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# EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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## **Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy**

# **Policy Name: Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy**

## **Policy Purpose**

This policy specifies the Academic Integrity expectations and the process for adjudication of Academic Misconduct for undergraduate and graduate students, except as indicated in the policy. Research misconduct is reviewed and adjudicated under [Misconduct in Scholarship and Research](#) policy. Professional ethical issues are reviewed and adjudicated under [Employee Code of Conduct](#) policy.

## **Applicability**

This policy is applicable to all faculty and undergraduate students at ETSU, and graduate students, excepted as noted in the policy, including those enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Biomedical Sciences within the College of Medicine.

This policy does not apply to graduate professional students at the Quillen College of Medicine (COM) or the Gattton College of Pharmacy (COP). Students at the COM and COP are adjudicated through the respective college procedures.

## **Responsible Official, Office, and Interpretation**

The Provost is responsible for the review and revision of this policy. For questions about this policy, please contact the Office of the Provost. The Provost, in conjunction with the Office of University Counsel, has the final authority to interpret this policy.

## **Defined Terms**

***A defined term has a specific meaning within the context of this policy.***

### Academic Activities

Any assigned work or project used to determine academic credit, including (but not limited to) an examination, writing project, take-home test, or other project; or any competition, activity, or project sponsored or sanctioned by the university in which the student participates for the purpose of gaining an Academic Advantage.

### Academic Advantage

Any potential benefit to a student's academic or professional standing or to the student's prestige within the university community, including (but not limited to) academic credit or honors, or an award or other recognition of excellence in a particular academic or professional field or endeavor (including selection for membership in an organization related to the field or profession); or a waiver, extension, release, or excuse from academic requirements, Sanctions, or penalties.

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## Academic Integrity

A set of values and practices that require honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all aspects of academic life.

## Academic Integrity Dismissal

Permanent separation from the university for at least two (2) years.

## Academic Integrity Probation

A specified period of time that may include separation from the university for one term, multiple terms, or the entire period remaining before the student earns the degree (undergraduate or graduate) the student was pursuing.

## Academic Misconduct

Any act of dishonesty that attempts to gain, helps others to gain, or attempts to help others to gain an unfair Academic Advantage in all aspects of academic work in or out of the classroom. Academic Misconduct includes plagiarism, self-plagiarism, cheating, collusion, impersonating someone or being impersonated, and/or fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation, and failure to meet legal, ethical and professional obligations, or an unauthorized use of generative artificial intelligence.

## Business Day

Days on which the university is open for business during regular business hours (e.g., sending an email after business hours on the final day of a deadline does not qualify as during the Business Day). University holidays for employees and closures are not included. Student breaks during a term during which the university is open for business are considered Business Days.

## Instructor of Record (Instructor)

The individual who provides direct instruction to students, is included on the Faculty Roster form, and is supported and overseen by the institution.

## Retroactive Withdrawal

Withdrawing from all courses after the last day of classes of the term, as published on the ETSU Academic Calendar, in which a grade was assigned.

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## Sanction

Penalty assigned for a violation. For the purposes of this policy, the severity of a Sanction varies depending on whether an Informal Resolution, Facilitated Resolution, or Formal Resolution is sought.

## Suspension

A disciplinary action that prevents a student from enrolling in classes, earning credits, and receiving financial aid for a specified period of time and, for the purposes of this policy, is a result of Academic Misconduct.

## Written Warning

Official documentation conveying to the student that their behavior was unacceptable and that any future violation of Academic Integrity may result in more severe action, including Suspension or Expulsion.

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## **Policy**

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) is a community committed to excellence in teaching, scholarship, service, and the holistic development of its students. Central to this mission is a shared commitment to Academic Integrity, a foundational principle that sustains the trust, respect, fairness, and responsibility essential in all Academic Activities.

Integrity ensures that both students and faculty benefit fairly from their academic pursuits. It upholds the value of a university education and reinforces the credibility of the institution's teaching, learning, and research endeavors. Violations of Academic Integrity compromise ETSU's reputation and undermine its core mission and goals.

ETSU recognizes that Academic Misconduct erodes the value of a higher education degree and diminishes the integrity of scholarly research. The consequences of such misconduct extend beyond campus, affecting relationships with future employers, graduate programs, research institutions, and the broader community.

The Instructor of Record (hereafter referred to as the "Instructor") has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of Academic Integrity. Students guilty of Academic Misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the course Instructor. Any form of Academic Misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) is subject to a Sanction. In all cases, a Written Warning will accompany any Sanction. Sanctions for a violation may vary with the severity of the offense.

The Instructor may reduce a grade up to and including an assignment of an "F" or a zero ("0") for the exercise/examination or an "F" in the course, propose Suspension, Academic Integrity Dismissal, or Academic Integrity Probation. If a Sanction is imposed, the Instructor must begin the Academic Misconduct procedures and notify the student and the dean/designee. Students may appeal a grade assignment associated with a finding of Academic Misconduct, as distinct from a student disciplinary or grade appeals process, through the university's Academic Misconduct Procedures. The student will not be subjected to any form of pressure to coerce admission of guilt or information about his/her conduct or that of others.

### **1. Responsibilities and Expectations.**

All faculty, students, and staff of the ETSU academic community share a collective responsibility to uphold and promote standards of honesty, fairness, and accountability in all Academic Activities.

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## **1.1. Instructor of Record Responsibilities.**

The Instructor of Record is responsible for maintaining the academic standards of their course and ensuring fair assessment of student performance. To uphold Academic Integrity, Instructors are expected to:

- 1.1.1. Become familiar with and follow the procedures outlined in this policy;
- 1.1.2. Clearly communicate expectations regarding academic conduct in the course syllabus;
- 1.1.3. Report all instances of suspected Academic Misconduct to initiate an adjudication;
- 1.1.4. Gather or supply evidence in instances of suspected Academic Misconduct;
- 1.1.5. Participate in the adjudication process as required;
- 1.1.6. Implement strategies to deter misconduct, such as exam proctoring and digital submission platforms; and
- 1.1.7. Assign a grade of Incomplete (“I”) if a resolution is pending when final grades are due; and
- 1.1.8. Assign a grade once an allegation is resolved and notify the Office of the Registrar.

## **1.2. Student Responsibilities.**

Students are accountable for maintaining the integrity of their academic work. Students are expected to:

- 1.2.1. Familiarize themselves with this policy;
- 1.2.2. Not engage in any form of Academic Misconduct;
- 1.2.3. Encourage peers to uphold the standards outlined in the Student Code of Conduct;
- 1.2.4. Notify the Instructor, department chair, academic dean, or Dean of the Graduate School of any credible suspicion;
- 1.2.5. Cooperate with the adjudication process as necessary;
- 1.2.6. Attend misconduct hearings when required;

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1.2.7. Continue to participate in the course, and complete all academic work pending any allegation of Academic Misconduct; and

1.2.8. Refrain from withdrawing from a course pending an allegation of Academic Misconduct. If the student submits a withdrawal, the “W” is temporary until resolution is reached. A confirmed violation nullifies a Retroactive Withdrawal.

## 2. Reporting.

Allegations of Academic Misconduct should be submitted promptly in writing to the Instructor, department chair, and academic Dean/designee, and Dean of Graduate School if the student is a graduate student. While a delay in reporting may occur based on when the issue is actually discovered, failing to report within thirty (30) Business Days of the date on which the individual first becomes aware of the potential Academic Misconduct may affect the ability to adjudicate the issue.

## 3. Adjudication.

An allegation of Academic Misconduct is adjudicated pursuant to the procedures of this policy. The determination of Academic Misconduct is based on a preponderance of the evidence (i.e., it is more likely than not that the student committed the misconduct), and an appropriate academic consequence is imposed (e.g., a zero for a plagiarized assignment). This determination is based solely on relevant documentation, exhibits, and oral or written testimony. If the Instructor is unavailable, the department chair will appoint a designee to participate in the adjudication of the matter. Minor deviations from procedure may occur and do not invalidate outcomes unless they cause significant harm to either party.

## 4. Appeal.

After the final decision of a hearing board has been issued, the student may file one (1) appeal. Appeals are not new hearings; they are a review of the existing case. It is not the function of the appeals process to permit a rehearing of the factual issues presented to the hearing board, but rather to ensure that the procedures have been implemented fairly and consistently. Grounds for an appeal are limited to the following: (1) an appeal of the outcome due to a material procedural error that directly affected the outcome or the resolution of the matter; or (2) an appeal of the Sanction due to the Sanction being inconsistent with the requirements of this policy related to Sanctions. Any Sanction imposed remains in effect during the appeal, unless delayed by the Provost/designee under extenuating circumstances. The Provost/designee hears all appeals. The decision of the Provost/designee is final.

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## **5. Academic Misconduct Records.**

Academic Misconduct records are official university records maintained by the Office of the Provost. These records serve to document allegations, decisions, and Sanctions related to Academic Integrity violations.

### **5.1. Records Maintenance.**

All records are maintained in accordance with ETSU's Records Retention Policy. Academic Misconduct records include, but are not limited to: complaints, correspondence, evidence, summaries of proceedings, final decisions, and audio recordings, if applicable. These records are considered internal to the university and are not disclosed in standard disciplinary history reports.

### **5.2. Access and Confidentiality.**

Students may request access to their Academic Misconduct records by contacting the Office of the Provost. Access to these records is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), university policies, and the laws of the State of Tennessee.

Academic Misconduct records are considered confidential and will not be released without the student's written consent, unless required in the ordinary course of the business of the university or by state or federal law. The university may share these records with university officials who have a legitimate educational interest.

Records may also be disclosed in response to a lawful subpoena.



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## **Procedures**

### **1. Reporting Academic Misconduct.**

A complaint of Academic Misconduct, along with any supporting evidence, may be brought by the Instructor or to the Instructor by other members of the faculty, staff, or student body. Such complaints should not be considered confidential.

Prior to applying a grade sanction for academic misconduct, the Instructor consults with the department chair. The level of the consultation will be at the chair's discretion. The chair may consult the dean/designee. If the student has committed other academic misconduct offenses at the university the dean/designee will take that information under advisement and determine if additional sanctions may be warranted through a hearing board and if it may reach the level of Academic Integrity Dismissal, Academic Integrity Probation, or Suspension.

The Instructor retains the final decision to either: (1) Use the situation as a teachable moment (discuss with the student, issue a verbal warning, advise that no Sanction is being applied, and consider the issue closed), or (2) apply a Sanction and issue a Written Warning.

### **2. Account Hold.**

Once it is determined to move forward with a charge of Academic Misconduct, the dean/designee contacts the Registrar's Office and requests a hold and note be applied to the student's record pending a final resolution of the matter. This ensures the student cannot drop the course in question until the matter is resolved.

### **3. Issuing Written Warning.**

The Written Warning is sent to the student's ETSU email account within seven (7) Business Days of assigning the grade Sanction.

This Written Warning is copied to the dean/designee of the college in which the violation occurred. Cases of alleged academic misconduct involving graduate students (including those enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Biomedical Sciences within the College of Medicine) are reported to the Dean of the Graduate School. Alleged violations by students at the Quillen College of Medicine (COM) or the Gatton College of Pharmacy (COP) are adjudicated through the respective college procedure: The Student Honor System as detailed in the COM Student Handbook and the Academic Misconduct section of the COP Student Handbook. The dean may refer the case to a formal board hearing if the nature of the allegation is severe, the imposed sanction is severe, or due to the student's prior history. The dean/designee has the option to forward the case to a formal board hearing and informs the student in the Written Warning if referring to a formal board hearing.

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The Written Warning includes:

- 3.1.1. student's E Number,
- 3.1.2. course information,
- 3.1.3. Sanction that has been applied,
- 3.1.4. a copy of the evidence,
- 3.1.5. the appropriate dean/designee the student contacts to file an appeal,
- 3.1.6. the available options to the student, including:
  - 3.1.6.1.1. the student accepting the Instructor-imposed sanction; or
  - 3.1.6.1.2. the student requesting a formal board hearing; and/or
- 3.1.7. whether the dean/designee is forwarding the case to a formal board hearing due to the nature of the allegation, the imposed sanction, or the student's prior history.

Allegations not directly tied to a specific academic course are referred to the appropriate dean/designee for the area where the alleged misconduct occurred.

## **4. Student Response to Written Warning.**

The student notifies the dean/designee in writing within five (5) Business Days which option they selected:

- 4.1. Accept the Instructor-imposed sanction; or
- 4.2. Request formal board hearing.

If the student fails to notify the dean/designee of a selection, the student forfeits the right to select an option and the dean/designee moves forward with the dean/designee recommendation.

## **5. Student Accepts Sanction.**

In the event the student elects to waive a hearing and accept the Instructor's Sanction and the dean/designee concurs, then the student waives the right to a hearing in writing. The dean/designee informs the Instructor, department chair, Registrar's Office, and the Sanction is implemented. The issue is then considered closed.

## **6. Formal Board Hearing.**

If the student elects to appeal the Instructor's Sanction or the dean/designee elects to forward the case to a hearing board, the dean/designee begins the hearing process. Every attempt will be made to conclude the procedures within forty-five (45) days of the date the student and/or the dean/designee selects the hearing board option. The hearing may

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proceed in the absence of a properly notified student or Instructor (having been sent written notice at least seven (7) Business Days in advance).

## **7. Hearing Board Members.**

The dean/designee designates a hearing board of six (6) members that includes three (3) faculty members and three (3) students who are not involved in the offense or from the department in which the offense took place. Board members may be selected from a standing committee appointed by the dean/designee of each school or college on an annual basis or from the college population at large. The dean/designee either appoints a chair or has the board elect a chair from among the hearing board members. The dean/designee schedules a hearing board. The student or Instructor may challenge the ability of a board member to render an impartial judgment and may request a member's removal prior to the hearing beginning. If any members of a board believe that their relationship with either the case or the individuals involved would affect their ability to render an impartial judgment, they may disqualify themselves.

## **8. Communication About Hearing.**

The dean/designee notifies the student and Instructor in writing, at least seven (7) Business Days in advance of the date, time, and place of the hearing, as well as the specific allegations, the structure and procedure for the hearing, the range of possible Sanctions, and the student's right to be accompanied by an advisor. The student is provided copies of any evidence to be presented during the hearing. The hearing shall be private, unless otherwise requested by both the student and Instructor, in writing.

## **9. Evidence or Documentation in Hearing.**

Both the Instructor and the student provide the dean/designee with copies of any evidence or documentation they will present, a list of names of witnesses they will have at the hearing, and the name of their advisor at least three (3) Business Days prior to the hearing. The dean/designee collects and distributes any evidence or documentation from the Instructor and student to be used in the formal hearing. Determinations as to the admissibility of evidence or any procedural questions in the hearing rest solely in the discretion of the hearing board.

## **10. Assistance During Hearing.**

Both the student and Instructor may be assisted by any advisor they choose, at their own expense. The advisor may be an attorney. Both parties are responsible for presenting their own case and advisors are not permitted to speak or to participate directly in any hearing. The University Counsel's Office will be advised when an advisor is an attorney.

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## **11. Record of Hearing.**

The record is the property of the university. The board chair ensures that there is a single record, such as minutes or a tape recording of the hearing. The dean/designee provides a written outcome of the hearing to the student, Instructor, and the Provost/designee within five (5) Business Days following the hearing.

## **12. Hearing Process.**

At the hearing, the dean/designee coordinates the presentation of evidence relevant to the alleged misconduct. Both the student and the Instructor may be present throughout the hearing, until the hearing board goes into executive session. Both the student and Instructor have the opportunity to testify and present evidence and witnesses relevant to the charges and penalties involved and to cross-examine any witnesses. In no case will the hearing board consider written statements against the student unless they have been advised of their contents. The student may decline to testify, with knowledge that silence may be considered as evidence. The board may dispose of the case in whatever manner it deems just based upon available information. After all evidence has been presented, members of the hearing board meet in executive session to deliberate on the charges.

## **13. Voting During Hearing.**

The board will rule on the request by a majority vote. The hearing board proceeds with a quorum of two-thirds (2/3) of the hearing board members. The hearing board's decision and recommendation are based on a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, both opinions are shared with the dean/designee. The board will use a preponderance of the evidence standard to decide if more likely than not the violation occurred.

## **14. Hearing Findings.**

If the finding is for the student, the hearing board recommends that the sanction applied by the Instructor be removed. If the finding is against the student, the hearing board recommends such sanction as deemed appropriate. After considering all the evidence, this penalty may differ from that imposed initially by the Instructor. If the hearing board recommends Academic Integrity Dismissal, Academic Integrity Probation, or Suspension and the dean/designee concurs, the approval of the Provost must be obtained. The dean/designee then advises the student of the decision and of the student's right to appeal, and on what grounds an appeal may be based.

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## **15. Appeals.**

The student or Instructor may file an appeal in writing with the Provost/designee within seven (7) Business Days of the written outcome.

The written appeal will contain the substantive grounds upon which the appellant is basing the appeal. General dissatisfaction with the outcome of the decision is not a basis for consideration of an appeal. Appeals that do not allege sufficient grounds will be denied consideration and dismissed. Appeals that do allege sufficient grounds will be accepted for consideration.

The Provost/designee may permit written or oral statements from the concerned parties at the time the appeal is considered. The Provost/designee may either: (1) affirm the original decision; (2) reverse the original decision; (3) send the issue back to the original hearing board for consideration of additional information; (4) modify the original sanction; or (5) refer the case to a completely new hearing board for a new hearing. The Provost/designee will notify the student, Instructor, and dean/designee of the outcome of the appeal in writing within fifteen (15) Business Days.

## **16. Removal of Account Hold.**

After the Academic Misconduct Procedures are completed, the dean/designee shall request that the Registrar's Office remove the hold from the student's record within five (5) Business Days of receiving notice of the final resolution.

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## **Applicable Forms and Websites**

N/A

## **Authority and Revisions**

**Authority:** TCA § 49-8-203, et seq.

## **Previous Policy:** N/A

The ETSU Board of Trustees is charged with policy making pursuant to TCA § 49-8-203, et seq. On March 24, 2017, the Board delegated its authority to ETSU's President to establish certain policies and procedures for educational program and other operations of the university, including this policy. The delegation of authority and required process for revision to this policy can be found on the [Policy Development and Rule Making Policy webpage](#).

To suggest a revision to this policy, please contact the responsible official indicated in this policy. Before a substantive change to the policy section may take effect, the requested changes must be: (1) approved by the responsible office; (2) reviewed by the Office of University Counsel for legal sufficiency; (3) posted for public comment; (4) approved by either Academic Council or University Council; and (5) approved by ETSU's President.

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