

# Academic Integrity FAQ for Educators

The information below is designed to help educators better understand academic integrity at Penn State and how it applies to undergraduate and graduate students. None of this information redefines or replaces college or university policies.

## General Information

### **Question: What is ‘academic integrity’?**

According to [Senate policy 49-20](#), academic integrity is the pursuit of scholastic and academic work in an open, honest, and responsible manner. It is a basic guiding principle for all academic activities, and all members of the University community are expected to act accordingly.

Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception, as such acts violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

### **Question: What counts as an academic integrity violation?**

According to [policy G-9 Academic Integrity](#) and [policy GCAC 805 Academic Integrity](#), an academic integrity violation is a breach or attempted breach of a course or assessment policy that affects the educator’s ability to evaluate the student’s genuine contributions to their work. Academic integrity violations can be unintentional – a failure to read or remember instructions will not excuse the misconduct.

### **Question: How can I educate students about academic integrity and reduce the likelihood of an academic integrity violation?**

Class educators are required to include academic integrity information in their syllabus. On our [Academic Integrity website](#), you can find a recommended and customizable syllabus statement and additional syllabus language around the use of “intelligent” and “smart” tools (look under the ‘Faculty Resources’ tab). Educators should consider including similar information in the instructions for assignments/assessments. Graduate educators should also review their Graduate Program Handbook for other suggestions.

The [Academic Integrity website](#) includes supporting resources that educators can use to build and support their academic integrity climate, including [videos designed for educators](#) and resources for students.

### **Question: What is the academic integrity process? How does it work?**

At Penn State, the academic integrity process is the set of procedures that educators are required to follow when they believe that a student has violated academic integrity expectations.

It is also the process students use to appeal the allegations and/or the outcome proposed by the educator.

You can find information about that at <https://integrity.psu.edu/videos-for-university-community>. Briefly, when an educator submits an academic integrity claim, the student has an opportunity to accept responsibility for the violation and the academic outcome proposed by their educator, to accept responsibility but challenge (appeal)

the proposed outcome, or to challenge (appeal) both. If the student challenges (appeals) the allegations and/or the proposed outcome, a neutral Academic Integrity Committee determines if there is a violation and/or the appropriate outcome.

If the student accepts responsibility, or an Academic Integrity Committee determines that the student is in violation, then the violation also goes to The Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response after the academic integrity process concludes.

## When do I need to submit an academic integrity claim?

### **Question: When does an educator need to submit an academic integrity claim?**

An educator needs to submit an academic integrity claim whenever they believe, for reasons beyond mere suspicion, that a student has violated or attempted to violate a course or assessment policy that affects the educator's ability to evaluate a student's genuine contribution to their work.

### **Question: What happens if I handle the situation on my own without submitting a claim?**

Per [Senate policy 49-20](#), academic integrity should be a shared conviction, which is best taught and reinforced by educators as an element of the teaching and learning process. This shared conviction is also reflected in other University policies:

Penn State's [General Standards of Professional Ethics](#) says, "As teachers, professors....hold before their students the best scholarly standards of their respective disciplines... They make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to assure that their evaluations of students reflect the students' true merit."

Penn State's [policy on academic freedom](#) says, "Academic freedom is also inherent in faculty members' roles in the classroom and in related instructional activities. Faculty members are, however, responsible for the maintenance of appropriate standards of scholarship..."

To foster a healthy academic integrity culture, educators must submit an academic integrity claim when they believe, for reasons beyond suspicion, that a student has violated academic integrity policies, even when they believe the violation was minor and/or unintentional (see [policy G-9 Academic Integrity](#) and [policy GCAC-805](#)).

Educators who respond to a suspected academic integrity violation outside of [the academic integrity process](#), compromise the University's ability to track and respond to violations, both educationally and in other ways (see below). Additionally, educators who do this compromise the student's rights and the University's ability to document that the student was aware of these rights, which include:

- an opportunity, offered through the academic integrity process, to become aware of violation consequences that go beyond the academic outcome in the class before responding to the allegations.
- an opportunity to contest/appeal the allegations and/or the outcome proposed by the educator through the academic integrity process.
- when contesting/appealing, an opportunity for a neutral Academic Integrity Committee to determine if the student violated and, when appropriate, to determine the academic outcome.

- when contesting/appealing, an opportunity to share information with the Academic Integrity Committee before outcomes are determined.

**Question: I think a student violated academic integrity policies, but I don't have time to submit a claim. What can I do?**

An educator needs to submit an academic integrity claim whenever they believe, for reasons beyond mere suspicion, that a student has violated or attempted to violate a course or assessment policy that affects the educator's ability to evaluate the student's genuine contribution to their work.

In 2023, the University adopted the [Digital Academic Integrity System \(DAISY\)](#), which reduces significantly the time and energy educators need to spend submitting an academic integrity claim. DAISY will coordinate communications and organize information, freeing the educator from those responsibilities. Additionally, educators need to include only relevant information (e.g., the allegations and a proposed outcome) and a course syllabus, when applicable, to initiate the academic integrity process.

Course educators mentoring a graduate teaching assistant (TA) may ask the TA to manage the academic integrity process on their behalf.

**Question: Can the Academic Integrity Committee investigate to see if the student violated academic integrity policies?**

Because course and assessment policies and instructions vary, educators are responsible for making preliminary determinations that lead to an academic integrity claim.

**Question: I think a student violated academic integrity policies. How should I talk with the student about this?**

First, try not to take it personally. If the student violated intentionally, it probably had more to do with their situation (e.g., time stress) than you.

Second, recognize that academic misconduct is situational. Academic expectations vary across academic programs, institutions, and classes.

Third, remember that confidentiality matters. If you need to talk with multiple students, talk with each student separately and privately.

Fourth, remember that talking with your student is an opportunity for you to gain information. Have an educationally driven conversation to assess your student's understanding of your expectations. You might ask questions like:

- ~Why did you choose to write about \_\_\_\_?
- ~I did not understand what you were saying about \_\_\_\_, can you tell me more?
- ~I could not find the sources you listed. Could you help me find them now?
- ~I noticed that your essay and \_\_\_\_ (Chat GPT output, Course Hero, etc.) include the same ideas in the same sequence. Did you use \_\_\_\_ to help you with your essay?

**Question: I think a student used an A.I. tool in a prohibited way. How can I know?**

The most effective way is the most obvious – when you suspect a violation, talk with the student (see above for

more information). It is especially noteworthy when the student cannot answer reasonable questions about the work they've submitted.

Review the work to see if an A.I. tool has self-identified or to see if the content of the work matches, sequentially or conceptually, the responses from an A.I. tool.

A.I. tools will sometimes fabricate citations, references, names, movie scenes, quotations, interviews, etc.

Some educators require students to rely on a set of sources for an assignment and then look for information from external sources that has not been cited/attributed/referenced appropriately.

If the assignment topic is uncommon, A.I. tools may include the same examples or errors across responses, which may appear across students' work.

Some of our colleagues have noted particularly short completion times on assignments that typically take much longer.

Some of our colleagues have noted significant changes in the student's "voice" within or across assignments.

Some of our colleagues have embedded hidden prompts in assignment instructions, directing artificial intelligence to include certain information or formatting, then checking student work to see if the A.I. platform has followed these hidden instructions.

## Submitting an Academic Integrity Claim

### **Question: How do I submit an academic integrity claim?**

To submit a claim, log in to the [Digital Academic Integrity System \(DAISY\)](#). Although DAISY has been designed with all users in mind, educators who need to explore another claim-submission option should reach out to their Academic Integrity Contact person (see Additional Information below).

### **Question: What academic outcome should I propose?**

Educators submitting an academic integrity claim for an undergraduate student should consult the [Undergraduate Sanctioning Guidelines](#), unless the student is taking a graduate course. Educators submitting an academic integrity claim for a graduate student or an undergraduate student in a graduate course should consult the [Graduate Sanctioning Guidelines](#).

Educators should propose a clear academic outcome and should not propose conditional outcomes (e.g., if \_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_).

### **Question: How are students notified when an educator submits a claim?**

Students are notified by email. That message tells students what they need to do to accept or contest/appeal the allegations or the outcome proposed by the educator.

At Penn State, '@psu.edu' email is a primary means of communication (see [AD99 University Provided Email Policy](#)), so the notification is sent to the student's '@psu.edu' email address. Please remind your students to check their '@psu.edu' email accounts regularly.

**Question: I did not talk with the student before I filed an academic integrity claim. Is that a problem?**

No. We prefer it if you would with the student first, but sometimes circumstances get in the way. The academic integrity process provides opportunities for both students and educators to share and respond to information shared by the other before any decisions are made.

**Question: I submitted an academic claim. Can the student drop the course?**

Students facing allegations may not drop the course unless they are absolved of responsibility for the alleged violation. Undergraduate students who need to drop because of significant health or well-being issues can petition for an exception to this policy (see [policy G-9 Academic Integrity](#) and [policy GCAC 805 Academic Integrity](#)).

**Question: My student dropped the class. What do I do?**

If the student dropped the class successfully, the Office of the University Registrar will add them back to the class. If your class uses Canvas, you should re-add the student to the Canvas class roster. If you think the student needs to drop the class for serious health or well-being reasons, encourage the student to reach out to your Academic Integrity Contact person (see Additional Information below). If you believe the student needs assistance, please consider the information in the [Red Folder Penn State](#).

**Question: My student violated academic integrity policies again. Should I submit again?**

Yes.

**Question: My student violated on multiple assignments. Should I submit an academic integrity claim for each suspected violation or include the allegations and proposed outcomes for multiple violations within one claim?**

Either is fine. For outcomes beyond those that affect the student's progress/grade in the class, the number of accumulated violations is more important than the number of claims submitted.

## Outcomes for Academic Integrity Violations

**Question: Who determines the academic outcome(s) for an academic integrity violation?**

When educators believe a student has violated, they propose an academic outcome or outcomes. When a student accepts the proposed outcome(s), the proposed outcome(s) is/are applied, so the answer is "the student." When a student challenges (appeals) the proposed outcome(s), the answer is "The college/campus/school's Academic Integrity Committee."

**Question: What are the possible academic outcomes for an academic integrity violation?**

For course-based violations, common academic outcomes include a reduced grade on the affected work, a reduced course grade, or both. Sometimes, the student will have to redo the work for a reduced grade.

Students with multiple violations also put themselves at risk for a note on their transcript and/or removal from their major program. You can find related information for students in undergraduate courses [here](#).

When graduate students violate on milestone or benchmark assessments, the outcome may include failure without another opportunity to pass and/or the initiation of processes to remove the student from their program. You can find related information for graduate students and students in graduate courses [here](#).

**Question: I think a student violated academic integrity policies, but I don't want a punitive outcome. What can I do?**

When submitting an academic integrity claim, educators may propose an "Integrity Warning," which is a formal notification that the student must change their approach or they are likely to put themselves at risk for more significant outcomes. An educator may also propose a redo for an assignment or part of an assignment and/or an educational intervention.

**Question: I think a student violated academic integrity policies, but I don't want to ruin their academic career. What can I do?**

It is important to hold students accountable for their actions. Although the 'top 10 lists' for 'reasons why new collegiate hires are fired from the workplace' change regularly, there is often foundational overlap with issues that cause academic misconduct. Our educational interventions target these foundational issues; they are designed to help students get back on track and succeed in the workplace.

It is true that **repeat offenders** put themselves at risk for a note on their transcript, removal from an academic program, or separation from the University, but attempts are made to respond educationally before these outcomes are applied.

**Question: I don't agree with the Academic Integrity Committee's decision. Can I appeal an academic outcome?**

The decisions of the Academic Integrity Committee are final. If you have questions about committee decisions, please reach out to your Academic Integrity Contact (see below) and ask to speak with the committee chair. If you believe the committee did not follow procedures properly, then reach out to your Academic Integrity Contact, who may connect you with the academic officer to whom the committee reports.

**Question: Will an academic integrity violation appear on the student's transcript?**

Usually, the answer is 'no.' Academic Integrity Committees may assign a transcript notation (an "XF") when a violation is unusually bad or when a student accumulates violations in the same class, but only when an academic integrity consequence or accumulated academic integrity consequences will, in-and-of-themselves, cause the student to fail the course. Students have an opportunity to appeal a transcript notation before it is applied.

If a transcript notation is applied, the Academic Integrity Committee or their supervising academic officer will determine the duration of the transcript notation. Transcript notations are removed after two years, if not sooner. When the "X" is removed, the grade of "F" will remain.

**Question: Besides academic outcomes, are there other outcomes?**

Students may not drop or withdraw from a class in which they have an academic integrity violation. Students who need to leave an affected class for health/well-being reasons may petition for that (see [Penn State policy G-9](#)).

Undergraduate students who violate lose the opportunities to qualify for The Dean's List for the semester (see [Penn State policy G-6](#)) and to apply grade forgiveness to the affected course (see [Penn State policy H-2](#)).

If mentioned in the [University Bulletin](#), the undergraduate student's major/minor program may impose additional consequences. The Schreyer Honors College (SHC) may do so, too (<https://www.shc.psu.edu/academics/index.cfm>).

Graduate students may face additional and severe consequences from their program.

At the conclusion of the college or campus academic integrity process, the claim is referred to the [Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response](#) (OSACR). That office may assign an educational intervention and/or administrative sanctions. Administrative sanctions may include a Formal Warning, Conduct Probation, Suspension, or Expulsion. Also, OSACR can assign a transcript notation to reflect a violation of the Student Code of Conduct or a pending student conduct process. More information is available on the OSACR [website](#).

### **Question: What else should I know about academic integrity?**

When students violate repeatedly, colleges/campuses/schools and The Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response work together to balance educational responses, fair opportunities for student success, and the reputation and value of academic programs. Often, this involves required educational interventions and outcomes that progressively limit the student's opportunities with the University. Students who violate academic integrity policies egregiously or repeatedly put themselves at greater risk for separation from the University, and graduate programs may be intolerant of any academic misconduct.

### **Question: Should I try to find out if my student has an academic integrity violation outside of my class/academic experience?**

No. Educators should focus on the student's academic progress within their class/academic experience. If the student has prior violations, Academic Integrity Committees and appropriate University offices will respond. Educators should not consider such information for educational or academic decisions.

## **Confidentiality and Disclosure**

### **Question: Will other Penn State people know when a student is found responsible/accepts responsibility for an academic integrity violation?**

The people responsible for carrying out the academic integrity process and relevant Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response staff will know about the violation. If the student facing allegations is an undergraduate, their major/minor/honors programs might be notified (for more information see policy [Penn State policy G-9](#)). If the student facing allegations is a graduate student or an undergraduate in a graduate class, the graduate program will be notified (for more information see [policy GCAC-805](#)).

### **Question: Will the University disclose an academic integrity violation to an employer or to another organization?**

Academic Integrity Committees should not disclose this information. The Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response has information about their policy for the disclosure of conduct records on their [Understanding Conduct Records](#) webpage.

**Question: Can I disclose information about an academic integrity violation I submitted to another person?**

In accordance with the [University Policy on Confidentiality of Student Records](#), the answer depends on the person's **need** to review an educational record **to carry out their responsibilities** on behalf of the University. Usually, educators can disclose/discuss specific information about an academic integrity claim only with the people who are involved in the claim or the academic integrity process. If the student's home program qualifies, administrators for that program may be notified, in accordance with [policy G-9 Academic Integrity](#) (for undergraduate students) or [policy GCAC-805 Academic Integrity](#) (for graduate students).

Educators seeking guidance may share general statements about the situation with colleagues but may not reveal specific information and should take reasonable steps to protect the identity of the affected student.

**Question: My student's parent/guardian has a question. Can I answer their question?**

Please direct parents/guardians to the "Other Resources" tab on our [Academic Integrity website](#) or to your Academic Integrity Contact person (see Additional Information below).

## Additional Information

**Question: I have a question that is not addressed above. Who should I contact?**

If the information in this FAQ is not helpful, please contact your Academic Integrity Contact person. Each college/campus/school has an Academic Integrity Contact person. When you log into the [Digital Academic Integrity System \(DAISY\)](#), you can use the "Contacts" tab to find their information. If you aren't sure who your contact person is, you can email the [university's lead academic integrity contact](#), who can help you identify the correct person.

**Question: Are there other academic integrity resources, including resources related to the use of "intelligent" and "smart" tools/devices?**

Yes. You can find additional resources on the [Academic Integrity Resources](#) webpage.