

# Academic Integrity: Process Change Proposal

Summer - Fall 2022  
Academic Integrity Team

## Academic Misconduct: Current Processes

If faculty members have evidence of academic misconduct, they can issue a zero on the assignment and make a referral to Student Affairs. If the incident is the first academic misconduct violation for the student, the Dean of Student Affairs provides a verbal warning and meets with the student to discuss academic misconduct and the GCCCD [Student Code of Conduct](#). The Dean of Student Affairs provides an overview of the process and discusses possible sanctions for any further violations to the policies. The goal is for the student to take responsibility and not engage in any further academic misconduct in the future. The academic misconduct violation is unofficially documented (no formal disciplinary file) in case there are further violations. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss additional resources that can be useful for the student.

If the student decides to appeal an academic misconduct issue, they first go through the instructional process, and appeal to the Instructor, then to the Department Chair/Coordinator, and finally to the Division Dean. If the student wants to appeal the academic misconduct violation after working through the instructional process, they can move forward with the formal [GCCCD Grievance Policies and Procedures](#).

If the student previously engaged in academic misconduct, the formal GCCCD Student Conduct Process applies. The student is sent a formal allegation letter and asked to schedule a meeting with the Dean of Student Affairs within ten days. The student meets with the Dean of Student Affairs for the fact-finding investigation. Depending on the outcome of the fact-finding investigation, the Dean of Student Affairs makes a recommendation for a resolution. (If the recommended sanction is more than a ten day suspension, the case will be referred to the [Student Conduct & Grievance Committee](#) for a hearing).

If there is a recommended sanction from the Dean of Student Affairs, the student has the option to accept the sanction and resolve the case, or move forward with a formal student conduct hearing outcome to determine the outcome of the case. The Student Conduct and Grievance Committee forwards the recommended resolution to the Vice President of Student Services for the formal recommendation. The student can appeal the decision to the President. These steps are outlined in detail in the [Student Conduct: Community Standards, Policies, and Procedures](#) booklet.

In practice, this process is not consistently applied within and across instructional departments/programs. The Student Conduct and Support Inquiry Group (part of former President

Barnes' Racial Equity and Social Justice Task Force) conducted an analysis of academic misconduct processes, and found that:

1. Students report generally knowing that academic misconduct is wrong and that it carries penalties. Students consistently note, however, that what constitutes misconduct is unclear and can vary from course to course and instructor to instructor. They also report that they associate academic misconduct with admonishments and threats of punishment in the first week of class, but that substantive information about how to uphold academic integrity and conform to the norms of academic work are often missing from their coursework and instruction, which creates a culture of fear.
2. There is a lack of alignment and consistency with how individual faculty members and/or instructional departments handle academic misconduct incidents among students. Many instructional chairs and coordinators suggest that it is more equitable and student-centered to handle suspected cases of academic misconduct between the instructor and student (rather than refer those cases to the Dean of Student Affairs), while others suggest that they are too poorly equipped, busy, and/or inadequately compensated to handle incidents of misconduct themselves. Faculty receive conflicting instructions about how to document, report, and handle suspected violations from college publications and from department chairs. Recent data compiled by Student Affairs shows that while academic misconduct is likely happening across the college, there are significant variances regarding reporting by instructional department.
3. Incidents of academic misconduct, including repeat offenses and serious offenses (like contract cheating), are steadily rising, which suggests that our current processes and culture around academic integrity aren't effective.

Hence in order to: 1) promote a culture of academic integrity across campus, 2) help resolve inconsistencies and disproportionate impact in reporting misconduct, and 3) adopt equity-minded and student-centered approaches to addressing academic misconduct, the Academic Integrity Team suggests that the College adopt new processes to manage academic integrity violations, which are outlined below.

Furthermore, the Academic Integrity Team encourages all instructional departments to adopt consistent standards for students in accordance with the norms appropriate to the academic discipline in question; communicate those standards in classes regularly throughout the semester, and particularly in connection to significant assignments or assessments; and address suspected academic violations through the lens of educational intervention.

## Process Changes: Toward an Educational Intervention Paradigm

As is common in institutions of higher education, the College's processes around academic misconduct are primarily focused on conveying to students what not to do. Often missing are conversations about academic integrity, what it is, why it matters, what values underpin academic work, what the norms and expectations are, and how to meet those expectations (especially when they feel out of reach in some students' eyes). The lapses in our institutional conversations about academic integrity and how to

uphold it most profoundly affect students who are learning English, are first generation, and/or who experience barriers to educational opportunity. Hence in keeping with the mission, vision, and values of Cuyamaca College, the academic integrity team proposes that the College approach academic misconduct through the lens of **educational intervention**, which should offer more equitable and effective resources for students and faculty as we all work to uphold a culture of academic integrity.

While the motivations and circumstances of academic misconduct vary with each student, most incidents are best addressed with educational intervention first. This paradigm emphasizes a few key principles:

- 1) It is more effective to foster a class community where students are motivated to engage academic work with integrity than it is to punish incidents of misconduct, and
- 2) Educational interventions that happen after incidents of misconduct are more effective when there is a foundation of trust, open communication, collaboration, and respect already established in the class community, and
- 3) Incidents of misconduct should be addressed by collaborative consideration between the instructor and student regarding what resources, support, and/or growth opportunities would better enable the student to meet the objectives and expectations of the class.

Hence this process is divided into two parts: establishing a culture of academic integrity, and addressing misconduct through educational intervention.

## **Establishing a Culture of Academic Integrity**

In her seminar on Creating the Inclusive and Integrous Classroom, Dr. Tricia Bertram Gallant emphasizes that the characteristics of a class—and the extent to which a class is inclusive and equitable—have an important role in creating a culture of academic integrity. Student perceptions of their belonging in a class, the fairness of that class, and the quality of instruction can be powerful factors in whether they engage with the course with integrity (Bertram Gallant). Here are some guidelines for establishing an equitable and inclusive class that fosters academic integrity:

### **1. Cultivate a sense of belonging for all students**

- Convey a mindset in course communications, design, and assessment that all students can learn/grow and succeed.
- Ask about students' preferred names and pronouns, learn those names, and pronounce them correctly.
- Inquire about students' lives and any concerns they might have about the class, and respond to what they share.
- Ask students to bring their experiences, perspectives, values, and goals to the work of the class; students come with their own cultural capital—make that capital a valuable currency in your course.
- Honor the unique and diverse ways that students learn and express themselves.

- Emphasize that you see and celebrate students' growth and successes in all communication and feedback; be clear and constructive about opportunities for further development.
- Provide frequent avenues for students to give anonymous feedback about their learning, challenges, and the class environment throughout the course. Follow up by identifying what you have learned from their feedback and making changes to the course in ways that demonstrate to students that their perspectives are important.

## **2. Orient the course toward skill-building**

- Use backward design to build toward the most significant learning outcomes of the course.
- Offer clear, relevant, student-centered instruction in multiple accessible formats to support learning.
- Support students in accessing approved resources to support learning, such as office hours, tutoring, personal and academic counseling, and disability support services.
- Address the norms and expectations for academic work often throughout the course, particularly in connection to significant assignments, including "gray areas" regarding internet or resource use and potential academic integrity traps to avoid.
- Create a collaborative work environment where students can share their expertise, learn from each other, easily ask questions, engage in productive struggle, and learn from failure.
- Incorporate low-stakes assignments and assessments, where students can test their skills, receive personal, detailed, and constructive feedback, and revise their work.

### ***Consider adopting these powerful equity practices:***

- Employ a Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) design, where the purpose of the work (including skills practiced and knowledge gained in connection to students' lives), the task at hand (including what students will do and what they should avoid), and the criteria for success (rubric for evaluation, opportunities for self-evaluation and revision, annotated models, etc.) are all clear, consistent, and well-established.
- Establish an equitable assessment model for the course, such as contract grading, labor-based grading, upgrading, or any of the other frameworks that have been proven to facilitate more equitable outcomes in course success.

## **3. Integrate Academic Integrity With Intention**

- Include updated information about academic integrity on the syllabus *and on relevant assignment prompts*. Consider incorporating this information in a constructive framework rather than a punitive one.
- Define what academic integrity is and how to uphold it, both generally, and in your class specifically.
- Check for student understanding regarding academic integrity and misconduct.
- Incorporate conversations about academic integrity regularly throughout the course, including around significant assignments.
- Ask students about their questions and concerns about academic integrity and misconduct; invite them to discuss any inconsistencies they've seen from course to course, and what they find unclear or confusing, and help them work through those challenges.

- Make expectations clear and consistent; it can be confusing to students when instructors specify that they “don’t check for plagiarism” on certain drafts, permit a “certain percentage” of plagiarism, or invite students to work together on individual assignments.
- Clarify how you use plagiarism detection software (like Turnitin via Canvas) and how students should interpret or use the submission reports, if you make those reports available to them.
  - Note that it is advisable to use Turnitin when relevant, and it can be helpful to hide those reports from students if you do not intend to use them in an intentional manner.

## Addressing Incidents of Academic Misconduct

If a student engages in academic misconduct, such as plagiarism, unauthorized use of sources or aids, unpermitted collaboration, or other type of cheating, the college’s new process emphasizes the role of educational intervention in addressing that misconduct. In a framework of educational intervention, faculty approach the incident as a demonstration that the student has needs that would best be met through additional resources or learning opportunities. Faculty work with the student to identify that need, brainstorm resources, learning opportunities, or other measures to help meet that need, and make a plan so the student is better equipped to approach academic work with integrity in the future.

### New Process: Steps

1. Student meets with the instructor to discuss the suspected misconduct or incident.
2. Student and instructor work together to identify the underlying motivation for the misconduct. This could include, but is not limited to:
  - Student-perceived gap between expectations and ability
  - Lack of knowledge about how to cite
  - Confusion about acceptable vs unacceptable sources/support
  - Misconceptions about how to conduct research
  - Challenges with managing time or knowing how long quality work takes
  - Gaps in foundational knowledge or skills in topic/subject
  - Intolerance for learning process and productive struggle and/or discomfort with prospect of failure
  - Instructor reflection regarding elements in the class which may not be serving all students effectively, or that may inadvertently be contributing to a culture of misconduct.
3. Student and instructor develop a plan to address motivation or meet the need. This could include:
  - Tutoring (especially regular/weekly sessions)
  - Office hours support
  - Special or additional instruction on a topic
  - Scaffolded assignment or resource
  - Peer support

- Calendar or schedule to support time management and to plan steps toward a larger assignment
- 4. Student and instructor work out how to address the misconduct and next steps to take:
  - It is recommended that students receive a grade deduction or zero credit on any assignment implicated in misconduct, per the specifications on the course syllabus.
  - Instructors are welcome to incentivize growth behavior with extra credit, dropping lowest scores, etc., as long as those incentives are available to all students.
  - It is not recommended that the instructor give the student another opportunity to complete the assignment unless all students receive the same opportunity.
  - Instructors are encouraged to think through innovative, equity-minded approaches to addressing misconduct and to sharing what they are doing and how it's working!
- 5. Instructor reports student to Student Affairs via this [Academic Integrity Incident Report Form](#), with information about the incident, for notation only; Dean does not meet with the student or students for first incidents.

## Process for Repeat Offenses or Special Circumstances

Occasionally, students are reported multiple times for academic integrity violations, either across different classes, or during the same course.

- If a student commits academic misconduct in a course a second time, after the educational intervention process outlined above is underway and/or complete, the referral to Student Affairs will include a meeting with the Dean. In that meeting, the student and the Dean will discuss academic misconduct and the GCCCD [Student Code of Conduct](#), as well as a recommended resolution. Resolutions may include a seminar on Integrity and Ethical Decision Making, and/or a sanction.
  - Note that if a student commits academic misconduct in multiple assignments in a course before the incidents are uncovered and an educational intervention process is initiated, **those multiple assignments should collectively be treated as a single first offense or incident.** This marks a change from prior practice.
- If a student is referred for a first incident in a class and the Dean of Student Affairs discovers that the student has had prior referrals in other courses, the Dean may meet with that student, depending on the circumstances involved. In that meeting, the student and the Dean will discuss academic misconduct and the GCCCD [Student Code of Conduct](#), as well as a recommended resolution. Resolutions may include a seminar on Integrity and Ethical Decision Making, and/or a sanction.
- Students sometimes engage in incidents of academic misconduct that appear to be especially serious or egregious. These incidents might include distributing exam materials to groups of students, or contract cheating (such as hiring another person to complete a whole class on the student's behalf). In these cases, the instructor should contact the Dean of Student Affairs to discuss the incident and how best to proceed.

- Occasionally, instructors may feel that they are not equipped to work with a student on an educational intervention after an incident of academic misconduct. If that occurs, the instructor may request a faculty member to support the process and/or handle the process on behalf of the instructor. The instructor should contact the Dean of Student Affairs to request faculty support.

## **Advice for Faculty**

It is strongly encouraged that faculty employ equitable, restorative approaches to the process of educational intervention after academic misconduct.

- An equity-minded approach demands that faculty are aware of the role of bias in their perception and treatment of academic misconduct. It is imperative that faculty recognize that students may have histories of adverse educational experiences, and that faculty avoid targeting students based on perceived ability or familiarity with academic norms and expectations.
- A restorative approach requires an open and honest dialogue, where the parties involved can work together to repair the harm done in the incident. Sometimes that harm goes two ways. A restorative process would therefore allow the student to identify shortcomings in courses that may have contributed to the incident, such as unclear assignment instructions, lack of instructional presence, unclear expectations, insufficient models of expected work, lack of class community, etc. Faculty should be ready to ask for and receive feedback about students' experiences in the course in connection to their decisions to commit academic misconduct, and to be open to making changes in the course to create better class conditions for academic integrity.

Sometimes inconsistencies in student work stem from their experiences in other courses. If an instructor sees that a student is using symbols, processes, or language that don't correlate to the particular class, the instructor should not immediately assume that the student is cheating. Instead, the instructor might ask other faculty members who teach the class (or the prerequisite classes) to inquire about the origins of the details in question. Faculty can also ask the students without the pressure of an accusation of academic misconduct.

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