

Summary of Changes to the Academic Integrity Policy Effective May 24, 2021

Background

Syracuse first adopted a university-wide academic integrity policy in 2006. The current policy, implemented in January 2017, was designed to increase effectiveness, fairness, flexibility, and efficiency. Key goals include offering multiple avenues for case resolution and reserving hearings for only the most serious cases, which require intensive faculty and administrative resources and can be stressful for instructors and students.

Data for three full academic years (AY1718, AY1819, and AY1920) indicate that the policy has largely functioned as intended:

1. In each year, more than 80 percent of cases have been expedited, that is, resolved through a student waiver of the formal case process or a faculty interview, without need for a written review or hearing (essentially, the student admits the charges and resolves the case informally).
2. In each year, fewer than 10 percent of cases were classified as Level 3, the most serious violation level. The share of cases requiring a hearing fell from 25 percent under the previous policy to between nine and 13 percent.
3. Faculty panel members have expressed satisfaction with the policy and procedures, especially heightened predictability and fairness of the process for students with suspected violations, for instructors who report suspected violations, and for faculty, students and administrators who serve as panel members.

Rationale for Revisions

Despite these successes, recent events related only in part to the pandemic demonstrated a need for some changes to the policy:

1. The increase in online courses and online assessment led to an unprecedented rise in reports of suspected violations in spring 2020. The number of suspected violations reported in fall 2020 also reached an all-time high.
2. A growing number of cases involve multiple students and/or involve the use of websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material to obtain exam or homework solutions, such as Chegg and Course Hero. These cases are often complex and require higher-than-usual investments of time by reporting instructors, faculty interviewers and hearing panel members. The increase in complex cases and total cases has driven up the number of hearings even as the percentage remains low.
3. With support from school/college Academic Integrity Coordinators, Interim Provost John Liu, and the Office of General Counsel, CLASS adopted emergency procedures in July 2020 to better manage the caseload without undue delays, and without overburdening faculty panel members and reporting instructors during the pandemic. Central elements of these changes involved use

Key Policy Changes

1. Level 1 and 2 cases (lower level cases where suspension or expulsion is not a possibility) are expedited and resolved following the faculty interview. Students who contest a Level 1 or 2 suspected violation retain the opportunity to present evidence to a faculty interviewer and to request an appeal. However, they no longer have the option to present their case for a second time to a hearing panel. This change avoids long delays in case resolution for students with suspected violations. (See Academic Integrity Policy Section III. E. Avenues for Case Resolution.)
2. Cases that previously resulted in a written panel review are addressed through the faculty interview process. Such cases involve student requests that a Level 2 case be downgraded to Level 1 or that course failure be reconsidered. Only three written reviews took place in 2019-20 and only four in 2018-19. (See Section III. E. Avenues for Case Resolution.)
3. Hearing panels consist of a minimum of three members, with an equal number of faculty and student members and one administrator. We continue to rely on five-member panels for the most serious and complex cases. This change allow our office to convene hearing panels without undue delay – it is typically more manageable to schedule three panel members as opposed to five. (See Section III. E. Avenues for Case Resolution.)
4. Detailed requirements regarding the school and college affiliation of hearing panel members and the program level (undergraduate or graduate) of panel members are replaced by language allowing the Academic Integrity Coordinator of the school or college where the suspected violation occurred and the Academic Integrity Coordinator of the student’s home school or college to review and approve the selection of all panel members. This makes it easier to seat panels to hear cases involving suspected collaboration of several students from different colleges and programs. (See Section III. E. Avenues for Case Resolution.)