

# Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures

All members of St. Francis Xavier University are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical manner in their academic work. It is the policy of the University that academic dishonesty in any form is not acceptable. Academic dishonesty is defined as any act, practice or behaviour that gives a student an unearned academic advantage over another or that counteracts or undermines the integrity of academic or scholarly endeavour at St. Francis Xavier University.

## 1. The Code of Academic Conduct

An academic community flourishes when its members are committed to five fundamental values. An academic community of integrity:

- a) advances the quest for truth and knowledge by acknowledging intellectual and personal **honesty** in learning, teaching, research, and service;
- b) fosters a climate of mutual **trust**, encourages the free exchange of ideas, and enables all to reach their highest potential;
- c) establishes clear standards, practices, and procedures and expects **fairness** in interactions amongst students, faculty, staff, and administrators;
- d) recognizes the participatory nature of the learning process and honours and **respects** a wide range of opinions and ideas; and,
- e) upholds personal **responsibility** and accountability and depends upon action in the face of wrong-doing.

## 2. Offenses Against Academic Integrity

The following is a list of offenses constituting academic dishonesty that are subject to discipline; this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

### 2.1 Plagiarism

Although academic work often involves research on, or reference to, the ideas, data, and critical commentary of other scholars, academic integrity requires that any use of another person's work be explicitly acknowledged.

Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of another's work—whether ideas or words, intellectual or creative works, images or data— published or unpublished, as one's own. Examples of plagiarism include:

- a) quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing text, even small portions of text, without proper acknowledgement; paraphrasing too closely (e.g., changing only a few words or simply re-arranging the text); and,
- b) downloading from the Web or from a library or any other database all or part of a paper, a journal article, or a book, or downloading any other website material, excluding bibliography makers, and presenting it as one's own work.

## **2.2 Cheating**

Some examples of cheating are:

- a) submission, in whole or in part, of any purchased written work as one's own;
- b) sharing papers, including the buying or selling, borrowing or leasing of essays, tests, or other assignments;
- c) submission, without the prior expressed written consent of the appropriate instructor(s), of any work for which credit has been, or is being, sought in another course, including any work that has been submitted at another institution;
- d) collaboration (i.e., working together) on an assignment which an instructor did not specify was to be completed collaboratively;
- e) use of unauthorized aids or assistance including copying during tests and examinations;
- f) impersonating another student in a test, examination, assignment, or attendance record, or knowingly permitting another to impersonate oneself;
- g) knowingly helping another to engage in academically dishonest behaviour (including, but not limited to, providing answers to a test or examination or providing an essay or laboratory report that is subsequently plagiarized or submitted by another student as his or her work);
- h) obtaining or looking at a copy of a test or examination before it is administered; and,
- i) altering a test or examination after it has been graded and returned by the instructor.

## **2.3 Falsification**

Some examples of falsification are:

- a) falsification of any research results, whether in laboratory experiments, field trip exercises, or other assignments;
- b) alteration or falsification of transcripts or other academic records for any purpose;
- c) submission of false credentials;
- d) making false representation on an application for admission;
- e) making false representation on an application for ethical approval for a research project involving human or animal subjects; and,
- f) requesting the extension of a deadline citing reasons known to be false, including submitting false documentation supporting that request.

## **2.4 Tampering**

Examples of tampering are:

- a) unauthorized access to, use of, or alteration of computer data sets, including course, student, faculty, alumni, public, and corporate records;
- b) gaining unfair advantage by using software and computer tools that inhibit the use of the resources by others;
- c) damage to or destruction of library materials or laboratory resources; and,
- d) willful or negligent damage to the academic work of another member of the University.

## **2.5 Miscellaneous**

- a) any other form of misrepresentation, cheating, fraudulent academic behaviour, or other improper academic conduct of comparable severity to the above.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **3.1 The Complainant:**

- a) Any member of the University community who believes that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty may act as a complainant. However, in the instance of plagiarism, any individual who is aware that this academic offense may have occurred has a responsibility to bring his or her concerns to the attention of the course instructor. If the course instructor, upon investigation, determines that the concerns about possible plagiarism are warranted, he or she shall become the complainant.

### **3.2 The University Registrar shall:**

- a) maintain the Registry of Academic Discipline;
- b) maintain the list of individuals serving as Academic Discipline Officers; and,
- c) maintain academic dishonesty case files as specified in Section 4 of this policy.

### **3.3 The Senate Committee on Academic Discipline shall:**

- a) be a standing committee of the University Senate;
- b) be composed of five members of the University Faculty, elected by the University Senate, serving rotating but renewable three-year terms;
- c) select its chair from among its own members;
- d) review annually the regulations with respect to academic dishonesty, making recommendations to the University Senate about possible changes to those regulations;
- e) require a quorum of three members and hear cases brought before it:
  - 1. of alleged first instances of plagiarism where the student does not agree with the complainant that plagiarism has occurred;
  - 2. of alleged first instances of plagiarism where the student does not accept the remedy or penalty imposed by the complainant; or,
  - 3. of alleged instances of academic dishonesty that have been forwarded by an Academic Discipline Officer.

#### **3.3.1 Potential Conflict of Interest**

- a) If any member of the Committee believes that he or she has a potential conflict of interest in any case brought before the Committee, he or she shall excuse himself or herself from all meetings of the Committee regarding that case.

### **3.4 Academic Discipline Officers shall:**

- a) be members of the University Faculty;
- b) be not fewer than three in number, at least one of whom shall be a member of the Faculty of Arts and one of the Faculty of Science;
- c) be appointed by the Academic Vice-President and Provost;
- d) normally serve three-year renewable terms;
- e) review statements received from complainants with respect to possible cases of academic dishonesty; and,
- f) inform the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline of cases to be heard.

### **3.5 The Joint Committee on Studies:**

The faculty and administrative members of the Joint Committee on Studies (i.e. excluding student members, but including the Executive Vice-President of the Students' Union and the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline as invited observers) shall act as an appeal body for:

- a) a student who wishes to appeal a decision of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline that he or she has committed an academic offense; and,
- b) a complainant who wishes to appeal a decision of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline.

In reaching its decisions, the Joint Committee on Studies shall use the principle of a majority vote.

#### **3.5.1 Potential Conflict of Interest**

- a) If any member of the Committee believes that he or she has a potential conflict of interest in any case brought before the Committee, he or she shall excuse himself or herself from all meetings of the Committee regarding that case. If the member is a student member, a student member of the University Senate shall be designated to replace the excused member.

## **4. Procedures**

### **4.1 Plagiarism: Initial Steps**

When plagiarism is suspected, the faculty member, as complainant, shall first seek a second opinion from the chair of his or her department. If the complainant is the Chair of a department, he or she will seek a second opinion from another senior faculty member. If both parties agree that it is an apparent case of plagiarism, the complainant shall consult the Registrar to determine whether the student's name is on the Registry of Academic Discipline as a consequence of having been reported previously for plagiarism.

- a) If the student's name does not appear on the Registry as a result of a previous case of plagiarism, the procedures described in the section below, Plagiarism: First Instance, shall be followed.
- b) If the student's name does appear on the Registry as a result of a previous case of plagiarism, the procedures described in the section below, Plagiarism: Second and Subsequent Cases; Cheating, Falsification, and Tampering, shall be followed.

## **4.2 Plagiarism: First Instance**

- a) The complainant shall inform the student of the nature of the allegation.
- b) The complainant shall have recourse to one or more of the following:
  1. the student may be required to rewrite and re-submit the assignment before a grade is assigned;
  2. the grade assigned for the original submitted work may be reduced;
  3. a grade of zero may be assigned for the original submitted work; or,
  4. the student may be required to seek assistance from the Writing Centre and to submit a report, signed by a Writing Centre instructor, of the assistance received.
- c) The complainant shall send a brief report to the Registrar outlining the nature of the offense and the penalty applied. The report will be kept in the Registry of Academic Discipline until the student graduates, at which time it shall be destroyed.
- d) A copy of the complainant's report shall be sent to the student at the same time as it is sent to the Registrar.
- e) The Registrar shall add the student's name to the Registry of Academic Discipline, with a note indicating that plagiarism has occurred and the nature of the penalty applied. These will be removed from the Registry when the student graduates.
- f) The complainant shall retain, for a period of one year, the original title page of the submitted work, the original page or pages on which plagiarism occurred, a copy of the material from which the work was plagiarized, if available, and the report from the Writing Centre, if applicable.

### **4.2.1 Appeals to the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline**

- a) If a student does not agree that he or she has plagiarized or does not accept the remedy or penalty applied by the complainant, he or she has the right to be heard by the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline. The student will write a formal letter to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline, outlining the reasons for the objection and will send a paper copy thereof to the complainant.
- b) The complainant shall prepare a statement describing the alleged plagiarism and the rationale for the remedy or penalty and send it to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline.
- c) A copy of the complainant's statement shall be sent to the student at the same time as it is sent to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline.
- d) The Senate Committee on Academic Discipline shall normally meet within seven business days of receipt of both the letter from the student and the statement from the complainant.
- e) The Senate Committee on Academic Discipline will rule on the alleged plagiarism and/or the remedy or penalty applied and will inform the student, the complainant and the Registrar of its decision. The Committee may interview the student or the complainant or both.
- f) The decision of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline is final and cannot be appealed.

- g) If the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline dismisses the allegation, the complainant and the Registrar will destroy all materials related to the case and the Registrar will remove the student from the Registry of Academic Discipline.
- h) If the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline alters the remedy or penalty, the complainant will take the necessary action to comply with the Committee's decision and the Registrar will retain the Committee's decision on file until the student graduates and will amend the Registry of Academic Discipline as required.

### **4.3 Plagiarism: Second and Subsequent Cases; Cheating, Falsification, and Tampering**

Complainants alleging academic dishonesty involving an instance of cheating, falsification, tampering or a repeat instance of plagiarism, shall prepare a file that includes a detailed statement of the allegation and any available supporting documentation, including the names of possible witnesses.

#### **4.3.1 The Academic Discipline Officer**

- a) The file prepared by the complainant shall be sent to any one of the Academic Discipline Officers. If the receiving Academic Discipline Officer perceives there to be a potential conflict of interest, he or she shall pass the file on to another Academic Discipline Officer.
- b) Once the file has been sent forward to an Academic Discipline Officer, the allegation cannot be withdrawn by complainant.
- c) The Academic Discipline Officer shall review the information provided by the complainant, normally within seven business days, and will decide whether there appears to be sufficient evidence to proceed to the next stage of investigation.
- d) The decision of the Academic Discipline Officer shall be made entirely on the basis of his or her assessment of the information supplied by the complainant.
- e) If the Academic Discipline Officer determines that there is not sufficient evidence supporting the allegation to warrant a formal hearing, he or she shall inform the complainant of that decision and the file shall be destroyed.
- f) If the Academic Discipline Officer determines that there is sufficient evidence supporting the allegation to warrant a formal hearing, he or she shall forward the file to the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline.
- g) The Academic Discipline Officer shall provide a copy of the file, excluding copies of any exams that may be included in the file, to the student against whom the allegation has been made, at the same time as the entire file is forwarded to the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline. The Academic Discipline Officer shall also provide the student with a copy of the Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures document. The Academic Discipline Officer shall instruct the student to submit a written plea to the allegation to the Chair of the Committee on Academic Discipline within seven business days of his or her receipt of the file.
- h) The decision of the Academic Discipline Officer to dismiss an allegation or to proceed with a formal hearing is final and cannot be appealed.

#### **4.3.2 The Senate Committee on Academic Discipline**

- a) The Committee shall normally meet within seven business days of receipt of a file from an Academic Discipline Officer.
- b) In its deliberations, the Committee shall review the information contained in the file obtained from the Academic Discipline Officer.
- c) The Committee may decide to interview the complainant. If the complainant is requested to attend a meeting of the Committee, he or she can be questioned only by members of the Committee.
- d) If the student has admitted to the alleged offense, the Committee shall determine the appropriate penalties; see Penalties, below.
- e) If the student has disputed the allegation, the Chair of the Committee will invite him or her to appear before the Committee to present such information and arguments as he or she deems appropriate.
- f) The student has the right, when appearing before the Committee:
  1. to be accompanied by another person who may speak on the student's behalf; and,
  2. to call witnesses who may provide information that is directly relevant to the alleged offense.
  3. Only members of the Committee may question witnesses.
- g) When considering its decision, the Committee shall meet in camera.
- h) In determining whether an offense of academic dishonesty has occurred, the burden of proof is satisfied by the civil standard, "on the balance of probabilities". The burden of proof applied in criminal cases, "beyond a reasonable doubt", is not applicable.
- i) The Committee shall use the principle of majority vote in arriving at decisions.
- j) If it is determined that a student has not committed an offense of academic dishonesty, the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline shall inform the student, the complainant and the applicable Academic Discipline Officer of its decision. The case file will be sent to the Registrar who will destroy the file after the appeal period has expired unless the decision of the Committee is appealed.
- k) If it is determined that a student has committed an offense of academic dishonesty, the Committee shall determine the appropriate penalty; see Penalties, below. The Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline shall inform the student, the complainant, the Dean of the student's Faculty, and the Registrar of its decision and of the penalty applied. The case file will be sent to the Registrar who will retain the file until the student graduates, at which time it will be destroyed.

### **4.3.3 The Joint Committee on Studies As an Appeal Body**

- a) The faculty and administrative members of the Joint Committee on Studies (i.e., excluding student members, but including the Executive Vice-President of the Students' Union and the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline as invited observers) shall serve as an appeal committee with respect to all aspects of decisions of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline, e.g. guilt or innocence, type of penalty or length of time that a penalty for academic dishonesty will be recorded on a student's transcript.
- b) The student and the complainant each have the right to appeal a decision of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline. If the student or the complainant wishes to appeal a decision of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline, he or she must send a written letter to the Chair of the Joint Committee on Studies within two weeks of the date of the decision of the Committee on Academic Discipline and send a copy thereof to the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline.
- c) The Joint Committee on Studies shall retain the case file from the Registrar, review the file and inform the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline of its decision to uphold or amend a decision of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline that has been appealed. The Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline will take the necessary actions to comply with the decision of the Joint Committee on Studies.
- d) Decisions of the Joint Committee on Studies cannot be appealed.
- e) The Committee shall use the principle of majority vote in arriving at decisions.

### **4.3.4 Penalties**

- a) The penalties for academic dishonesty shall be determined in each individual case by the Senate Committee on Academic Dishonesty.
- b) Penalties may include a grade of zero for the assignment, a grade of zero for the course, academic probation for a specified period, suspension from the University for a stated period or permanent dismissal from the University.
- c) In the case of a student being found to have committed a second offense against academic integrity with both cases having been heard by the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline, the penalty in the second case shall normally be more severe than the first.
- d) The offense and the penalty shall be recorded by the Registrar in the Registry of Academic Discipline until the student graduates, at which time they will be removed.
- e) A penalty of probation, suspension, or dismissal shall be recorded as a transcript note on the student's office copy, student copy and official academic transcripts. The note for a suspension, for example, might read "Student is suspended from the University for academic dishonesty; may apply for re-entry for the <insert term> academic year. This note will be deleted on <insert date>."

- f) A policy statement will be pre-printed on the reverse side of the official transcript, such as **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**: When a student is placed on probation, or is suspended or dismissed for academic dishonesty by the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline, a notation will appear on the student's official transcript, showing the period of the penalty, where applicable, and the date, where applicable, on which the notation will be removed from the student's transcript. For further information, see section 3.9 of the StFX Academic Calendar.
  
- g) The Senate Committee on Academic Discipline shall, in its ruling, determine whether the transcript shall record the penalty on a permanent basis or for a shorter term (e.g. lifted upon graduation or removed two years after graduation), but the record shall not, other than in exceptional circumstances, be lifted prior to graduation or, if the student leaves the University before graduating, before five years has elapsed since the student last attended the University.”