

# Academic Policies

## Academic/Administrative Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

This policy applies to all students enrolled in online or on campus courses. Specific procedures will be modified as appropriate if a student is taking courses from a distance and unable to participate in person.

Grievances may arise in the following areas or situations:

1. Allegations of inadequate supervision or instruction which the student feels hinders his or her ability to function adequately.
2. Disagreement with an evaluation of classroom or clinical performance.
3. Disagreement with faculty's decision regarding discontinuation of progression in the program(s) in question.
4. Disagreement with decision of faculty or administration in other categories that would delay or prohibit progression in the program(s).
5. Disagreements with Mount Mercy administrators and/or Mount Mercy administrative staff members.

### Required Steps Before Initiating a Formal Grievance

1. Within 15 working days of the alleged injustice the student may initiate a conference with the involved person or persons to determine if he/she can resolve the problem(s) at this level. If the student decides not to initiate such a conference, he/she may not initiate a formal grievance.
2. A response from the involved faculty/administrative personnel to the student must be given within five (5) working days.
3. If the student considers the response unacceptable and inconsistent with the alleged injustice, the student is to inform the involved faculty and/or Mount Mercy administrative staff member(s) within five (5) working days that the response is considered unjust.
4. Then, if the student chooses, the student may initiate a grievance conference with the departmental chairperson or supervisor to whom the faculty/administrative personnel involved is responsible. A response to the student from the designated departmental chairperson or supervisor is due within five (5) working days of the latter's receipt of the student's request for a grievance conference.

### Formal Grievance Procedure

1. The formal written "Statement of Grievance" is to be submitted to the Provost within ten (10) working days following the student's grievance conference with the chairperson or supervisor. The student may select an uninvolved faculty member to assist him/her in working through the steps of the grievance procedure.
2. The formal "Statement of Grievance" must include:
  - a. the date(s), time(s) of day, and setting relevant to the alleged injustice and names of the person or persons involved.
  - b. the nature of the problem and alleged injustice.
  - c. a narrative, objective description of events relevant to the grievance.
  - d. the student's previous attempts to resolve the problem and the specific results of those attempts.
  - e. objective assessment(s) with documentation concerning specific aspects of the alleged, initial injustice and subsequent

responses from involved faculty member(s) and/or administrative personnel.

3. Within five (5) working days following Step 1 of the formal grievance procedure, the Provost has the responsibility to convene a committee that will hear both sides. This committee shall consist of persons representing the following categories:
  - a. Provost serves, with no vote, as chair of the grievance committee. All other members shall vote.
  - b. one full-time Mount Mercy faculty selected by the student.\*
  - c. one full-time Mount Mercy faculty member selected by involved faculty or administrative staff member.\*
  - d. one student representative, selected by the student, from the same class, specialty, or major field as the student.
  - e. the chairperson or supervisor of the department involved.
  - f. Mount Mercy's Equal Opportunity Officer representative, if different from all of the above.
4. Student shall receive the written recommendation of the committee, postmarked no later than three (3) working days after the final meeting of the committee. Copies of the recommendation shall also be sent to the involved faculty member/staff and the department chairperson or supervisor.
5. The committee chairperson shall also send the committee's recommendation to the President, who shall report in writing, normally within five (5) working days, his decision to the parties concerned. The President's decision is final.
6. In cases where the "Statement of Grievance" occurs towards the end of a term and committee members are not able to convene, the above-mentioned procedure will require special modification by the Provost. This may include but is not limited to modifications in the timeline for responding at each level of the process and may involve a reconfiguration of committee membership so that decisions are rendered in an equitable manner.

\* The student and the involved other individual have the responsibility for informing the Provost of the name of each person selected by each of them within one (1) working day of the student's distribution of the Statement of Grievance.

## Complaint Process

Students who wish to register a complaint may do so as outlined in the Student Consumer Complaint Process ([https://www.mtmercy.edu/\\_documents/about/compliance-accreditation/Student-Consumer-Complaint-Process.pdf](https://www.mtmercy.edu/_documents/about/compliance-accreditation/Student-Consumer-Complaint-Process.pdf)). Mount Mercy University seeks to resolve all student concerns in a timely and effective manner, and it is expected that students will fully utilize any or all of the University's administrative procedures to address concerns or complaints prior to contacting these agencies.

## Online Programs

Mount Mercy University is approved by the Iowa College Aid Commission for participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) initiative. To learn more about this authorization and programs leading to licensure, visit the Compliance & Accreditation (<https://www.mtmercy.edu/about/compliance-accreditation/>) website to review the sections titled *Educational Requirements for Licensure* and *State Authorization*.

## Academic Integrity

Mount Mercy values integrity and honesty in all aspects of academics and campus life. As part of the academic mission, the institution provides the following Definitions and Procedures for which all students are responsible. The Mount Mercy community encourages all students to carefully consider these definitions, to adhere to these standards, and to ask for guidance if in doubt.

This policy applies to all students enrolled in online or on campus courses. Disciplinary procedures will be modified as appropriate if a student is taking courses from a distance and unable to participate in person.

## Definitions of Cheating, Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

### Cheating

Cheating is an act or an attempted act of dishonesty that includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Copying:
  - a. any part of another person's work in an examination or for an assignment, with or without their consent, or
  - b. allowing another person to copy any part of your work, on an examination or for an assignment.
2. Using unauthorized materials or technology:
  - a. during an examination. (Examples would be answers passed to you, view of a calculator output, or text messages on a cell phone; however, other instances may apply).
  - b. to complete an assignment. (Examples would include using an AI bot to produce an assigned paper).
3. Collaboration during an assignment or during an examination when prohibited by the instructor.
4. Taking an examination for another person or letting a person take an exam for you.
5. Completing an assignment for another person or letting a person complete an assignment for you.
6. Forging needed signatures on academic work.
7. Altering of grades or other official educational records.
8. Obtaining a copy of an examination without permission from the class instructor.
9. Fabricating or falsifying information or data; or deliberately misrepresenting information for an assignment.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using somebody else's words, expression of ideas, data, images, or other creative products without acknowledgment or attribution. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Copying, paraphrasing, or blending words, images, or ideas that are not common knowledge without acknowledging the source.
2. Providing false, insufficient or incomplete acknowledgment of sources.
3. Claiming authorship of a work that is not one's own or that is the result of unauthorized joint effort, including purchasing, downloading, or otherwise acquiring the work.
4. Improper use of quotations.
5. Incomplete or improper use of citations.

### Academic Misconduct

Academic Misconduct includes acts that are considered unethical, dishonest, deceitful or inappropriate. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Attempting to gain an advantage over another individual by preventing access to needed books, materials, or aids.
2. Planning with another individual to commit any act of academic dishonesty.
3. Forging signatures on official institutional documents.
4. Breaking or entering an office or building to attempt to obtain an exam or other materials.
5. Submitting the same work for different classes without disclosure to and approval from the class instructor.
6. Receiving credit on group assignments without contributing.
7. Misrepresenting illness or personal crises, or otherwise intentionally misleading instructors as an excuse for missed or late academic work.

Academic cheating, plagiarism, and misconduct may be referred to collectively as "Academic Dishonesty." There are varying degrees of academic dishonesty. Suggested consequences for infractions are included below in order to promote consistency and equity. Mount Mercy reserves the right to act upon incidents of academic dishonesty that are not explicitly defined in the above policy.

### Procedures

All instructors are expected to cultivate integrity on campus and to affirm Mount Mercy's policy by introducing and discussing the *Definitions of Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct* at the beginning of each course and directing students to sources where the definitions can be found. Instructors should speak to the particular ways that Mount Mercy's Academic Integrity Policy applies to their courses.

### Suspected Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy

All information regarding cases of suspected or confirmed Academic Dishonesty will be dealt with under the standard of preponderance of the evidence and provided to only those with a need to know. Any suspected incident or dispute shall be raised to the appropriate party within a reasonable amount of time from the time of obtaining knowledge of the alleged violation. When allegations of academic dishonesty involve two or more students, each student will be evaluated on an individual basis. The following defines procedures, responsibilities and timelines for reporting suspected incidences of Academic Dishonesty.

### Faculty Resolution

Mount Mercy strongly encourages faculty members and students to resolve incidents of alleged academic dishonesty. Faculty members have the discretion to resolve cases of suspected academic dishonesty or misconduct on their own, including determining the consequence imposed. Faculty are urged to consult the suggested consequences outlined below. Faculty will check with the Provost Office to determine if the student(s) in question has a pattern of academic dishonesty before resolving a case.

A written record of each incident of academic dishonesty or misconduct **MUST** be given to the student placed on file. The record will detail the suspected academic dishonesty and the outcome. The Provost's Office will collect and retain these reports for purposes of data analysis, pattern monitoring, and notifying the committee when a student has a second offense.

Both the faculty member and the student can call upon the department chair to help in the resolution as needed.

### Academic Integrity Committee Involvement

There are three ways that an incident can be referred to the committee for resolution.

1. Faculty referral - a faculty member can refer an individual case to the committee for a decision at any time by notifying the Academic Integrity Committee chair.
2. Student referral – a student may ask that the committee make a decision on the case after the faculty resolution. To do so, the student should notify the Provost in writing that he/she would like the committee to review the case. This notification needs to occur within one week of the student being informed of the faculty member's decision in the case. The student should provide any relevant evidence and documentation to substantiate his/her case. Names of other students to contact can also be provided.
3. Automatic involvement - On the second or subsequent reported incident for a student, the committee will review the student's offenses. The committee will determine any further sanctions to help the student prevent future infractions.

### For First Academic Integrity Report

1. The faculty member will discuss academic integrity violation and faculty appointed sanctions with the student and send signed copy of the report to the office of the provost.
2. The office of the provost shall notify the student within a reasonable amount of time, in writing, that the report was received. The student has the option to admit charges or request committee involvement. Student will have one (1) week from the day the letter was sent to turn in any extra material. Failure to submit any requests in writing within this time frame will result in the student waiving their right to an appeal.
3. The office of the provost will keep the report on file.

### For Second or Subsequent Report

1. The office of the provost shall notify the Academic Integrity Committee within a reasonable amount of time of receipt of a second or subsequent complaint.
2. The Academic Integrity Committee shall notify the student within a reasonable amount of time, in writing, that the report was received, the student option to voice their side in writing, and the option of requesting a formal hearing. (See process of hearing below). Student will have one (1) week from the day the letter was sent to turn in any extra material or request a hearing. Failure to submit any requests in writing within this time frame will result in the student waiving their right to an appeal.
3. The Academic Integrity Committee will decide (within a reasonable amount of time after the student submits any request in writing or waives their right to an appeal) from the options listed below:
  - a. If sanctions, above that were assessed by the faculty member, are warranted. The committee shall refer to the list below for possible consequences.
    - i. Majority vote by the voting members is needed to proceed with sanctions.
  - b. Whether the allegations warrant a hearing
    - i. A vote of one of the voting members will warrant a hearing. (See process of hearing below).
4. The Academic Integrity Committee shall issue a final decision and notify all involved parties in writing.
5. The office of the provost will keep the report and Academic Integrity Committee decision on file.

### If a Hearing is Requested Either by Student or Committee

1. The chair will notify all parties and schedule a hearing within a reasonable amount of time. In the event of a conflicting scheduled,

a faculty member may choose not to attend the hearing and allow his/her written materials to state his/her side of the case.

2. The Academic Integrity Committee may gather relevant information to the case and may solicit information from other students in the class or other members of the Mount Mercy community at their discretion or upon request of any person involved in the allegation. At the hearing, the Academic Integrity Committee will meet with all parties and witnesses. The proceeding will be recorded; this record will be available on a need to know basis and maintained in the Office of Academic Affairs.
3. A decision, by majority vote of the voting members present at the hearing, shall be made based on the evidence presented at the hearing, along with other relevant materials gained through investigation by the Academic Integrity Committee. The committee shall refer to the list below for possible consequences.
4. The Academic Integrity Committee shall issue a final decision and notify in writing all involved parties.
5. After receiving the final written decision of the committee, any party who wishes to dispute, may appeal this decision. A written letter summarizing the groups for contesting this decision must be submitted to the Provost within three (3) business days. Within a reasonable amount of time, the Provost shall render a final written decision based upon review of the submitted information, findings, and recommendations. A copy shall be provided to the involved parties, including the Academic Integrity Committee. The decision of the Provost is final.
6. In cases where an allegation of academic dishonesty is submitted toward the end of a fall, winter, or spring semester and members of the Academic, Integrity Committee are not able to convene, the above-mention procedure will require special modification by the Provost. This may include but it not limited to modifications in the timeline for responding at each level of the process and may involve a reconfiguration of the membership of the Academic Integrity Committee so that decisions are rendered in an equitable manner.

## Resolution Options for Academic Dishonesty or Misconduct

Based upon the gravity of the academic dishonesty, different academic sanctions may be appropriate. For instance, the nature of the incident, and the personal history or prior offenses by an individual student are relevant factors to weigh. A suggested spectrum of offenses and examples are included below. Faculty are urged to consider these suggested sanctions in order to promote consistency and equity.

### Simple offense

Example: Student fails to properly cite sources one or two times in a paper, but the remainder of the paper is cited properly.

Types of Sanctions: The student is given the opportunity to re-do the assignment, or an alternate assignment, for a reduced grade. The student is required to meet with the Director of the Academic Center for Excellence and commit to a plan for improvement.

### Serious offense

Examples: Student is caught looking over at another student's test. Significant parts of a paper are not properly quoted and cited.

Types of Sanctions: The student receives a failing grade for the assignment, but is allowed to continue in the course.

## Aggravated offense

Examples: Student submits an entire paper from the Internet that is not his/her own.

Organized cheating with multiple students.

Stealing tests.

Types of Sanctions: The student receives a failing grade for the course.

## Repeated offenses (for committee decision only)

Example: Student engages in academic misconduct in more than one course.

*Note:* To monitor this type of misconduct, it is essential that faculty submit Academic Dishonesty Reports for each incident.

Types of Sanctions: Expulsion from Mount Mercy is warranted.

*A more complete list of possible consequences is detailed below, though consequences are not limited to the following list. One or more consequences may be appropriate.*

## Faculty or Academic Integrity Committee Resolution Options

- *Counseling:* The student(s) may be referred to appropriate counseling for assistance and education that will help prevent future incidences of Academic Dishonesty.
- *Educational sanction:* The student(s) may be required to attend an educational program on academic integrity, ethics, or related subject. The student may receive instructions, re-do the assignment with consultation from the instructor, or complete a new, alternative assignment with consultation from the instructor. The student may be responsible for related expenses, including expenses for education, counseling, or treatment, if any expense is entailed.
- *Forfeiture of Grade on the Assignment:* For the assignment to be given no credit, and the student(s) may continue the class with zero points for the assignment.
- *Failure of the Course:* The student(s) will receive a grade of F for the course.

## Academic Integrity Committee Resolution Options

- *Exclusion from Mount Mercy facilities or activities:* The student(s) may be prohibited from attending a class, undertaking Mount Mercy employment, entering a building, participating in an extracurricular activity sponsored by the institution, representing Mount Mercy in an official capacity, or using other services provided by the institution. Such exclusion may be for a definite or indefinite period of time.
- *Disciplinary suspension:* The student(s) may be involuntarily separated from Mount Mercy for a stated period of time after which readmission is possible. The Provost shall determine when the suspension will become effective. A student with one or more violations may be suspended from Mount Mercy for an indefinite period of time. A student suspended indefinitely may petition the Provost for reinstatement.
- *Expulsion:* For a serious violation of the Academic Integrity Policy or repeated violations, the student(s) may be dismissed from Mount Mercy permanently.

## Graduate Student Grievance Procedure

This policy applies to all students enrolled in online or on campus courses. Disciplinary procedures will be modified as appropriate if a

student is taking courses from a distance and unable to participate in person.

## Grievances may arise in the following areas or situations:

1. Allegations of inadequate supervision or instruction which the student feels hinders his or her ability to function adequately.
2. Disagreement with an evaluation of classroom or clinical performance.
3. Disagreement with faculty's decision regarding discontinuation of progression in the program(s) in question.
4. Disagreement with faculty or administration decision in other categories that would delay or prohibit progression in the program(s).
5. Disagreements with Mount Mercy administrators and/or Mount Mercy administrative staff members.

## Required Steps before Initiating a Formal Grievance

1. Within 15 working days of the alleged injustice the student may initiate a conference with the involved person or persons to determine if he/she can resolve the problem(s) at this level. If the student decides not to initiate such a conference, he/she may not initiate a formal grievance.
2. A response from the involved faculty/administrative personnel to the student must be given within 5 working days.
3. If the student considers the response unacceptable and inconsistent with the alleged injustice, the student is to inform the involved faculty and/or Mount Mercy administrative staff member(s) within five working days that the response is considered unjust.
4. Then, if the student chooses, the student may initiate a grievance conference with the Program Director to whom the faculty/administrative personnel involved is responsible. A response to the student from the Program Director is due within 5 working days of the latter's receipt of the student's request for a grievance conference.

## Formal Grievance Procedure

1. The formal written "Statement of Grievance" is to be submitted to the Provost within 10 working days following the student's grievance conference with the Program Director. The student may select an uninvolved faculty member to assist him/her in working through the steps of the grievance procedure.
2. The formal "Statement of Grievance" must include:
  - a. the date(s), time(s) of day, and setting relevant to the alleged injustice.
  - b. names of the person or persons involved.
  - c. the nature of the problem and alleged injustice.
  - d. a narrative, objective description of events relevant to grievance.
  - e. the student's previous attempts to resolve the problem and the specific results of those attempts.
  - f. objective assessment(s) with documentation concerning specific aspects of the alleged, initial injustice and subsequent responses from involved faculty member(s) and/or administrative personnel.
3. Within 5 working days following step 1 of the formal grievance procedure, the Provost has the responsibility to convene a

committee that will hear both sides. This committee shall consist of persons representing the following categories:

- a. Provost, or her representative serves, with no vote, as chair of the grievance committee. All other members shall vote.
  - b. One full-time Mount Mercy graduate faculty selected by the student.\*
  - c. One full-time Mount Mercy graduate faculty member selected by involved faculty or administrative staff member.\*
  - d. One graduate student representative, selected by the student, from the same class, specialty, or major field as the student.
  - e. The Program Director to be replaced by the department chairperson if the Program Director is the involved faculty member.
  - f. Mount Mercy's Equal Opportunity Officer representative, if different from all of the above.
4. Student shall receive the written recommendation of the committee, postmarked no later than 3 working days after the final meeting of the committee. Copies of the recommendation shall also be sent to the involved faculty member and the Program Director.
  5. The committee chairperson shall also send the committee's recommendation to the President, who shall report in writing, normally within 5 working days, his decision to the committee the parties concerned. The President's decision is final.

\* The student and the involved other individual have the responsibility for informing the Provost of the name of each person selected by each of them within 1 working day of the student's distribution of the Statement of Grievance.