

USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism Academic Integrity Process

Beginning with the Fall 2017 semester, USC has implemented a policy where individual academic units will address academic integrity violations for graduate students. This process is intended to provide Schools a path to adjudicate cases of academic dishonesty within their discipline, to be responsive to the nuances of their particular field, and to encourage local accountability of academic integrity within specific disciplines. Schools are encouraged to examine themes and patterns of academic violations within their disciplines and employ preventative measures to reduce cases of academic dishonesty.

University of Southern California's academic programs are based upon profoundly important themes of trust, honor and responsibility, for and between all students, faculty and administration. In alignment with the trust and honor necessary to support our community, it is expected that all members will embrace the responsibility to uphold the standards articulated in the Student Code of Conduct, found in SCampus, Part B.

Students also have significant responsibilities under the Student Code of Conduct. All students accept individual responsibility for creating and maintaining personal and academic environments in which integrity, honesty, and ethical behavior flourish. Students agree to abide by and accept the responsibility of understanding and upholding the provisions of the Code.

For the 2017-18 academic year, Gordon Stables (as Associate Dean for Student Affairs) and Cindy Martinez (as Interim Assistant Dean for Student Affairs) will be sharing these responsibilities.

Stage 1 – Faculty File Report about Student Conduct

If you suspect an academic integrity violation has taken place in your course by a graduate student, please report the matter to Annenberg's Academic Integrity Coordinator (AIC) using the following processes.

As soon as the platform is available you will be able to submit your report directly at https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/public_report/.

In the interim, please send a summary of the matter to stables@usc.edu and label the item “Academic Integrity Report.” The summary should include:

- Identifying information for the course;
- Identifying information for the student;
- Specifics about the alleged incident of academic dishonesty, including the date of the incident and any relevant documentation; and
- The faculty member’s recommendation for the academic penalty, if any.

Stage 2 – AIC Review Report and Notify Student

The AIC will review the matter and determine if additional information is required. The AIC run a query in Advocate to determine whether the student has had any prior disciplinary issues; this information should be used for sanctioning purposes.

Because two individuals are sharing this responsibility, once a report is made one of the AICs will be designated as the acting AIC for this individual case. For the rest of this process, reference to the AIC will indicate the acting AIC.

The AIC will provide notice to the student, through Advocate, of the exact allegations and subsequent process. Because the student may contest the allegation, they must be allowed to attend all classes and complete all assignments until the report is resolved. The student may not withdraw from a course in which they have been accused of committing an academic integrity violation.

Stage 3 - Initial Meeting between AIC and Student

An initial meeting will take place in which the AIC will help the student become familiar with the specific allegation as well as the academic integrity process. Unless otherwise permitted, the student will have 5 calendar days from the date of notice to set up an initial meeting with the AIC.

If the student is non-responsive, the AIC may:

- Compel the student using communication from higher level of administration.
- Notify the student that the decision-making process will proceed without them.

- A student's failure to respond should not be assumed as an admission of guilt. In cases where suspension or expulsion is being considered as a sanction, the decision-making body should consider the totality of the information provided, regardless of the level of the student's participation in the process.

At the initial meeting, the AIC shall meet with the student to:

- Provide an opportunity for the student to review the report and all supporting documents referenced in the report. In order to maintain standards of confidentiality, personally identifiable information of other persons listed in the report will be redacted.
- Provide the student with information about the academic integrity process outlined in SCampus, PartB, Section 13.
- Ask the student about any potential mitigating factors (e.g. disabilities, mental or physical health issues, special circumstances).
- Provide the student with an appropriate timeframe in which to submit documents supporting the student's defenses.

If the student has communicated a disability, mental or health issues, or special circumstances, the AIC will work with Disability Services and Programs, Student Counseling Services, or Student Support and Advocacy to determine how best to guide the student through the process.

Stage 4 – Formal Review of the Allegation

a) Individual Review Meeting (involving AIC, Student and Faculty)

Students have the right to have an individual review meeting involving themselves, the AIC and the faculty member who submitted the report.

If the student requests this individual meeting, the AIC shall arrange a time and location to discuss the incident together and potentially come to an agreement as to responsibility and sanction (if any). Any agreement reached in this individual meeting must be jointly agreed to by the student and faculty member. The Individual Review may take place over the course of multiple meetings. No other parties are permitted to participate in or observe the process.

If a mutual resolution is reached, the AIC shall use Advocate to record the decision and communicate this decision to both parties.

The student has the right at any time prior to a final decision to opt out and pursue a Panel Review. If no mutual solution is reached in the Individual Review meeting, the matter moves to a Panel Review.

b) Panel Review

Unless an allegation is resolved by Individual Review Meeting, a panel of Annenberg faculty and staff will review and resolve the matter. The panel will be convened by the AIC and designated by the Dean. The specific panel will be composed to ensure appropriate expertise regarding the nature of the academic work involved and to prevent any potential conflict of interest. The AIC overseeing this process will not be a voting member of the Panel Review.

Once the panel is convened, the AIC will share the case file, which includes the report, the student's response, and any supporting documentation. The panel may meet, separately, with the student and faculty member to discuss the incident.

The Panel shall make a determination as to the student's responsibility and sanction, if any. The Panel's decision shall be provided in writing to the AIC within 7 calendar days of the Panel meeting, unless otherwise permitted.

After the Panel reaches their decision, the AIC shall use Advocate to record the decision and communicate this decision to both parties.

Stage 5 - Appeal Process

Unless otherwise permitted, within 10 calendar days of the date of notice, the student is permitted to appeal the Individual or Panel Review decision to the Dean or appropriate designee. Appeals shall be submitted to the AIC.

The status of a student will not be altered and disciplinary sanctions will not be implemented until completion of the appeal, unless specific and extenuating circumstances are present and validated by the AIC.

Appeals can only be submitted on the following grounds:

- a) New evidence has become available which is sufficient to alter the decision, and which the student was not aware of or could not have been reasonably obtained at the time of the initial review.
- b) The sanction imposed is excessive or inappropriate.
- c) The AIC or Panel failed to follow university rules applicable to the particular student's matter while reviewing the cited behavior.

The AIC will record the appeal and provide notice to the faculty member, who will have 5 calendar days, unless otherwise permitted, to review and respond to the AIC. The faculty member may elect not to submit a response. Both the appeal and any faculty response will be stored in Advocate.

The AIC will provide the Formal Review decision, the Appeal, and the Response to the Appeal (if any) to the Dean or designee. The Dean or designee will have 5 calendar days, unless otherwise permitted, to provide a written final determination to the AIC. The AIC will use Advocate to record the final determination and provide notice to both parties.

Stage 6 - Implementation of Sanctions

If, once the Review and Appeals process have concluded, assessed sanctions will be implemented. The faculty member should make any adjustment to the student's grade as determined by the review process.

If the final determination is a sanction of suspension or expulsion, the AIC will use Advocate to provide notice to the appropriate offices including:

- The Graduate School
- The Office of Academic Records and Registrar
- The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
- The Housing Department (if student lives on University property)
- The Residential Education Office (if student lives in a Residential College)
- The Financial Aid Office (if student receives financial aid)
- USC Student Athlete Academic Services (if student is an athlete)

Appendix A - Academic Integrity Violations

General principles of academic integrity include and incorporate the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Faculty members may include additional classroom and assignment policies, as articulated on their syllabus.

Academic integrity violations are defined by university standards, including Part B "University Student Conduct Code" in the SCampus, available at <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>.. The following are examples of violations of these and other university standards. Violations include, but are not limited to:

11.11

- A. The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.
- B. The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style.
- C. Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers.
Note: Culpability is not diminished when plagiarism occurs in drafts which are not the final version. Also, if any material is prepared or submitted by another person on the student's behalf, the student is expected to proofread the results and is responsible for all particulars of the final draft.

11.12

- A. Acquisition of term papers or other assignments from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student's own work, or providing term papers or assignments that another student submits as their own work.
- B. Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials

for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See SCampus, Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

C. Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class.

11.13

A. Any use or attempted use of external assistance in the completion of an academic assignment and/or during an examination, or any behavior that defeats the intent of an examination or other classwork or assignment, unless expressly permitted by the instructor. The following are examples of unacceptable behaviors: communicating with fellow students during an exam, copying or attempting to copy material from another student's exam; allowing another student to copy from an exam or assignment; possession or use of unauthorized notes, calculator, or other materials during exams and/or unauthorized removal of exam materials.

B. Submission of work altered after grading, including but not limited to changing answers after an exam or assignment has been returned or submitting another's exam as one's own to gain credit.

11.14

A. Obtaining for oneself or providing for another person a solution to homework, a project or other assignment, or a copy of an exam or exam key without the knowledge and expressed consent of the instructor.

B. Unauthorized collaboration on a project, homework or other assignment, unless expressly part of the assignment in question or expressly permitted by the instructor.

11.15

A. Attempting to benefit from the work of another.

B. Any attempt to hinder the work of another student or any act which may jeopardize another student's academic standing.

11.16

Using any portion of an essay, term paper, project or other assignment more than once, without permission of the instructor(s).

11.17

Falsification, alteration or misrepresentation of official or unofficial records or documents including but not limited to academic transcripts, academic documentation, letters of recommendation, and admissions applications or related documents.

11.18

Taking a course, any course work or exam for another student or allowing another individual to take a course, course work, a portion of a course or exam in one's stead.

11.19

A Accessing, altering and/or using unauthorized information.

B. Misuse of university computer systems or access to those systems as articulated by the university's Computing Policies (including improper downloading of material, see SCampus, Part F, Section F.1. Computing).

11.20

Fabrication: Submitting material for lab assignments, class projects or other assignments which is wholly or partially falsified, invented or otherwise does not represent work accomplished or undertaken by the student.

11.21

Any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage may be considered an act of academic dishonesty.

11.31

A. Dishonesty, such as furnishing false information to any university official, faculty member or office. This includes, but is not limited to, furnishing false information in academic petitions or requests, financial aid documents, student employment documents, financial statements or other documents or intentionally evading university officials and/or obligations to the university.

B. Failing to participate fully and truthfully in university investigations.

Appendix B - Sanctions

A. Sanctions for academic integrity violations are based on the general principle of equal and fair treatment and take into account the student's remedial needs and prospects for improvement. The goal of the resolution process, particularly for first-time offenses, is to educate rather than punish. At all times during this process, it is important to recognize the pedagogical opportunity this process provides.

B. Sanctions are designed to hold students accountable for both their conduct and resulting consequences. Failure to comply with the terms of imposed sanctions should lead to further and more severe disciplinary action. Sanctions for second offenses should be more severe.

C. One or more of the following sanctions may be imposed:

1. **Expulsion:** Permanent termination of the student's right to enroll or participate in any classes, seminars, laboratories and clinical programs, at any School, at the University of Southern California. A Panel Review is required in order to impose a sanction of expulsion. Expulsion is a sanction from the university, not just to a specific school. Students who are expelled are disqualified from the University of Southern California.

2. **Suspension:** Termination of a student's right to participate in any classes, seminars, laboratories and/or clinical programs, at any School at the University of Southern California, for a specified period of time. After suspension, the student's status may be probationary for the remainder of

their time at the School. A Panel Review is required in order to impose a sanction of suspension.

3. Grade Sanctions: Grade sanctions are appropriate for any academic violation.

4. Other: Other sanctions may be imposed or deferred at the discretion of the deciding body, or in addition to, those specified above. These include creative sanctions such as community service or special projects designed as learning experiences, as well as denial of privileges such as restriction or denial of participation in specific activities at the School or in activities sponsored by the School.

5. Revocation of Degree. The student loses the right to claim the degree as earned. Posting of the degree will be removed from the student's transcript, and a permanent notation will be made on the transcript indicating the revocation, the degree involved and the date of the action.

D. Academic dishonesty sanctioning guidelines are provided in the following chart (This information is available separately as Appendix A to the Student Conduct Code).

| Violation | Recommended Sanction* |
|--|--|
| Copying answers from other students on any course work.** | F for course. |
| One person allowing another to cheat from his/her exam or assignment. | F for course for both persons. |
| Possessing or using material during exam (crib sheets, notes, books, etc.) which is not expressly permitted by the instructor. | F for course. |
| Continuing to write after exam has ended. | F for course. |
| Taking exam from room and later claiming that the instructor lost it. | F for course and recommendation for further disciplinary action (possible suspension). |
| Changing answers after exam has been returned. | F for course and recommendation for further disciplinary action (possible suspension). |
| Fraudulent possession of exam prior to administration. | F for course and recommendation for suspension. |

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| Obtaining a copy of an exam or answer key prior to administration. | Suspension or expulsion from the university; F for course. |
| Having someone else complete course work for oneself. | Suspension or expulsion from the university for both students; F for course. |
| Plagiarism — Submitting other's work as one's own or giving an improper citation. | F for course. |
| Submission of purchased term papers or papers done by others. | F for course and recommendation for further disciplinary action (possible suspension). |
| Submission of the same assignment to more than one instructor, where no previous approval has been given. | F for both courses. |
| Unauthorized collaboration on an assignment. | F for the course for both students. |
| Falsification of information in admission applications (including supporting documentation). | Revocation of university admission without opportunity to reapply. |
| Documentary falsification (e.g., petitions and supporting materials; medical documentation.) | Suspension or expulsion from the university; F for course when related to a specific course. |
| Plagiarism in a graduate thesis or dissertation. | Expulsion from the university when discovered prior to graduation; revocation of degree when discovered subsequent to graduation.*** |

**Assuming first offense*

***Exam, quiz, tests, assignments or other course work.*

****Applies to graduate students*

FAQ

Who can file a report? Only individuals acting as the instructors of record are permitted to report a violation. If a student/other has reason to believe an academic integrity violation has been committed, they should communicate with the instructor/designee of the course. Students/others who wish to communicate their concerns anonymously should be informed that while the academic integrity process is designed to include only those with a need to know, absolute anonymity

cannot be guaranteed. Graduate students can report an academic integrity violation if they are the instructor of record.

What if a student engages in forms of unacceptable conduct, aside from violations of academic integrity? This process applies in matters of academic and intellectual dishonesty, and unethical behavior related to grades and academic performance; it does not extend to all other areas of student conduct. The objectives are to provide an academic community based on honor and to ensure that those who cannot or do not are prohibited from continuing in the academic setting. Sexual, interpersonal, or protected class misconduct is adjudicated by the Office of Equity and Diversity: oed@usc.edu; 213-740-5086. Conduct matters beyond academic integrity are adjudicated by the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards: sjacs@usc.edu; 213-821-7373. In the event that an academic integrity violation intersects with sexual, interpersonal, or protected class misconduct, or student behavioral misconduct, please contact the respective office above to determine how best to proceed.

What if an undergraduate student commits an academic integrity violation? The process for addressing academic integrity violations by undergraduate students has not changed. Faculty should utilize the procedures identified by USC SJACS (Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards) at <https://sjacs.usc.edu/faculty/misconduct/>

What kinds of students are eligible for review in this process? This process is applicable to the following graduate students, regardless of whether the student is enrolled online or in-person:

1. Masters,
2. Professional Doctorate,
3. Ph.D.,
4. Dual-degree,
5. Progressive degree students who have completed the undergraduate component
6. Certificate
7. Visiting

This process does not apply to the following:

- Students enrolled in the Ostrow School of Dentistry
- Students enrolled in the M.D. program at Keck School of Medicine

- Students enrolled in the Leventhal School of Accounting, and in a Leventhal course

How will cases in joint graduate degree programs be managed? The School or program where the violation occurred will adjudicate the case. The AICs from the Schools are expected to communicate to determine if disciplinary action may impact student's status in both programs.

What if the student in my class is not enrolled in an Annenberg degree program? The policy still applies to them. This policy places jurisdiction within the academic unit offering the course, not the school in which the student is enrolled. This is designed to maximize the faculty expertise and professional norms associated with norms of academic integrity related to the academic work in that course. Students enrolling in a course outside their degree program are expected to learn and follow the professional and ethical norms of that program.

How long after an incident can an integrity violation be reported? Reports may be submitted up to one year after the date of the alleged incident. This timeframe may be extended under special circumstances (i.e. complaint is severe enough to impact the awarding of the degree).

What is an Academic Integrity Coordinator? They are the delegated individuals, nominated by their Dean on an annual basis, and responsible for managing the academic integrity process within their respective School.

How should faculty proactively address these matters? Faculty have the right and responsibility to establish standards of academic performance and expectations for students under their instruction and to assign grades accordingly. As we wish to create a culture around academic integrity that is proactive rather than reactive, faculty are encouraged to take reasonable steps to prevent academic misconduct. Faculty are encouraged to discuss with the class, in a positive manner, the issues of academic integrity, ethics and professionalism. Clear, unequivocal instructions, preferably in writing, should be given prior to all student assignments, which might be susceptible to ethical transgressions. The classroom and examination environment should be designed not only to prevent cheating, but also the appearance of cheating. Faculty must also be aware that reporting of academic violations is not a matter of personal choice but rather, a task essential to their roles and functions.