

Academic Integrity

Conducting yourself with integrity in your academic pursuits is of critical importance and a matter that the School of Education and Social Policy takes seriously. SESP has developed a comprehensive procedure both for investigating an allegation of academic integrity violation and for administering appropriate sanctions.

On each SESP course syllabus, you will find the following language:

Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed by the professor. Your written work may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern download the guide [here](#).

Following a description of the procedures used to investigate alleged violations and to determine sanctions are two testimonial letters written by SESP students who were sanctioned for violating the academic integrity policy. These letters provide helpful insight from the perspective of a SESP student regarding both what caused the student to violate the policy and what the student learned from the experience. Reading both letters will help you better understand the challenges with which you may be confronted during your undergraduate career.

Additional information about Academic Integrity is here:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/principles.html>

Information about how to avoid plagiarism: <https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/how-to-avoid-plagiarism.html>

If you have questions about academic integrity for a particular class, talk with the professor of the course. If you have general questions about academic integrity, talk with your SESP adviser or the SESP Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

SESP Procedures for Violations of Academic Integrity Guidelines

The School of Education and Social Policy and Northwestern University expects students to exhibit integrity in all academic matters. This section provides important details regarding the University's academic integrity policy and our school's procedures for handling allegations of violation of the policy, and a testimonial letter written by a SESP student who violated the Academic Integrity policy, are included at the end of this section.

All communications related to academic integrity allegations, procedures, and discipline will be communicated via email, which shall constitute effective notice.

Should you have any questions about this policy, contact your SESP adviser or the SESP Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. If you have a question regarding the expectations of a professor regarding group work, assignments, exams (in class and take home), papers (citations, references, quotations, footnotes, etc.), or other matters, contact the professor directly.

I. INITIATION OF A COMPLAINT

a. All cases of violations of academic integrity guidelines by undergraduates in courses in the School of Education and Social Policy (SESP) must be referred to the SESP Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. Cases should be referred within one month of the date of the alleged incident, or within one month of the date the reporting individual becomes aware of the alleged incident, whichever is later. No disciplinary action will be taken on any case if more than one year has elapsed since the alleged incident, however, the assistant dean may meet with the student to review the academic integrity policy.

b. The Assistant Dean shall review the facts of the alleged incident, including statements of the reporting individual, the instructor(s), and any supporting material. If, after the review, the Assistant Dean determines that there is cause for further investigation, he/she shall notify the student by letter of the date of the incident (if known), the course and instructor, the nature of the alleged violation, and the sanctions that may be imposed, if it is ultimately determined that a violation took place. A copy of the current procedures should accompany the letter. (The possible sanctions are detailed in Section III below). Inclusion of the document with the letter constitutes notification of the possible sanctions.

The letter shall request that the student make an appointment with the Assistant Dean to discuss the case within seven working days of the date of the letter, at which time the student may present any relevant material or statements on his/her behalf. The letter shall inform the student of his/her rights, prior to meeting with the Assistant Dean, to review relevant original materials in the Office of Student Affairs, to obtain copies of such materials if desired, and to discuss the matter with a member of the faculty or other individual. Review of original materials must take place by appointment during normal working hours at the Office of Student Affairs within seven working days of the date of the Assistant Dean's letter.

If the student does not schedule a meeting within seven working days, the Assistant Dean will make his/her determination on the basis of the evidence before him/her at that time.

c. A student may not change their registration in any course once an alleged violation of academic integrity in that course has been discovered regardless of whether the alleged violation has been referred to the Assistant Dean. Nor may

such students receive a University degree while the alleged violation is pending or during any period of suspension imposed pursuant to a finding of a violation of academic integrity is in effect.

d. In certain cases where timely notification is important - - as, for instance, if a student is about to leave campus for vacation - - verbal notification can be made, but such verbal notification should be followed by email.

II. MEETING WITH THE SESP ASSISTANT DEAN FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

e. The Assistant Dean has the authority to determine, based on the evidence presented by the reporting individual, the instructor(s), and the student, whether a violation of academic integrity guidelines has occurred: this authority will be communicated to the student in the Assistant Dean's initial letter.

f. In meeting with the student, the Assistant Dean will describe the charges made and detail the evidence supporting those charges. At this initial meeting, the student may decline to discuss the matter and/or request that the Assistant Dean defer making a determination until after a subsequent meeting between the student and the Assistant Dean, at which the student may present relevant information or evidence. This must be requested at the initial meeting and must be scheduled for a time within seven working days of the initial meeting.

g. After his/her review, the Assistant Dean shall inform the student by letter of their decision and the sanction, if any, to be imposed. If the student is not registered in SESP, the sanction will be determined by the school in which the student is registered. See Section VI below.

III. SANCTIONS

h. Sanctions which may be imposed by the Assistant Dean include, but are not limited to: a reduced or failing grade in the course (as determined by the course instructor); a letter of warning; a defined period of probation, with or without the attachment of conditions; withdrawal of University funding; a defined period of suspension, with or without the attachment of conditions; permanent exclusion from the University; notation on the official record; revocation of an awarded degree; nullification of an Interschool Transfer application or any combination of the previously listed sanctions.

i. Any grade entered for a student in a course in which an allegation of academic dishonesty is pending against him/her, whether for the course as a whole or for a piece of work submitted in the course, is subject to modification after all proceedings and appeals are concluded. Should the student be found to have violated academic integrity guidelines, the course instructor is empowered, in his/her sole discretion, to determine the effect this violation will have on the

student's grade in the course; possible actions range from disregarding the incident in calculating the grade to failing the student in the course.

IV. APPEALS TO THE SESP COMMITTEE ON APPEALS

j. The Assistant Dean's decision and sanction may be appealed to the SESP Committee on Appeals by filing a written notice of appeal within 10 working days of the date of the letter of notification of the imposed sanction. The student's written notice of appeal must state what is being appealed -- whether the finding of a violation of the academic integrity guidelines, the sanction imposed, or both -- and must describe in detail the grounds for the appeal. The student's written notice of appeal should also state whether the student desires to present the appeal in person to the SESP Committee on Appeals. The Assistant Dean's letter to the student setting forth their decision and sanctions informs the student of this right and process of appeal. *Refer to the end of this document for modification on the committee on appeals passed by the SESP faculty on October 8, 2002.*

k. If the student so requests, he/she will be granted an opportunity to appear in person to present his/her case to the SESP Committee on Appeals, and to hear and respond to any testimony provided by the Assistant Dean or witnesses appearing before the SESP Committee on Appeals. Likewise, the Assistant Dean may be present to hear and respond to testimony of the accused student or any witnesses appearing before the SESP Committee on Appeals. If the student wishes to present witnesses before the SESP Committee on Appeals, he/she must inform the Chair of the SESP Committee on Appeals at least seven working days before the appeal is to be heard of the names of the proposed witnesses and of the nature of the evidence they are prepared to present. However, the SESP Committee on Appeals has sole discretion to determine what witnesses other than the accused student and the Assistant Dean it will hear, if any. The SESP Committee on Appeals shall review the appeal as soon as practical after it has been filed.

l. Following its review, the SESP Committee on Appeals may sustain or reverse the findings of academic dishonesty, if that portion of the Assistant Dean's decision was appealed, and may, if a finding of academic dishonesty stands, sustain or modify (but not increase) the sanction, if that portion of the decision was appealed. The SESP Committee on Appeals shall inform the student of its decision by letter.

V. APPEAL TO THE PROVOST

The student may appeal the SESP Committee on Appeals' decision to the Provost of the University. Such appeals must be in writing and include a detailed statement setting forth the grounds for the appeal. Appeals to the Provost will be limited to alleged errors in procedures, interpretation of regulations, or alleged manifest discrepancies between the evidence and a school finding and/or sanction. The Provost will receive appeals only after a sanction has been specified for the alleged violation (see Section VI below). An appeal to the Provost may

concern the finding and/or the proposed sanction. The letter communicating the Committee's decision shall inform the student of this right of appeal.

VI. CROSS-SCHOOL CASES

m. In instances where a student registered in another school is alleged to have committed a violation of the academic integrity guidelines in a SESP course, the authority of the School of Education and Social Policy will extend only to determining whether or not the alleged action constitutes a violation of academic integrity and, if so, to the imposition of a grade penalty by the instructor in the course (See Section III.B.). If the finding is affirmative, the case will be referred to the appropriate authority of the school in which the student is registered for whatever further sanction that school deems appropriate.

n. Similarly, the Assistant Dean may be called upon to determine further sanctions for SESP students who have been found guilty of academic integrity violations in courses in another Northwestern school.

In instances where a SESP student has been found to have committed a violation of the academic integrity guidelines in a course offered by another school, the Assistant Dean will notify the student in writing of the formal referral of the matter to SESP for determination of a SESP sanction, if any. Such notification will inform the student that he/she should schedule an appointment with the Assistant Dean, to take place within seven working days, to present any evidence of mitigating circumstances, but not on the underlying question of guilt or innocence. If the student does not schedule an appointment within the allotted time, or within such extension of time as the Assistant Dean may grant in his/her sole discretion, the Assistant Dean will make a decision on sanctions based on the available information.

o. The Assistant Dean will inform the student in writing of any sanction imposed and of the student's right to appeal that sanction (but not issues of guilt or innocence) to the SESP Committee on Appeals.

VII. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

p. A student may not change their registration in any course once an alleged violation of academic integrity in that course has been discovered, regardless of whether the alleged violation has been referred to the Assistant Dean. Nor may such students receive a University degree while the alleged violation is pending or during any period of suspension imposed, pursuant to a finding of a violation of academic integrity is in effect.

q. The student may be accompanied by a fellow student, a faculty member, or another individual of the student's choosing – except an attorney – at any stage of the proceedings described above. This person may only serve as a witness;

thus, they may not take part in the proceedings. The Assistant Dean or the SESP Committee on Appeals may, however, grant an exception to this policy when either determines that the individual accompanying the student has testimony that they deem to be appropriate.

r. Sanctions specified by the Assistant Dean, as modified by the SESP Committee on Appeals or the Provost (if an appeal has been filed) shall take effect at the expiration of the period for appeal of a decision if an appeal has not been filed, and after a decision has been reached by the Committee on Appeals or the Provost if an appeal has been filed. If the appeal is not granted, the sanction will be applied retroactive to the date specified by the Assistant Dean and, if necessary, current registrations may be canceled.

s. All materials relating to an allegation of academic dishonesty will be kept in the SESP Office of Student Affairs for a period of 10 years, regardless of the findings in the case.

t. All references to the Assistant Dean in these procedures include the Assistant Dean's designee if circumstances prevent the Assistant Dean from participating.

MODIFICATIONS:

IV. APPEALS TO THE SESP COMMITTEE ON APPEALS

The Assistant Dean's decision and sanction may be appealed to the SESP Dean, or to the SESP Committee on Appeals, by filing a written notice of appeal within 10 working days of the date of the letter of notification. The Undergraduate Committee of the School serves as the SESP Committee on Appeals.

Approved by the School of Education and Social Policy Faculty on October 8, 2002.

Academic Integrity - Testimonial Letters

Two SESP students who were sanctioned for violating the academic integrity policy wrote testimonial letters in which they reflect upon and share what they learned through the academic discipline process. Read both letters carefully, and combined with a careful review of the Academic Integrity at Northwestern: A Basic Guide, make every effort necessary to comply with all University Academic Integrity Principles to avoid plagiarism.

First Letter

Three Simple Rules for Avoiding an Academic Integrity Violation

Northwestern University runs on the quarter system, and it moves quickly. While it's not always the case, some students find themselves with a heavy workload, especially if they are enrolled in several classes

that require them to complete lengthy assignments like long papers or extended projects. These assignments are often due during midterm or finals weeks. Attempting to complete multiple important projects in a short amount of time, however, can lead to carelessness and bad judgment, which in some cases may lead to an academic integrity violation.

Registration at Northwestern requires adherence to the University's standards of academic integrity. Academic integrity violations consist of many types of behaviors, and cannot be listed exhaustively. According to Northwestern's definition of academic integrity, behaviors that violate it include all types of cheating and plagiarism as well as fabrication of information or falsification of records. The University also forbids aiding and abetting academic dishonesty, which means no one is to assist another person in committing any of the violations listed above.

Here in the School of Education and Social Policy (SESP) you will be required to write many papers and complete a few extended projects. To ensure that you have not set yourself up to purposely or accidentally commit an academic integrity violation it is wise to follow a few simple rules:

Take your time ahead of time: It's best to start your assignments more than a couple days before they are due. While this isn't always possible, it's best to complete your assignments early so you have time to double check your work for errors and ensure you have properly cited your sources.

Communicate with your professors: If you feel like you've got too many assignments on your plate, try to ask one of your professors for an extension. While not every professor is flexible, it's always worth inquiring. Getting an extension can prevent you from needing to rush through an assignment.

Don't copy + paste: These days students do lot of research online. Although copy + paste is an easy way to transfer a quotation or an argument into a Word document, it is actually a violation of copyright law in most cases. Instead of copy + pasting, you should try to put the text in your own words, citing sources appropriately. If you wish to use the author's words make sure to use quotation marks and cite it correctly.

Second Letter

When faced with a decision that could lead to an academic integrity violation, our desire and need to accomplish the task at hand leads to short term, narrow minded thinking that clouds our moral reasoning and rational decision making. Short term, narrow minded thinking is a type of thinking in which people focus on short term benefits rather than thinking about potential long term costs or issues that would deter them from satisfying a current desire or need. It accounts for inconsiderate thinking as well as a person's abandonment of morals, making it easier to cheat. If a person can take time to think about why cheating is wrong, think considerately, and weigh the costs and benefits of cheating, they would more likely make the correct decision.

I never took the time to think about why cheating is actually wrong, so I encourage every student to think about why it is wrong. This thought process did not only help me with cheating in an academic setting, it helped me understand any form of cheating. In addition to understanding why cheating is wrong, thinking about the potential harm and time spent by others because of your violation is another deterrent for cheating. I failed to consider the person who worked hard to complete the assignment, as well as the TAs, professors, and deans who had to deal with the violation. I did not only waste their valued time, but I

caused stress and anxiety for the person whose work I used, and disturbed the professors and deans who I had previously been on good terms with.

Putting morals and the consideration of others aside, if a person could step back from the situation, and consider the costs and benefits from cheating, one would realize that cheating is not a wise decision. I only considered the short term benefit of finishing my assignment with less effort and receiving a good grade. The short term cost of this cheating only occurred to me as a slight chance that I would be caught, resulting in a zero for the assignment. The potential costs of cheating did not seem high because I failed to consider all of the potential costs from cheating. Cheating on an assignment will not only potentially get you a zero on the assignment, but it can also result in you failing the course, being suspended from the University, or even expelled (this is regardless if the assignment is worth 1% of your grade or your entire grade). Even if you consider the chances of getting caught from cheating to be extremely low, the severity of the costs associated with this low probability still makes cheating an irrational decision.

If you are ever faced with a decision that could lead to an academic integrity violation, and your moral reasoning and consideration of others fails, at least think about the irrationality of cheating in terms of the potential costs far outweighing any potential benefits. Most importantly, take the time to think through these issues and concerns before you are faced with a decision that could lead to an academic integrity violation, as it will help you avoid the short-term, narrow minded thinking that can result from a panic to get an assignment done or even pre-meditated violations.