

Steps for Handling Academic Dishonesty Cases

Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy Guidelines for Course Instructors and Department Chairs

Below is a set of guidelines for following the procedures necessary in handling cases of academic dishonesty. The Academic Integrity website at 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

- 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 paperwork 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 website) requesting a meeting to discuss the matter. If the student does not reply, the instructor should 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 Instructor Report* 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 report 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.

- c) The policy allows flexibility regarding the penalty for a minor offence. The recommended penalty is a zero grade but if the instructor believes that a less punitive penalty is appropriate, the instructor can recommend a grade higher than zero; it must be a failing grade (i.e., lower than 50%).

Step 4

The instructor sends an email to the student (recommend using sample email), copied to the chair and to the dean at academicintegrity@trentu.ca (a block will be put on the student's ability to drop the course). 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 webpage marked to show original material). The *Instructor Report* should be attached to the email; the other documentation 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 penalty 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 dean and asked to assess the work in question and recalculate the final grade.

Department Chair

- If the course instructor is also the department chair, another faculty member should take over the chair's role.
- Under the policy, the chair is expected to convey their decision to the student within two weeks of receiving student comments or, if no comments are provided, within two weeks of receipt of the *Instructor Report*.

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 report. The chair is not expected to meet with the student unless the student requests such a meeting.

Step 2

Chair reviews *Instructor Report* and appeal information (if provided) 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 the student has been given the opportunity to respond.

- If the chair is not satisfied that academic dishonesty occurred, the chair 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. That notification must also be copied to academicintegrity@trentu.ca (the registration block will be removed).

- If the chair is satisfied that academic dishonesty has occurred, chair determines if offence is minor or major (see website for guidance) – go to **Step 3**.

Step 3

Chair contacts academicintegrity@trentu.ca to see if a previous academic offence is on record. This step should not be taken until the chair has made the decision that academic dishonesty has occurred and has determined whether minor or major (Step 2).

- **If there is a prior record**, chair does not complete the *Academic Dishonesty Chair Report*. Instead, chair forwards case to the dean at academicintegrity@trentu.ca. Chair sends email to student (recommend using sample email), copied to instructor, notifying them that academic dishonesty occurred and, due to a prior offence on record, the case has been forwarded to the dean for a decision to be made. As well, student is told that they have two weeks to appeal decision of chair to the dean.

In addition to sending the dean (at academicintegrity@trentu.ca) all evidence supporting the allegation, the chair should provide the 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 completes the *Academic Dishonesty Chair Report* and indicates if offence is minor or major:
 - Minor Offence
 - Student receives a grade of zero on the piece of work OR a grade between zero and 49% (the recommended penalty is a grade of zero, but if a chair believes a less punitive penalty is appropriate, the chair can assign a grade higher than zero; it must be a failing grade – i.e., lower than 50%)
 - Major Offence
 - Student receives a grade of zero on the piece of work
 - Student receives a notation of 'Academic Dishonesty' on their transcript
 - Chair may deduct a further amount (up to 100%) from the student's final grade in the course – this can be included in the final grade calculation reported to the Office of the Registrar – if the student successfully appeals, the dean will contact the chair to arrange a change of grade
- **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.

- Penalty Other Than Usual Penalty – If chair decides, due to extraordinary circumstances, to levy a penalty other than the usual penalty, the chair will notify the 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, the chair outlines the rationale and forwards case to the dean for a decision.

Step 4

Chair sends email to student with the *Chair Report* attached or with notice that *Chair Report* can be picked up from department office (recommend using sample email); copied to the instructor and the dean at academicintegrity@trentu.ca.

All hard copy documentation is filed in the departmental office. If student appeals, department will be asked to forward documentation to the dean.

Student may appeal chair's decision by writing to the dean at academicintegrity@trentu.ca within two weeks of receiving the report.

Dean

Step 1

If student submits an appeal, dean considers the student's arguments and evaluates all the evidence provided by the instructor and chair. Dean informs the student, chair, and instructor of decision and penalties to be levied (if appropriate), normally within two weeks of receiving the appeal.

Step 2

Student may appeal a decision of the 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 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, the dean will inform the Office of the Registrar of a) imposition and/or removal of block on the student's ability to drop the course and b) any changes to a student's transcript and/or academic standing as a result of an academic integrity offence.