

## Abilene Christian University

### Academic Integrity and Honesty

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Abilene Christian University is a community of learners that supports the quest for knowledge and truth through intellectual and personal integrity and honesty in learning, instruction, research and service. Its educational programs, faculty and staff, administration, and student environment all exist to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.

Violations of academic integrity and other forms of cheating involve the intention to deceive or mislead or misrepresent, and therefore are a form of lying. As Christians, the norms for our behavior flow from the nature of God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). God does not lie (1 Samuel 15:29, Titus 1:2); therefore, those who claim His name should not lie. God is described as the one whose Son is “*the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6) and as one whose Spirit is “*the Spirit of truth*” who guides “*into all truth*” (John 16:13). If we, as people of God, strive to be like Him, then we will be about truth and truthfulness (Ephesians 4:20-25).

The most powerful motive for integrity and truthfulness comes from one’s desire to imitate God’s nature in our lives. As a community of Christian students and scholars, we are each responsible to expect behaviors from each other consistent with the nature of God, to respect the community, and to respect ourselves.

Academic integrity is essential to the most effective development of a person’s intellectual skills and abilities. In its work to prepare students for the future, ACU must introduce students to the kind of professional censure they will encounter in the workforce. The university’s enforcement of standards of academic integrity and academic consequences are set as a way of drawing students’ attention to the greater consequences they will find in the professional world.

Expectations of academic honesty and integrity extend to both university employees and students. Every member of the community is responsible for protecting the integrity of learning, scholarship, and research. Being responsible requires action against violations in spite of peer pressure, loyalty, or compassion. Individuals must take responsibility for their own conduct and discourage misconduct by others.

#### **DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic Integrity is defined as academic work completed as assigned for each class by the individual or group responsible for the work. Academic work includes but is not limited to reading assignments, assessments, examinations and tests, attendance at required out-of-class activities, written or oral presentations, and laboratory experiments and research.

The following examples of **academic dishonesty** include:

- Acquiring answers for any assigned work or examination from any source not authorized by the instructor for the specific assignment, such as opening the book on a closed book test or using notes on a test when not authorized.
- Observing the work of other students during any examination or other assignments where inappropriate.
- Claiming credit for an attendance or service activity without attending or performing the activity.
- Gaining access to the content of any examination prior to its being given.
- Receiving, giving, or using unauthorized aid on an examination.
- Informing any person(s) of the contents of any examination prior to its being given.
- Providing answers for any examination or assigned work when not specifically authorized to do so by the instructor(s).
- Offering to sell or buy unauthorized aids or information for an assignment or examination.
- Allowing other members of a group to provide a disproportionate fraction of a required group project or activity.
- Collusion with (an)other person(s) on an assignment for which the instructor has specified independent work.
- Using the work of (an)other person(s) in place of independent work.
- Permitting formal or informal tutors or editors to provide more than tutoring or editing, such as completing or rewriting work assigned by the instructor for the individual student to complete or write, or telling the student the steps in solving a problem rather than guiding the student to discover the proper steps.
- Altering, misrepresenting, or falsifying a transcript, course record or graded work to gain unearned academic credit.
- Agreeing to change or have changed academic records, including arranging for a grade or credit not earned.
- Offering or accepting a bribe related to academic work or records.
- Written or oral presentation of falsified materials and facts, including but not limited to the results of interviews, laboratory experiments, and field-based research.
- Written or oral presentation of the results of research or laboratory experiments without the research or experiment having been performed.

**Plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Intentional or unintentional failure to give credit to sources used in a work in an attempt to present the work as one's own.
- Submitting for credit in whole or in part the work of others.
- Submission of paper(s) or project(s) obtained from any source, such as a research service or a club paper file, as one's own.

## **NON-ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATIONS**

Integrity violations that occur beyond the context of a particular course and in other campus offices are typically investigated and processed within the Office of Student Life. When a member of the university community suspects a violation of integrity beyond the context of a course, he or she should contact the Dean of Students, who may consult with other faculty and staff to determine whether the incident should be pursued under the Student Conduct section of the Student Handbook. The decision of the Dean of Students regarding the choice of process is final, and may not be appealed.

1. If the Dean of Students or designee determines that the incident is best pursued in the context of a class-related incident, then the faculty member teaching that class will be responsible for pursuing the matter as outlined below.
2. If the Dean of Students or designee determines that the incident is best pursued in the context of a non class-related incident, then the Director of Judicial Affairs will be responsible for pursuing the matter as outlined in the Student Conduct section of the Student Handbook.

## **PROCESS FOR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATIONS**

All alleged violations of academic integrity trigger a three-phase university response. The first phase– the investigation phase – involves determining whether an academic integrity violation occurred within the department. The second phase – deliberation and notification of consequences – outlines the determination of the consequences and processes for notifying the student(s) involved. The third phase – reporting an academic integrity violation – outlines how the department will report the violation to Student Life, the examination of the student’s record for evidence of previous violations of integrity and/or student conduct, and, if necessary, assessing penalty for any recurring problems.

The Dean of each college, the Dean of Students and the Provost may designate a person within his/her office to represent the respective office in the process.

### **Investigation of an Academic Integrity Violation**

If faculty, staff or a student suspects a violation of integrity related to a specific class, he or she should contact the faculty member teaching that class as soon as possible, and the faculty member will be responsible for following up on the matter.

With consultation from the department chair, the faculty member will ask at least two colleagues in the department to review the situation without, in so far as is possible, revealing the names of the student(s) involved.

## **Deliberation and Notification of Consequences**

If the colleagues give a mixed response, some believing that an integrity violation occurred, and others believing it did not occur, the faculty member will, in the presence of the department chair or a second faculty member, visit with the student(s) involved to gather additional information. The faculty members must, in a timely manner, conclude that the student did or did not violate the academic integrity policy.

If the colleagues respond unanimously that an integrity violation did not occur, the faculty member should visit with the student about the behavior or other evidence that led to the perception of academic dishonesty in order to educate the student about conduct and practices that clearly establish one's integrity rather than creating suspicion. The matter is closed and appropriately documented.

If the colleagues respond unanimously that an integrity violation did occur, the faculty member will meet with the student in the presence of the department chair or a second faculty member. If the student admits guilt or if the student denies guilt but the evidence indicates otherwise, then the faculty member will convey orally and in writing the consequence determined in accordance with university policy, departmental policy and/or the class syllabus. The faculty member is responsible for forwarding paperwork describing the incident and penalty to the department Chair who will forward the paperwork to the Dean of the college. The Dean will then forward the paperwork to the Office of the Dean of Student Life as an informational record of discipline. If the student accepts the incident phase penalty, then the university response is concluded.

Examples of consequences determined by the faculty member may include, but are not limited to:

- Lowering the grade on the assignment up to and including an F in the course for a first offense, based on policies included in the syllabus;
- Should the student be permitted to remain in the class after being found in violation of the academic integrity policy, the instructor may also require the student to retake the exam or an alternate exam, resubmit the course work, or complete an alternate assignment. Any such makeup work may be graded independently or averaged with the penalized grade for the original dishonest work. Failure to comply with such requirements constitutes a second violation.
- A second violation in a class will result in an F in the course and immediate referral to the Dean of Student Life.

## **Reporting an Academic Integrity Violation to Student Life**

It is recommended that the Dean of each college and/or designees report academic integrity violations to the Dean of Students at the conclusion of the department's process and after all appeals have been exhausted. It is important to note that while the department may consider the consequences to be final, faculty may not be aware of previous integrity violations in other departments.

## **THE ROLE OF STUDENT LIFE IN RESPONDING TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATIONS**

In many cases, Student Life may have a more holistic picture of the student's conduct and behavior throughout the campus. Incidents of academic integrity violations in other departments, chapel integrity violations, disrespectful behavior towards others, and providing misleading information to other university authorities are typically located in the discipline file and document a pattern of behavior not otherwise expected from an ACU student. Once a department has forwarded the academic integrity violation to Student Life, the Dean of Students and/or designee reserves the right to further investigate, deliberate, and sanction a student if it is determined the student has a documented pattern of misconduct.

### **Multiple Violations of Academic Integrity**

Once the written findings are forwarded to the Dean of Student Life, he/she or designee will review the records of each student found in violation of the academic integrity policy and determine if previous integrity violations or related student conduct violations have occurred. As is the case with all university disciplinary responses, a student's entire disciplinary record will be considered when making decisions regarding appropriate sanctions.

The Dean of Students or designee will, in consultation with the Dean of the college, determine an appropriate consequence. The Dean or designee may choose to meet with the student to convey orally and in writing the disciplinary action.

Disciplinary actions sanctioned by Student Life may include, but are not limited to: a formal warning, conduct probation, suspension or dismissal. Refer to the Student Conduct section of the Student Handbook for a full description of each sanction.

### **Disciplinary Records**

Any sanction given to a student may be documented in the student's discipline file in the Office of Student Life. It is recommended that each Dean of the college, department chair and/or faculty members maintain copies of the violations for their own records as well. Matters involving testing organizations or local, state, or national legal issues may be reported to the appropriate authorities.

According to the Student Handbook, "The Dean of Students retains responsibility for the maintenance, storage and release of student records related to disciplinary proceedings in keeping with FERPA. In most cases, student disciplinary records may be kept for a period of five years upon separation from the university, at which time minimal statistics may be retained and the full document may be destroyed." For a full description of FERPA policy, refer to the University Catalog.

## **APPEAL PROCESS**

ACU gives each student the right to a single appeal to the next highest level. Under normal circumstances, imposition of disciplinary responses will be deferred pending the review of the appeal.

### **Appealing the Consequence Determined by the Faculty Member**

A student may appeal the faculty member's consequence for a class-related incident to the Dean of the college by filing a written appeal within five business days of receiving the written disciplinary action from the faculty member. Appeals will not be accepted after this deadline. These forms are available in the Office of the Dean of the college and will be filed along with the student's response, including his or her statement of the facts, reasons for the appeal and such other statements and documents he or she believes are relevant to the appeal. Faculty and other appropriate university personnel will be notified of the appeal and will have five business days from notification to prepare statements to be included in the student's record.

Within five business days after receiving the appeal, the Dean of the college will review the appeal notice and may decide to meet with the student to further discuss his or her grounds for appeal. The Dean of the college may meet with only the student. No one else may represent the student during the appeal process. Prior to this meeting and in order to reach a decision, the Dean of the college will, in consultation with the involved faculty member, review the appeal and support materials (for example, plagiarized sources, tests from which answers were copied, etc.). The Dean of the college may also confer with the student in the process of coming to a final decision. The Dean of the college will consider the appeal and uphold, reverse or otherwise modify the previous decision. The decision of the Dean of the college may not be appealed. The Dean of the college will convey orally and/or in writing the final decision to the student and the faculty member involved. The Dean of the college is responsible for forwarding paperwork describing the result of the appeal to the Dean of Students.

### **Appealing a Student Life Decision**

Should a decision be made by Student Life as a result of multiple academic integrity violations, the student has the right to appeal the decision to the Provost. A written appeal within five business days of receiving the written disciplinary action from the Dean of Students or designee is required. Appeals will not be accepted after this deadline. Appeal forms are available in the Office of the Dean of Students and should be submitted to the Office of the Provost.

Within five business days after receiving the appeal, the Provost or designee will review the appeal notice and may decide to meet with the student to further discuss his or her grounds for appeal. The Provost or designee may meet with only the student. No one else may represent the student during the appeal process. Prior to this meeting and in order to reach a decision, the Provost will, in consultation with the involved faculty member and/or the Dean of Students, review the appeal, the student's discipline file, and support materials (for example, plagiarized sources, tests from which answers were copied, etc.). The Provost may also confer with the

student in the process of coming to a final decision. The Provost will consider the appeal and uphold, reverse or otherwise modify the previous decision. The appeal decision of the Provost may not be appealed. The Provost will convey orally and/or in writing the final decision to the student, the faculty member involved, and the Dean of Students.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Faculty rights and responsibilities**

- Actively educate toward and encourage academic honesty and integrity.
- Consciously avoid conditions that encourage or excuse academic dishonesty and fraud.
- Faculty may require that a student present his or her ACU-issued photo ID in order to accept an examination or other item for evaluation.
- Determine whether the act is a violation of academic integrity or failure to understand the standards for academic integrity.
- Faculty must report and pursue all alleged violations of academic integrity.
- If it is determined that an instructor provided unfair advantage to a student by failing to report a violation of the academic integrity policy, this act may be reported to the Dean of the instructor's college.

### **Student rights and responsibilities**

Abilene Christian University provides each student the following rights for a hearing conducted at the departmental, college, or university level.

- Right to meet with the faculty member or other university official responsible for investigating and making decisions with regard to violations of academic integrity.
- Right to admit guilt and seek reparation.
- Right to reasonable access to the information in the case file.
- Right to review evidence.
- Right to present counter evidence and/or witnesses on student's own behalf.
- Right to have a non-representative and non-witnessing observer present during all meetings. A student may not be represented by an attorney at a departmental, college, or university hearing.
- Right to continue in affected classes until all appeals have been exhausted.

### **Departmental responsibilities**

Departments may adopt specific departmental academic integrity policies in consultation with their Dean of the college.

## Department chair responsibilities

- Ensure that faculty are aware of departmental policies, with particular attention given to new and adjunct faculty.
- Ensure that statements of appropriate departmental policies are included in course syllabi.
- Consult with faculty who suspect a violation of academic integrity.

## Student Life responsibilities

- Determine if an incident is processed through the academic department or through the Office of Student Life if the alleged violation occurred outside of a course context.
- Further investigate, deliberate and sanction a student if the student has a documented history of multiple integrity violations and/or a pattern of misconduct.
- Consult with appropriate faculty and staff as needed.
- Ensure each student's discipline file is accurate and up-to-date.

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### **University Policies Consulted**

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Oregon State

"Seaver College Code Academic Ethics," Pepperdine University

Texas A&M University

University of Pittsburgh

### **Handouts Consulted**

Donald L. McCabe and Sally Cole, "Student Collaboration: Not Always What the Instructor Wants."

Donald L. McCabe and Gary Pavela, "The Principled Pursuit of Academic Integrity" w/ "Ten Principles of Academic Integrity for Faculty."

Bill Taylor, "Integrity: Academic and Political, A Letter to My Students."

### **Web Sites**

Center for Academic Integrity (<http://www.academicintegrity.org/>)

turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com/>)