

# STEPS FOR HANDLING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY CASES

The following provides a set of guidelines for following the procedures necessary in handling cases of academic dishonesty. The Academic Integrity website ([www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity)) provides additional guidance as well as sample email messages that can be used when communicating with students about academic integrity offences. In order to ensure that students are treated fairly, it is very important that the procedures be followed.

## COURSE INSTRUCTOR

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*For the purposes of interpreting this policy, "instructor" means the course instructor - a teaching assistant (TA) is not an instructor. In some departments where TAs have considerable responsibility for teaching parts of a course (e.g., seminars, labs), an instructor may request that the TA have an initial discussion with the student. However, it is expected that the course instructor will meet with the student, make a decision and complete the paper work as outlined below.*

### STEP 1

If academic dishonesty is suspected, the instructor investigates and gathers supporting evidence.

### STEP 2

Instructor sends an email to the student at the student's trentu.ca address (*recommend using sample email from Integrity website*) requesting a meeting to discuss the matter. If the student does not reply, the instructor needs to make a reasonable effort to ensure that the student received the message (*e.g.*, talk to the student after class, telephone student). The student is not required to meet with the instructor and the investigation can proceed without such a meeting. Instructors are encouraged to be sensitive to the timing of original contact with the student. Sending an email and/or requesting a meeting just before the final exam in the course is likely to cause a considerable amount of anxiety.

During the meeting, the instructor should show the student the evidence that supports the accusation (*e.g.*, section of essay that has been plagiarized and section from the source material containing the same or highly similar wording; highly similar responses on another student's test or essay). If the incident involves more than one student, each student should be interviewed separately.

### STEP 3

- a) If, after meeting with the student, the instructor determines that no academic dishonesty occurred, the student should be informed of that decision as soon as possible. The student should be assured that no further action will be taken unless new evidence comes to light.
- b) The *Academic Dishonesty Report – Instructor Form* should be completed if, after meeting with the student or if the student fails to respond to a request for a meeting, the instructor determines that an offence has been committed. The form has a section for the student's version of events to be provided. This is for the instructor to complete; it is not expected that the student will fill this in.  
NOTE: The most recent version of the Instructor Form (dated 2011-04-07) should be used - available from the Integrity website.

### STEP 4

The instructor sends an email to the student, copied to the Chair (*recommend using sample email*). The email should indicate that a report has been completed and that the student has seven days from the date of the report to send written comments to the Chair. The student must be provided a copy of the report and copies of the supporting documentation (*e.g.*, essay marked to show plagiarized material and article or web page marked to show original material). These can either be appended as scanned documents attached to the email or as hard copies to be picked up from the department office.

**Note:** The instructor should assume that the minimum penalty of zero on the assignment is to be imposed and calculate the final grade accordingly. If the student is successful in appealing the accusation of academic dishonesty, the instructor will be contacted by the Chair or the Associate Dean and asked to assess the work in question and recalculate the final grade.

# CHAIR

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In the event that the course instructor is also the department Chair, another faculty member should take over the Chair's role.

## STEP 1

Chair receives a copy of the Instructor Report and all supporting documentation. (*Instructor should also have provided same information to student*). Student has seven days from date of report to send written comments to the Chair in order to add or clarify information in the Instructor's Report. The Chair is not expected to meet with the student unless the student requests such a meeting.

## STEP 2

Chair reviews Report and appeal information (if available) from the student. If no responding comments have been received, the Chair should be assured that a reasonable effort was made to notify the student of the charge and that s/he has been given the opportunity to respond.

- If the chair is not satisfied that academic dishonesty occurred, he/she informs both student and instructor, in writing, of that decision. The student should be assured that no further action will be taken unless new evidence comes to light.
- If the chair is satisfied that academic dishonesty has occurred, go to STEP 3

## STEP 3

Chair contacts Office of Associate Dean to see if a previous academic offence is on record. Note, this step should not be taken until the Chair has made the decision that academic dishonesty has occurred (Step 2).

- If there is a prior record, Chair does not complete the Chair Dishonesty form. Instead, Chair forwards case to Associate Dean who will make the decision. Chair sends email (*recommend using sample email*) to student notifying him/her that academic dishonesty occurred and, due to a prior offence on record, the case has been forwarded to the Associate Dean for a decision to be made. As well, student is told that he/she has two weeks to appeal decision of Chair to Associate Dean.
  - In addition to sending the Associate Dean a copy of the Instructor Form and any evidence supporting the allegation, the Chair should provide the Associate Dean with copies of any email communications by the Instructor and Chair with the student, a summary of any meetings between the Chair and the student, and whether in the Chair's opinion, the offence is Minor or Major.
- If there is no prior record, Chair determines if offence is Minor or Major (*see website for guidance on making this decision or consult Associate Dean*):
  - Minor Offence - student receives a grade of '0' on the piece of work
  - Major Offence - student receives a grade of '0' on the piece of work
    - student receives a notation of 'Academic Dishonesty' on his/her transcript
    - Chair may deduct a further amount (up to 100%) from the student's final grade in the course
- Simultaneous Offences – As a general rule, if the Chair receives two or more simultaneous cases of Academic Dishonesty for the same student (and there is no prior record), each case should be treated as if it were the student's first offence, whether it is minor or major. *Recommendation: discuss with the Associate Dean.*
- Penalty Other Than Usual Penalty – If Chair decides, due to extraordinary circumstances, to levy a penalty other than the usual penalty, he/she will notify the Associate Dean of the reasons.
- Limits of Chair's Authority – The Chair cannot levy a penalty any stronger than a final grade of zero in the course. If Chair decides that the offence requires a stronger penalty, he/she outlines the rationale and forwards case to Associate Dean for a decision.

## STEP 4

Chair completes the *Academic Dishonesty Report – Chair's Form*.

- Chair sends email to student with copy of form attached or with notice that form can be picked up from department office (*copied to Associate Dean - recommend using sample email*).

- All documentation is filed in the departmental office. If student appeals, department will be asked to forward documentation to the Associate Dean.

Student may appeal Chair's decision by writing to the Associate Dean within two weeks of receiving the form.

**Note:** If the Chair decides that an additional reduction in the final grade is warranted, this can be included in the final grade calculation that is reported to the Registrar's Office. If the student successfully appeals, the Assoc. Dean will contact the Chair to arrange a change of grade.

## **ASSOCIATE DEAN**

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### **STEP 1**

Student has two weeks to appeal Chair's decision by writing to Associate Dean.

### **STEP 2**

If student submits an appeal, Associate Dean will consider student's arguments and evaluate all the evidence provided by the Instructor and Chair. The Associate Dean will inform the student, department Chair and course Instructor of decision and penalties to be levied (if appropriate), normally within two weeks of receiving the appeal.

### **STEP 3**

Student may appeal a decision of the Associate Dean to the Special Appeals Committee within four weeks of notification of that decision. The Special Appeals decision is final.

**Note:** If the decision by either the Associate Dean or the Special Appeals Committee is in the student's favour and the allegation of academic dishonesty is rescinded, no record of the allegation is kept in the central Academic Integrity database.

**Note:** With the exception of grade adjustments noted above (steps for Instructor and Chair), the Associate Dean will inform the Office of the Registrar of any changes to a student's transcript and/or academic standing as a result of an academic integrity offence.