

Academic Integrity

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

A primary responsibility of higher education is to provide students with the opportunity for inquiry and the freedom to discuss and express their views openly and freely without fear of retaliation or abuse of person or property. These attributes are the foundation of good citizenship. For these reasons, students have an obligation to act in a fair and reasonable manner toward their peers, the faculty, staff, administration and the physical property of the College. Academic integrity and personal conduct, both on-campus and off-campus, are critical elements in achieving these goals. Violations of college regulations (that have been adopted to protect the college community) will be subject to academic sanction and/or disciplinary action. This may include, but is not limited to, violations of regulations governing plagiarism, cheating, examination impersonation, academic fraud and acts of personal behavior such as sexual harassment, vandalism and substance abuse. The College's policies (and their processes) provide guidance to the individuals charged with administering disciplinary action or academic sanction while outlining the protection to be afforded to students through their right of appeal. Disciplinary authorities are encouraged, whenever possible and appropriate, to settle findings of violation by informal resolution.

The purpose of this information is to

- Help if you have been accused of academic dishonesty;
- Help you decide what to do if you know or suspect someone else of committing or participating in academic dishonesty;
- Help you understand academic integrity better so you can avoid unintentional acts of academic dishonesty.

It is important to know the rules. Temple College's rules can be found in the policy section of this handbook, under "College Policies." You can also obtain a copy of the Academic Integrity Policy from the Web or the Office of the Vice President of Educational Services (Administration Building). Finally, there are handouts on plagiarism or related subjects, and course syllabi should make reference to cheating or plagiarism. Excellent writing guides are available in the library and the Bookstore. Every student involved in essay or report-writing should follow an appropriate style guide in order to correctly and completely acknowledge all sources and forms of assistance.

It is the responsibility of the student to know the rules.

Temple College values academic honesty. Faculty members have implemented a variety of measures to identify, address, and eliminate academic dishonesty as it might occur in the learning process:

- Examinations are carefully monitored by faculty members;
- Individuals taking examinations in the college Testing Center are required to sign in and to display a student ID card;
- Different versions of an exam may be alternated row by row;
- Assignments done out of class may be subject to scrutiny (if the teacher has not authorized collaboration);
- Faculty can often tell that an essay has been plagiarized, even if they do not at first know the exact source of unacknowledged passages;
- Faculty are aware of various forms of 'Cyber-Cheating' which may include downloading papers from the 'Net' or purchasing an essay from an agency. Despite everyone's best efforts, students responding anonymously to surveys indicate a fairly high level of cheating - well above the numbers of students caught and punished. Some cheating and plagiarism is due to student ignorance of rules and obligations. One goal of this section of the handbook is to reduce cheating due to ignorance.

What to do if you are accused of cheating or plagiarism

1. You will probably feel angry at the person who accuses you, even though he or she is just trying to make the academic environment more honest. Do what you can to master your angry feelings so you won't say anything you later regret.
2. Answer questions honestly. The instructor (or designated instructional leader) has an obligation to investigate and to try to determine the truth. Lying or fabricating evidence may lead to a more severe sanction or disciplinary action.
3. Remember, there is an appeal process available to you. Regardless of the circumstances, you must be allowed an opportunity to "tell your side of the story." Remember that allegations of cheating must be substantiated by some kind of evidence (having seen the act, having physical proof, or having receipt of a report from another student).
4. Consider the evidence against you. Contrary to popular belief, evidence does not have to be conclusive. The burden of proof is based on the 'balance of probabilities' that is; if a reasonable person can say: "Based on this evidence, cheating probably took place." If you encounter an instructor who, in your opinion, is handling a cheating accusation unprofessionally, you may want to seek advice from someone else (another faculty member, a department chair or division director, or administrator) who may help you. However, keep in mind that the College is obligated to handle incidents that may result in sanction or disciplinary action with the strictest confidence, and so should you. Therefore, discuss these sensitive matters only with those in whom you can place the most trust.

Here are examples of some improper (or unprofessional) reactions to academic dishonesty:

- A. The instructor appears to take the matter very personally, looks at the alleged offender with loathing, and refuses to allow the student the chance to convey “their side of the story.”
- B. The instructor warns the student not to appeal because much worse could happen than the sanction being imposed. (Students cannot be denied their due process rights for any reason. If you are threatened with this kind of action, seek the help of a department chair, division director, or administrator immediately.)
- C. The instructor offers no reason for believing the student cheated, but demands proof that the student did not or offers superficial evidence for an accusation based on a generalization or a judgment of the person. (“I can’t believe anyone your age would say that.” “The writing is too good for a student.”)

Penalties

Various factors influence instructors, department chairs, division directors, and administrators when deliberating the appropriate academic sanction/disciplinary action for academic dishonesty:

- Was the offense planned or the result of an impulse?
- Has the student been honest and cooperative during the investigative process?
- Is this a first offense?
- Does the student appear to be genuinely sorry for the offense?
- Were other students compromised through the actions of this student?
- Was this student irresponsible in not knowing that the offense was an offense?

The penalties listed in the Academic Integrity Policy are examples. They range in severity from no action (least severe) to **the XF grade (a grade which designates failure of the course based on violation of the academic integrity policy)** to expulsion and possible criminal prosecution (for capital offenses). Note that the policy is divided into two sections: basic and capital violations. Instructors retain the right to apply the appropriate academic sanction for basic violations, but are encouraged to do so in consultation with their department chair to ensure adherence to the policy and allowance of due process. **If an instructor believes a student is guilty of a capital violation of the academic integrity policy, he or she cannot impose academic sanctions or penalties more severe than an “XF” without referring the case to the discipline committee through their department chair or division director.** It is important to note that the possible academic sanctions for “basic” violations are different from the disciplinary sanctions intended for “capital” violations. However, regardless of which form of sanction may be forthcoming, students are guaranteed due process rights which means you will have an opportunity to be heard and to appeal the recommended sanction to administrative authorities. Of course, this does not imply or promise reversal of the recommended sanction; it simply allows you the opportunity to present your reasons for appeal.

Less severe penalties: (for “basic violations) include:

- Verbal warning/no grade related sanction
- O/F on the assignment/quiz/exam (with or without possibility of makeup)
- O/F in the course (with or without prohibition of future enrollment in course)
- Recommendation/Designation of the “XF” grade (with or without prohibition of future enrollment in the course) More severe penalties apply if there is evidence of planning or involvement of others in the offense (i.e., “capital violations”)
- Formal reprimand
- Probationary status
- Suspension (for one semester or more)
- Reduction or retraction of college-awarded scholarship(s)
- Suspension from participation in college-sponsored activities
- Requirement of community service hours
- Denial of graduation application
- Expulsion, and/or
- Criminal prosecution (as may be warranted by evidence)
- Repeal of original grade and/or degree (if dishonesty is discovered after grade/degree is awarded)

Expulsion, unlike suspension, is deemed to be permanent. Expulsion appears to be reserved for very serious cases which may also involve criminal prosecution.

Criminal prosecution is reserved for criminal acts, such as fraud, forgery, theft and impersonation.

Fraud

The regulations on academic dishonesty as outlined in the handbook describe a number of fraudulent acts, but the reference is not intended to be comprehensive because the nature of cheating continually evolves. While innocent acts can sometimes be mistaken for cheating or plagiarism, this rarely happens with fraud. Fraud is usually a deliberate lie. For example, submitting a forged signature for clinical work or failing to disclose information on an application is fraudulent. Consequently, it is sometimes dealt with more severely.

Your rights

Student Rights: As an academic matter, basic violations of the academic integrity policy will result in academic sanctions applied by the respective faculty member. However, students are guaranteed the following process prior to disposition of sanction or disciplinary action:

- (1) Notification of the allegation(s) and possible sanctions,
- (2) Notification as to how their alleged actions violated college policy,
- (3) Opportunity to meet with the faculty member and hear the evidence to be applied as justification for academic sanctions and/or disciplinary action,
- (4) Notification as to the recommendation to be made by the faculty member and/or discipline committee, and
- (5) Opportunity to appeal the application of academic sanction and/or disciplinary action to the department chair, division director, VPES, and Academic Integrity Committee (AIC). The decision of the AIC is final.

Capital violations must be referred to the VPES for adjudication by the Academic Integrity Committee when the recommended academic sanction and/or disciplinary action is more severe than the application of the "XF."

The Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) will serve as an advisory committee to the Vice President of Educational Services (VPES) called to serve in those instances when (a) the affected faculty member is unable or unwilling to recommend academic sanction, (b) the nature of the violation requires the recommendation of disciplinary sanction (i.e., for capital violations), and (c) when the student appeals the decision of the VPES. The VPES will not serve on the AIC, but reserves the right to appoint the chair and AIC members (in consultation with the faculty and staff).

When a student appeals, he or she is entitled to due process and a hearing with the AIC. The request for an appeal must be made in writing to the Chair of the AIC (through the VPES) on or before the (5) fifth day following the disposition of academic sanction or disciplinary sanction. The AIC shall notify the student concerned, in writing, of the date, time, and place for the hearing which shall take place within (15) fifteen class days after the date of the letter. The decision of the AIC is final.

How offenses are recorded

1. If you receive an "XF" grade, it will be recorded on your transcript with your other grades and will factor into your GPA just like an "F" (i.e., 0 points).
2. Reported incidents of academic dishonesty are recorded in the VPES office and faculty members are encouraged to call (prior to recommending academic sanction) to determine whether or not you have been accused or found guilty of any previous act of cheating. It is important to note that once you have received an academic sanction for a "basic" violation, all subsequent violations are handled as "capital" (more serious) violations and may result in more severe punishment.
3. In order to protect the privacy interest of the students and the academic sanction and/or discipline process, information regarding previous acts of academic dishonesty (and the related sanctions effected) will be stored in the VPES office in a secure file.

How to avoid cheating and plagiarism in tests and exams

1. Do not sit near friends.
2. Shield your answer sheet so that others cannot see it.
3. Take no notes, books or other items into a test or exam except those expressly authorized. If unsure about what is permitted, always ask.
4. Do not gaze around the room when writing a test or exam.
5. Do not communicate with any other student during a test or exam. Communicate only with the instructor or proctor.
6. Arrive on time. Hand in all papers as required.
7. If you hear of anyone obtaining information about a test or exam in advance, report it to the instructor immediately.
8. If procedures for administering or supervising tests or exams seem inadequate to you, let the instructor or other instructional leader (department chair, division director, or VPES) know what your concerns are.
9. Report to the instructor any unusual or suspicious behavior of other students writing the test or exam.
10. Keep any electronic devices (including pagers and/or cell phones) secure and away from testing area.
11. If you are using an approved electronic device (i.e., graphing calculator), be sure to check with your teacher and demonstrate that nothing has been stored in the memory. You may be asked to use the equipment of the department rather than your own personal equipment to protect fellow students from an unfair advantage.
12. Refrain from any "distracting" behavior (i.e., tapping on the desk with your pencil or similar activity) as this may be construed as sending "signals" to others.

In essays, reports and other assignments

1. Know the rules, including the specific rules for the specific assignment. If you are not sure if you are allowed to work with others, check with your teacher.
2. Do not work with a fellow student on any assignment unless authorized to do so. It is called 'inappropriate collaboration' if you exceed the amount of group work expected by the professor. Make sure you clearly understand the professor's expectations for individual and group work on each assignment/project.
3. Acknowledge all assistance received, including help from friends or others in terms of proofreading, suggestions or information.

4. Do not submit work that is not entirely yours (i.e., use of another student's essay, use of a downloaded essay from the 'Net', use of an assignment purchased from a service/agency).
5. Do not cite in your bibliography any books, articles or other sources e.g., including the world wide web, which you have not used for the assignment in question.
6. Do not lend your work to other students unless you feel certain they will not use it dishonestly.
7. Keep a xeroxed copy of all assignments, essays, and reports you hand in to be graded. Keep rough copies and notes until your final grade is received. Notes and rough copies can constitute valuable evidence that your work is your own.
8. When saving electronic files, save the drafts of assignments/ papers under different versions. This maintains a record of your work as it develops to the final version and may also help you demonstrate that your work is your own.
9. If you submit an assignment by sliding it under an instructor's office door (not recommended), confirm the next day or as soon as you can that the assignment was received. Make a note of the actual time and date of submission.
10. The assignment you prepare for one course should not be used for a different course unless you receive the approval of your teacher. This is called 'duplicate submission'.
11. When in doubt about any practice, ask your instructor. Do not rely on friends, relatives or fellow students for information about what is acceptable academic practice in a particular course or discipline.
12. When material you read impresses you, be particularly careful to use your own words. Use quotation marks and cite sources whenever you use the words of another, even phrases only one or two words in length. Acknowledge all sources of information and inspiration.

What to do if you know or suspect someone else of cheating

Anyone who suspects someone else of committing academic dishonesty has several choices:

- Talk about your suspicions with the other person
- Report the suspicion to the instructor/department chair/or division director
- Remain uninvolved before deciding to remain uninvolved. Consider the big picture. Who benefits most from your lack of action? The wrong-doer. If you feel a moral obligation to try to make your college a fairer and more honest place, try to find a way to get involved. Please contact an academic advisor, the VPES office, or any other college staff member for advice.

Talking to the other person: Many Temple College students hope to enter careers where peer monitoring is an important means of maintaining professional ethical standards. If you decide to talk to someone you suspect of academic dishonesty, make sure you are familiar with the academic integrity policy. Then consider the evidence you have that a dishonest act has taken place or will take place. Be clear about your own motives and goals. You may want to consult someone you trust before undertaking the difficult task of talking to someone you suspect.

Reporting a suspect: There are two ways to make such a report: (1) by giving the instructor, department chair or division director (or VPES) a tip; (2) by giving evidence. When you give a tip, you need not disclose your identity. You are merely advising the instructor, chair or director that you suspect academic dishonesty took place (or will probably take place). It is up to that person to investigate and gather evidence needed to charge the offenders. You do not become a witness. A tip can be written, phoned or given in person. Sometimes a tip will not be useful because the instructor is unable to find any evidence in support of the claims made. From the college's point of view, it is always preferable to have a witness willing to state what they have seen or heard.

If you have any questions, please contact the VPES office or website for more information. Students are expected to place all records on file with the specific offices (Admissions & Records, Student Life, Financial Aid, etc.) and to keep them up to date. Failure to do so will subject the student to disciplinary action, including suspension.

It is the responsibility of the student to read and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy which is printed in full on pages 48-51.

TRANSFER OF CREDIT

Temple College is a participating institution in the Texas Common Course Numbering System. Courses designed for transfer have a standardized four-letter prefix followed by a four-digit number. The four-letter prefix identifies the subject area. For example, ENGL is the common prefix for English courses, while DRAM is the common prefix for drama/theatre courses. The four digit number following the prefix identifies specific courses within the subject area. Each digit in the four-digit sequence gives additional information about the course. The first digit identifies the course as either freshman level (1) or sophomore level (2). The second digit identifies the number of credit hours students earn upon successfully completing the course. Most often this digit will be a 1, 2, 3, or 4. The final two digits serve to establish the sequence in which the courses are generally taken. Thus, General Chemistry I -- CHEM 1411 is taken before General Chemistry II-- CHEM 1412.

Courses at TC that are developmental in nature and not designed for college credit or transfer have a O (zero) as the first digit.

Students should check the catalog under their program of study with the college they plan to transfer to for information on transferability of technical courses. Course equivalency guides for academic transfer courses are available in the Advising Center.