

# FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY

## Introduction

The statement on *Values and Moral Standards* says: “The moral norm which guides conduct and informs policy at The Florida State University is responsible freedom. Freedom is an important experience which the University, one of the freest of institutions, provides for all of its citizens – faculty, students, administrators, and staff. Freedom is responsibly exercised when it is directed by ethical standards.” (*Values and moral standards at FSU* retrieved from the current General Bulletin located at <http://registrar.fsu.edu/>.)

The statement also addresses academic integrity: “The University aspires to excellence in its core activities of teaching, research, creative expression, and public service and is committed to the integrity of the academic process. The [Academic Honor Policy] is a specific manifestation of this commitment. Truthfulness in one’s claims and representations and honesty in one’s activities are essential in life and vocation, and the realization of truthfulness and honesty is an intrinsic part of the educational process.” (*Values and moral standards at FSU* retrieved from the current General Bulletin located at <http://registrar.fsu.edu/>.)

Guided by these principles, this Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the process. The Academic Honor Policy Committee may take direct jurisdiction of a case under extraordinary circumstances when it is determined by a majority vote of the committee that taking direct jurisdiction is appropriate.

Students in the College of Law and the College of Medicine are governed by the academic integrity policies and procedures of their respective colleges, which are subject to approval by the Academic Honor Policy Committee.

## FSU Academic Honor Pledge

I affirm my commitment to the concept of responsible freedom. I will be honest and truthful and will strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University. I will abide by the Academic Honor Policy at all times.

## Academic Honor Violations

Note: Instructors are responsible for reinforcing the importance of the Academic Honor Policy in their courses and for clarifying their expectations regarding collaboration and multiple submission of academic work. Examples have been provided for the purpose of illustration and are not intended to be all-inclusive.

- 1. PLAGIARISM. Presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source).**

**Typical Examples Include:** Using another's work from print, web, or other sources without acknowledging the source; quoting from a source without citation; using facts, figures, graphs, charts or information without acknowledgement of the source; utilizing ghostwriting or pay-for-paper services.

**2. CHEATING. Improper access to or use of any information or material that is not specifically condoned by the instructor for use in the academic exercise.**

**Typical Examples Include:** 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, cell phones, or computers) when these are not authorized; procuring without authorization a copy of or information about an examination before the scheduled exercise; unauthorized collaboration on exams.

**3. UNAUTHORIZED GROUP WORK. Unauthorized collaborating with others.**

**Typical Examples Include:** Working with another person or persons on any activity that is intended to be individual work, where such collaboration has not been specifically authorized by the instructor.

**4. FABRICATION, FALSIFICATION, AND MISREPRESENTATION. Unauthorized altering or inventing of any information or citation that is used in assessing academic work.**

**Typical Examples Include:** Inventing or counterfeiting data or information; falsely citing the source of information; altering the record of or reporting false information about practicum or clinical experiences; altering grade reports or other academic records; submitting a false excuse for a class absence or tardiness in a scheduled academic exercise; lying to an instructor to increase a grade.

**5. MULTIPLE SUBMISSION. Submitting the same academic work (including oral presentations) for credit more than once without instructor permission. It is each instructor's responsibility to make expectations regarding incorporation of existing academic work into new assignments clear to the student in writing by the time assignments are given.**

**Typical Examples Include:** Submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without instructor permission; making minor revisions in a credited paper or report (including oral presentations) and submitting it again as if it were new work.

**6. ABUSE OF ACADEMIC MATERIALS. Intentionally damaging, destroying, stealing, or making inaccessible library or other academic resource material.**

**Typical Examples Include:** Stealing or destroying library or reference materials needed for common academic purposes; hiding resource materials so others may not use them; destroying computer programs or files needed in academic work; stealing, altering, or intentionally damaging another student's notes or laboratory experiments. (*This refers only to abuse as related to an academic issue.*)

**7. COMPLICITY IN ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. Intentionally helping another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.**

**Typical Examples Include:** Knowingly 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 before a scheduled exercise; deliberately furnishing false information.

**8. ATTEMPTING to commit any offense as outlined above.**

### **Student Rights**

Students have the following important due process rights, which may have an impact on the appellate process:

1. to be informed of all alleged violation(s), to receive the complaint in writing (except in a Step 1 agreement, described in the Procedures Section, where the signed agreement serves as notice) and to be given access to all relevant materials pertaining to the case.
2. to receive an impartial hearing in a timely manner where the student will be given a full opportunity to present information pertaining to the case.

Students are also accorded the following prerogatives:

1. when possible, to discuss the allegations with the instructor.
2. privacy, confidentiality, and personal security.
3. to be assisted by an advisor who may accompany the student throughout the process but may not speak on the student's behalf.
4. to choose not to answer any question that might be incriminating.
5. to contest the sanctions of a first-level agreement and to appeal both the decision and sanctions of an Academic Honor Hearing.

The student has the right to continue in the course in question during the entire process. Once a student has received notice that he/she is being charged with an alleged violation of the Academic Honor Policy, or when a student has been found "responsible" for an Academic Honor Policy violation, the student is not permitted to withdraw or drop the course. Should no final determination be made before the end of the term, the grade of "Incomplete" will be assigned until a decision is made.

Students should contact the Dean of Students Department for further information regarding their rights.

### **Procedures for Resolving Cases**

**Step 1.** Throughout the Step 1 process, the instructor has the responsibility to address academic honor allegations in a timely manner, and the student has the responsibility to respond to those allegations in a timely manner. For assistance with the Academic Honor Policy, students should consult the Dean of Students Department and instructors should consult the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.

If a student observes a violation of the Academic Honor Policy, he or she should report the incident to the instructor of the course. When an instructor believes that a student has violated the Academic Honor Policy in one of the instructor's classes, the instructor must first contact the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement to discover whether the student has a prior record of academic dishonesty in order to determine whether to proceed with a Step 1 agreement. The instructor must also inform the department chair or dean. (Teaching assistants must seek guidance from their supervising faculty member and adjunct instructors must seek guidance from their department chair.) However, faculty members or others who do not have administrative authority for enforcing the Academic Honor Policy should not be informed of the allegation, unless they have established a legitimate need to know. If pursuing a [Step 1 Agreement](#) is determined to be possible, the instructor shall discuss the evidence of academic dishonesty with the student and explore the possibility of a [Step 1 Agreement](#). Four possible outcomes of this discussion may occur:

1. If the charge appears unsubstantiated, the instructor will drop the charge, destroy the documentation, and no record of academic dishonesty will be created. The instructor should make this decision using the “preponderance of the evidence” standard.
2. The student may accept responsibility for the violation and accept the academic sanction proposed by the instructor. In this case, the agreement involving an academic penalty must be put in writing and signed by both parties on the “[Academic Honor Policy Step 1 Agreement](#)” form, which must then be sent to the Dean of Students Department. This agreement becomes a confidential student record of academic dishonesty and will be removed from the student’s file five years from the date of the final decision in the case. Any grade imposed as the result of an academic sanction will remain on the student’s transcript indefinitely and will not be subject to course drop or withdrawal.
3. The student may accept the responsibility for the violation, but contest the proposed academic sanction. In this circumstance, the instructor must submit the “[Academic Honor Policy Referral to Contest Sanction](#)” form along with supporting documentation to the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The student’s written statement must demonstrate specific reasons why the proposed sanction is extraordinarily disproportionate to the offense committed for any change to occur in the sanction. The Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement (or designee) will review the submitted written documentation to determine whether the proposed sanction should be imposed. The Vice President (or designee) may affirm or modify the sanction as appropriate. The decision that results from this review is final.
4. The student may deny responsibility. In this circumstance, the instructor submits the “[Academic Honor Policy Hearing Referral](#)” form along with supporting documentation to the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement for an Academic Honor Policy Hearing. The student is issued a letter detailing the charges within ten class days of the receipt of the referral, and the schedule for the hearing will be set as soon as possible and within 90 days from the date of the letter. These timelines may be modified in unusual circumstances. Unless all parties agree, the hearing will not be held any sooner than 7 class days from the student’s receipt of the charge letter. The process then proceeds to Step 2.

If the student is found to have a prior record of academic dishonesty or the serious nature of the allegations merits a formal hearing, the instructor must refer the matter to Step 2 for an Academic Honor Policy Hearing by submitting the “[Academic Honor Policy Hearing Referral](#)” form and appropriate documentation to the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement.

Allegations of academic dishonesty involving a graduate student engaged in any phase of the preliminary or comprehensive examination, thesis, or dissertation will be treated as egregious and will be resolved through the Step 2 process, in which the major professor will serve as the “instructor” under the hearing procedures. The Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement and the student’s academic dean, (as well as the Vice President for Research in cases involving grant-funded research), should be informed as soon as possible of all such allegations. The decision regarding whether to submit a hearing referral will be made by a committee consisting of the department chair and two faculty members appointed by the academic dean, one of whom should be the student’s committee member serving as the University representative (if one has been identified), excluding the major professor. In rendering its decision, this committee should review all available information and consult with the major professor and the academic dean.

**Step 2.** Academic Honor Policy Hearing. A panel consisting of five members shall hear the case. The panel shall include: one faculty member appointed by the dean from the unit in which the academic work is conducted; one faculty member appointed by the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement who is not from that unit; and two students appointed through procedures established by the Dean of Students Department. The panel shall be chaired by the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement (or designee), who votes only in case of a tie.

The hearing will be conducted in a non-adversarial manner with a clear focus on finding the facts within the academic context of the academic work. The student is presumed innocent going into the proceeding. After hearing all available and relevant information from the student and the instructor, the panel determines whether or not to find the student responsible for the alleged violation using the “preponderance of the evidence” standard. If the student is found responsible for the violation, the panel is informed about any prior record of academic honor policy violations and determines an academic sanction (and disciplinary sanction, if appropriate). In some cases, a Step 1 sanction may have been appropriately proposed prior to the convening of an Academic Honor Hearing. If the student is found responsible in these cases, the panel typically will impose a sanction no more severe than that which was proposed by the faculty member. The panel is required to provide a clear written justification for imposing a sanction more severe than the sanction proposed in Step 1.

The chair of the Academic Honor Policy hearing panel will report the decision to the student, the instructor, the instructor’s academic unit, the supervising faculty member of a teaching assistant or an adjunct instructor, the student’s dean, the Dean of Students Department, and the Registrar, if appropriate. If the student is found “responsible,” this outcome will be recorded with the Dean of Students Department and becomes a confidential student record of an Academic Honor Policy violation. Records in which suspension or a less severe sanction (including all academic sanctions) is imposed will be removed five years from the date of the final decision in the case. Any grade imposed as the result of an academic sanction will remain on the student’s transcript indefinitely and will not be subject to course drop or withdrawal. Records involving dismissal and expulsion will be retained permanently, except in cases where a dismissed student is readmitted. Those records will be removed five years from the date of the student’s readmission.

## **Sanctions**

### **Step 1**

This Step 1 procedure is implemented with first-offense allegations that do not involve egregious violations. The decision regarding whether an allegation is egregious is made by the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement (or designee) and the instructor. The instructor should consider the seriousness of the violation, the student’s circumstances, potential opportunities for learning, and consistency with past sanctions in determining a proposed sanction. The following sanctions are available in the Step 1 procedure.

1. additional academic work, including re-doing the assignment
2. a reduced grade (including “0” or “F”) for the assignment
3. a reduced grade (including “F”) for the course

## **Step 2**

An Academic Honor Policy Hearing is held for all second offenses, for all first offenses that involve egregious violations of the Academic Honor Policy, for all offenses that involve simultaneous violations of the Student Conduct Code, and in all cases where the student denies responsibility for the alleged violation. The decision regarding whether an allegation is egregious is made by the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement (or designee) and the instructor. In some cases, a Step 1 sanction may have been appropriately proposed prior to the convening of an Academic Honor Policy Hearing. If the student is found responsible in these cases, the panel typically will impose a sanction no more severe than that which was proposed by the faculty member. The panel is required to provide a clear written justification for imposing a sanction more severe than the sanction proposed in Step 1. Students will not be penalized solely for exercising their right to request a Step 2 hearing. The following sanctions are available in Step 2 (see the Procedures section) and may be imposed singly or in combination:

1. additional academic work, including re-doing the assignment
2. a reduced grade (including “0” or “F”) for the assignment
3. a reduced grade (including “F”) for the course
4. Educational Activities – attendance at educational programs, development of an academic plan with the assistance of the Academic Center for Excellence, participation in an Ethics Workshop, tutoring regarding proper citation practices, meetings with appropriate faculty or administrators, writing essays, or other educational activities. Fees may be charged to cover the cost of educational activities.
5. Restitution, letter of apology, or other restorative act
6. Disciplinary Probation – a period of time during which any further violation of the Academic Honor Policy puts the student’s status with the University in jeopardy. If the student is found “responsible” for another violation during the period of Disciplinary Probation, serious consideration will be given to imposing a sanction of Suspension, Dismissal, or Expulsion. Restrictions that may be placed on the student’s activities during this time period include, but are not limited to: participating in student activities; representing the University on athletic teams or in other leadership positions; and participating in practice for athletic or other competitions.
7. Suspension – Separation from the University for a specified period, not to exceed two years.
8. Dismissal – Separation from the University for an indefinite period of time. Dismissal is considered a final sanction, but readmission is possible in some cases under documented exceptional circumstances. No consideration will be given to readmitting a dismissed student within the first three years after a dismissal is imposed. Dismissal is noted on the student transcript.
9. Expulsion – Separation from the University without the possibility of readmission. Expulsion is noted on the student transcript.
10. Withholding of diplomas, transcripts, or other records for a specified period of time.
11. Suspension of degree, in cases where an offense is discovered after the degree is posted.
12. Revocation of degree, in cases where an offense is discovered after the degree is posted.

## **Appeals**

Decisions of the Academic Honor Policy Hearing Panel may be appealed to the Academic Honor Policy Appeal Committee, a standing four-member committee composed of two faculty members

appointed by the President and two students appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs. The chair will be appointed annually by the President, and members will serve two-year renewable terms. In case of a tie vote regarding a case, the committee will submit a written report to the Provost, who will then make the final determination.

On appeal, the burden of proof shifts to the student to prove that an error has occurred. The only recognized grounds for appeal are:

1. Due process errors involving violations of a student's rights that substantially affected the outcome of the initial hearing.
2. Demonstrated prejudice against the charged student by any panel member. Such prejudice must be evidenced by a conflict of interest, bias, pressure, or influence that precluded a fair and impartial hearing.
3. New information that was not available at the time of the original hearing.
4. A sanction that is extraordinarily disproportionate to the offense committed.
5. The preponderance of the evidence presented at the hearing does not support a finding of responsible. Appeals based on this consideration will be limited to a review of the record of the initial hearing, and the student will not be invited to appear before the Appeal Committee.

The procedures followed during the appeals process are:

1. The student should file a written letter of appeal to the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement within 10 class days after being notified of the Academic Honor Policy Hearing Panel decision. This letter should outline the grounds for the appeal (see 1-5 above) and should provide supporting facts and relevant documentation.
2. The Academic Honor Policy Appeal Committee will review this letter of appeal and will hear the student and any witnesses called by the student, except in appeals based on consideration #5 above. The committee may also gather any additional information it deems necessary to make a determination in the case. The instructor is not typically involved in the appellate process.
3. The Appeals Committee may affirm, modify, or reverse the initial panel decision, or it may order a new hearing to be held. This decision becomes final agency action when it is approved by the Provost. In cases where the student is found responsible, the decision becomes a confidential student record of academic dishonesty.
4. Appellate decisions are communicated in writing to the student, the instructor, the instructor's academic unit, the supervising faculty member of a teaching assistant or an adjunct instructor, the Office of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement, the student's academic dean, the Dean of Students Department, and the Registrar, if necessary, within 30 class days of the appellate hearing.

### **Academic Honor Policy Committee**

An Academic Honor Policy Committee shall be appointed by the University President. The Committee will include three faculty members, selected from a list of six names provided by the Faculty Senate Steering Committee; and three students, selected from a list of six names provided by the Student Senate. The Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement or designee and the Dean of Students or designee shall serve *ex officio*. Faculty members will serve three-year

staggered terms, and students will serve one-year terms. The committee will meet at least once a semester. It will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the Academic Honor Policy, work with the Faculty Senate and the Student Senate to educate all members of the community regarding academic integrity, and make recommendations for changes to the policy.

### **Amendment Procedures**

Amendments to the Academic Honor Policy may be initiated by the Academic Honor Policy Committee, the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, and/or the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Amendments to the policy must be approved by both the Faculty Senate and the Student Senate.