

Academic Integrity FAQ for Parents and Guardians

As mentioned in the [Parents and Families Guide](#), parents and guardians should be recognized and appreciated for their significant roles, which seem to evolve into those more akin to a coach or a mentor as children evolve into adults. The [Guide](#) goes on to say that, at Penn State, we expect students to “become increasingly responsible for their actions,” including their academic actions, and we expect students to “take the lead in solving their own problems.”

With this in mind, we hope you will find this FAQ helpful for supporting and guiding your student. We have added an *Academic Integrity FAQ for Students* to our [Academic Integrity Resources](#) with the hope that it will empower students to take the lead when they have an academic integrity concern.

Please keep the following things in mind as you review this FAQ:

- We recognize that students sometimes make mistakes or violate academic integrity policies unintentionally. Our Academic Integrity Process is designed to balance educational responses and the need for fair opportunities for academic success. Students facing allegations have an opportunity to participate in a fair and impartial resolution process that provides them with an opportunity to share their perspective before outcomes are determined.
- The information below is designed to help parents and guardians understand academic integrity at Penn State. None of this information redefines or replaces college, campus, school, or University policies.
- Many parents and guardians are familiar with the term “teacher” or “professor.” At Penn State, we use the terms “educator” or “instructor” to refer to a class instructor or another person who is responsible for assigning course grades, evaluating students’ academic assessments, or providing other feedback on students’ academic work. This will typically be a professor or graduate assistant but could be another Penn State employee.

General Information

Question: What is ‘academic integrity’?

At Penn State, academic integrity is the pursuit of scholastic and academic work in an open, honest, and responsible manner. It includes a commitment to avoid intentional misrepresentation and deception, and Penn Staters are expected to act accordingly.

Question: What counts as an academic integrity violation?

At Penn State, an academic integrity violation is a breach or attempted breach of a course or assessment policy that affects the educator’s ability to evaluate a 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: What is the academic integrity process? How does it work?

At Penn State, this is the process that educators are required to use when they believe that a student has violated academic integrity instructions.

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

You can find information about the process 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 violated, then the violation goes on to The Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response (more on this below).

Question: As a parent/guardian, what is my role in the Academic Integrity Process? Parents and guardians may advise their student, but do not have a role in the Academic Integrity Process. Throughout the academic integrity process, students must speak for and represent themselves. Students with questions should consider the information in the [Academic Integrity FAQ for Students](#).

Question: My student has a question. Who should my student contact?

Each college/campus/school has an Academic Integrity Contact. When your student logs into the [Digital Academic Integrity System \(DAISY\)](#), they can use the “Contacts” tab to find their contact’s information.

If your student is a graduate student or an undergraduate student facing allegations for work in a graduate course, then the contact is the one listed for The Fox Graduate School.

If your undergraduate student did the work on the University Park campus, then the contact is the one listed for the college/program supervising that course.

If your undergraduate student did the work on another campus, then the contact is the one listed for that campus.

If your undergraduate student did the work online, then your student should ask their instructor.

When in doubt, your student can email the [university’s lead academic integrity contact](#), who can help you find the correct person.

Question: I have a question. Can the Academic Integrity Contact answer my questions about my student’s academic integrity situation?

The contact person can provide only general information about the academic integrity process, unless your student gives consent to share more. According to the [Parent Rights Relating to Educational Records](#), “When the student reaches the age of 18 or begins attending a postsecondary institution, regardless of age, FERPA rights transfer from the parent to the student. This means that parents may not obtain any of their student’s education records without the written consent of the student.” Please visit the [Confidentiality Forms webpage](#) to find the **Student Consent for Release of Information to Third Parties** form your student can use to grant access to this protected information.

When an academic integrity claim is submitted

Question: How long does my student have to respond to an allegation?

When an educator submits the academic integrity claim, the student receives an email message with instructions. This email message is sent to their “@psu.edu” email account. The University expects students to check their ‘@psu.edu’ email account regularly, so students have **five business days** to respond. Students who need an extension should follow the instructions in that email message or reach out to their Academic Integrity Contact.

On occasion, and depending on how students have configured their email setup, academic integrity messages can end up in a junk/spam folder. Students should check that folder, too.

Question: My student is facing allegations in a class. Should my student continue with that class?

Yes! Unless the student is cleared of responsibility for the alleged violation, they will not be able to drop or withdraw from the class for academic reasons. For more information about this, see [Penn State policy G-9](#).

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

No. It is preferred if discussions occur first, but sometimes circumstances get in the way. The academic integrity process provides opportunities for students and their educators to share and respond to information shared by the other before any decisions are made.

Question: My student’s educator keeps submitting academic integrity claims for my student. Why?

Penn State educators are required to submit a claim whenever they believe there is evidence of an academic integrity violation.

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 the student accepts the proposed outcome(s), the answer is “the student.” When the 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 put themselves at risk for a note on their transcript and/or removal from their major program.

When graduate students violate academic integrity policies 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.

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.

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 their [website](#).

Question: How does the university respond to students who violate more than once?

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 intentionally or repeatedly put themselves at greater risk for separation from the university, and graduate programs may be intolerant of any academic misconduct.

Question: My student doesn't agree with the Academic Integrity Committee's decision. Can a student appeal an academic outcome?

Usually, no. The academic integrity process is the appeal process. However, if an Academic Integrity Committee wants to add a note to the student's transcript or remove an undergraduate student from a major/minor program, the student will have an opportunity to appeal that decision to the academic officer supervising that Academic Integrity Committee.

If your student does not understand the academic outcome or the academic outcome is unclear to your student, then your student should reach out to their Academic Integrity Contact (see below). When students contest, academic outcomes are determined by an Academic Integrity Committee, which maintains responsibility for clarifying those outcomes when needed.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

Question: Will other Penn State people know if my student is responsible 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. If your student is an undergraduate, their major/minor/honors program might be notified (for more information see policy [Penn State policy G-9](#)). If your

student is a graduate student or facing allegations in a graduate school class, your student's 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?

You can find information about that on The Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response's [Understanding Conduct Records](#) webpage.

Additional Information

Question: Are there other academic integrity resources?

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