

Academic Integrity Policy

This policy is directly related to the first Testimony, which is part of the Student Code of Conduct, "I will practice personal and academic integrity." The College believes it is important that students develop high ethical and scholarly standards, accept responsibility for maintaining these standards, and encourage mutual trust and respect among all members of the academic community.

While affirming these standards of academic integrity, the College acknowledges that students do not always uphold those standards and thus there must be a clear and fair method of dealing with violations of that integrity. Community members who are willing to discourage academic misconduct not only help others assume a higher degree of personal integrity, but by assuming responsibility for the community's welfare also develop their own capabilities as responsible leaders. Faculty and students share the responsibility for creating an environment that encourages academic integrity.

A. Examinations

To assure an environment that discourages academic misconduct, the following guidelines have been established for examinations (including in-class, take-home, etc.):

1. Students should not attempt to obtain unauthorized early copies of examinations or to question clerical personnel about the content of future examinations.
2. Whenever space allows, sit in alternate seats or separate the chairs in the room.
3. Use no notes, papers, or books unless specified exceptions are made by the instructor.
4. Direct all questions to the instructor rather than to other students.
5. Come to the class equipped with pens, pencils, paper, and other materials so that borrowing or leaving the room during the examination will not be necessary.
6. Faculty members may choose to remain in the classroom, have someone else proctor the exam, or leave it un-proctored. However, faculty members must honor students' requests that the examination be proctored.
7. Students who knowingly permit another student to copy their answers in an examination may be charged with academic misconduct, along with the person who has cheated. Students who observe cheating during an examination should alert the faculty member as to what is going on. At that point, handling of the offense becomes the primary responsibility of the instructor, who must protect the rights of both the accused and the reporter. The faculty member should follow the procedures specified in Section C below.

B. Plagiarism

Every scholarly activity depends on someone's previous work, and where credit for that work can be specifically given, it should be given. Most people would understandably resent their own ideas being used without acknowledgment. Writers should accord the same respect to others that they would consider fair for themselves.

To quote from Practical English Handbook (Watkins, Dillingham and Martin, 1978, 260): "Using others' words and ideas as if they were your own is a form of stealing called plagiarism." In academic or scholarly writing, plagiarism offends the community of learning as seriously as does cheating on an examination. Developing the habit of giving appropriate credit to others for their ideas is important not only in school but in all other professional and life situations. Following are some guidelines for avoiding plagiarism:

To quote Practical English Handbook again (260–262): “Even when you take only a phrase or a single unusual word from a passage, you should enclose it in quotation marks.” You may quote words, phrases, clauses, sentences or even whole paragraphs. Generally, you should quote a sentence or a paragraph only when a writer has phrased something especially well and when you need to supply all the information given.

“In paraphrasing you are expressing the ideas of another writer in your own words. A good paraphrase preserves the sense of the original, but not the form. It does not retain the sentence patterns and merely substitutes synonyms for the original words, nor does it retain the original words and merely alter the sentence patterns. It is a genuine restatement. Invariably it should be briefer than the source...If the source has stated the idea more concisely than you can, you should quote, not paraphrase.”

If you are in doubt about footnote form, quoting, or paraphrasing (stating another writer’s idea in your own words—this kind of borrowing also requires a footnote), ask your instructor for information and a format. Most footnotes include at least the author’s name; the title of the article, essay, story, etc.; the title of the book; the place of publication and publisher; the date of publication; and the page number. The general guideline is that the reader should be able to find, without much difficulty, the source and the page from which you extracted the idea or quotation.

Some instances of plagiarism are the result of ignorance rather than dishonesty. When plagiarism is encountered, the instructor should be sure that the student knows proper procedures for attributing ideas. However, when the infraction seems deliberate, the faculty member should follow the procedures specified in Section C below.

C. Handling Academic Misconduct Charges

Faculty members will deal with cases of academic misconduct within five working days after discovering the offense. The goal is for faculty to confront cheating and plagiarism, teach ethical behavior, and provide escalating consequences based on the severity and frequency of cases. Determination of academic misconduct, the severity of each case, and classroom consequences are the responsibility and purview of each faculty member.

Minor Offense: Verbally address the matter with the student if possible and notify the Program Director. A minor offense will result in the student’s name being recorded for future reference.

Moderate Offense: Verbally address the matter with the student if possible and notify the Program Director. Two minor offenses OR a case deemed so by the faculty member involved will be a moderate offense. The second stage will result in a letter in the student’s permanent file and a discussion moderated by the Office of Academic Affairs. The letter will identify the offense and the sanction.

Major Offense: Verbally address the matter with the student if possible and notify the Program Director. A major offense is defined as two moderate offenses OR a case deemed so by the faculty member involved. The student will face the Graduate Committee and abide by their sanctions (typically disciplinary probation, loss of privileges, discretionary sanctions, suspension, dismissal).

Students can appeal allegations to the Academic Standards and Appeals Committee.

D. Grievances

Any student who has a grievance regarding assignment of grades or other issues related to classroom interaction and performance is advised to first meet with his/her instructor concerning the matter. If the

difficulties are not resolved as a result of meeting with the relevant faculty member, the student is encouraged to contact the Program Director with the concern. If the problem is not resolved at this level, the issue may be brought to the Chief Academic Officer for resolution.

Students who wish to appeal a grade, after talking with the instructor and the Program Director, may complete the Wilmington College – Grade Appeal form which is available in the Office of Academic Records or in the Student One Stop Center. Grade appeals must be submitted no later than 30 days from the posting of grades.

E. Academic Appeals

The Academic Standards and Appeals Committee meets in confidential, closed sessions. It usually meets regularly during the academic year, beginning one week before classes start in August and ending approximately two weeks after grades have been submitted in May. Students may appeal to the Committee to drop or add a class after the final drop or add date, change a grade, extend the final date to submit work for an incomplete grade, appeal a charge of academic misconduct, or request a semester of academic probation. All appeals must be submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs in writing. Students may secure the appropriate form from the Office of Academic Affairs, the Student One Stop Center, or the Office of Academic Records.

Students should complete the form giving particular attention to the rationale for the appeal while making sure to include pertinent facts. Supporting documents, such as syllabi, tests, papers, and statements from a physician or a professor, may be attached. Students should seek assistance from an academic advisor or the Associate Vice President for Retention and Student Success if necessary, particularly if the professor does not make the requested materials available.

If in addition to the written appeal the student wishes to appear before the Academic Standards and Appeals Committee, the student must notify the Office of Academic Affairs to arrange a time at the next available Committee meeting.

The Academic Standards and Appeals Committee may prohibit testimony that is irrelevant or redundant. It will consider all appeals in a timely manner and will notify students in writing after the conclusion of all deliberations.

Typically, a grade appeal takes a minimum of one month to cycle through the various offices where responses and signatures are required before the grade appeal can be presented to the Committee.

F. Administrative Appeals

Administrative appeals are reviewed and acted upon by the Chief Academic Officer in consultation with Faculty and, depending on the appeal, other administrators. Often, an administrative appeal is a request for variance in the general education requirements or an hour requirement for graduation. Administrative appeal forms are available in the Office of Academic Affairs, the Student One Stop Center, or the Office of Academic Records.