

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

**ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE  
UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

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

**ORIGINAL DATE:** SEPTEMBER 1991

**LAST REVIEWED/REVISED:** OCTOBER 2011

**POLICY:** A faculty member accepts an obligation, in relation to his/her students, to discharge his/her duties in a fair and conscientious manner in accordance with the ethical standards generally recognized within the academic community as well as those of the nursing profession.

Without limiting the application of the above principle, members of the faculty are also expected (except in cases of illness or other compelling circumstances) to conduct themselves in a professional manner, including the following:

1. To meet their class when scheduled.
2. To be available at reasonable times for appointments with students, and to keep such appointments.
3. To make appropriate preparation for classes and other meetings.
4. To perform their grading duties and other academic evaluations in a timely manner.
5. To describe to students, within the period in which a student may add and drop a course, orally, in writing, or by reference to printed course descriptions, the general content and objectives of a course; and announce the methods and standards of evaluation, including the importance to be assigned various factors in academic evaluation and, in advance of any evaluation, the permissible materials or references allowed during evaluation. If a course is deemed experimental in content, evaluation techniques or grading practices, the students should be so advised.
6. To base all academic evaluations upon good-faith professional judgment.
7. Not to consider, in academic evaluation, such factors as race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, political or cultural affiliation, and life style, activities or behavior outside the classroom unrelated to academic achievement.
8. To respect the confidentiality of information regarding a student contained in University records; and to refrain from releasing such information, except in connection with intra-University business, or with student consent, or as may be permitted by law. References or recommendations may be given in good faith by a faculty member without documentation of a student's consent if it may be

reasonably perceived that the student initiated the request for a recommendation, in response to apparent bona fide inquires.

9. Not to exploit their professional relationship with students for private advantage; and to refrain from soliciting the assistance of students for private purposes in a manner which infringes upon such students' freedom of choice.
10. To give appropriate recognition to contributions made by students to research, publication, service, or other activities.
11. To refrain from any activity which involves risk to the health and safety of a student, except with the student's informed consent, and where applicable, in accordance with the University policy relating to the use of human subjects in experimentation.
12. To respect the dignity of students individually and collectively in the classroom and other academic contexts.

Any member of the University community having evidence may bring to the attention of the Dean, appropriate Associate Dean or Department Chair a complaint that a faculty member has failed, in one or more respects, to meet faithfully the obligations set forth above.

The Dean, appropriate Associate Dean or Department Chair, at his or her discretion, will take such action by way of investigation, counseling, or action (in accordance with applicable University procedures) as may appear to be proper under the circumstances. The faculty member's and student's interest in confidentiality, academic freedom and professional integrity in such matters will be respected.

In order to provide a means for students to seek and obtain redress for grievances affecting themselves individually, the following procedures should be followed. These are not intended and shall not be used to provide sanctions against faculty members.

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**PROCEDURE:**

Where an individual student alleges with particularity that the actions of a faculty member have resulted in serious academic injury to the student, the matter shall (if requested by the student) be presented to the Academic Integrity Hearing Board for adjudication. Serious academic injury includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the awarding of a lower course grade than that which the student has earned, or suspension from a class. However, this is not intended to address normal grading decisions of faculty in exercising good-faith professional judgment in evaluating student work.

It is the responsibility of the student, before seeking to have a grievance adjudicated, to attempt to resolve the matter by personal conference with the faculty member concerned.

If such attempts are unavailing, the aggrieved student may present the matter in writing to the Department Chair for consideration and adjustment by informal means. This informal process shall take no longer than five (5) academic working days. If a matter remains unresolved after such efforts have been made, the following grievance procedures shall be employed:

**All communications between the student and the school must be via certified mail. The beginning of all time frames stated in the procedure will be the date of delivery.**

1. The aggrieved student will file a written statement of charges with the appropriate Associate Dean or designate, with a copy to the Department Chair, no later than ten (10) academic working days after the beginning of the subsequent academic term.
2. If the appropriate Associate Dean or designate determines that the charges are subject to adjudication under the terms of Academic Integrity Guidelines, he/she will transmit the charges within the next five (5) academic working days to the faculty member together with a copy of this policy.

A request will be made at that time by the appropriate Associate Dean or designate that the faculty member submit five (5) names of faculty who are willing to serve on a committee for informal inquiry into the charge. This list of names must be submitted to the appropriate Associate Dean or designate within the next five (5) academic work days.

Within the next five (5) academic working days after receiving the faculty member's list of faculty names, the appropriate Associate Dean or designate will then form a committee composed of two (2) faculty members and one student chosen from the names submitted by the aggrieving student. One of the two faculty members who is appointed will be from the list of names submitted by the faculty member involved. The committee chairperson will be appointed by the appropriate Associate Dean or designate.

3. Within the next five (5) academic working days the appropriate Associate Dean or designate will address a letter of transmittal to the faculty member, a copy of which shall also be sent to the student. The letter will state the composition of the committee that has been named to meet with the involved parties to make an informal inquiry into the charge. The purpose of this committee is to provide a last effort at informal resolution of the matter between the student and the faculty member.
4. The committee will meet within the next five (5) academic working days with the faculty member, the student, and others as appropriate, to review the nature of the problem in an attempt to reach a settlement of the differences. This is not a formal hearing and formal procedural rules do not apply. On completion of these meetings, if no mutually agreeable resolution results, the committee may produce its own recommendation for a solution to the conflict.
5. Should the committee recommend that the faculty member take some corrective action on behalf of the student, its recommendations shall be provided to the faculty member within the next five (5) academic working days. As promptly as is reasonable and at least within the next five (5) academic working days after the faculty member receives the recommendations of the committee, the faculty member shall privately take that action which he or she elects. The action will be presented in writing to the student, chairperson of the committee and the Appropriate Associate Dean or designate.
6. Should the committee conclude that the faculty member need take no corrective action on behalf of the student, this finding shall be forwarded within the next two (2) academic working days to the faculty member and the student.

7. If the student elects to pursue the matter further, either because he or she is dissatisfied with the resulting action of the faculty member, or the conclusion of the committee, he or she should discuss this intent with the chair of the committee within the next five (5) academic working days. The chair should review the procedures to be followed with the student. If the student wishes to proceed with a formal hearing, the chair of the committee shall advise the Dean within the next two (2) academic working days that the formal hearing procedure must be initiated.
8. The formal hearing shall provide a fair inquiry into the truth or falsity of the charges, with the faculty member and student afforded the right to cross-examine. The faculty member and the student will both be afforded the right to submit supporting evidence and to call witnesses to support their case in a closed hearing. At the level of the School of Nursing Academic Integrity Hearing Board, legal counsel shall not be permitted, but a representative from within the University community shall be permitted for both faculty and students.
9. 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. Eight (8) faculty members shall be elected at the September Total Faculty Meeting to serve a two (2) year term. Four (4) shall be faculty members who teach primarily at the undergraduate level and four (4) shall be faculty members who teach primarily at the graduate level. The Nursing Student Association, Graduate Student Nursing Organization, and Doctoral Student Nursing Organization shall also elect four (4) members per group.

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 the same faculty members and students may not be named to the informal committee and to the School Academic Integrity Hearing Board reviewing the same grievance.
- b faculty membership will be comprised of faculty members who teach primarily at the undergraduate level and those who teach primarily at the graduate level.
- c students selected should be enrolled in the same program (baccalaureate, masters, doctoral) as the aggrieving student.

The Dean shall appoint the chairperson of the Hearing Board.

10. Within the next ten (10) academic working days after the Hearing Board is selected, the formal hearing will begin.
11. An audio recording shall be made of the proceedings, exclusive of deliberations to arrive at a decision. This recording shall then be transcribed by a secretary appointed by the Dean.
12. The transcription of the proceedings may be reviewed by the chairperson of the Hearing Board, the faculty member, and the aggrieving student.
13. If the decision of the Hearing Board is unanimous, the chairperson will write the report within the next five (5) academic working days of the transcription being completed. The report will include a determination whether the charges have been proved by clear and convincing evidence, together with findings with respect to the material facts. If any charges are established, the report shall state the particular remedial action to be taken. If the opinion of the Hearing Board was arrived at by majority rule, then the chairperson shall appoint one Hearing Board member to write

the majority report and one Hearing Board member to write the minority report. These individuals may also review the transcription of the proceedings.

14. The proposed decision shall be submitted to the Dean, 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 s/he deems this to be necessary. The Dean may limit the scope of any further proceedings or require that part or all of the original proceedings be reconvened. Upon completion of such additional proceedings, if any, the Dean shall issue a decision. The Dean may reject any findings made by the School of Nursing Academic Integrity Board, may dismiss the charges or reduce the extent of the remedial action to be taken. If the Dean believes the remedial action to be taken may infringe upon the exercise of academic freedom, he or she will seek an advisory opinion from the Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom before issuing his/her own decision. The decision of the dean shall be in writing, shall set forth with particularity any new findings of fact or remedies, and shall include a statement of the reasons underlying such action.
15. The Dean shall then transmit to the faculty member and to the student copies of all actions affecting them taken by the Hearing Board and the Dean. 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.

**REMEDIAL ACTION:** Remedies in a student's behalf should usually be those agreed to willingly by the faculty member. Other remedial action to benefit a student may be authorized by the Dean only upon recommendation of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board and limited to: allowing a student repeat an examination; allowing a student to be evaluated for work that would otherwise be too late to be considered; directing that additional opportunities be afforded for consultation or instruction; elimination of a grade that had been assigned by a faculty member from the transcript; changing of a failing letter or numerical grade to a "pass" or "satisfactory" grade, so as not to adversely affect a student's grade average; allowing a student to repeat a course without paying tuition or any other penalty, schedule and program permitting.

If some action is contemplated that might be deemed to infringe upon the academic freedom of the faculty member, the Dean will seek an advisory opinion from the Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom (TAF). In such cases, the Senate TAF may identify other acceptable remedies or render such advice as may be appropriate in the particular situation.

No action detrimental to the faculty member will be taken, except as in strict accordance with established University procedures. An adjustment hereunder in the student's behalf shall not be deemed a determination that the faculty member was in any way negligent or derelict.

**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 action of the Provost,

taken with or without the advice of the University Review Board, shall constitute an exhaustion of all required institutional remedies.

If any such determination may be deemed to have a possible adverse effect upon the faculty member's professional situation, the faculty member's professional situation, the faculty member may seek the assistance of the Tenure and Academic Freedom Committee of the University Senate.

Parties have the right to seek review of the Provost or to petition the University Review Board for an appeal from a decision of the Academic Integrity Hearing Board or investigatory committee within five (5) academic working days of the date of the decision letter.

**GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE AGAINST SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR:**

A student complaint of arbitrary or unfair treatment against the Dean of the School of Nursing should be made to the Provost or appropriate Senior Vice President. There must be a prompt review and decision on the grievance. Members of the faculty who may be called upon to review and advise on the grievance should be drawn from outside the jurisdiction of the administrator against whom the charge is made.

Approved by Total Faculty: 5/89, 10/11  
Revised by Total Faculty 5/90, 4/91  
Reviewed 97-98, 04-05, 11-12

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