

Academic Integrity Policy

January 3, 2000 (modified and reissued August 10, 2004; February 27, 2015; February 15, 2018)

Academic Integrity Policy

A. Jurisdiction

This policy covers all cases where graduate or undergraduate students are alleged to have committed academic dishonesty at Villanova University in the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Nursing, Professional Studies or School of Business. This policy does not apply to students solely in the School of Law, which has its own policy.

B. Procedure

If a faculty member believes that a student has committed an academic integrity violation, the faculty member shall, under normal circumstances, notify the student, allowing the student an opportunity to respond. Following this initial communication with the student, all subsequent communications by the student or parent go to the dean (or designee). Faculty members who have questions about whether an incident constitutes an academic integrity violation are urged to consult with their chair, dean, or with the chair of the Academic Integrity Board. If the faculty member continues to believe that a violation has occurred, the faculty member assigns an appropriate grade penalty. The instructor may impose a grade penalty up to and including failure in the course. In the School of Business, all faculty members assign a grade of zero to any work in violation of the Code. At the sole discretion of the faculty member, the faculty member may offer the student an opportunity to redo the work or complete an alternate or additional piece of work. If the faculty member assigns a grade penalty, the faculty member must report in writing to his or her dean (or designee) and chair or program director that an academic integrity violation has occurred. A form is available for reporting violations or faculty members may write a letter. The letter should give a brief account of the matter and, where appropriate, should include copies of the assignment and other documentary evidence. The faculty member must also make a recommendation to the dean (or designee) as to whether the violation should be treated as a Class I violation or as a Class II violation. Typically, violations of the Academic Integrity Code are treated as Class I violations, but in cases which are less serious or where there are mitigating circumstances, the violation may be treated as a Class II violation.

When the faculty member's dean (or designee) receives the report, the dean (or designee) reviews the case. If the dean (or designee) has questions about the case, the dean (or designee) may request further consultation with the student, the faculty member, or the chair. Unless the faculty member wishes to withdraw the case at this point, the faculty member's dean (or designee) makes a determination of the level of the violation (whether Class I or Class II), giving serious weight to the recommendation of the faculty member. If a student has previously received a violation, (either Class I or Class II), then all subsequent violations will normally be held to be Class I violations.

The faculty member's dean (or designee) sends a hard copy or e-mail letter (using the official University e-mail system) to the student informing the student that the student is being charged with having committed an academic integrity violation, and indicating the level of the violation. The letter to the student should include a copy of the academic integrity policy. Copies should also be sent to all parties (defined as follows): the faculty member; the student; the student's dean (if different); the faculty member's chair; the faculty member's program director (if different); and the chair of the board of academic integrity. The student shall respond in writing to the faculty member's dean (or designee) within five business days of receipt of the notice of complaint (excluding public and University holidays),

either admitting the violation or asserting innocence. Failure to respond will be construed as admission that a violation has occurred. The faculty member's dean (or designee) will send copies of the student's letter to all of the parties indicated above. If the student admits that a violation has occurred but asserts that there are extenuating circumstances, the student should explain this in the letter to the dean (or designee). The dean (or designee) may, at any point in the proceedings, change the level of the violation from Class I to Class II.

If the student denies that an academic integrity offense has occurred, the dean (or designee) will refer the matter to the Chair of the Board of Academic Integrity, with notification of this to the other parties.

Upon receiving notice from the dean (or designee), the chair of the Board of Academic Integrity will assemble a panel consisting of three faculty and two student members of the Board of Academic Integrity. The panel will make a determination (based on a preponderance of the evidence) of whether academic dishonesty has occurred. The Chair of the Board of Academic Integrity will convey the panel's finding to the dean (or designee), the student, the faculty member and department chair; and will advise the student and faculty member of their rights of appeal. If several students are involved in one case, the dean (or designee) may request that the panel consider the situation of all involved students, even if one or more do not deny having committed an academic integrity offense. If the panel finds that no violation has occurred, the faculty member's dean (or designee) or the Chair of the Board of Academic Integrity will advise the faculty member to re-grade the assignment in question (on the premise that no violation has occurred), and notification will be sent to all parties. The Chair of the Board of Academic Integrity may make informal recommendations to the dean (or designee) on issues relating to the level of the violation, but the purpose of the panel is to consider whether an academic integrity violation has occurred. The panel does not make recommendations on issues such as mitigating circumstances or the severity of the punishment.

If the panel determines that a violation has occurred, the original grade assigned by the faculty member will stand. If a student believes that the grade assigned is inappropriate, the student may appeal the grade through the normal procedure for handling complaints concerning grades. In such cases, the instructor's stated policy regarding grading and academic integrity will be taken into account and given great weight. The complaint process will only consider the grade, and will not review the panel's decision that an academic integrity violation has occurred.

If the student accepts responsibility, the faculty member's dean (or designee) sends a notification to all parties. If the student is found responsible by the panel hearing the appeal, then the Chair of the Board of Academic Integrity sends a notification to all parties. Once it has been determined that a violation has occurred, the case is turned over to the student's dean (or designee). The student's dean (or designee) will supervise a program of education and reflection on the meaning and importance of academic integrity. This may include any or all of the following: written exercises; participation in an academic integrity educational program supervised by the college; or community service. If this program is not carried out within the timelines specified by the dean and to the dean's satisfaction, the dean will impose a judicial hold on the student's records (and inform the student that such a hold has been placed). This will prevent the student from registering for courses or graduating until the conditions imposed by the dean have been satisfied. The student's dean (or designee) may also impose or recommend additional disciplinary penalties.

A student who has two Class I violations of the academic integrity code will be reviewed by his or her dean (or designee). The dean (or designee) will review the student's file and also consult with other academic deans if one or more of the cases occurred in another college. Absent extenuating or mitigating circumstances, the student will be dismissed from the University and a record of the reason for the dismissal will be retained in the student's permanent file and will appear on the student's official transcript. At the sole discretion of the dean (or designee), the student may be suspended or put on probation instead of dismissed, with or without a permanent indication on the transcript.

Materials on academic integrity violations will be retained in the files until the student graduates or otherwise severs all relationship with the University. If there is no indication of an academic integrity violation on the student's transcript, the files will be removed and destroyed. If there is an indication on the student's transcript, the files will be retained.

Students who believe that an integrity violation has occurred should report the suspected violation to the faculty member. If the faculty member does not act on the report, the student may also report the matter, in writing, directly to the faculty member's chair or dean (or designee), who will then make a judgment as to whether an academic integrity violation has occurred, and, if so, will follow the process described above.