

Academic Honesty Policy

Academic honesty 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.

Definition

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 a vital 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 are examples of academic dishonesty at WPI:

Fabrication

Examples:

- Altering grades or other official records
- Changing exam solutions after the fact
- Inventing or changing laboratory data
- Falsifying research
- Inventing sources
- Sabotage of another student's work or academic record

Plagiarism

Examples:

- Misrepresenting the work of another as one's own
- Inaccurately or inadequately citing sources including those from the Internet

Cheating

Examples:

- Use of purchased term papers
- Copying on exams, homework, or take-home exams
- Use of unauthorized materials or sources of information such as "cheat sheet," pre-programmed calculator
- Assistance of another person in cases where prohibited

Facilitation

Examples:

- Sharing test questions or answers from an exam with another student
- Letting another student copy a solution to a homework problem, exam, or lab
- Taking an exam for another student
- Assistance in any act of academic dishonesty of another student

Responsibilities of Faculty Members and Students

Faculty members should outline their policies concerning evaluation procedures and their expectations pertaining to academic integrity at the beginning of each course. Faculty must ensure that student performance is judged solely on the basis of academic work in courses and projects. Because of the differences in disciplines and the type of work involved, faculty interpretation regarding what constitutes academic dishonesty may vary across campus. Since project-based education places a strong emphasis on group work, faculty and students should be particularly attentive to the distinction between group work and individual performance expectations. Faculty and students are responsible for knowing and understanding WPI's policy and procedure for dealing with academic dishonesty. Faculty are encouraged to implement measures designed to minimize or prevent academic dishonesty.

Procedures

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. Students or others who suspect a faculty member of professional dishonesty should consult the academic department head or the provost.

- Faculty shall report to the department chair any suspected act of academic dishonesty.
- The chair shall review cases referred to him/her to determine if there is reason for believing that academic dishonesty may be involved.
- Faculty shall allow the student to continue in the course without prejudice, pending resolution of the case.
- The chair or instructor shall check with the dean or associate dean of students to determine if the student has any record of prior offenses involving academic dishonesty.
- The chair or instructor shall consult with the student involved. If the act of academic dishonesty is admitted and is the first violation of that nature, the chair or instructor may resolve the complaint within the department, provided the penalty is accepted by the student in writing. The maximum penalty that can be applied at the department level is dismissal from a course or a project without credit. In all cases, a signed, written report on the matter, including the action taken, shall be sent to the Dean of Students Office and to the student's Academic Advisor.
- For the second and subsequent violations, the case shall be submitted to the Campus Hearing Board for resolution.
- The Campus Hearing Board shall hear the allegations, following standard procedures for disciplinary hearings established by WPI. The board 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 instructor on the grounds of dishonesty. The instructor shall assign a grade based on his or her assessment of the student's mastery of the material being evaluated.
- Disciplinary records for any act of academic dishonesty shall be retained in the Dean of Students Office for two years from the date of graduation or withdrawal from WPI, except when the sanction includes suspension or expulsion. In cases resulting in suspension or expulsion from WPI, disciplinary records shall be kept in perpetuity. Records for cases that are pending completion of the hearing and/or the sanction shall be kept in perpetuity. Judicial records are kept separate from a student's academic records. A student's judicial record may be shared internally as appropriate to determine if a past record exists. Records shall be available to prospective employers and other authorized individuals, in accordance with federal regulations that require written permission from the student involved.