

NTC Committee on the Oversight of Academic Integrity Report, Fall 2020

The office of Academic Integrity built on the momentum from last year, when the office developed a new reporting process, created the Faculty Chair of the Honor Board position, revised the Code of Academic Conduct, developed a new data management system, and moved all paper files into a digital archive.

This year, the office:

- Managed more academic misconduct reports than ever
- Revised the Code of Academic Conduct
 - NTC no longer handles academic misconduct of SOPA students
 - Honor Board hearings now require 2 students and 1 faculty member (down from 3 and 2, respectively)
- Moved to a docket system for handling honor board hearings
 - Hearings now take place on either Tuesday or Friday, and panelists sign up for at least 2 times per week to be available for hearings
- Moved hearings to Zoom
 - As a results of the pandemic, hearings moved to Zoom after March; this will continue for 2020-2021
- Continued to discuss academic integrity in new student and new faculty orientation
- Conducted training sessions for new Honor Board members, officers, and advisors
- Revised form letters for Honor Board communications with Complainants and Respondents
- Revised the membership of the Committee on Academic Integrity and gave this body responsibility over the appellate process

New Faculty Chair of the Honor Board

Many thanks to Chris Rodning for serving as the inaugural FCHB from Jan 2019-July 2020!

Sanda Groome, Professor of Practice in the Freeman School of Business, will serve as the FCHB for a 3-year term

Honor Board Cases, 2019-2020

For the third consecutive year the number of reported academic misconduct cases increased. It is hard to know whether this is because more students are violating the Code, or whether more faculty are reporting these cases. In 2019-2020, the number of reported cases increased 40% from the previous year. [Note: A “case” = a student.]

The increase was most pronounced in the School of Science & Engineering, which saw an increase from 36 cases in 2018/19 to 87 in 2019/20. In fact, 58% of all the reported cases were in SSE.

Outcomes:

In the vast majority of reported cases, the FCHB charged the student with a violation: 102/150 (68%). Those not charged are in two equal camps: 1) charges dismissed because of insufficient evidence; or 2) students are given a warning, but are not charged because the instructions were not clear or

comprehensive. The latter was new this year and due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Spring 2020 semester (more below).

Nearly all cases involve a first-time offender, who usually is offered and signs a hearing waiver (91/150). Only 5 cases involved a student who was not offered a hearing waiver because they were a repeat offender and/or because the potential sanction could reasonably include suspension or expulsion. In 2019-2020, three students appealed their decisions; the Committee on Academic Integrity denied these appeals

Sanctions:

We now abide by the general practice that sanctions are somewhat more severe than if a student had simply failed to turn in the assignment. Thus, most cases include multiple sanctions – a zero on the assignment in question AND a reduction in the letter grade, or zero AND an education sanction, etc.

See appendix for general tables.

Spring 2020 – A perfect storm

In Spring 2020, 91 students were reported to have violated the Code of Academic Conduct. This represents a higher number in one semester than in many recent academic years. We believe this is largely attributable to the move to remote learning as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nearly all of these cases were related to students' use of materials online. There were multiple cases in which multiple students (dozens) were accused of cheating by using Chegg.com. This resource has textbooks, tutoring services, and other academic support for students. These cases (in SSE and BUS) involved students who posted exam questions during the exam and others who viewed the answers during the exam.

Chegg.com cooperates with University inquiries related to academic integrity. As such, upon request from our office, it provides detailed information with contact info, time and date information, and more. This allows us to see who posted the questions and who viewed the answers.

The cases were complicated not just because of the volume, but because the instructions varied. In cases in which the instructor prohibited use of the internet during the exam, it was easy to use the Chegg.com data to charge the students with cheating. In cases when the internet was allowed, but the instructor was unaware of the possibility of sites like Chegg, the issue became murkier. Students claimed they believed they could use the site – especially those who only viewed the answers. In some cases, students who viewed or posted materials were not in the course or sections – largely because students often share login information.

Tips & Suggestions for Preventing Misconduct in Remote Exams

NTC strongly encourages faculty to prohibit use of the internet during exams, with the only exception being the browser needed to take the exam in Canvas.

When faculty use Canvas to give an exam, we encourage the use of the Lockdown Browser that prevents students from using other sites during the exam. Faculty should still include instructions that prohibit internet use because students may use their phones or other devices even when using the Lockdown

Browser. Canvas also offers Respondus, an exam proctoring service that will record students as they take exams and flag odd or inappropriate behavior (such as looking at other devices).

Be specific with your instructions. Can students work together, and if so, in what ways and for what purposes? Can students use their notes, books, and the internet during the exam? Can students post exam or homework questions to a third-party source? Are there sites that are definitely off-limits? We recommend using broad language, such as “Students may not use Google Translate or other translation services during the exam.” Or “Students may not post exam questions to or view exam answers on Chegg.com or other online tutoring platforms.”

We have also created a cover sheet for exams that faculty may use and modify with their own instructions. Studies show that reminding students about the honor code and requiring them to sign a pledge that they have not cheated does reduce misconduct. This sheet is included in this report and we encourage faculty to use it for all exams, especially when giving a remote exam.

See handout from NTC/CELT with other guidance.