



## MEMORANDUM

August 2017

TO: Faculty

FROM: Prabhat Hajela, Provost

**Subject: New Guidelines for Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is one of the cornerstones of education and professional practice. Rensselaer, as one of the oldest technological universities, clearly understands the importance of academic integrity in preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century work environment. It is critical in terms of education and the student-faculty relationship, and it is critical to our students' success as they leave Rensselaer to participate as professionals in industry and academia governed by their specific profession's code of ethics. With the availability of on-line sources that publish copyrighted solution manuals, the ability to purchase term papers, and the ease of electronic communication, the educational landscape has evolved and can erode the faculty-student relationship in the classroom. The guidelines described here are part of on-going conversation to create a positive environment in the classroom with clear expectations.

**Based on discussion with students, faculty and the Office of Student Life, it was determined that students participate in an academic integrity training event during Navigating Rensselaer and Beyond. Additionally, starting this year, all first year students are required to complete an online training module about academic integrity. Thus, there can no longer be the excuse that they did not know or understand the importance of academic integrity.**

**We ask the following of all faculty:**

1. All violations of academic integrity should be reported to the Dean of Students using the attached form (or by going to <http://www.rpi.edu/dept/doso/resources/policies/Fillable2015-2016Version2AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf> to download a form). This is critical to ensuring that those who are repeat offenders are identified.
2. Faculty can choose on the form to a) Just report, b) ask for a letter of warning, c) ask for judicial action. Only in the latter case is the violation permanently in their record. If, however, a student has two or more academic integrity violations, the Dean of Students can choose to put the student through the judicial process.

In addition, we are asking faculty to do the following:

- Faculty should very carefully establish in the syllabus or when assigning work what is permitted as cooperative activity among students in completing the assignments, tests, projects, etc. THIS was the primary challenge students provided when appealing.
- Faculty should remind students at the start of every exam that we take academic integrity seriously.

On the next page is a list of suggestions to help prevent cheating.

## GUIDELINES TO REDUCE BREACHES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

1. Include a statement on all exams and major assignments, that the students sign and date, "I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this test/report..."
2. For exams consider:
  - Using paper – It is well know that exams in electronic format are more susceptible to academic dishonesty.
  - Making new problems for each section, each semester.
  - Sharing past exams with all students so students with access to past exams are not at an advantage.
  - Making sure the TAs understand the value of careful proctoring.
  - Eliminating the use of electronics during the exam (except calculators). Cell phones, smart watches, and computers can be used to transmit answers.
  - Identity verification for major exams in large classes (ID check, signature sign in sheet, or other means).
3. For Labs/Projects consider:
  - Using software to determine if laboratory and project reports are plagiarized – This is available on LMS.
  - Altering labs to prevent opportunities to directly recycle old lab reports (the material tested, the air foil design, the rate...)
4. For Homework consider:
  - That solutions are likely available to students unless new questions are written each year.
  - Reducing the value of homework as a major portion of the course grade. As an alternative, consider giving pop quizzes regularly based on the homework.
5. In addition:
  - Make sure your TA understands what cheating / plagiarism are, and assists you to enforce academic integrity.
  - Remind students of the repercussions if an incident is reported to the Dean of Students. Note: a faculty member can ask the Dean of Students if a student, who is suspected of cheating, has any prior offenses.
  - Set a tone and expectation on the importance of academic integrity at Rensselaer and living by a code of professional ethics.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

(2014-2016 Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights & Responsibilities, August 2014)

Intellectual integrity and credibility are the foundation of all academic work. A violation of Academic Integrity policy is, by definition, considered a flagrant offense to the educational process. It is taken seriously by students, faculty, and Rensselaer and will be addressed in an effective manner.

If found responsible for committing academic dishonesty, a student may be subject to one or both types of penalties: an academic (grade) penalty administered by the professor and/or disciplinary action through the Rensselaer judicial process described in this handbook.

Academic dishonesty is a violation of the Grounds for Disciplinary Action as described in this handbook. A student may be subject to any of the following types of disciplinary action should disciplinary action be pursued by the professor: disciplinary warning; disciplinary probation; disciplinary suspension, expulsion and/or alternative actions as agreed on by the student and hearing officer. It should be noted that no student who allegedly commits academic dishonesty will be able to drop or change the grade option for the course in question and is not eligible to have the opportunity to sit for an "F Examination" for the course.

The definitions and examples presented below are a sampling of types of academic dishonesty and are not to be construed as an exhaustive or exclusive list. The academic integrity policy applies to all students, undergraduate and graduate, and to scholarly pursuits and research. Additionally, *attempts* to commit academic dishonesty or to assist in the commission or attempt of such an act are also violations of this policy.

### **Academic Fraud**

The alteration of documentation relating to the grading process. For example, changing exam solutions to negotiate for a higher grade or tampering with an instructor's grade book.

### **Collaboration**

Deliberately facilitating an act of academic dishonesty in any way or form. For example, allowing another student to observe an exam paper or allowing another student to "recycle" one's old term paper or using one another's work in a paper or lab report without citing it as another's work.

### **Copying**

Obtaining information pertaining to a graded exercise by deliberately observing the paper of another student. For example, noting which alternative a neighboring student has circled on a multiple-choice exam.

### **Cribbing**

Use or attempted use of prohibited materials, information, or study aids in an academic exercise. For example, using an unauthorized formal sheet during an exam.

### **Fabrication**

Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information in an academic exercise. For example, use of "bought" or "ready-made" term papers, or falsifying lab records or reports.

## **Plagiarism**

Representing the work or words of another as one's own through the omission of acknowledgment or reference. For example, using sentences verbatim from a published source in a term paper without appropriate referencing, or presenting as one's own the detailed argument of a published source, or presenting as one's own electronically or digitally enhanced graphic representations from any form of media.

## **Sabotage**

Destruction of another student's work. For example, destroying a model, lab experiment, computer program, or term paper developed by another student.

## **Substitution**

Utilizing a proxy, or acting as a proxy, in any academic exercise. For example, taking an exam for another student or having a homework assignment done by someone else.

## **FACULTY PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (as stated in the *Rensselaer Faculty Handbook*)**

"If there is reason to believe a student in a course may have been involved in academic dishonesty, then contact the student(s) and schedule a meeting to discuss the allegations. This meeting should occur *within ten (10) Institute business days* of having discovered the possible dishonesty.

When meeting with the student, review the circumstances and evidence related to the suspicion of academic dishonesty and allows them the opportunity to provide his or her perspective on the situation. Take notes during the meeting to document important information. After reviewing the situation, including speaking with others who might be involved or have knowledge of the situation, then the Professor will issue a finding as to the nature and extent of the violation, if any, by the accused student. If it is concluded that a student has violated the Institute academic dishonesty policy, it is the faculty member's responsibility to determine the academic (grade) penalty (i.e., failure of the course, significant reduction of the final grade, etc.) and to communicate this decision to the student in writing. This communication should occur *within five (5) Institute business days* of having met with the student. Included in this written notification should be information regarding the student's option to appeal the grade decision and of the procedure/time limit in which to do so.

Faculty who choose to apply an academic sanction to a student found responsible for committing academic dishonesty must complete the *Academic Integrity Violation Case Summary and Report Form*. Documentation should be submitted with the report that includes exams/assignments involving the cheating, crib sheets, witness statements, or other materials deemed relevant to the case. The incident shall remain on file in the Dean of Students Office as a record of the incident and a way to track repeat/multiple offenses by the same student(s). The incident shall remain on record until said student graduates except where disciplinary action has also been taken. If disciplinary action is taken, the incident remains permanently on record.

In addition to the academic penalty, the faculty member can request that judicial action be taken against a student for violating Grounds for Disciplinary Action, specifically academic dishonesty. Such requests should be made in writing to the Senior Judicial Administrator or Dean of Students. The documentation will be reviewed, assigned to a hearing officer, and proceed in accordance with Institute protocol."

## **APPEAL PROCESS FOR ACADEMIC PENALTY FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (as stated in the *Rensselaer Faculty Handbook*)**

Decisions regarding grades are initially the responsibility and jurisdiction of the course professor, and the school in which the academic dishonesty occurred, as there is no one in a better position to make this determination. Any appeal of a grade or academic penalty for academic dishonesty falls under the same authority. Therefore, a student can submit a written appeal of an academic penalty to the Department Chair *within five (5) Institute business days* of being notified of the faculty member's decision. If the course professor is the Department Chair or Dean of the school or there are other circumstances that could create the perception of bias, steps must be taken to use other appropriate individuals for the appeal process.

The Department Chair (or designee) will then make a determination based on the facts/circumstances of the case and the appropriateness of the original sanction. This determination should be made and communicated to the student and the professor *within ten (10) Institute business days* of receiving the appeal. Included in this written notification should be information regarding the student's option to appeal the grade decision and of the procedure/time limit in which to do so.

If the student or professor believes he or she has grounds for appealing the decision of the Department Chair (e.g., new evidence), both parties have the option to submit a written appeal to the Dean of the School *within five (5) business days* of receiving the decision. The Dean will then render a decision based on the facts/circumstance of the case and the appropriateness of the sanction. This determination should be made and communicated to the student and the professor *within ten (10) Institute business days* of receiving the appeal.

The decision of the Dean of the School may be subject to **final** determination by the Provost (or designee), with good cause and at the written request of either party involved, *within five (5) Institute business days* of notification of the Dean of the School's decision. The Provost is unconstrained in the procedure he or she chooses to employ in the context of such a review. The Provost is the final level of appeal and his/her decision stands as final for both the student(s) and professor involved. The Provost will render a decision based on the circumstances of the case and the appropriateness of the sanction. This determination should be made and communicated to the student and the professor *within ten (10) Institute business days* of receiving the appeal.

Students found in violation of the academic integrity policy are prohibited from dropping a course in order to avoid the academic penalty.

### **PREVENTION OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

For those courses or academic exercises in which either the instructor or student considers proper definition of academic dishonesty to be open to interpretation, the instructor is expected to outline his or her particular standards. An example for which such definition seems particularly necessary would be collaboration on out-of-class assignments.

Course supervisors are expected to provide adequate and conscientious proctoring for exams. Faculty and proctors may ask a student for identification during an exam or exercise, and take reasonable precautions to lessen probability of academic dishonesty occurring, such as requiring that all personal belongings, texts, etc., be placed away from desks in the exam room.



**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATION  
CASE SUMMARY & REPORT FORM**

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ RIN # \_\_\_\_\_

Semester: Fall \_\_\_\_\_ Spring \_\_\_\_\_ Summer \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Name \_\_\_\_\_ Professor \_\_\_\_\_

Section Number \_\_\_\_\_ Teaching Assistant / Grader \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Assignment under Review \_\_\_\_\_

Noticed By \_\_\_\_\_ Date First Noticed \_\_\_\_\_

Reported To: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Reported \_\_\_\_\_

Description of questionable material and reason for suspecting a violation of academic integrity  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Student Notification Date \_\_\_\_\_ Notification Type (Choose ONE): **Verbal** **Letter** **Email** **Other**

Student / Professor Meeting Date to discuss violation \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of Meeting with Student and Outcome \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sanction Issued and Rationale: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Items noted on this page are for reference of the Dean of Students and Faculty member submitting this report. The summary and outcome should be sent to the Dean of Students Office, Academy Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, with a copy retained by the faculty member, for reference only. It shall remain in the student's file until graduation or until the student is no longer affiliated with Rensselaer. This paper should not be given to anyone nor its contents discussed without appropriate approval.*

**Check One:**

\_\_\_\_\_ I am making NOTIFICATION of Academic Sanction to the Dean of Students Office only for purpose to identify other incidents of academic dishonesty. *(Record Expunged Upon Graduation)*

\_\_\_\_\_ I am making NOTIFICATION of Academic Sanction to the Dean of Students Office and authorize a Letter of Warning be sent to the student. *(Record Expunged Upon Graduation)*

\_\_\_\_\_ I request that judicial action be taken, in addition to the above stated academic sanction, as a violation of the Grounds for Disciplinary Action, specifically a violation of Academic Integrity Policy. *(Permanent Record)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*(Please submit this completed form to the Dean of Students Office, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Academy Hall. Include all relevant information and/or documentation supporting your decision.)*

## **Student Section**

I have read and understand the Academic Integrity Policy as stated in the 2014-2016 Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities, pages 15 – 18. I have met with the faculty member, discussed the violation(s) of the academic integrity policy, and

**Check One:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Accept** this decision as final and decline to appeal.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Decline** to accept the decision and understand I must submit my appeal in writing to the Department Chairperson **Or Designee** no later than 4:00 PM on \_\_\_\_ (five Institute business days). The written appeal must state the specific reasons for appealing this decision as stated in the 2014-2016 Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities, *Grounds for Appeal*, page 11.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*(Please retain a copy and submit original to the Department Chair, one copy to the Dean of Students Office, and one copy to the student.)*

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# Rensselaer Process to Address Violations of Academic Integrity Policy





