

Guide to Evaluating Severity of Academic Misconduct¹

This document is designed to aid faculty in evaluating the severity of academic misconduct and in considering what type of sanction to impose. These are guidelines only. The chart below contains guidelines that faculty may find useful as they determine their recommended sanctions. The chart uses the terms “minor,” “moderate,” and “major” as related to offenses. It is also important to contact the Office of Student Conduct to determine if the student has received prior sanctions for academic misconduct. Please note that a minor offense in one category counts as the first minor offense in any category. For instance, if one commits a minor offense in cheating and then plagiarizes at a later time, the plagiarism is considered a second offense.

MINOR OFFENSES: In general, minor offenses involve errors in judgment that, in the faculty member’s professional opinion, violate academic integrity, such as:

- Minor Collaboration example: student copies part of the work of another student exactly on an assignment on which collaboration is allowed but copying is not.
- Minor Cheating example: A student is caught glancing at another exam, but there is no evidence of premeditation or collaboration between those students
- Minor Plagiarism example: student indicates that source of information is not original, but does not follow proper citation procedures.

MODERATE OFFENSES: In general, moderate offenses are unpremeditated dishonest acts that directly affect only one student, such as:

- Moderate Collaboration example: student paraphrases or copies a sentence (or two) without citing the source, or provides an improper citation.
- Moderate Cheating example: student cheats, or facilitates the cheating of another, on an examination (in cases where there is no evidence of premeditation). A student tries to gain an advantage in an exam by removing reserved materials from a lab or library to have additional study time at home
- Moderate Plagiarism example: student paraphrases or copies a portion of a document without citing the source, or provides an improper citation

MAJOR OFFENSES: In general, major offenses are premeditated dishonest acts or dishonest acts that directly affects the offenders and/or other students’ grades, such as:

- Major Collaboration example: student poses as, or facilitates another posing as, someone else during an exam.
- Major Cheating example: student cheats or facilitates the cheating of another on an examination in a way that is premeditated (e.g., using a cheat sheet, a prearranged system of sharing answers, or some similar method that was planned in advance).
- Major Plagiarism example: student places his/her name on a written assignment he/she did not write.

¹ This guide is adopted, with modification, from Penn State University with permission

Table 1. Descriptions of possible academic violations and considerations	
VIOLATION	CONSIDERATIONS
<p>Cheating: Using crib sheets; reprogramming a calculator; using notes or books during a closed book exam; etc.</p>	<p>When sanctioning, consider whether the misconduct was premeditated, the impact it potentially had on student's course grade, and the level of dishonest activity in which the student engaged.</p>
<p>Copying on test: Looking at other unsuspecting students' exams and copying; copying in a complicit manner with another student; exchanging color-coded exams for the purpose of copying; passing answers via notes; discussing answers in exam; etc.</p>	<p>In determining severity, consider the weight of the exam as related to total percentage of course grade, the frequency of copied answers, whether or not it was premeditated or spontaneous, and any other significant actors.</p>
<p>Plagiarism: Fabricating information and/or citations; copying from the Internet or submitting the work of others from professional journals, books, articles and papers; submitting other students' papers or lab results or project reports and representing the work as one's own; fabricating, in part or total, submissions and citing them falsely; etc.</p>	<p>In determining severity, consider the weight of the paper as related to the total percentage of course grade, whether the fabrication or plagiarism was a substantive portion of the assignment, and attempt to determine whether this was a clear case of intentional dishonesty or careless scholarship.</p>
<p>Tampering with work: Changing one's own or another student's work product such as lab results, papers, or test answers; tampering with work either as a prank or in order to sabotage another's work.</p>	<p>The motive for this behavior is a critical issue. Such acts may be motivated by an immature sense of humor or competition for grades, or may be a form of harassment of another student. If such misconduct induces conflict between students in your class, the Office of Student Conduct should be contacted.</p>
<p>Acts of aiding or abetting: Facilitating academically dishonest acts by others; unauthorized collaboration of work; permitting another to copy from exam; writing a paper for another; inappropriately collaborating on home assignments or exams without permission or when prohibited; etc.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) For students who are enrolled in your class, consider the impact their actions had on the grade of the student they were assisting in measuring the severity of the violation. 2) In cases where the student is facilitating an act that is dishonest for another, the facilitator may not be enrolled in your class and thus you may not be able to assign a failing grade. You may consider making a direct referral to the Office of Student Conduct, as well as notifying the school in which the student is enrolled for their records.
<p>Unauthorized possession: Buying or stealing exams; failing to return exams on</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) This form of misconduct is inherently premeditated and deceptive with the intent to

<p>file; selling exams; photocopying exams; any possession of an exam without the faculty member's permission.</p>	<p>defraud. The nature in which the exam was obtained is critical in determining appropriate action in this type of case. For example, if a student were to break into an office to steal an exam, we are then dealing with not only an academic violation, but also a theft.</p> <p>2) <i>Note: In this case the category 1st offense minor is Not Applicable. It is recommended that all sanctions resulting from this misconduct be drawn from either moderate or major ranges.</i></p>
<p>Submitting previous work: Submitting a paper, case study, lab report, or any assignment that had been submitted for credit in a prior class without the knowledge and permission of the instructor.</p>	<p>Students appear to be less informed regarding this form of academic dishonesty. Consideration should be made to determine if the student was simply trying to avoid additional work, or if the student has a continued and significant interest in that particular subject matter. In the later case it should be made clear to student that the papers must be substantively different from each other by adding new material. In order to clarify these assumptions, students should seek permission from the instructor before submitting such work.</p>
<p>Ghosting or misrepresenting: Taking a quiz or exam, or performing a laboratory exercise or similar evaluation in place of another; Having another do the same in one's place.</p>	<p>1) This form of misconduct is inherently premeditated and deceptive with the intent to defraud.</p> <p>2) Also note that one of the actors may not be enrolled in your class and as such you may not have the option to assign an academic sanction. In such instances you should notify the college in which the student is enrolled and refer the case to the Office of Student Conduct.</p> <p>3) <i>Note: In this case the category 1st offense minor is Not Applicable. It is recommended that all sanctions resulting from this misconduct be drawn from either moderate or major ranges.</i></p>
<p>Altering exams: Changing incorrect answers and seeking favorable grade adjustments when instructor returns graded exams for in class review and subsequently collects them; Asserting that the instructor made a mistake in grading. Other forms may include changing the letter and/or the numerical grade on a test.</p>	<p>This form of misconduct is deceptive with the intent to defraud, and may also affect the credibility of an instructor. Consideration should be given to whether the act was premeditated or spontaneously committed out of panic. In determining severity, consider the extent to which the exam was altered, the weight of the exam as related to total percentage of course grade, and other significant factors.</p>

<p>Computer theft: Electronic theft of computer programs or other software, data, images, art, or text belonging to another.</p>	<p>1) This misconduct includes premeditation and intent to deceive. Depending on the nature of the theft, the student may have also committed violations of computer policy so it is recommended that the Office of Student Conduct should be contacted.</p> <p>2) <i>Note: In this case the category 1st offense minor is Not Applicable. It is recommended that all sanctions resulting from this misconduct be drawn from either moderate or major ranges.</i></p>
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Table 2. Use this chart to determine appropriate range of sanctions for violations of different severity in consideration of 1st or 2nd offenses				
	1 st offense minor	1 st offense moderate 2 nd offense minor	1 st offense major 2 nd offense moderate 3 rd offense any	PROPOSED SANCTION
	✓	✓	✓	Academic Integrity workshop
	✓			Reduced grade on assignment
	✓			Additional Course Work
	✓			Opportunity to revise
	✓	✓		Failure of Assignment
	✓	✓		Reduced course grade
		✓	✓	F in Course
		✓	✓	Probation
			✓	Suspension
			✓	Expulsion