

TITLE: Carnegie Mellon University Academic Disciplinary Actions Overview for Graduate Students

ACCOUNTABLE DEPARTMENT/UNIT: [Office of the Dean of Student Affairs](#). Questions about policy content should be directed to the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, ext. 8-2075.

ABSTRACT: Describes procedures for disciplinary actions against graduate students in cases of alleged violations of academic regulations.

NOTE: Some language in these procedures refers to the former University Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism which has been edited and amended as the University Policy on Academic Integrity. The procedures are currently under review to update the related language. 01/06/14

MISC: See also the policies on:

- [Undergraduate Academic Discipline](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)

---

# Academic Disciplinary Actions Overview for Graduate Students

"Academic Disciplinary Actions" refers to penalties or sanctions imposed for violation of academic regulations against [cheating or plagiarism](#) as defined in this guidebook, or other behavior judged as inappropriate academic conduct.

## Statute of Limitations

There shall be no "statute of limitations" that precludes faculty from acting on the discovery of alleged violations, either during the semester or term when the incident occurs or after that semester or term, and including after a student has graduated.

## Confidentiality

Cases involving violation of academic regulations against [cheating or plagiarism](#) shall be regarded as "confidential" in the manner outlined below:

1. No discussion or disclosure of the specifics of any case with any individual within or outside of the university community will occur unless such discussion or disclosure is deemed necessary in the determination of guilt or appropriate sanction by parties reviewing the case at the initial or second level of review or unless such an action is specifically imposed as part of the penalty for a violation.

2. The existence of a case, the general nature of a case and the sanctions imposed, if any, may be discussed and available to the university community provided that such availability is unlikely to lead to the clear identification of the student(s) or faculty involved.
3. If the student is exonerated, all relevant records under the control of the university will be destroyed (unless the student specifically requests that a record of exoneration be maintained).

## Procedures

Incidents of suspected academic disciplinary violations shall be handled initially at the level at which the incident occurs (e.g., course or research/creative project<sup>[1]</sup>) and at the department level, reported immediately to designated parties and (where appropriate as answered below) shall receive second-level review(s) in the manner outlined in the following section.

### Initial Review, Decision and Action(s)

Initial review, decision and action(s) shall remain local, to involve the instructor(s) or academic supervisor(s)<sup>[2]</sup> and, if desired, consultation with a third party from the faculty, the department/program head<sup>[3]</sup> or associate head, or the dean of student affairs. Instructors are free to discuss alleged violations informally with the student(s) thought to be involved, but should avoid revealing the identity of other students involved, if at all possible. Suspected violations that would result in a penalty should be handled by the instructor(s), in direct communication with the student(s) involved, within one week of the discovery of the suspected infraction and before the imposition of a penalty.

After discussion with the student(s) involved and their response, the instructor(s) shall conclude, within a reasonable period of time and based on available evidence, whether the suspected violation(s) occurred. Instructors are encouraged to consult at this stage with their department/program head about the nature of the suspected violations, the nature of the evidence of these violations and the range of penalties under consideration. They may also choose to consult with the dean of student affairs. If the conclusion is that the suspected violation(s) did occur, the instructor(s) shall also choose an appropriate penalty.<sup>[4]</sup>

The most severe penalty available at this level of review and action shall be failure in the course or dismissal from a project, although instructors may also recommend a more severe penalty to the student's home department/program head, who retains the option to impose more severe penalties (e.g., suspension or dismissal from the program) at this level. Elements to consider include prior incidents of academic disciplinary action in a student's record, available from the dean of student affairs. The department/program head may discuss the issue with a student and choose to convene a disciplinary hearing according to the procedures of the department/program.

The student shall be notified immediately, and in writing, of this decision, the basis for this decision and (when applicable) the penalty imposed. This notification will come from the instructor and/or department/program head depending on the penalty involved. Students whose penalty is failure in the course in question will not be allowed to drop the course and should be

so informed. Students should also be informed at this time of their right (and attendant procedures) for appeal (see [Student Appeals](#) below).

## **Reporting of Initial Action(s)**

A copy of the letter outlining the initial decision and action to the student(s) involved in cases of academic disciplinary violations should also be directed to the following parties:

- Student's home department/program head
- Dean's office of the student's college
- Dean's office of the college housing the course in which the violation(s) occurred (if different from the student's college)
- The student's major department
- The dean of student affairs
- The provost

The dean of student affairs will maintain the central record of academic disciplinary violations and actions. If the dean of student affairs is aware of information on prior incidents of academic disciplinary actions in the student's record, he or she should communicate that information to the department/program head and give the department/program head the opportunity to impose an appropriate sanction.

## **Second-level Review and Action(s)**

Normally, a second-level review of an initial decision and action follows from at least one of three sources: (1) appeal by the student(s) involved because the student deems the penalty inappropriate and/or believes that improper procedure has been followed, (2) recommendation by the instructor, home department/program/college that the student be permanently expelled from the university, (3) recommendation by the provost for a review.

Where an appeal is made or a second-level action appears warranted, the provost will determine what action should be taken. The provost may decide to deny the appeal or waive the opportunity for a second-level action, to remand the case to the department/program head for additional consideration, to order a new or different penalty or to convene a Review Committee for additional investigation of facts and/or determination of appropriate sanctions.

## **Student Appeals**

In general, students who want to appeal an academic disciplinary action must state in writing to the provost their intention to do so within one week of the penalty date in question, and then must present their appeal to the provost no later than two weeks after said penalty date. Appeals must be in writing, with appropriate documentation.

If the provost determines that a second-level review is warranted and that a Review Board should be convened, the provost or his/her designee shall immediately form and convene a Review Board and designate a chair. The board will include faculty from the college of the student

involved, a graduate student from the college, the dean of student affairs and others deemed appropriate by the provost. If a student appeal and a review of a recommendation for second-level action occur at the same time, both shall be considered by this Review Board simultaneously. Where appropriate, it is expected that the instructor(s) from the course/project involved (or appropriate representatives designated by the department) will be available for participation or at least for consultation. The chair of the board shall inform the student(s) involved, in writing, of this step. Copies of this letter should go to:

- The instructor(s) in the course in question
- The department head of the course involved
- Dean's office of the student's college
- Dean's office of the college housing the course in which the violation(s) occurred (if different from the student's college)
- The student's major department
- The provost

The Review Board shall (a) review the facts of incidents involved and (b) make a recommendation about second-level action to the provost or his/her designee. The provost shall then render a decision subject only to appeal to the president of the university.

---

#### Footnotes

1. The term "course" will be used in the remainder of this document to refer to the academic process, including academic work inside and outside of the classroom, such as independent research, thesis preparation, etc.
2. The term "instructor" will be used in the remainder of this document to refer to academic supervision in courses, research and/or creative work, including thesis preparation.
3. In schools with only one graduate department (e.g., [GSIA](#), [SCS](#), [Heinz School](#)) the designation "department/program head" refers to the dean.
4. If the invitation to confer with the instructor(s) is not accepted by the affected student(s), a final decision about the incident and, if appropriate, a penalty will be determined in their absence.



[\[Policies Home Page\]](#)