



**HANDBOOK:  
INSTRUCTORS AND TAs**



**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**  
OFFICE OF STUDENT  
JUDICIAL AFFAIRS

# 1 INTRODUCTION

*Excellence in research and scholarship depends on the creativity, hard work, and dedication of its practitioners. It also depends on integrity. Dishonesty and fabrication fundamentally undermine the worth and usefulness of research and other scholarly work.*

*(University of Alberta Research and Scholarship Integrity Policy)*

This handbook is intended to provide basic resources for Instructors and Teaching Assistants (TAs) to promote academic integrity in the classroom or lab and to address any incidents of inappropriate academic behaviour that may arise.

The regulations are set out in the Code of Student Behaviour (“the Code”). Everything you need to know about the procedures for dealing with academic misconduct is outlined in Section 30.5.4 of the Code.

To augment the Code, the Academic Integrity program focuses on prevention of academic dishonesty by promoting integrity.

These two approaches are complementary and together they work to reduce the number of incidents of inappropriate academic behaviour and encourage a climate of integrity.

Instructors and TAs are the point of first contact and play a key role in both prevention and detection of inappropriate academic behaviour. The following information is intended to guide you through the process from prevention to detection to reporting any cases that do arise. A list of resources is also provided for further information.

## Code of Student Behaviour

The official version of the Code of Student Behaviour is online, located on the University Governance website. It is organized into broad categories, including rights for students being charged under the Code, offences under the Code, sanctions and their impact, the discipline process, and appeals.

Following is a **summary of offences** that relate to inappropriate academic behaviour; please check the Code online for the most detailed and current definitions.

### **PLAGIARISM**

Submitting the words, ideas, images or data of another person’s as one’s own, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

### **MISUSE OF CONFIDENTIAL MATERIALS**

Procuring, distributing or receiving any confidential academic materials (e.g. pending tests or assignments).

### **MISREPRESENTATION OF FACTS**

Misrepresenting facts for the purpose of obtaining unfair academic advantage.

### **CHEATING**

There are five categories of cheating:

- a) Possessing unauthorized material (such as crib notes, notes written on hands or other body parts, electronic devices not specifically permitted, or copying from another student),
- b) Misrepresenting one person as another for an exam or assignment,

- c) Substantial editorial or compositional assistance,
- d) Resubmitting material already graded for credit (sometimes referred to as “self-plagiarism”), and
- e) False or fabricated claims, data or references.

### **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP MISCONDUCT**

Refers to the Research and Scholarship Integrity Policy as it relates to students.

### **PARTICIPATION IN AN OFFENCE**

Knowingly helping or encouraging other students to commit an offence under the Code.

### **INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR IN PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS**

Students in professional programs are also bound by the code of ethics governing that profession. To violate the code of ethics is to violate the Code of Student Behaviour.

### **BRIBERY**

Offering money or other benefits in exchange for academic advantage.

It is important to become familiar with the Code. It contains valuable information on types of offences (Section 30.3), available sanctions and their impact (30.4), and procedures for Instructors (30.5.4), Deans (30.5.7) and Discipline Officers (30.5.8), as well as a full description of procedures for the University Appeals Board (UAB) in the few cases that are appealed (Section 30.6).

## Academic Integrity

While the Code of Student Behaviour provides the rules and regulations, the Academic Integrity program provides the education for prevention of academic misconduct and the promotion of academic integrity.

The program is based on a project undertaken by the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI). It promotes the values essential to academic integrity as the basis for achieving a culture of integrity on post-secondary campuses. The five fundamental values are honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and

responsibility. To enact these values in the face of adversity also requires courage.

The promotion of these values with respect to academic integrity is a key part of the educational process. While students, faculty and administration need to be informed about the Code of Student Behaviour, it is beneficial to discuss why we hold ourselves to those standards. The Fundamental Values are a good starting place for that conversation.

## 2 PREVENTION

### Integrity Education

Whitley and Keith-Spiegel identify a connection between what happens in the classroom and students' attitudes about academic integrity. Students are more likely to embrace academic integrity when they believe their professors are fair, respectful, trustworthy and honest – the same qualities we expect of them. McCabe and Christenson-Hughes showed similar findings in their academic integrity study of Canadian universities.

An integrated approach to academic integrity should include integrity education and clear, fair, universally applied policies. Noah and Eckstein propose four tactics to minimize academic misconduct:

- a) Reduce incentives, or reduce the potential (or perceived) benefits of cheating,
- b) Reduce opportunity and maximize probability for detection, that is, set up situational constraints,

- c) Clarify, publicize and enforce sanctions, and
- d) Build an academic community that regards academic misconduct as unacceptable. Peer disapproval is one of the strongest deterrents to academic dishonesty.

There are some very simple ways to build integrity education into the classroom and demonstrate your belief that this is an important issue. Chances are good that your students will follow your lead. The following pages give some general suggestions for preventing plagiarism and cheating. Because the demands and objectives of each course are different, not all of the suggestions are appropriate for all situations. Be sure to customize your prevention program to the needs of your class for optimum effectiveness. Students respond better to situation-specific instructions than generic ones. Choose whatever tips are useful in your classroom and applicable to your assignments and exams.

### Promoting Academic Integrity

1. Make your expectations clear and explicit. For example, you might discuss how the Code's definition of plagiarism applies to the specific assignments in your class.
2. Engage your students in a discussion about academic integrity. They will more likely retain the conversation when they participate. In particular, have them think about how other students in the class are affected by academic dishonesty.
3. Make sure the academic integrity policy is explicitly stated on your syllabus. The statement required by the University is included in the Evaluation Procedures and Grading System section of the University of Alberta Calendar (section 23.4).
4. Give examples of times when you personally struggled to do the right thing in your academic work. This alerts students to the reality that academic integrity might not always be a simple matter.

# Preventing Academic Misconduct

## Situational Constraints: Preventing Plagiarism on Papers

1. You may be surprised at what your students don't understand about plagiarism. Never assume they know what you mean when you talk about plagiarism.
2. Discuss appropriate use of sources and plagiarism in class. Acknowledge that proper citation is a skill that requires practice.
3. Make it clear that all sources – print or electronic – must be cited.
4. Give clear guidelines for format and citation style.
5. Provide bibliography and citation resources (websites, textbooks, handouts, etc.).
6. Assign essay topics that are specific to your course and timely in nature, and therefore impossible to find on the Internet.
7. Assign questions that require evaluation, reasoning, or personal reflection on assignments.
8. Analyze an essay taken from an online paper mill in class. This provides dual benefits in that your students learn that you are aware of the cheating resources, and they also learn that the quality of the essays provided can be questionable.
9. Assign papers in stages: outline, bibliography, rough draft, final draft. In doing so, you emphasize the value of starting early.
10. Use in-class writing assignments.
11. Give assignments in which the objective is to critique websites, thereby avoiding the temptation for students to copy them.
12. Be explicit about possible sanctions, including failure on the essay, failure in the course, suspension or worse. Note that even unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism.

## Situational Constraints: Preventing Cheating on Tests

1. Discuss cheating and academic integrity in class, especially right before a test or exam.
2. Change your exam every term. Even minor changes, such as changing the order of questions, using a question bank, or altering numerical values, will make a difference.
3. Use alternating formats so students seated next to each other are not writing identical exams. Do not tell students you've used alternating exams when you haven't.
4. Carefully proctor your exams. Be sure there are a sufficient number of proctors for the size of the class.
5. Check ONEcards at the beginning of the exam. If any students are unable to produce ID, make arrangements for them to present their ONEcards to you before you mark their exams.
6. Wherever possible, seat students with space in between them.
7. Provide scratch paper if required, rather than allowing students to bring their own.
8. Record the seating arrangement where possible.
9. Where possible, use long answer/essay format.
10. Formulate questions in which students are required to apply knowledge rather than memorize and reproduce answers.
11. Have students put all bags/coats/hats/electronic devices at the front or side of the room. Remind them that even possessing material that could be used for cheating is an offence under the Code.
12. If possible, have students answer directly on the exam rather than in an exam booklet.
13. Be aware of technologies that could be used for cheating, e.g. programmable calculators, cell phones, iPods, MP3 players, etc. See also the University of Alberta Examinations policy in section 23.5 of the University of Alberta Calendar.
14. Be explicit about possible sanctions, including failure on the exam, failure in the course, suspension, and expulsion.

## Situational Constraints: Preventing Inappropriate Collaboration

1. Specify how much, if any, collaboration is allowed and how it should be acknowledged.
2. Provide a protocol for group work specific to the assignment.
3. Clearly explain how group assignments will be assessed.
4. Make sure your students know that working together when they've been instructed to work individually is an offence under the Code (Plagiarism and/or Cheating).
5. Be explicit about acceptable use of tutors, editors and translators. Refer students to the Section of the Code on Cheating (Section 30.3.2(2)c).

# 3 DETECTION

## Exams

Detecting cheating in an exam may be as simple as witnessing the act. Following are some strategies for detecting and handling cheating in an exam situation:

- If you observe students cheating, quietly bring it to the attention of another proctor or the instructor so that both of you can document what you have seen.
- Note the seating arrangement around the student you suspect of cheating and put his or her exam aside when it is handed in, along with any exams you suspect were being copied.
- Be sure to allow the student(s) to finish the exam.
- Unauthorized materials (e.g. cheat sheets, electronic devices) should be confiscated discretely, without disrupting the class.
- If the information is contained on a device (e.g. programmable calculator or cell phone) confiscate the item only for the time it takes to record the information

in the presence of a colleague before returning it to the student, or check with the Dean (or designate) if it is necessary to keep the device for a longer period of time.

- If two students are observed working together, discretely separate them and clearly mark on their exams (in ink) the point at which they were moved for later comparison.

While you may not have observed the cheating as it occurred, you may detect it when marking. Typical indicators are verbatim answers to long answer questions or strings of identical choices in multiple-choice exams, and cases in which two students have the same incorrect answer(s), unusual formulations or mistakes.

If possible, photocopy or digitally scan exams or assignments before you hand them back. In the event that a student changes the answers and resubmits the assignment for extra marks, you can compare the copy to the original to be sure nothing was altered (Misrepresentation of Facts).

## Written work

The most common type of plagiarism on written work here at the University of Alberta tends to be the unacknowledged use of sentences or paragraphs from websites. Robert Harris lists several ways to detect plagiarized passages, including abrupt changes in style or diction, unusual or inconsistent formatting, and obvious references to facts or people outside the scope of the paper.

The easiest way to check whether material was copied from a website is to type a suspect phrase, in quotation marks to find the exact phrase, into a search engine (e.g. Google). Start with concise but distinctive phrases rather than an entire sentence or paragraph.

You may also find a phrase or passage in a paper that sounds familiar. Keep copies of written work from previous years, just in case you run across one that has been resubmitted or plagiarized from another student.

If you opt to use a text-matching software to detect plagiarism in student work, be aware that that use must be FOIPP compliant. There are also intellectual property and pedagogical implications that should be considered. If you use a software package that stores student work in a database, you must also provide an opportunity for students to opt out. See the Report on the Use of Text-Matching Software for Detecting Plagiarism in Student Work.

## Assignments

As always, prevention is better than detection. Let students know specifically what you expect on labs and assignments concerning group work or collaboration. If you allow collaboration, how much is acceptable? At what point does collaboration cross the line into Plagiarism, Cheating or Participation in an Offence?

Detecting inappropriate collaboration may be as simple as noting that two or more assignments contain similar or identical responses, especially in terms of diction, formatting or unusual formulations or mistakes.

# 4 INVESTIGATING & REPORTING

## Guidelines for Meeting with Students about Inappropriate Academic Behaviour

All charges of academic dishonesty under the Code are adjudicated by the Dean or designate of the Faculty in which the course is offered. As an instructor, you are required by the Code to meet with the student(s) who have allegedly committed the offence before submitting the case to the Dean. The following is a guide to use in your conversation with

your student. You are not required to follow this format, and deviations from this guide will certainly not result in legitimate cases being dismissed. This is intended to ease the stress involved with this process for both the instructor and the students. See the Code of Student Behaviour for the section on Procedures for Instructors.

### Before the meeting

- Make an appointment to speak to the student(s). Respect their privacy (e.g., do not make a general announcement to the class). Email is an effective and discrete way to contact them.
- Be clear about the reason for the meeting. For example, "I have noted some problems with your use of sources in essay #2 and would like to discuss them with you."
- Provide a date by which you would like to meet. Be reasonable, taking into account that students may have exams, jobs, or other commitments that may prevent them from meeting with you immediately.
- If several students were involved in the same offence, meet with them individually.
- If a student doesn't respond or avoids meeting with you, you can send the evidence you have collected to the Dean, with a note that you were unable to meet with the student.

As an instructor, you do not impose sanctions under the Code and therefore you are not required to allow the student to bring an advisor. However, when meeting with a student, it may be beneficial to have another person in the room. For example, you may invite a colleague or administrator from your department to sit in as a witness. An Ombudsperson can be quite helpful in the situation by helping the student prepare for the meeting beforehand and providing support during the meeting. The OmbudService can offer information on policy and process, and provide some consistency between the meeting with you and any subsequent discipline meetings the student may face. If you do have others in the meeting, remember that you and the student are the two main participants in the discussion.

Inform the students about the Student OmbudService, a neutral office that advises students on University processes. An Ombudsperson can assist them throughout the discipline process.

## During the meeting

- Allow the student to examine your evidence.
- Explain what you suspect and why.
- Give the student an opportunity to respond. S/he may be able to provide a plausible explanation. On the other hand, this may be an opportunity for a student who would like to take responsibility for the offence to do so.
- Be prepared for possible false excuses, but open-minded enough to consider plausible explanations.
- If, at the end of the meeting, you believe there was a Code violation, advise the student that you are required to turn the case over to the Dean of the Faculty and that you do not have the discretion to impose any sanctions on your own. You may wish to provide reasons for this: it maintains consistency across the Faculty and provides the opportunity for appeal. It also allows the University to track students who have violated the Code in other departments or Faculties.
- If you are planning to send the case to the Dean, let the student know that the Dean's office will contact him or her to make an appointment.
- Avoid threatening to send the evidence to the Dean if the student doesn't confess. You are required to send the case on to the Dean any time you suspect a Code violation, whether or not the student has admitted to it.
- Do not take matters into your own hands and simply assign a zero on the paper. Our system is based on natural justice, which accords certain rights before any sanction is imposed. If you assign a zero on the paper without sending the information on to the Dean, not only are you acting without proper authority, but you are depriving the student of any right to appeal. You could also be laying the groundwork for a valid grade appeal and allowing serial cheaters to continue undetected.

## After the meeting

- Provide enough information in your report to the Dean for him or her to follow up. A checklist is provided on the following page.
- If a case is still unresolved at the end of a term, report the student's grade as IN (incomplete).
- The course instructor receives copies of any decisions made in the case, including those of the Dean, the Discipline Officer and the University Appeal Board.

## Guidelines for Reporting to the Dean

If you believe that there has been a violation of the Code of Student Behaviour, you are required to submit a separate written report to the Dean or designate (often an Associate Dean) of your Faculty for each student involved. The more details you are able to provide, the better informed the Dean's decision will be. Following is a checklist of information to include:

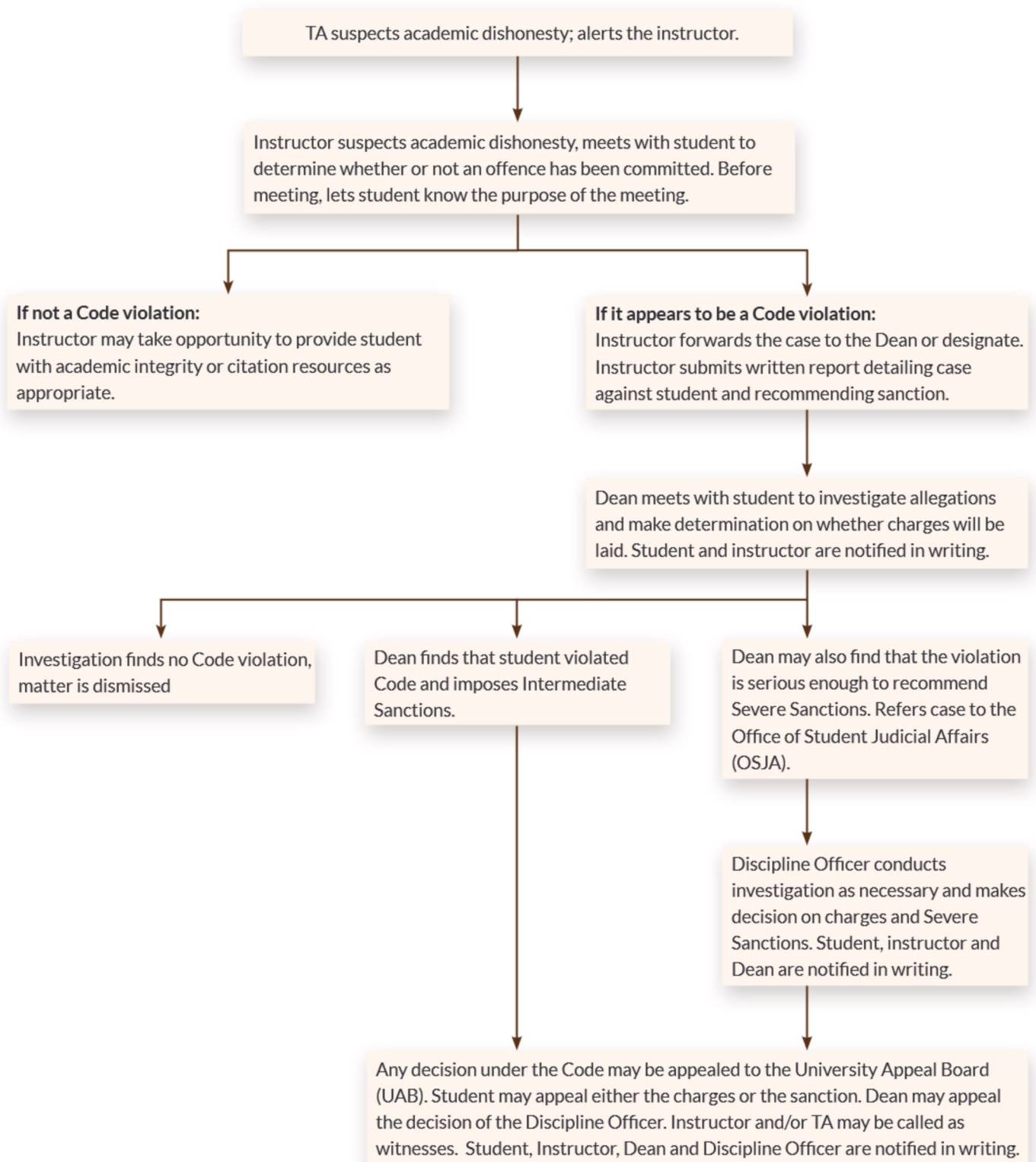
- Student name and ID number
- Course and section number
- Your name, telephone number and/or email address
- Nature of suspected offence
- Relative weighting of assignment or exam in question
- Record of meeting with student
  - Date
  - Who attended
  - Summary of discussion and notes from observer, if applicable
- Evidence – examples might include:
  - Assignment or examination sheet
  - Student's assignment, paper or other work in question, cross referenced with suspected source
  - Photocopy or print-out of source with areas of concern highlighted
  - Student's examination, areas of concern highlighted
  - Copies of other students' work, if relevant
  - Proctor statements or other eye-witness accounts, if available
- Entire course outline or syllabus
- Any other relevant handouts or information you gave your students (e.g. a handout on proper citation or academic integrity)
- Account of any discussions of academic integrity in class
- Recommendation for a sanction based on your assessment of the situation. See Section 30.4.3 of the Code for the range of available sanctions.



# 5 DISCIPLINE PROCESS

The Code of Student Behaviour involves a multi-layered process in the application of charges and sanctions in order to provide checks and balances for students facing potentially serious consequences to their academic careers.

The Code is amended periodically to reflect new policies. Always check the Code on-line for the most up to date information. **This is a summary only.**



# 6 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## Graduate Students

The Code applies equally to graduate and undergraduate students. The process is also identical, with one exception: If a graduate student commits an act of inappropriate academic behaviour in a course, the report should be directed to the Dean or designate of the Faculty in which the course is offered.

If the academic dishonesty occurs in the context of activities related solely to the degree (for example, comprehensive exams, a thesis or dissertation), the report should be directed to the Dean or designate of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR).

## Standard of Proof

In making findings under the Code of Student Behaviour, the University of Alberta uses a standard called Balance of Probabilities. We are not required to prove allegations beyond a reasonable doubt. Rather, the Balance of Probabilities allows us to determine what is more likely than not, based on the

available evidence. While this is an easier standard of evidence to meet than the criminal standard, simple suspicion or a previous act do not provide enough evidence to establish the balance of probabilities; therefore, the more information you can gather and document, the better.

## Due Process

The University of Alberta is dedicated to the principles outlined in this handbook. Because we demand honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility from our students, we are called upon to model those values. In addition, we are required to ensure due process when addressing academic dishonesty. The Code stipulates procedures from reporting an offence through to the final appeal. These procedures are designed to ensure that all students are treated fairly as they go through the discipline process. They also protect instructors from uncertainty and, when followed properly, they may protect the University from litigation.

The Code begins with rights afforded to the students, including the right to an advisor, the right to know the case against oneself and to respond to the allegations, the right to an unbiased decision maker, and the right to be presumed innocent until a finding has been made on balance of probabilities. Instructors are advised to become familiar with these rights to ensure that these principles of natural justice are followed.

When in doubt, it's best to consult on the process. Both the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and the Student OmbudService are available to provide information on the discipline process. Because they are a neutral service, the OmbudService can provide information and advice on procedure and natural justice to instructors as well as to students.

## Anonymous Reports

Occasionally, students report witnessing other students engaging in dishonest behaviour but wish to remain anonymous. While we must take these students seriously and follow up on their allegations of misconduct, we must also ensure that the accused student has the opportunity to respond to the allegations. Part of knowing the case against oneself is knowing who has made the allegation. Consequently, laying Code charges based solely on an anonymous report is at odds with the principles of natural justice; it is necessary to find corroborating evidence in order to proceed.

On the other hand, it takes courage and conviction for a student to come forward with a report, even if it's one you are unable to verify. We must not alienate those students who are trying to do the right thing by bringing academic dishonesty to our attention. We should be sure to communicate some kind of resolution to the students who brought the situation to light in

the first place. While privacy law prevents us from disclosing the actual details and outcome of a case, you can thank them for coming forward and assure them that the University takes their concerns seriously and is doing all it can to address the issue they reported.

While an anonymous report may not provide enough evidence to proceed with charges against a particular student, you may certainly gain some ideas as to how to prevent the same kind of activity in the future. Changes designed to prevent academic dishonesty benefit everyone involved, and the students who initiated the complaint can be assured that they have made a contribution to academic integrity at the University of Alberta. Providing a way for students to discuss academic dishonesty with you encourages discussion and allows students a role in promoting academic integrity.

## Non Academic Misconduct

On occasion, you may encounter non-academic behaviour which contravenes the Code.

Reports of Class Disruption go to the Dean or Designate of the faculty. Specific procedures are outlined in Section 30.5.3 of the Code. In all other non-academic incidents, charges are laid by University of Alberta Protective Services. You can contact UAPS by phone at 780-492-5050 or by attending their office in the main floor of the Education Car Park to make a report.

# RESOURCES

## Books and Articles

- Bertram Gallant, T. (2008). *Academic Integrity in the Twenty-First Century: a teaching and learning imperative*. ASHE Higher Education Report, vol. 33. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Blum, S. D. (2009). *My Word! Plagiarism and College Culture*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
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- Whitley, B.E., Jr. and Keith-Spiegel, P. (2002). *Academic Dishonesty: an Educator's Guide*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

**For online resources, please visit:**

<http://www.osja.ualberta.ca/Instructors/Resources.aspx>