

Academic Integrity Council

Academic Integrity

Mutual trust is a basic component of any community. Mercer University expects students, as members of the academic community, to take seriously their position in that community. Students are expected to insure the continuance of trust among themselves and between them and the faculty by accepting responsibility for their own work. The University considers breaches of this trust and responsibility to be serious offenses.

Each student enrolling in undergraduate courses that are not a part of the Macon campus undergraduate day program or the nursing program consents to the following Academic Integrity Code:

“I pledge myself to neither give nor receive aid during tests or for any individual assignments or papers, nor to use any information other than that allowed by the instructor. I further pledge that I will not allow to go unreported to the proper persons any violation of this Academic Integrity Code and that I will give true and complete information to the Academic Integrity Council.”

Article I – Academic Integrity Code Violations

Academic offenses that constitute violations of the Academic Integrity Code include plagiarism, cheating, lying and academic theft. The following shall be deemed Academic Integrity violations and shall be the basis for reporting cases to the Council and for findings of responsibility by the Council:

A. **Cheating:** Cheating is to include but is not limited to the deliberate submitting of work that is not one’s own and that violates the professor’s instructions for the work for a grade or credit. The student who gives inappropriate aid shall be held as responsible as the student who receives it.

1. Use of materials from past testing periods as a study guide unless authorized by the professor.
2. Possession of written materials not expressly authorized by the professor during an examination containing matter relevant to the course in which the examination is being taken, and such materials being within a reasonable proximity to the student.
3. Discussion of examination contents with any other student while taking an examination or test. It shall also be a violation for any student to divulge or receive any information on the content or form of any examination that either student has not yet taken.

B. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the copying of words, facts, or ideas belonging to another individual without proper acknowledgment.

C. **Lying:** Lying is to make a statement that one knows is false with the intent to deceive. It includes, but is not limited to:

1. Lying to administration and faculty in relation to academic matters concerning Honor Code violations.
2. Falsifying any University document by mutilation, addition or deletion.
3. Perjury which is knowingly giving false testimony to the Academic Integrity Council.

D. **Academic Theft:** Academic theft is the removal of academic materials depriving or preventing others from having equal learning opportunities (e.g., removal of exams during the exam period or from a professor's office, computer theft of an exam).

Article II – Academic Integrity Code Violations Procedures

Academic violations of the Academic Integrity Code will be dealt with as follows:

A. **Awareness:** If a faculty member observes an Academic Integrity Code violation or if a student alerts a faculty member to possible Code violations, the faculty member will discuss the situation with the student suspected of the violation.

B. **Admission of guilt:** If the student confesses, the faculty member may assign a penalty from the list of sanctions found in Article IV of the Academic Integrity Code. If the faculty member decides that the appropriate sanction is expulsion or suspension, the Academic Integrity Council must hear the case. The faculty member will inform the dean of the student's college/school of record in writing of his/her decision.

C. **Appeal of sanction:** If the student believes the sanction assigned by the faculty member is inappropriate, or too severe he or she may appeal to the Academic Integrity Council. The Council will either affirm or recommend a different penalty.

D. **Student maintains innocence:** If the student maintains innocence and the faculty member wishes to pursue this matter, the faculty member will refer the matter to the Academic Integrity Council for resolution. In such cases both the faculty member and the student will be bound by the decision of the Council.

Article III – The Academic Integrity Council

A. Membership

1. The Academic Integrity Council will be a standing committee consisting of one faculty member for each college/school providing undergraduate courses not in nursing or the Macon day program. One of these members will serve as Chair for a two year term. After this term is completed the Chair position will rotate to another college/school. These members will be appointed by the respective deans of the colleges/schools. The deans will also appoint alternates if their representative is unable to participate in a specific hearing.

2. In addition to academic administrative officers and faculty, students will be represented on the Academic Integrity Council. The dean of each college/school will select a student representative as requested by the Chair of the Council. The college/school of record of the student who is alleged to have violated the Academic Integrity Code will not be contacted for a student representative.

B. Hearings

1. Rights and Responsibilities:

a. Student Rights:

- i. A right that notice of charges be served by a member of the Academic Integrity Council at least three work days prior to the hearing.
- ii. A right to summon witnesses.
- iii. A right to be present when the witnesses testify and to question them at the designated time.
- iv. A right to examine written work or other exhibits where the evidence consists in part or whole of same.
- v. A full right of free speech as regards his or her hearing.
- vi. A right to appeal the Council's decision.

b. Responsibilities of the accused:

- i. A general duty to cooperate fully with the Hearing Panel in all matters pertaining to the hearing of the case.
- ii. A duty to be present at the hearing. If the accused fails to appear or to notify the Hearing Panel, the hearing shall proceed in his or her absence.
- iii. A duty to answer all relevant questions frankly, fully, and honestly, remembering that intentional omission is as serious an offense as willful distortion of the truth.

c. Rights of witnesses:

- i. The right to be presented with a notice of hearing by a member of the Academic Integrity Council at least three work days prior to the hearing.
- ii. The right to expect that neither his or her person nor property shall be insulted, molested, threatened, or damaged because of his or her part in the hearing.

d. Responsibilities of witnesses:

- i. A general duty to cooperate fully with the Hearing Panel in all matters pertaining to the hearing procedure.
- ii. The duty to be present at the hearing.
- iii. The duty to answer all relevant questions frankly, fully, and honestly, remembering that intentional omission is as serious an offense as willful distortion of the truth.

2. Hearing Procedures:

- a. The Hearing Panel may allow the introduction of evidence other than testimony of witnesses if the Panel determines that the evidence is relevant.
- b. Proceedings of each hearing shall be recorded in writing and on tape and shall be labeled and signed by the Chair of the Hearing Panel and the Chair of the Academic Integrity Council.
- c. After hearing all testimony and reviewing all relevant evidence, the accused and all witnesses will be excused while the panel deliberates.
- d. The Hearing Panel will make its decision based on evidence that is presented. The Hearing Panel shall vote on responsibility by secret ballot. If clear and convincing evidence is presented that Academic Integrity Code violations have occurred the student will be found responsible. A majority vote will determine the Hearing Panel's decision.
- e. The Hearing Panel shall notify the student of its decision. In cases in which the accused is held responsible, the Panel may contact the college/school of record to inquire of previous Academic Integrity Code violations prior to determining appropriate sanctions. The student will be informed in writing within five work days of the hearing.
- f. In cases in which the student is found not responsible, all transcriptions and tapes shall be destroyed immediately. In cases in which the student is held responsible, the transcriptions and tapes shall be filed in the appropriate Dean's Office of the student's college/school of record.

C. Appeals: The student may appeal the decision of the Academic Integrity Council to the Dean's Office of the academic unit in which the course is housed, which may uphold or negate the recommendation of the Council. A final appeal may be submitted to the Office of the Provost. The following criteria may be used as a guide for all appeals:

1. New information became available after the hearing of a nature that hearing results would have been different.
2. Significant procedural effort occurred which substantially affected the outcome of the hearing. (Procedural flaws alone are not ground for appeal.)
3. Imposed sanction(s) was inconsistent with the weight of information.

D. Confidentiality:

- a. The only individuals who will be informed of an investigation of the Academic Integrity Council will be the student, the witnesses, those bringing the charge of an Academic Integrity Code violation, and those individuals in the School/College or University administration who may be involved in carrying out sanctions.
- b. The only faculty members who will be informed of the outcome of the Academic Integrity Council will be the student's academic advisor and the

Dean of the academic unit in which the course is housed, and the Dean of the college/school or record if this differs. The only exception will be the faculty member who may be asked to carry out sanctions or in whose course the violation occurred.

- c. The student will not be informed of the identity of the person who alleges that the Academic Integrity Code has been violated unless ALL of the following conditions are met:
 - i. The student requests to confront the person bringing the charge during the hearing.
 - ii. The Academic Integrity Council is using the person's testimony in determining the guilt or innocence of the student;
 - iii. The person bringing the charge agrees to be confronted by the student. If the person bringing the charge refuses to meet with the student, his/her testimony cannot be used.

Article IV – Sanctions

- A. Expulsion or suspension for a specified period is recommended in writing by chair of the Academic Integrity Council to the Dean of the student's college/school of record.
- B. Failure in the course in which the violation occurs.
- C. Failure or reduction of grade on the work in which the violation occurs.
- D. Discretionary penalty: a censure or penalty other than the above indicating to the student that the conviction is a result of improper conduct and/or dishonesty on his or her part.
- E. Creative educational sanction that may include interviews with appropriate officials, submission of a ___ page paper, bulletin board(s) or displays in certain locations related to the Academic Integrity Code or specific violation.

Revised: 2/12/09