

Guidelines for Instructors

Academic Dishonesty

Academic honesty is essential to learning in college. Whatcom Community College expects students to demonstrate the core learning abilities of communicating, thinking, relating, knowing, and integrating. Representing another person's ideas or work as one's own undermines the essence of the collegiate experience. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the WCC Student Rights and Responsibilities (WAC 132U-125-020) and includes cheating, plagiarism (fraudulent representation of student work product), fabrication, and facilitating academic dishonesty as defined in the WCC Catalog.

Plagiarism by Mistake

While academic dishonesty is very serious, **often plagiarism is unintentional**. Many students have not learned how to cite their sources properly and they are confused about whether to quote an author or paraphrase and summarize the information with an author citation. Some students have not learned that patching together sentences or paragraphs from various sources into their own essays is unacceptable. Since college coursework at Whatcom Community College prepares students for careers or transfer to universities, it is critical that they learn how to avoid plagiarism now.

Intentional cheating or Plagiarism

The opposite extreme of the unintentional mistake is the bold theft of another person's research paper, essay, data, ideas, or creation. Examples of blatant theft include: submitting entire papers found on the Internet or borrowed from friends attending other universities and using unauthorized notes hidden from the view of their instructors during exams. Again, it is important for students to understand the seriousness of academic dishonesty while creating the conditions for them to learn from their actions as they pursue their career and educational goals.

Guidelines for Faculty

Place the following or a similar statement in your syllabi:

Academic honesty is essential to learning in college. Cheating and plagiarism are serious violations of the WCC Student Rights and Responsibilities and will result in college disciplinary action such as probation, suspension or expulsion. If you represent the work or ideas of another as your own, a grade of "F" may be given for that assignment. A second violation may result in an "F" for the course.

Discuss the importance of academic honesty and review how to cite sources **prior** to the first major written assignment. Give examples and refer them to the **WCC Student Success Handbook and the WCC Online Writing Center**.

The WCC Student Rights and Responsibilities outline the procedure that must be followed. All students have *due process* rights and instructors may **not** fail students from their courses for suspected dishonesty without the involvement of the Office of Community Standards.

If you suspect the academic dishonesty, use the steps below as helpful guidelines. Throughout this process, it can be helpful to consider whether it appears to be an accidental or an intentional act as a guide for your conversations and outcome decisions.

1. Arrange to meet with the student to discuss the assignment in question. Ask the student to describe the sources of the information or ideas presented. Also ask how the student approached the assignment and what strategies were used.
2. Once you determine whether cheating or plagiarism occurred, **you may decide to allow students to resubmit their work after rewriting the assignment or it may be appropriate to give a zero for the assignment.** Be sure your consequences are consistent with your statement in the course syllabus. Students are always entitled to *due process* according to the WCC Student Rights and Responsibilities should they disagree about responsibility for the allegation.
3. The Office of Community Standards maintains a database of students who have been found responsible for academic dishonesty. When you intervene directly with students, it is helpful to tell students that you "will be completing an incident report form" which will be submitted to the Office of Community Standards who will monitor the list in order to reduce repeated violations of dishonesty. This is a confidential, administrative database and the information is NOT included in the students' academic records. Please go to the Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism Reporting Form on the Staff web: <http://fidalgo>.

If the student is absent or unable to be reached by phone, send a letter or email outlining the concern and the date you expect to meet. **If you are unable to contact the student to discuss the incident before final grades are due, DO NOT give the student a grade. Instead, submit your grade roster with a notation to temporarily put an * in place of the grade on the student's transcript.** Contact the Office of Community Standards to discuss the next steps.

Typical Response from Office of Community Standards

1. Send letter to student supporting classroom/faculty resolution, providing resources for future success, and reminding student of policy and expectations. No in person meeting.
2. If a repeated or egregious violation, the student conduct hearing adjudicative process is pursued with progressive discipline steps and sanctions.

If you have any questions or if you would like assistance with this process, call the Office of Community Standards, 360-383-3073.