

Academic Integrity Policy

Westmont College is a Community of Christian Scholars

When students join our college community, they are expected, as apprentice scholars, to search for truth with integrity and accuracy. This quest requires humility about our abilities, respect for the ideas of others, and originality in our thinking. Since Westmont is a Christian community, the integrity of our scholarship is rooted in the integrity of our faith. We seek to be followers of Christ in the classroom, in the library, and at the privacy of our computers. Violations of academic integrity are a serious breach of trust within the Westmont community because they violate the regard for truth essential to genuine learning and Christian consistency. Such deception also hurts those students who do their work with integrity. Violations of Academic Integrity may consist of cheating (the use of unauthorized sources of information on an examination or other assignment), falsification (misrepresentation of facts in any academic project or obligation) or plagiarism (the use of someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit). Violations of academic integrity may also consist of making quizzes and tests or essays and papers available to others in person, via the internet, or other means thereby inviting others to cheat, falsify, or engage in plagiarism.

Faculty and students should operate in an environment of mutual trust and respect. Faculty will expect students to act in ways consistent with academic integrity. However, for both scholarly and spiritual reasons, inappropriate sharing of one's work, cheating, falsification plagiarism and all other violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated in the Westmont community.

Cheating

Cheating is obtaining or aiding another to obtain credit for work accomplished by deceptive means. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Talking or communicating through signals with another student during an exam;
- Using unauthorized materials such as electronic devices or cheat sheets to obtain information for an exam;
- Copying or sharing information during an exam;
- Leaving during an exam in order to obtain information;
- Misrepresenting the procedure used to take an exam or complete an assignment;
- Taking, using, sharing or posting to the internet an exam or answers to an exam.

Falsification

Falsification is the alteration of information, documents, or other evidence in order to mislead. Examples of academic dishonesty of this form would include but not be restricted to:

- Fabrication or falsification of data, analysis, citations or other information for assignments, exams, speeches or any other academic work;
- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of official documents, credentials, or signatures;
- Misrepresentation of one's academic accomplishments, experiences, credentials, or expertise;
- Withholding information related to admission, transfer credits, disciplinary actions, financial aid, or academic status.

Plagiarism

To plagiarize is to present someone else's work—his or her words, line of thought, or organizational structure—as our own. This occurs when sources are not cited properly, or when permission is not obtained from the original author to use his or her work. By not acknowledging the sources that are used in our work, we are wrongfully taking material that is not our own. Plagiarism is thus an insidious and disruptive form of dishonesty. It violates relationships with known classmates and professors, and it violates the legal rights of people we may never meet.

Another person's "work" can take many forms: printed or electronic copies of computer programs, musical compositions, drawings, paintings, oral presentations, papers, essays, articles or chapters, statistical data, tables or figures, etc. (The Learning Skills Centre, 1999). In short, if any information that can be considered the intellectual property of another is used without acknowledging the original source properly, this is plagiarism. Conversely, supplying essays and papers to others in a way that constitutes an invitation to plagiarize, either in person or via the internet, or other means is to participate in the practice of plagiarism and constitutes a violation of academic integrity.

Minimal plagiarism is defined as doing any of the following without attribution:

- Inserting verbatim phrases of 2-3 distinctive words.
- Substituting synonyms into the original sentence rather than rewriting the complete sentence.
- Reordering the clauses of a sentence.
- Imitating the sentence, paragraph, or organizational structure, or writing style of a source (Saupé, 1998; Student Judicial Affairs, UCD, 1999).

Substantial plagiarism is defined as doing any of the following without attribution:

- Inserting verbatim sentences or longer passages from a source.
- Combining paraphrasing with verbatim sentences to create a paragraph or more of text.
- Using a source's line of logic, thesis or ideas.
- Repeatedly and pervasively engaging in minimal plagiarism.

Complete plagiarism is defined as doing any of the following without attribution:

- Submitting or presenting someone's complete published or unpublished work (paper, article, or chapter) (Wilhoit).
- Submitting another student's work for an assignment, with or without that person's knowledge or consent (Wilhoit).
- Using information from a campus file of old assignments (Wilhoit).
- Downloading a term paper from a web site (Wilhoit).
- Buying a term paper from a mail order company or web site (Wilhoit).
- Reusing or modifying a previously submitted paper (e.g., from another course) for a present assignment without obtaining prior approval from the instructors involved.

Response to Violations of Academic Integrity

In any given course, when a professor detects a violation of academic integrity, the instructor of the course determines the severity of the infraction and the ultimate consequence for the assignment or course. In most cases the result would be a grade of F on the assignment although an F in the entire course is possible if the instructor has announced a zero-tolerance policy for any violations of academic integrity. In all cases, faculty will use an infraction as an opportunity to help the student learn how to avoid such errors in the future.

The professor of the course will notify the Provost's and Student Life offices of all instances of academic dishonesty. For minor, first offenses, the infraction will simply be noted. For repeated or more severe infractions, other actions may be taken by the college that include but are not limited to a written warning or initiating a student conduct meeting (which could lead to suspension, or expulsion).

If instances of plagiarism are discovered after a course or a degree is completed, the level and frequency of plagiarism will be evaluated by the Vice Provost in consultation with relevant faculty members. Consequences may include changing the grade awarded in a course or courses, delaying the awarding of the degree, withholding the degree, or rescinding the degree.

Appeals

A student who feels that he or she has been unfairly accused or unjustly treated regarding violations of the Academic Integrity Policy may appeal to the Provost (or designee). Appeals must be in writing and submitted to the Provost's Office during regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) within three calendar days of the decision. If the third day falls on a non-business day, submit appeals via email to provost@westmont.edu.

An appeal must be in writing and include a statement outlining and supporting the specific grounds on which the student is appealing. The appeal is not a rehearing of the original case and the role of the Provost is not to substitute his or her own judgment for the judgment of the original decision. The role of the appeal officer is to determine whether a new decision should be considered due to a procedural error, the availability of new information or the imposition of excessive sanctions. During the appeal process, the Provost may choose to set aside sanctions as appropriate.

Following a prompt and effective review, the Provost will communicate a decision on the student's appeal no later than ten business days following the submission of the appeal. The decision will be communicated in writing to the appealing student. The decision will be in one of the two following forms:

1. Original Decision Upheld: Where review of the original decision does not demonstrate a different decision is warranted, the original decision will be upheld.

2. Original Decision Modified: Where review of the original decision demonstrates support for the appeal and a different decision is warranted, the review body will modify the original decision. This decision may include sanctions being decreased, modified, or revoked.

The decision on the appeal is final, and no other office will accept or review appeals following the decision.