

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
SCHOOL OF NURSING

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE  
UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS

---

**TITLE OF POLICY:** ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: STUDENT OBLIGATIONS

**ORIGINAL DATE:** SEPTEMBER 1, 1991

**LAST REVIEWED/REVISED:** APRIL 2012

**POLICY:** This policy establishes each student's obligations for academic integrity, and includes procedures regarding adjudication for alleged breach of these obligations by students.

A student has the obligation to exhibit honesty, and to respect the ethical standards of the nursing profession in carrying out his or her academic assignments. A student may be found to have violated this obligation if he or she:\*

1. Refers during an academic evaluation to materials or sources, or employs devices not authorized by the instructor.
2. Provides assistance during an academic evaluation to another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
3. Receives assistance during an academic evaluation from another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
4. Engages in unauthorized possession, buying, selling, obtaining, or using a copy of any materials intended to be used as an instrument of academic evaluation in advance of its administration.
5. Acts as a substitute for another person in any academic evaluation process.
6. Utilizes a substitute in any academic evaluation procedures.
7. Practices any form of deceit in an academic evaluation proceeding.
8. Depends on the aid of others in a manner expressly prohibited by the instructor, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
9. Provides aid to another person, knowing such aid is expressly prohibited by the instructor in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
10. Presents as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or works of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources.
11. Submits the work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be one's own.
12. Knowingly permits one's work to be submitted by another person without the instructor's authorization.

13. Attempts to influence or change one's academic evaluation or record for reasons other than achievement or merit.
14. Indulges, during a class (or examination) session in which one is a student, in conduct which is so disruptive as to infringe upon the rights of the instructor or fellow students.
15. Fails to cooperate, if called upon, in the investigation or disposition of any allegation of dishonesty pertaining to another student, or any other breach of a student's obligation to exhibit honesty.
16. Violates the ANA Code for Nurses, while a nursing student.  
*Code for Nurses:*
  1. *The nurse, in all professional relationships, practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth and uniqueness of every individual, unrestricted by considerations of social or economic status, personal attributes, or the nature of health problems.*
  2. *The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, or community.*
  3. *The nurse promotes, advocates for, and strives to protect the health, safety, and rights of the patient.*
  4. *The nurse is responsible and accountable for individual nursing practice and determines the appropriate delegation of tasks consistent with the nurse's obligation to provide optimum patient care.*
  5. *The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to preserve integrity and safety, to maintain competence, and to continue personal and professional growth.*
  6. *The nurse participates in establishing, maintaining, and improving healthcare environments and conditions of employment conducive to the provision of quality health care and consistent with the values of the profession through individual and collective action.*
  7. *The nurse participates in the advancement of the profession through contributions to practice, education, administration, and knowledge development.*
  8. *The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public in promoting community, national, and international efforts to meet health needs.*
  9. *The profession of nursing, as represented by associations and their members, is responsible for articulating nursing values, for maintaining the integrity of the profession and its practice, and for shaping social policy.*

American Nurses Association, *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements*, Washington, D.C.: American Nurses Publishing, 2001.

\*NOTE: There may be instances where the charging party appropriately invokes the University of Pittsburgh Student Code of Conduct and Judicial Procedures. This may occur where the alleged wrong mainly involves factual determinations and not academic issues.

---

**PROCEDURE:** No student should be subject to an adverse finding that he or she committed an offense related to academic integrity, and no sanction should be imposed relating thereto, except in accordance with procedures appropriate for disposition of the particular matter involved. The degree of formality of proceedings, the identity of the decision maker or decision makers, and other related aspects properly reflect such considerations as the severity of the potential sanction, its probable impact upon the student, and the extent to which matters of professional judgment are

essential in arriving at an informed decision. In all cases, however, the objective is to provide fundamental fairness to the student as well as an orderly means for arriving at a decision, starting first with the individual instructor and then designated administrative officers or bodies.

These Guidelines are not meant to address differences of opinion over grades issued by faculty in exercising good faith professional judgments of student work. They are meant to address ways in which a faculty member deals with a student regarding an alleged breach of academic integrity. In matters of academic integrity the succeeding procedural steps must be followed:

1. Any member of the University community, who has evidence may bring to the attention of the instructor a complaint that a student has failed, in one or more respects, to meet faithfully the obligations specified in the above policy within ten (10) academic days after the beginning of the next academic term. If the instructor elects not to pursue a complaint submitted by a member of the University community, the complaint can be submitted to an individual appointed by the Dean who can pursue the matter in place of the instructor. Acting on his or her own evidence, and/or the basis of evidence submitted to the instructor, the instructor will advise the student that he or she has reason to believe that the student has committed an offense related to academic integrity, and the student will be afforded an opportunity to respond within five (5) academic working days. If the accused student and the instructor accept a specific resolution offered by either of them, the matter shall be considered closed if both parties sign a written agreement to that effect, and submit it to the Dean's Office. The Dean's office will maintain a written record of the agreement, signed by the student and the instructor. These records are not to be added to the student's individual file and they are to be destroyed when the student graduates or permanently terminates registration. The Dean's Office may provide such information identifying an individual student for the following uses:
  - a. to an instructor who is involved with a student integrity violation at the initial stage and who wishes to use this previous record in determining whether a resolution between the faculty member and the student or an academic integrity board hearing may be most appropriate, especially in the case of repeat offenders; and,
  - b. to the School of Nursing Academic Integrity Hearing Board after a decision of guilt or innocence has been made in a case, but before a sanction has been recommended.
2. If an agreed upon resolution between the faculty member and the student cannot be reached, the faculty member will file a written statement of charges within the next five (5) academic working days with the appropriate Associate Dean of the School of Nursing. Such statement should set forth the alleged offenses which are the basis of the charges, including a factual narrative of events and the dates and times of occurrences. The statement should also include the names of persons having personal knowledge of circumstances or events, the general nature and description of all evidence, and the signature of the charging party. If this occurs at the end of a term, and/or the last term of enrollment, the "G" grade should be issued for the course until the matter is decided. In situations involving the student's last term before graduation, degree certifications can be withheld, pending the outcome of the hearing which should be expedited as quickly as possible.
3. The Associate Dean for Clinical Education will transmit within the next five (5) academic working days the written statement of charges to the student, as well as the instructor or charging party, together with a copy of this policy.
4. Within the next five (5) academic working days, the School of Nursing Academic Integrity Hearing Board will be selected by the Dean from those individuals elected by the faculty and student organizations. The Dean shall appoint the chairperson of the Hearing Board. (Refer to Policy 306 for election of persons to serve on the Hearing Board.)
5. The Hearing Board shall consist of three (3) faculty members and two (2) students. The criteria utilized in the selection process for the hearing board will be:

- a. faculty membership will be comprised of both undergraduate and graduate faculty members.
  - b. students selected should be enrolled in the same program (baccalaureate, masters, doctoral) as the aggrieved student.
6. The chairperson of the Hearing Board will send a letter to the student, a copy of which shall also be sent to the instructor or charging party, which will state the time and place when a hearing on the charges will be held. The hearing must be held within the next ten (10) academic working days after the Academic Integrity Hearing Board was appointed.
7. In proceedings before the School of Nursing Academic Integrity Hearing Board, the student shall have the right to:
- a. be considered innocent until found guilty by clear and convincing evidence of a violation of the student obligations of academic integrity;
  - b. have a fair disposition of all matters as promptly as possible under the circumstances;
  - c. elect to have a private or public hearing;
  - d. be informed of the general nature of the evidence to be presented;
  - e. confront and question all parties and witnesses except when extraordinary circumstances make this impossible;
  - f. present a factual defense through witnesses, personal testimony and other relevant evidence;
  - g. decline to testify against himself or herself;
  - h. have only relevant evidence considered by the Academic Integrity Hearing Board; and,
  - i. a record of the hearing, at his or her own expense, upon request (audio tape).
8. The hearing should provide a fair inquiry into the truth or falsity of the charges, with the charged party and the instructor or charging party afforded the right to cross-examine all adverse witnesses. At the level of the School of Nursing Academic Integrity Hearing Board, legal counsel shall not be permitted, but a non-attorney representative from within the University community shall be permitted for both faculty and student. A law student can not be used as a representative at the Academic Integrity Hearing Board.
9. Any member of the University community may, upon showing of relevancy and necessity, request witnesses to appear at the hearing. Witnesses who are members of the University community shall be required to appear and other witnesses may be requested to appear at a hearing. When necessitated by fairness or extraordinary circumstances, the Chairperson of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board may make arrangements for recorded or written testimony for use in a proceeding.
10. **HEARING PROCEDURE:** The hearing will be conducted as follows:
- a. the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board will not apply technical exclusionary rules of evidence followed in judicial proceedings nor entertain technical legal motions. Technical legal rules pertaining to the wording of questions, hearsay, and opinions will not be formally applied. Reasonable rules of relevancy will guide the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board in ruling on the admissibility of evidence. Reasonable limits may be imposed on the number of factual witnesses and the amount of cumulative evidence that may be introduced;
  - b. the alleged offense or offenses upon which the complaint is based shall be read by the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board;
  - c. objections to procedure shall be entered on the record, and the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board shall make any necessary rulings regarding the validity of such objections;
  - d. the charging party shall state his or her case and shall offer evidence in support thereof;
  - e. the accused or representative(s) for the accused shall have the opportunity to question the charging party;
  - f. the charging party shall be given the opportunity to call witnesses;
  - g. the accused or representative(s) for the accused shall be given the opportunity to question each witness of the charging party after he or she testifies;

- h. the charging party shall inform the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board when his or her presentation is completed, at which time the Academic Integrity Hearing Board members shall be given an opportunity to ask questions of the persons participating in the hearing;
  - i. the Academic Integrity Hearing Board shall recess, and the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board shall make a determination as to whether the charging party has presented sufficient evidence to support a finding against the accused, if such evidence is uncontroverted. The parties may be required to remain in the hearing room during the recess or may be excused for a time period set by the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board;
  - j. depending upon the determination of the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board, the matter shall be dismissed or the accused shall be called upon to present his or her case and offer evidence in support thereof;
  - k. the accused may testify or not as he or she chooses;
  - l. the charging party shall have the opportunity to question the accused if the accused voluntarily chooses to testify;
  - m. the accused or representative(s) for the accused shall have the opportunity to call witnesses;
  - n. the charging party shall have the opportunity to question each witness of the accused after he or she testifies;
  - o. the accused shall inform the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board when his or her presentation is complete, and the Academic Integrity Hearing Board members shall have an opportunity to ask questions of the accused as well as the accused's witnesses;
  - p. the Chair of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board shall have an opportunity to address the hearing board on University regulations or procedure in the presence of all parties, but shall not offer other comments without the consent of all parties; and,
  - q. the hearing shall be continued and the members of the Hearing Board shall deliberate in private until a decision is reached and recorded.
11. An audio recording shall be made of the proceedings, exclusive of deliberations to arrive at a decision. If necessary this recording shall then be transcribed by a secretary appointed by the Dean.
12. The proposed decision, which shall be written, shall include a determination whether the charges have been proven by clear and convincing evidence, together with findings with respect to the material facts. If any charges are established, the proposed decision shall state the particular sanction or sanctions to be imposed. Prior violations or informal resolutions of violations may be considered *only* in recommending sanctions, not in determining guilt or innocence. Once a determination of guilt has been made, and before determining sanctions, the Chairperson of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board should find out from the Dean whether prior offenses and sanctions imposed have occurred.
13. The proposed decision shall be submitted to the Dean within the next five (5) academic working days, who will make an independent review of the hearing proceedings. The Dean may require that the charges be dismissed, or that the case be remanded for further proceedings whenever he or she deems this to be necessary. Upon completion of such additional proceedings, if any, and within a reasonable time the Dean shall issue a final decision. The Dean may reject any findings made by the Academic Integrity Hearing Board adverse to the student, and may dismiss the charges or reduce the severity of any sanction imposed, but the Dean may not make new findings adverse to the student or increase the severity of a sanction, except in the case of repeating offenders of Academic Integrity Guidelines.
14. The Chairperson of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board shall then transmit to the charged party and the instructor copies of all actions taken by the hearing authority and the Dean. If a sanction is imposed, the notice to the student will make reference to the student's opportunity, by petition filed with the Provost, to appeal to the University Review Board.
15. Suitable records shall be maintained as confidential and retained in the Office of the Dean for four (4) years.

Note: If the faculty member involved in the dispute has an administrative role in the academic integrity procedure, then the administrator at the next higher level will assume the administrative responsibilities in the academic integrity procedure.

**TIMELINESS:** It is the responsibility of all parties, including administrative officers, to take prompt action in order that charges can be resolved quickly and fairly. Failure of the instructor to utilize these procedures diligently may constitute grounds for dismissal of charges. Parties have the right to seek review of the Provost or to petition the University Review Board for an appeal from a decision of an academic integrity hearing board or investigatory committee within five (5) academic working days of the date of the decision letter.

**SANCTIONS:** The alternative sanctions which may be imposed upon a finding that an offense related to academic integrity has been committed are the following:

- a. Dismissal from the School of Nursing without expectation of readmission.
- b. Suspension from the School of Nursing for a specific period of time.
- c. Dismissal from the course in which the offense occurred, with the opportunity to be enrolled therein at a future date.
- d. Reduction in grade, or assignment of a failing grade, in the course in which the offending paper or examination was submitted.
- e. Reduction in grade, or assignment of a failing grade, on the paper or examination in which the offense occurred.

In administrative sanctions, the School of Nursing must strive to achieve consistency in their application. That is, within the School of Nursing, the same sanctions should be applied for the same offenses, unless extenuating circumstances can be documented, e.g. the student is a repeat offender.

The imposition of such sanctions may be considered by the School of Nursing in the preparation of any report concerning a student, submitted to a government agency, accrediting body, or other person or institution in accordance with the requirements of law or the written consent of the student.

**REVIEW AND APPEAL:** A student or faculty member may seek to have the Dean's final decision (or a determination that the charges are not subject to adjudication) reviewed by the Provost, who may seek the advice of the University Review Board, or the student may appeal to the University Review Board, whose recommendation shall be made to the Provost. The University Review Board and its jurisdiction are described in the University of Pittsburgh Guidelines on Academic Integrity-Student and Faculty Organization and Hearing Procedures, September, 2005. The action of the Provost, taken with or without the advice of the University Review Board, shall constitute an exhaustion of all required institutional remedies.