

Academic Integrity FAQ for Students

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

Many students 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 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: Where can I find course and assessment policies?

Usually, these are in the course syllabus. Sometimes they are in assessment/assignment instructions, in course announcements or lessons, or part of class lessons/lectures.

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

At Penn State, it 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 lots of 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 violated, then the violation goes on to The Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response (more on this below).

Question: I have a question that is not answered in this FAQ. Who should I contact?

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

If you are 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 you are an undergraduate student and the allegation is for coursework done on the University Park campus, then the contact is the one listed for the college/program supervising that course.

If you are an undergraduate student and the allegation is for coursework done on another campus, then the contact is the one listed for that campus.

If you are an undergraduate student and the allegation is for coursework completed through the World Campus, then you should ask your instructor.

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

Question: My parent/guardian has a question. Can the Academic Integrity Contact answer their questions about my academic integrity situation?

The contact person can provide only general information about the academic integrity process, unless you give 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 you can use to grant access to this protected information.

When an academic integrity claim is submitted

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 contest/appeal the allegations or the outcome proposed by the educator.

At Penn State, 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 and students are expected to check their “@psu.edu” email account regularly. On occasion, those messages can end up in junk/spam folders. Remember to check that, too.

Question: How long do I 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.

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

No. We'd like it if you would, 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: I am facing allegations in a class. Should I continue with that class?

Yes! Unless you are absolved of responsibility for the alleged violation, you 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](#) (undergraduate policy) or [the procedures supporting policy GC 805](#) (graduate policy).

Question: I want to appeal/contest the allegations. What do I say?

An academic integrity violation is a violation of course or assessment policies/instructions. The best way to appeal/contest is to explain how the work was completed within the boundaries set by those policies/instructions.

Question: My educator keeps submitting academic integrity claims for me. Why?

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

Question: My educator did not submit the academic integrity claim in a timely manner. Does that matter?

Academic Integrity Committees may consider circumstances pertaining to the timing of claim submissions when they determine outcomes, but this is less likely when the committee determines that the violated course policies/instructions are clear.

Question: Does it matter if my educator submits an academic integrity claim for each alleged violation or includes multiple allegations in the same claim?

When determining consequence for multiple academic integrity violations, Academic Integrity Committees and the Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response consider the number of violations on assignments/assessments and the accumulated impact on course grades, regardless of the number of claims submitted for a course.

Outcomes for Academic Integrity Violations

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

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

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

For course-related 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 academic integrity violations also put themselves at risk for a note on their transcript and/or removal from their major program.

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.

Question: Will an academic integrity violation appear on my transcript?

Usually, the answer is ‘no.’ Academic Integrity Committees may assign an **academic transcript notation** when a violation is unusually bad or when a student accumulates violations in the same class. Students have an opportunity to appeal an academic transcript notation before it is applied.

If an academic transcript notation is applied, the Academic Integrity Committee or their supervising academic officer will determine the duration of the transcript notation. Academic transcript notations are removed after two years, if not sooner.

In response to a persistent pattern of misconduct, and following their own policies and procedures, The Office of Student Accountability may assign a **non-academic transcript notation** (see the answer to the question below).

Question: Are there other outcomes for a violation?

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: Can I appeal the loss of opportunity to qualify for the Dean's List or to apply grade forgiveness to the course?

Neither the Dean's List policy ([Penn State policy G-6](#)) nor the Grade Forgiveness policy ([Penn State policy H-2](#)) provides an opportunity for a student to appeal the loss of the opportunity.

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: I don'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 a 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 to whom that Academic Integrity Committee reports. This appeal may not overturn/reverse an Academic Integrity Committee's determination of responsibility.

Question: What do I do if I don't understand the academic outcome?

If you do not understand an academic outcome or the academic outcome is unclear to you, then you should reach out to your Academic Integrity Contact (see below). When students contest, academic outcomes are determined by an Academic Integrity Committee. That committee maintains responsibility for clarifying the outcomes they determine.

Question: I received an academic transcript notation. What does that mean?

That means that you received the grade of "XF" for the course. The "X" is temporary. The duration of the "X" is determined by the Academic Integrity Committee. When the "X" is removed, the course grade will become an "F."

Question: I have been removed from an academic program because of accumulated academic integrity violations across courses. What does that mean?

It means that you cannot graduate with that major/minor or complete the certificate program. For a credit-based academic program, you will retain your earned credits, and you can continue to take courses in that field, but you will need to find another major to graduate. For noncredit courses, it may mean that you cannot complete that program. This is especially true when professional and ethical conduct are critical for the completion of the program, or the student needs the program's endorsement for a future qualifying exam, opportunity, or credential.

Confidentiality and Disclosure

Question: Will other Penn State people know if I am found responsible/accept responsibility for an academic integrity violation?

The people responsible for conducting the academic integrity process and the relevant Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response staff will know. If you are an undergraduate, your major/minor/honors program might be notified (for more information see policy [Penn State policy G-9](#)). If you are a graduate student or facing allegations in a graduate school class, your 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, including resources related to the use of “intelligent” and “smart” tools/devices?

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