Student Guide to

Academic Integrity

at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Published by the WPI Dean of Students Office, with support from the WPI Committee on Advising and Student Life, August 2015
A Message from the Dean of Students Office

The Dean of Students Office has developed the Student Guide to Academic Integrity at WPI to articulate to students the high value WPI places on academic integrity. The guide is intended to assist the community in understanding the subject of academic honesty and to orient students to WPI’s specific policies and procedures. It also provides hints about how to avoid becoming involved in a case of academic dishonesty.

Topics include:

- WPI Aspirations for Academic Integrity
- What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty at WPI
- A Look at Academic Honesty at WPI
- Responsibilities of Students
- What If I Am Accused of Academic Dishonesty?
- Academic Dishonesty Flow Chart
- Facts and Myths about Academic Dishonesty at WPI
- Hints to Avoid Committing an Act of Academic Dishonesty

The Dean of Students Office welcomes comments and suggestions from students on ways to enhance this guide. Email us at dean-of-students@wpi.edu.

For more information about Academic Integrity, please consult the Academic Honesty website, www.wpi.edu/offices/policies/honesty.html.
WPI Aspirations for Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a fundamental principle of learning and a necessary foundation for all academic institutions, particularly those dedicated to independent project-based education, such as WPI. Violations of the principle deny the violators an opportunity to obtain confident command of the material they are credited with knowing, cheat their classmates out of deserved rewards and recognition, debase the institution, and demean the degree that it awards. It is, therefore, a matter of great and mutual concern to all members of the WPI community that a concerted effort be made to maintain high standards of integrity, both to protect the value of the educational process in which we are engaged and to maintain the credibility of the institution.

What Constitutes Academic Dishonesty at WPI

Individual integrity is vital to the academic environment because education involves the search for and acquisition of knowledge and understanding, which are, in themselves, intangible. Evaluation of each student’s level of knowledge and understanding is an essential part of the teaching process, and requires tangible measures such as reports, examinations, and homework. Any act that interferes with the process of evaluation by misrepresentation of the relation between the work being evaluated (or the resulting evaluation) and the student’s actual state of knowledge is an act of academic dishonesty.

The following acts provide a broad overview, but not an all-encompassing definition, of what constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
• Using and submitting purchased papers
• Using unauthorized materials or sources of information, such as a cheat sheet, preprogrammed calculator, etc.
• Copying another student’s academic work
• Unauthorized communication during an examination
• Submitting the same paper for more than one course without explicit permission from the instructor(s)

Myth:
My academic dishonesty record will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

Fact:
Records will be available to prospective employers and other authorized individuals in accordance with applicable state and federal law and regulations. Judicial records may be shared both internally (e.g., IGSD, honor societies) and externally (e.g., transfer applications, prospective employers, law school) in accordance with federal regulations that require written permission from the student involved. In keeping with the WPI Academic Honesty Policy and the Constitution of the WPI Campus Judicial System, a student’s judicial record may be shared internally as appropriate without the student’s permission to determine if the student has any record of prior offenses involving academic honesty.

Myth:
International students will be deported if they are found responsible of academic dishonesty.

Fact:
Academic honesty violations are not reported to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for action against an international student. If a student is in the United States on a visa and is suspended or expelled, the university must report that the student is no longer registered as a full-time student. Unless that student becomes accepted and enrolled as a full-time student at another institution, ICE may begin the deportation process because the student is no longer “in status.”

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Myth: Unless a faculty member catches me in the act of cheating there is no way to prove that I cheated, so no disciplinary action can be taken against me.

Fact: The standard used in campus judicial hearings is "preponderance of evidence," meaning more likely than not. Also, hearsay and circumstantial evidence is considered by the CHB. An example of circumstantial evidence might be for a faculty member to present to the CHB that it would be impossible for two students to do the same work on an assignment without cheating.

Myth: My professor can lower my grade or give me an “NR” on an assignment (or an “F” for a graduate student) if he/she suspects that I have committed academic dishonesty.

Fact: Faculty may impose punitive action only if the student has admitted responsibility and agreed to the professor’s sanction. The maximum penalty that can be applied at the departmental level is dismissal from a course or a project without credit. If a student has a past record or the student claims innocence, the case must be referred to the CHB. If the CHB finds the student responsible, it can recommend a grade action to the professor. The CHB has a greater range of sanctions, up to and including expulsion from WPI.

Myth: If I admit to academic dishonesty and accept an agreed upon sanction, my professor has the option to retain all records for the case without reporting the case to anyone.

Fact: All cases must be reported in writing to the Dean of Students Office citing the student’s name, student ID number, facts of the case, and sanction imposed. The student and faculty member must sign the Departmental Agreement before it is sent. This is the only way that the Dean of Students Office can accurately report to another faculty member if a student has a past record and ensure that a student does not have multiple violations in different courses that go unreported.

Fabrication: Falsification, misrepresentation, or the invention of any information, data, or citation in an academic exercise.
Examples include, but are not limited to:
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• Altering grades or other official records
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Facilitation: Helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.
Examples include, but are not limited to:
• Sharing test questions or answers from an exam, homework or lab with another student
• Doing any academic work for another student, such as homework or tests
• Allowing another student to copy a solution to a homework problem, exam or lab
• Making available previously used academic work for another individual who intends to resubmit the work for credit
• Assisting in any act of academic dishonesty of another student

Plagiarism: Using as one’s own the words, ideas, data, code, or other original academic material of another without providing proper citation or attribution. Plagiarism can apply to any assignment, including final or drafted copies.

Examples include, but are not limited to:
• Misrepresenting the work of another as one’s own
• Inaccurately or inadequately citing sources
• Paraphrasing (using the ideas of others in your own words) without citation
A Look at Academic Honesty at WPI

WPI has collected data about attitudes and practices associated with academic dishonesty at the undergraduate level at the university. The following is a sampling of data from the most recent survey of both faculty and students.

Report of Undergraduate Students

One third of the students and over half of the faculty reported that academic dishonesty is a problem at WPI.

One third of the faculty reported that they had encountered a case of academic dishonesty in one of their classes.

More than half of the students saw another student cheat during an exam.

Over 80% of the faculty considered it dishonest to obtain an exam question from a student who had already taken the exam. According to faculty who witnessed cheating, the most common forms were:

- Working on assignments in groups when prohibited to do so
- Copying assignments, homework, or computer programs from another student
- Plagiarizing or not citing sources properly

Responsibilities of Students

Students should make sure that they are familiar with WPI’s Academic Honesty Policy, which is articulated in the WPI Student Planner and Resource Guide. In addition to the institutional policy, individual faculty members may have more specific guidelines for their classes. Students should find out from each faculty member what their policies are concerning evaluation procedures and their expectations pertaining to academic integrity at the beginning of each course. These policies may be outlined in the course syllabus, posted on the Web, or discussed in one of the first classes of the term. However, many faculty members may not highlight their specific policies in any of these ways, and may only utilize the campus policy.

Because of the differences in disciplines and the type of work involved, faculty interpretation regarding what constitutes academic honesty may vary across campus. Since project-based education places a strong

Facts and Myths about Academic Honesty at WPI

Myth:
Academic honesty is not given much attention at WPI and students are rarely brought up on academic dishonesty charges.

Fact:
WPI takes the academic integrity of its students very seriously, and all cases of academic dishonesty are rigorously adjudicated. During the 2014–15 academic year, there were 95 academic dishonesty cases initially reported to the Dean of Students Office. Of these, 51 were found responsible. The remaining cases were either dismissed by faculty (37), were found not responsible by the CHB (1), or are pending a hearing (6).

Myth:
I’ve been told that I should accept responsibility for cheating and take an NR for the course even though I know I did not cheat because, if I don’t, the CHB will impose something far worse.

Fact:
While it is true that the CHB can impose more serious sanctions, the WPI CHB is not something to be feared. The CHB was established to protect students’ rights and provide them with an opportunity for an unbiased board of their peers to hear the facts of the case and decide whether a violation of WPI’s Code of Conduct occurred. Information about the CHB and your rights under the WPI Judicial System is available in the Student Planner and Resource Guide and from the Dean of Students Office.

Myth:
All faculty members are in agreement about what level of student collaboration on homework or projects constitutes academic dishonesty.

Fact:
Each faculty member establishes his/her own rules and limits regarding collaboration. A student may incorrectly assume that what was allowed in one course applies to another course as well. Students should listen carefully to their professors’ expectations at the beginning of the course to eliminate incorrect assumptions. Students should ask if they are unsure about the limits of collaboration on group work.
4. Students and/or faculty may request that a case be heard by the Campus Hearing Board (CHB) in lieu of a departmental agreement. This option may be used when a student does not accept responsibility for the charge or does accept responsibility but feels that the sanction offered by the faculty member is too severe. In cases involving a previous record of the academic honesty policy, the case is automatically forwarded to the CHB for resolution.

5. The CHB will hear the allegations following standard procedures for disciplinary hearings established by WPI. The CHB may impose normal disciplinary sanctions and may recommend loss of any credit or grade for the course or project. If a student is found not responsible on a complaint of academic dishonesty, he/she may not be failed or penalized by the faculty member on the grounds of dishonesty. The faculty member must assign a grade based on his/her assessment of the student’s mastery of the material being evaluated. Faculty must allow the student to continue in the course without prejudice, pending resolution of the case.

6. Judicial records are maintained by the Dean of Students Office, and are kept separate from a student’s academic records. It is the policy of WPI that judicial records shall be reportable by the Dean of Students Office for a period of two years from the date of graduation, transfer or withdrawal from WPI, except when the sanction includes suspension or expulsion. In cases involving suspension or expulsion from WPI, disciplinary records shall be kept in perpetuity. Records for cases that are pending completion of the hearing and/or sanction shall be kept in perpetuity. Records will be available to prospective employers and other authorized individuals in accordance with applicable state and federal law and regulations. Judicial records may be shared both internally (e.g., IGSD, honor societies) and externally (e.g., transfer applications, prospective employers, law school) in accordance with federal regulations that require written permission from the student involved. In keeping with the WPI Academic Honesty Policy and the Constitution of the WPI Campus Judicial System, a student’s judicial record may be shared internally as appropriate without the student’s permission to determine if the student has any record of prior offenses involving academic honesty.

emphasis on group work, students should be particularly attentive to their professors’ distinction between group work and individual performance expectations. If a student is in doubt about what is expected of him/her or how he/she will be evaluated, it is always better to seek clarification from his/her faculty member rather than run the risk of violating the academic honesty policy.

What If I Am Accused of Academic Dishonesty?

The WPI faculty and administration have developed a set of procedures designed to ensure uniform (and fair) treatment of undergraduate or graduate students suspected of academic dishonesty.

1. When a faculty member suspects that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty, he/she will investigate the situation and consult with his/her department head. The department head or faculty member will check with the Office of the Dean of Students to determine if the student has any record of prior offenses involving academic dishonesty.

2. The faculty member will consult with the student involved regarding the alleged act of academic dishonesty. If after discussing the situation with the student, the faculty member feels that there is not sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation, the case will be dropped and not pursued any further.

3. If the student admits responsibility for the act of academic dishonesty and it is the first violation of that nature, the complaint may be resolved at the department level. As part of this resolution, there will be a penalty assigned by the faculty member or department head. The maximum penalty that can be applied at the department level is dismissal from a course or a project without credit. In order to resolve the case at the department level, the student and a faculty member must sign the Departmental Agreement Form, which indicates that he/she accepts responsibility for the charge as well as the sanction assigned. Students are not required to resolve the case at the department level, and should not feel intimidated or pressured to do so.

Continued on page 8
Professor suspects student of academic dishonesty

Professor confers with Department Head

Checks with Dean of Students for previous record

Previous record

optional

Student does not admit

Meet with student

Student admits and accepts sanctions

Faculty/Student sign

Copy of agreement sent to Dean of Students

CASE CLOSED

CAMPUS HEARING BOARD

Student found not responsible

CASE CLOSED

Student found responsible

Decision and sanction letter sent

Student does not appeal

CASE CLOSED

Student appeals

PRESIDENTIAL BOARD OF APPEALS

CHB decision upheld

CASE CLOSED

CHB decision modified

Sanction modified

CASE CLOSED

CHB decision reversed

Case remanded to CHB for re-hearing

no record
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Myth:
Students found responsible of academic dishonesty are always suspended from the university.

Fact:
WPI does not subscribe to an automatic sanction for violation of its Academic Honesty Policy. Rather, each violation is reviewed individually and sanctioning takes into consideration the unique situation surrounding the incident. Having said that, reviewing past precedent, most faculty who adjudicate cases within the department impose either a "0" for the assignment or an "NR" for the course. In cases where the student has a prior record of academic dishonesty, the Campus Hearing Board many times imposes a sanction of suspension or disciplinary probation.

Hints to Avoid Committing an Act of Academic Dishonesty
Consider implementing the following best practices to minimize or prevent being accused of an act of academic dishonesty:

• Make sure that you are aware of each professor’s guidelines for Academic Honesty at the beginning of each course. If your professor does not articulate his/her guidelines in the course syllabus or on the first day of class, do not hesitate to ask him/her questions about what specifically constitutes cheating in the course. Do not assume that the guidelines for one professor or one class apply to all your classes.

• Pay particular attention to class guidelines about group and project work and when it is appropriate to work in teams. The same holds true for homework or computer programs. If you are confused or unclear, ask your faculty member for clarification.

• If you are not permitted to work together on assignments, use caution when you are helping a classmate. Do not lend your homework, provide copies of exams or quizzes, or provide assistance when it is specifically prohibited. Some students have tried to help out a friend, only to find themselves accused of facilitating academic dishonesty.

• If you are having difficulty with an assignment, homework, or project, don’t cheat. Get help from your professor, teaching assistant, or tutor.

• When doing research or writing a paper, make sure that you give full and proper credit to your sources, including those from the...
Internet, and appropriately attribute direct quotes. An excellent resource is a copyright booklet entitled “Campus Copyright Rights and Responsibilities,” which is located at [www.aapnet.org/images/stories/documents/Campus_Copyright.pdf](http://www.aapnet.org/images/stories/documents/Campus_Copyright.pdf). Remember that it is just as easy for your professor to search the web for your sources as it was for you to find them. If you are unsure about proper documentation practices, make an appointment with the Writing Center to educate yourself. Ask your professor about his/her specific requirements for documentation. WPI also has access to RefWorks, an on-line program that helps you create an on-line bibliography and reference tracking system. It helps you keep track of the sources you are using for your research, including the ability to paste in sections of the text of the documents and your own notes about the sources. Go to [http://libguides.wpi.edu/refworks](http://libguides.wpi.edu/refworks).

- If you are using old copies of tests to study and prepare for an exam, make certain this is allowed by your professor and, if so, do so with caution. Many professors will make subtle changes in exam questions from year to year.
- In an exam setting, keep your eyes on your own paper. Guard your own paper during an exam so that it is not easy for someone to copy from you.
- Plan ahead. When you procrastinate or leave things until the last minute, feelings of desperation and panic may lead you to consider cheating as a solution to your lack of preparation. Leave yourself enough time to properly prepare assignments and projects, and to study for tests.
- If you see a fellow student committing an act of academic dishonesty, do not hesitate to report him/her to the professor.
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2015–16

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