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| Standard Number: | 2001 | Effective Date: | May 1, 2022 |
| Standard Title: | Academic Integrity | Last Updated: | Sept 5, 2024 |
| Standard Category: | Academics | Next Review Date: | Sept, 2026 |

Purpose

This standard:

- Explains and defines academic integrity
- Describes different types of academic misconduct
- Specifies investigative measures and procedures followed when academic misconduct is suspected
- Presents punitive measures if an individual is found to be in violation of this standard
- Outlines the appeal process for students who believe they have not been treated fairly by this standard

Definitions

Academic Misconduct / Cheating: Any behavior that misrepresents a student's own work or the work of others; acting with dishonest or unfair values or demonstrating a lack of respect for the responsibility of learning. Academic misconduct can be intentional or unintentional.

Course: one course of the program which is required to achieve a regulated certification, or consideration for completion of a College defined program.

Program: the complete set of all courses required to achieve a regulated certification, or the collection of courses defined as a program by the College.

Sanction: an academic sanction is a penalty imposed on a student when academic or code of conduct violations have been determined to have taken place. Sanctions may take many different forms.

Work: visual material: whether by hand, computer, mathematical equation, musical or artworks; oral material; individual or group reports and presentations; audio visual material and any other medium submitted to an instructor for the purposes of grading.

Statement

Ridge Meadows College adopts the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI)'s definition of academic integrity – “having the courage to uphold academic honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness and trustworthiness even when it is difficult to do so.”

Academic misconduct can more simply be referred to as “cheating”. There are many different forms of misconduct. RMC categorizes academic misconduct in five categories:

- 1) Assignment Misconduct (eg. working on an individual assignment with others; copying an assignment from another).
- 2) Exam Misconduct (eg. copying a neighbour's exam; using an unauthorized aid).
- 3) Falsification (eg. altering a graded exam and submitting it for regrade, presenting a false excuse to delay an assessment).
- 4) Fraud (eg. hiring or enlisting a third party to write a paper).
- 5) Plagiarism (eg. submitting an assignment of which portions contain material copied or paraphrased from an unattributed source).

If Academic Misconduct is Suspected:

Instructors and college administrators may pursue different methods of investigation if they suspect a case of academic misconduct. Methods may include, but are not limited to:

- Asking the student about the work and their methods.
- Submitting the material to an online plagiarism detector like Turnitin.
- Entering portions of the material into a search engine to determine if there are exact copies of the text elsewhere.
- Cross-referencing the material with texts, papers, or other submitted assignments.
- Requesting the student to complete a supervised work to determine if vocabulary and writing style are consistent with that of the previously submitted work.
- Requesting the student to orally explain the work or details of a cited source.

Notifications:

Upon suspicion of academic misconduct, instructors will conduct an initial investigation. If following completion of the investigation, instructors believe misconduct took place, the student will be informed in writing along with any confirmed sanction(s). The instructor will also notify the college administrative office in writing. The student will then have the opportunity to appeal the decision. The written notification to the student will contain:

- The nature of the misconduct detected
- Evidence that aided in the instructor's decision-making process
- The student's right to appeal

Potential Sanctions

If a student has been deemed to have committed an act of academic misconduct, different sanctions may be applied. In general, sanctions increase in severity if the misconduct is a second or greater offence, or if the offence is particularly egregious. Sanctions may include:

- A written warning to be recorded on file with the college administrative office.
- Resubmission of an assignment/work.
- Required attendance at an academic integrity workshop.
- Failure of an assignment.
- Failure of a course.*
- Suspension from the college.*
- Expulsion from the college.*

*Sanctions with an asterisk are administrative decisions and can only be made by the Program Chair in consultation with the College Manager.

In all cases, academic misconduct will be reported to and recorded by the college administrative office. If the misconduct is a second (or greater) offence, or deemed severe, the Program Chair, in consultation with the College Manager, will be entitled to choose an alternative or additional sanction.

Typical Hierarchy of Sanctions

In most cases sanctions will increase in severity with additional offences. The choice of sanctions rests with the instructor (or Program Chair and College Manager). A typical order of sanctions is as follows:

- **First Offence:** A written warning, often requiring resubmission of the work.
- **Second Offence:** Failure of the work.
- **Third Offence:** Failure of the course.
- **Fourth Offence:** Suspension or expulsion from the college.

Appeal Process

Students may appeal an academic misconduct sanction if they deem the sanction was inappropriate or unfair. There are three potential steps to the appeal process that must be completed in order. At any time, the student may decide to cease the appeal process.

Request to Review Decision (to Instructor)

The first step in the appeal process is an informal request to review the decision. This request should be made in writing and made to the instructor. This is the student's opportunity to present additional information that may change the instructor's decision. This request must be made within 7 calendar days from the student's initial notification of the misconduct.

An instructor may overturn the decision at this time and modify or restore the student's original grade if they feel the presented information/evidence is sufficient.

Appeal of Decision (to Program Chair)

The second step in the appeal process may only be undertaken if the first step has been attempted and proven unsuccessful. To conduct an appeal to the Program Chair, students must fill out the *Academic Misconduct Appeal Form* and submit it to the College Administrative Office with any required payment as per the form (payments will be refunded to the student in the case of a successful appeal).

An appeal must be made within 7 calendar days from the instructor's reply to an initial review request.

Upon receipt of the appeal form, the College Administrative Office will send the form to the appropriate Program Chair for consideration. The Chair will review all provided documentation and may or may not choose to interview the student and/or instructor as part of the investigative process.

When a decision has been reached, the Program Chair will notify the student and College Administrative Office in writing and provide an explanation of the investigative process and rationale for the decision.

It is the student's responsibility to provide all relevant information and materials for review. In general, an appeal will only be granted on the grounds of a procedural error or the presentation of evidence that proves the student's case. An appeal will not be granted solely on compassionate grounds.

Appeal of Decision (to College Manager)

This final step in the appeal process may only be undertaken if the first and second step has been attempted unsuccessfully.

To conduct an appeal to the College Manager, students must forward all documentation, including the *Academic Misconduct Appeal Form* and all prior decision letters to the College Administrative Office for forwarding to the College Manager.

An appeal must be made within 7 calendar days from the Program Chair's reply to an appeal.

The College Manager will review all provided documentation and may or may not choose to interview the student, instructor, and/or program chair as part of the investigative process.

When a decision has been reached, the College Manager will notify the student and College Administrative Office in writing along with an explanation of the investigative process and rationale for the decision.

If an appeal is still unsuccessful after this stage, the initial sanction shall stand and is not subject to further appeal.

Related Standards

- 2005 – Grade Appeals
- 6002 - Turnitin