Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

**Academic Integrity Departure Guide for Instructors**

**What is an academic integrity departure?**

Following the six fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage in one’s academic work would uphold academic integrity (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2021). Consequently, any violations of these values would involve an academic integrity departure. Some examples include, but are not limited to, cheating on exams, plagiarism, sharing exam questions and answers online, facilitating others’ to depart from academic integrity conventions, and forging documents to attain privileges.

**Note:** **Informal** handling of possible academic integrity departures should **not** be pursued. It is neither effective nor fair to seek informal ways of investigation, remedy, or sanction when dealing with suspected cases of academic integrity departure.

**What do I do if I suspect an academic integrity departure in my students’ work?**

1. **Initial Investigation**

Do not contact the student at the beginning of your investigation!

1. You initiate the investigation of a possible departure by collecting all the documents related to the case. You can also ask for guidance from the department chair or director.
2. After carefully examining the case, if you conclude there is insufficient evidence supporting a departure from academic integrity, the case is dismissed. Therefore, you need to destroy all the information on file. No further action is required.
3. If you conclude that there is enough evidence for continuing the investigation of an academic integrity departure, you need to notify the student using the “Notice of Investigation of a Possible Departure from Academic Integrity” form (“the NOI”).
4. The student needs to respond to your NOI email within **ten** business days of your email date. In their response, they need to identify whether they have chosen to meet with you to discuss the case **or** will provide a written response. If they decide to respond in writing, they shall do so in **five** business days from the date they express their decision.
5. If the student wishes to meet with you, you need to decide whether the meeting shall be in person, by phone, or audio/video conferencing. You also need to ask if anyone will accompany the student to the meeting.
6. Schedule a meeting as soon as possible. “The student has the right to know what material will be considered, and that at the meeting, the student will have the opportunity to respond to the evidence related to the alleged departure.” ([Academic Integrity Procedures-Requirements of Faculties & Schools](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools))

The student may have a support person at the meeting for emotional support who is **not** involved with the case discussion. The instructor may have an advisor at the meeting who may chair the meeting and provide procedural clarifications.

1. If the student elects to respond in written form, they have **five** business days after submitting their response to NOI. The response shall “include a detailed explanation of the student’s case and all relevant documents in the student’s possession on which they intend to rely” [(Academic Integrity Procedures-Requirements of Faculties and Schools](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools)).
2. **Final Investigation**

After the meeting or after receiving a written response from the student, if you find any further information about the case, you shall disclose the new evidence to the student and give them the option to respond to them.

1. **Decision-Making**

Based on the academic integrity applicable policies and rules, evidence, and arguments with the student and their assessment of the case, the instructor will decide whether or not a departure from academic integrity occurred.

1. If the decision is that an academic integrity departure has not occurred, the case will be dismissed. The instructor needs to submit a “Notice of Dismissal of Alleged Departure from Academic Integrity” using the template to the student. The instructor then needs to forward an anonymized version of the dismissal form to the faculty/school Academic Integrity Administrator for reporting purposes.
2. After reviewing the evidence and student’s response, using a balance of probability, if the instructor decides that a departure from academic integrity occurred, they need to fill out the “Finding of a Departure from Academic Integrity” form.
3. The instructor contacts the faculty/school Academic Integrity Administrator informing them of the departure from academic integrity, and inquires whether a previous academic integrity departure record exists on the student’s file. If there is a record of academic integrity departure, the existing departure is categorized as **level II** departure on the finding form. The case, then, shall be referred to the faculty/school for the remedy and/or sanction.
4. If the faculty/school Academic Integrity Administrator informs the instructor that there is no prior record of academic integrity departure for the student, the instructor decides on a remedy or sanction from the ones available to the instructor ([Section 3.4.2](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools)) or refers to the Faculty/School AI Lead for determining the proper sanction and remedy.
5. If the instructor decides to proceed with a remedy and sanction, they need to exercise so by being “fair, reasonable,” and choosing a remedy and/or sanction “proportionate to the gravity of the departure found.” ([Section 3.4.1](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools))
6. Some factors to consider in deciding on the remedy and sanction:

• the extent and seriousness of the departure;

• any educational measures that may be undertaken to ensure that the student understands the departure and what should have been the appropriate conduct in such circumstances;

• the value of the academic work in relation to the overall grade for the course;

• the experience of the student (for example, a first-year or an upper-year student; a student experienced in the discipline or a student in an elective course);

• any mitigating and/or aggravating circumstances; and

• possible direct injury to another student or the institution.

(Verbatim from the [Academic Integrity Procedures](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools)—Section 3.4.1)

1. Range of remedies and sanctions available to the instructor:

The instructor may impose one or more of a range of remedies or sanctions, including:

* an oral or written warning that such infractions constitute unacceptable behaviour;
* a learning experience involving rewriting or revising the original work within a stipulated period of time;
* the submission of new or other work within a stipulated period of time;
* the deduction of a partial or total loss of marks for the work, assignment or exam;
* a deduction of a percentage of the final grade in the course; or
* a failing grade (down to a grade of zero) in the course. ([Academic Integrity Procedure](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools) – Section 3.4.2)

**Note:** The remedy and/or sanction need to be proportionate to the gravity of the academic integrity departure and consistent with previous remedies and sanctions rendered for similar cases.

**Guidelines for Rendering Remedies and Sanctions:**

* Bear in mind that cultural differences may cause different practices of citation and what constitutes common knowledge.
* Consider EDII issues related to bias and perception of bias.
* Use an EDII lens in consideration of mitigating factors.
* Sometimes, the borderline between appropriate and inappropriate collaboration becomes blurry. Thus, instructors can use these opportunities to educate students on expected and beneficial cooperation and unacceptable collaboration in such cases.
* Considering the impacts of the departure can help decide the sanction.[[1]](#footnote-1) For example, a departure might only impact the student’s academic progress while another departure can impact fairness to all the students, yet some infractions may affect the community.

**Guidelines for Categorizing the Level of Departure[[2]](#footnote-2):**

The [Academic Integrity Procedures – Requirements of Faculties and Schools](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools) provides two levels of departure: Level I and Level II. Here are some directing considerations for each group. These considerations are suggestions, and each case merits its judgement.

Level I:

1. The student’s status. First-year students and students new to the field might have had fewer opportunities to learn about academic integrity conventions.
2. The first-time departures.
3. The departure does not constitute a significant portion of the course grade.
4. The sanction for the departure does not necessarily cause a failure in the course.

Level II:

1. The departure is a subsequent departure by the student.
2. The harms of the departure are significant, such as unfairness to other students or considerable damage to professionalism or the university’s integrity. In such cases, the case is referred to the faculty or school for sanctions and remedies.
3. The work constitutes a significant portion of the course grade.
4. The sanction can result in failure in the course.
5. The student is at higher years of their program, for example, fourth-year students.
6. Significant use of unacknowledged resources.
7. Multiple departure types are included in one case.
8. It has a direct negative impact on other students, such as stealing other students’ academic work.

**Some Considerations for Faculties and Schools:**

* Before approval of the degree lists, Faculties and Schools need to check with Degree Coordinators to ensure that no students with ongoing academic integrity departure cases have applied to graduate.
* If a sanction includes the requirement to withdraw, you need to contact the Academic Integrity Subcommittee’s chair to seek approval of the sanction. The chair’s office will review the previous cases that included a requirement to withdraw across the university to ensure consistency and fairness.

**References**

Queen’s University. (2021). *Academic Integrity Procedures – Requirements for Faculties and Schools*. <https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-procedures-requirements-faculties-schools>

University of Ontario Institute of Technology. (n. d.). *Why is Academic Integrity and Honesty Important?* <https://secure.tlc.ontariotechu.ca/academic_integrity/module1/Module13.html>

1. University of Ontario Institute of Technology has elaborated the impacts of academic integrity departures in this section “[Why is Academic Integrity and Honesty Important?](https://secure.tlc.ontariotechu.ca/academic_integrity/module1/Module13.html)” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The majority of the ideas in this section come from Claire O’Brien’s presentation at the Academic Integrity Roundtable on November 8, 2021, *Changes to academic integrity procedures*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)