

University Policies and Procedures

03-01.00 – STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

I. Policy Statement:

The acquisition, sharing, communication, and evaluation of knowledge are at the core of a university's mission. To realize this part of its mission, a university must be a community of trust. Because integrity is essential to the purpose of an academic community, the responsibility for maintaining standards of integrity is shared by all members of that academic community.

As instructors, faculty members are ultimately responsible for maintaining the academic standards of integrity on which trust is founded because they set academic standards, award academic credit, and confer degrees when standards are met. To carry out these responsibilities, faculty members will reasonably assess that student work submitted for academic credit is authentic as well as consistent with established academic standards. Therefore, academic evaluation includes a judgment that the student's work is free from academic dishonesty of any type.

Through example in their own academic pursuits and through the learning environment that they create for their students, faculty members preserve and transmit the values of the academic community. They are expected to instill in their students respect for integrity and a desire to behave honestly. They must also take measures to discourage student academic dishonesty. The following policies, procedures, and definitions are intended to help faculty meet these responsibilities.

As responsible members of the academic community, students are obligated not to violate the basic standards of integrity. They are also expected to take an active role in encouraging other members to respect those standards. Should a student have reason to believe that a violation of academic integrity has occurred, he/she is encouraged to make the suspicion known to a member of the faculty or university administration. Students should familiarize themselves with the university's policies, procedures, and definitions of types of violations.

Commitment to maintaining and encouraging high standards of academic integrity is demonstrated in many ways. One way is through the establishment of policies and procedures governing violation of the standards. The provisions of Towson University's Student Academic Integrity Policy follow.

II. Definitions:

The following definitions and examples are not meant to be exhaustive. The University reserves the right to determine, in a given instance, what action constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

- A. Student – includes all persons taking courses at the University, both full-time and part-time, pursuing undergraduate, graduate, professional, and certificate or continuing studies.
- B. Plagiarism – presenting work, products, ideas, words, or data of another as one’s own is plagiarism. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:
 - 1. one quotes another person’s actual words or replicates all or part of another’s product. This includes all information gleaned from any source, including the Internet.
 - 2. one uses another person’s ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one’s own words.
 - 3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials.

Because expectations about academic assignments vary among disciplines and instructors, students should consult with their instructors about any special requirements related to citation.

Some examples: Submitting as one’s own the work of a “ghost writer” or commercial writing service; knowingly buying or otherwise acquiring and submitting, as one’s own work any research paper or other writing assignment; submitting as one’s own, work in which portions were produced by someone acting as tutor or editor; collaborating with others on papers or projects without authorization of the instructor.

In addition to oral or written work, plagiarism may also involve using, without permission and or acknowledgement, internet websites, computer programs or files, research designs, ideas and images, charts and graphs, photographs, creative works, and other types of information that belong to another.

Verbatim statements must be enclosed by quotation marks, or set off from regular text as indented extracts, with full citation.

- C. Fabrication and Falsification - making unauthorized alterations to information, or inventing any information or citation in an academic exercise. Fabrication is a matter of inventing or counterfeiting information or citation, while falsification is a matter of altering

information.

Some Examples: Fabrication--inventing or counterfeiting data, research results, information or procedures; inventing data or fabricating research procedures to make it appear that the results of one process are actually the results of several processes; counterfeiting a record of internship or practicum experiences.

Falsification--altering the record of data or experimental procedures or results; false citation of the source of information (e.g., reproducing a quotation from a book review while indicating that the quotation was obtained from the book itself); altering the record, or reporting false information about, practicum or clinical experiences; altering grade reports or other academic records; submitting a false excuse for absence or tardiness in a scheduled academic exercise; altering a returned examination paper and seeking re-grading.

- D. Cheating - Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices in any academic exercise. This includes unauthorized communication of information during an exercise.

Some Examples: Copying from another student's paper or receiving unauthorized assistance during a quiz, test or examination; using books, notes or other devices (e.g., calculators) when these are not authorized; procuring without authorization tests or examinations before the scheduled exercise (including discussion of the substance of examinations and tests when it is expected these will not be discussed); copying reports, laboratory work, computer programs or files and the like from other students; collaborating on laboratory or computer programs or files and the like from other students; collaborating on laboratory or computer work without authorization and without indication of the nature and extent of the collaboration; sending a substitute to take an examination.

- E. Complicity in Academic Dishonesty - helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Some Examples: Allowing another to copy from one's paper during an examination or test; distributing test questions or substantive information about the material to be tested without authorization before the scheduled exercise; collaborating on academic work knowing that the collaboration will not be reported; taking an examination or test for another student, or signing a false name on an academic exercise. (Note: Collaboration and sharing information are characteristics of academic communities. These become violations when they involve dishonesty. Instructors should make expectations about acceptable collaborations clear to students. Students should seek clarification when in doubt).

- F. Abuse of Academic Materials - destroying, stealing, or making

inaccessible library or other resource materials.

Some Examples: Stealing or destroying library or reference materials needed for common academic exercises; hiding resource materials so others may not use them; destroying computer programs or files needed in academic work; stealing or intentionally destroying another student's notes or laboratory experiments; receiving assistance in locating or using sources of information in an assignment where such assistance has been forbidden by the instructor. (Note: The offense of abuse of academic materials shall be dealt with under this policy only when the abuse violates standards of integrity in academic matters, usually in a course or experience for which academic credit is awarded).

- G. Multiple Submissions - submitting substantial portions of the same academic work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization of the instructor(s). What constitutes a "substantial portion" of the same work is determined solely by the university.

Some Examples: Submitting the same or substantially the same work for credit in more than one course without prior permission of the instructor. Building upon or reworking prior work is acceptable with permission of the instructor.

- H. Course Related – an alleged violation that occurs in a course being taken for academic credit.
- I. Non Course Related – an alleged violation that relates to any aspect of a student's program of studies that is not part of a course being taken for academic credit.

III. Responsible Executive and Office:

Responsible Executive: Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

Responsible Office: Office of the Registrar

- IV. Entities Affected by this Policy:** This policy applies to all enrolled students, undergraduate and graduate, regardless of teaching site (e. g., off-campus), or teaching mode (e.g., distance learning).

V. Procedures:

- A. Procedures for handling cases.

This Policy will cover two types of academic integrity violations: course related and non course related.

1. Course related violations.

- a. A faculty member responsible for assigning final grades in a course may acquire evidence, either directly or through information supplied by others, that a student violation of academic integrity may have occurred. After collecting the evidence available, the faculty member meets with the student to present the evidence of a violation and request an explanation.

If the faculty member accepts the student's explanation, no further action is taken. If the faculty member determines that a violation has occurred, the faculty member informs the student, in writing, of the academic penalty and of the student's rights of appeal. The faculty member sends a copy of the letter, together with any additional information, to the department chairperson and to the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education. The letter should include:

- i. nature of the charge/evidence against the student;
 - ii. brief summary of the meeting with the student;
 - iii. faculty member's decision;
 - iv. right of appeal to the department chair.
- b. If the student is subsequently found not responsible for the charge, the student may either:
 - i. remain in the course without penalty, or
 - ii. withdraw from the course regardless of any published deadlines.

Once a faculty member has charged a student with academic dishonesty, the student may not withdraw from the course. Any student who withdraws from a course before the charge is made may be reregistered for the course so that appropriate action can be taken. If the student is found responsible for violating the Student Academic Integrity Policy, the student may not withdraw from the course and will receive the sanction imposed by the instructor or other academic authority.

2. Non course related violations.

- a. A department chair, or other academic authority, may acquire evidence, either directly or through information supplied by others, that a violation of academic integrity may have occurred in a departmental or comprehensive exam, or other departmental activity. After collecting the evidence available, the chair, or

academic authority, meets with the student to present the evidence of a violation and request an explanation.

If the chair, or other academic authority, accepts the student's explanation, no further action is taken. If the chair, or other academic authority, determines that a violation has occurred, the chair, or other academic authority, informs the student, in writing, of the academic penalty and of the student's rights of appeal. The chair, or other academic authority, sends a copy of the letter, together with any additional information, to the college dean and to the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education. The letter should include:

- i. nature of the charge/evidence against the student;
- ii. brief summary of the meeting with the student;
- iii. chair or designee's decision;
- iv. right of appeal to the college dean.

B. Procedures for group projects.

When academic dishonesty occurs in a group project, faculty should make a concerted effort to determine who was responsible for the violation of the academic integrity by examining each student's part of the project, and by meeting with each student individually and then collectively.

If the preponderance of evidence identifies the violator(s), that student (or students), not the group, may be charged with a violation of the academic integrity policy and the student(s) be informed of the penalty to be assessed.

In cases where the identity of the violator(s) is not easily determined with reasonable certainty, or when the violator(s) are not forthcoming, the faculty member may then hold the entire group responsible for a violation of the academic integrity policy, and assess a penalty to each member of the project team.

C. Penalties.

All acts of academic dishonesty violate standards essential to the existence of an academic community. Most offenses are properly handled and remedied by the faculty member teaching the course in which they occur, or by an academic department or college. Other violations will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education for sanctions listed in the Code of Student Conduct.

The penalties that may be assessed by a faculty member for a course-related violation may include the following:

1. revision of the work in question and/or completion of alternative work, with or without a grade reduction;
2. reduced grade (including “F” or zero) for the assignment;
3. reduced grade (including “F”) for the entire course.

The penalties that may be assessed by a department, college, or other academic authority for a non course-related violation may include the following:

4. failure of a comprehensive exam;
5. dismissal from an academic program;
6. dismissal from a Graduate program;
7. referral to the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education.

Note: If a department or college has its own code of professional standards, any academic integrity violation, whether course related or non course related, may be sanctioned under the process described in those professional standards, in addition to those penalties outlined above.

Whatever the penalty, the letter describing the incident and recording the decision will be kept for seven years in the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education. The purpose of this record keeping is to ensure that students who violate the university’s Student Academic Integrity Policy a second time are dealt with appropriately. A second purpose is to deter students from repeating offenses. The first-offense file is an internal record, not part of the student’s disciplinary record or of the academic transcript.

Students found responsible for a first violation of this policy will be subject to an educational task assigned by the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education. The purpose of this task is to assist with the student’s understanding of academic integrity at institutions of higher education and to avoid future violations of this policy. Students will be expected to complete the task as outlined by the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary charges against the student as per the Code of Student Conduct.

A second violation of this policy will normally result in formal disciplinary charges being brought against the student. In addition to the sanctions listed above, sanctions for a second or subsequent violation may include:

8. suspension from the university for a designated period of time;
9. expulsion from the university;
10. any sanctions listed in the Code of Student Conduct or Graduate School Catalog.

In the determination of penalties, the following factors may be considered:

11. the nature and seriousness of the offense;
12. the injury or damage resulting from the misconduct;
13. the student's prior disciplinary record;
14. frequency of academic integrity violations.

D. Appeal procedures.

1. If the student chooses to appeal a course-related sanction, upon receipt of the faculty member's decision, the student must submit within five working days a letter of appeal to the department chairperson. If a department chairperson is also the instructor bringing the charge of academic dishonesty, any appeal will be sent to the dean of the college. After receiving the student's appeal letter, the chairperson will:
 - a. arrange a meeting with the student within five business days, unless there is a compelling reason to extend this time period. If the time is extended, the meeting will be held as soon as possible after the five days;
 - b. arrange, if appropriate, a meeting with the faculty member, either separately or with the student in attendance;
 - c. notify the student in writing of his/her decision within five business days following their meeting, unless there is a compelling reason to extend this time period. If the time is extended, the student will be notified as soon as possible after the five days;
 - d. send copies of the decision to the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education and to the office of the dean of the college.
2. If the student is dissatisfied with the chairperson's decision, in the case of either a course-related violation or a non course-related violation, the student may appeal to the dean of the college. The student must submit a letter to the dean within five business days following the receipt of the chair's letter.
3. Finally, if the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the college dean, he or she may appeal to the Student Appeals Committee. The student must submit a letter of appeal to the Committee, in care of the Office of Student Conduct & Civility Education, within five business days of the dean's decision, unless there is a compelling reason to extend this time period. If the time is extended, the letter of appeal will be due as soon as possible after the five days. Once the Committee has received the appeal, it will set up a meeting where both student and

faculty or departmental representative will be invited to give testimony to the Committee. The Committee may let the original decision stand or may modify it. The decision of the committee is final.

Related Policies:

USM Policy III-1.00, Policy on Faculty, Student and Institutional Rights and Responsibilities for Academic Integrity.

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