be heard by the Campus Hearing Board (CHB) in lieu of a Departmental Agreement Form, even if the student accepts responsibility. The CHB may impose any sanction, up to and including expulsion, for an act of academic dishonesty.
7. For the second and subsequent violations, the case must be submitted to the CHB for resolution. For any case before the CHB, a member of the Dean of Students Staff will meet with the faculty to discuss the hearing process.

What if I am accused of Academic Dishonesty?



8. The CHB shall hear the allegations following standard procedures for conduct hearings established by WPI. The CHB may impose conduct sanctions and may recommend loss of any credit or grade for the course or project. If a student is found not responsible on a complaint of academic dishonesty, he/she may not be failed or penalized by the faculty member on the grounds of dishonesty. The instructor shall assign a grade based on his/her assessment of the student's mastery of the material being evaluated.
9. Conduct records are maintained by the Dean of Students Office, and are kept separate from a student's academic records. It is the policy of WPI that conduct records shall be reportable by the Dean of Students Office for a period of two years from the date of graduation, transfer or withdrawal from WPI, except when the sanction includes suspension or expulsion. In cases involving suspension or expulsion from WPI, or cases that are pending completion of the hearing and/or sanction, conduct records shall be kept indefinitely. Records will be available to prospective employers and other authorized individuals in accordance with applicable state and federal law and regulations. Conduct records may be shared both internally (e.g., IGSD, honor societies) and externally (e.g., transfer applications, prospective employers, law school) in accordance with federal regulations that require written permission from the student involved. In keeping with the WPI Academic Honesty Policy and the Student Code of Conduct, a student's conduct record may be shared internally as appropriate without the student's permission to determine if the student has any record of prior offenses involving academic dishonesty.

Facts and Myths About Academic Dishonesty at WPI

Myth:

Students never get punished for academic dishonesty by the administration or the Campus Hearing Board (CHB), so why should I bother wasting my time by reporting academic dishonesty?

Fact:

WPI takes the academic integrity of its students very seriously, and all cases of academic dishonesty are rigorously adjudicated. Cheating is the most commonly reported violation, followed by plagiarism and facilitation. For detailed data on academic honesty incidents please contact the Dean of Students Office.

Myth:

If students read the Academic Honesty Policy or if it were discussed during Orientation, they should know that collaborating on homework with another student is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

Fact:

Each faculty member establishes his/her own rules and limits regarding collaboration. A student may erroneously assume that what was allowed in one course applies to another course as well. Faculty should clearly spell out their expectations in the syllabus, at the beginning of the course, and frequently thereafter. To eliminate incorrect assumptions, particular emphasis should be placed on defining expectations for group work.

Myth:

Unless a faculty member catches a student in the act of cheating, there is no way to prove that the student cheated, so I should not pursue the case.

Fact:

The standard used in campus conduct hearings is “preponderance of the evidence,” meaning more likely than not. Also, hearsay and circumstantial evidence are allowed to be considered by the CHB. (An example of circumstantial evidence: a faculty member presents to the board that it would be impossible for two students to do the same work on an assignment without cheating.)

Myth:

As a faculty member, I have the freedom to lower a student's grade or to give an "NR" on an assignment (or an "F" for a graduate student) if I believe the student has committed academic dishonesty.

Fact:

Faculty may impose punitive action only if the student has admitted responsibility and has agreed to the professor's sanction. The maximum penalty that can be applied at the department level is dismissal from a course or a project without credit. If a student has a previous record or if the student claims innocence, the case must be referred to the CHB. If the CHB finds the student responsible, it can recommend a grade action to the professor, but the professor makes the final decision about the student grade. The CHB has a greater range of sanctions, up to and including expulsion from WPI.

Myth:

If a student admits to academic dishonesty and accepts an agreed upon sanction, I have the option to retain all records for the case without reporting the case to anyone other than my department head.

Fact:

All cases must be reported in writing, via the Department Agreement Form, to the Dean of Students Office citing the student's name, student ID number, facts of the case, and sanction imposed. The student and faculty member must sign the Department Agreement Form before it is sent. This is the only way that the Dean of Students Office can accurately report to another faculty member if a student has a previous record and ensure that a student does not have multiple violations in different courses that go unreported.

Myth:

I can assure a student that his/her academic dishonesty record will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

Fact:

Conduct Records will be available to prospective employers and other authorized individuals in accordance with applicable state and federal law and regulations. Conduct records may be shared both internally (e.g., IGSD, honor societies) and externally (e.g., transfer applications, prospective employers, law school) in accordance with federal regulations that require written permission from the student involved. In keeping with the WPI Academic Honesty Policy and the Student Code of Conduct, a student's

conduct record may be shared internally as appropriate without the student's permission to determine if the student has any record of prior offenses involving academic dishonesty.

Myth:

International students will be deported if they are found responsible of academic dishonesty.

Fact:

Academic honesty violations are not reported to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for action against an international student. If a student is in the United States on a visa and is suspended or expelled, the university must report that the student is no longer registered as a full-time student. Unless that student becomes accepted and enrolled as a full-time student at another institution, the ICE may begin the deportation process because the student is no longer "in status."

Myth:

A student's conduct record is destroyed or sealed upon graduation or withdrawal from the university.

Fact:

It is the policy of WPI that conduct records shall be reportable by the Dean of Students Office for a period of two years from the date of graduation or withdrawal from WPI, except when the sanction includes suspension or expulsion. In those cases, conduct records are kept indefinitely. Conduct records are kept separate from a student's academic record.

Myth:

Students found responsible of academic dishonesty are always suspended from the university.


Fact:

WPI does not subscribe to an automatic sanction for violation of its Academic Honesty Policy. Rather, each violation is reviewed individually and sanctioning takes into consideration the unique situation surrounding the incident. Having said that, reviewing past precedent, most faculty who adjudicate cases within the department impose either a "0" for the assignment or an "NR" for the course. In cases where the student has a prior record of academic dishonesty, the CHB may impose a sanction of disciplinary probation or disciplinary suspension.

Suggestions to Discourage Academic Dishonesty

Faculty should consider implementing the following best practices to minimize or prevent cases of academic dishonesty:

- Put WPI's Academic Honesty Policy in your course syllabus.
- Clearly explain your expectations during the first day of classes, and frequently during the term/semester, including concrete examples that do and do not constitute cheating in your course.
- Address academic integrity in class while distributing assignments and/or exams.
- Inquire about "best practices" policies from colleagues in your department or in your discipline at other institutions.
- Encourage students to come to you if they are confused about citation and documentation practices, and/or to visit the WPI Writing Center.
- Talk about academic honesty with your students.
- Specify how you want sources documented on papers and research assignments.
- Make up variations of the same exam.
- Avoid use of repeated exams, homework sets, and research projects.
- Explain your expectations regarding collaboration on homework, computer programs, and take-home exams.
- Report cases of academic dishonesty, utilizing WPI's policy and procedures.
- Collect all exams or rewrite exams each term.
- **Canvas** has a resource, *Verisite*, which is a plagiarism assignment submission tool. *Verisite* can be used to detect unoriginal content in student papers by comparing them to a variety of sources. Encourage groups to use *Verisite* before submission of their group project work.



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