Reporting Academic Offences in 3 Easy Steps!

The Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (the Code) dictates the process required for the resolution of allegations of academic misconduct. While this process can sometimes seem cumbersome, it protects both you and the rights of the student. The Code can be found online at http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm.

Key Points to Remember when Resolving Offences
- Instructors are not authorized to assign a penalty for an offence, regardless of the weight of the assignment or a student’s admission to the offence.
  - Instructors must forward all cases of academic misconduct to the department chair (or the chair’s designate) for resolution.
- All allegations for assignments worth more than 10% must be submitted to OSAI (via the chair) for resolution, regardless of whether the student has admitted to an offence (unless the chair or instructor decides there is no offence).
- “I didn’t know” is not a valid excuse.
- Students are not allowed to drop a course when an allegation is under investigation or after a sanction has been imposed. Please remind students of this.
- You are required to pursue a case if you believe an offence has occurred. Failure to pursue or report an academic offence may be considered an offence under the Code.

Steps:
1. Gather the Supporting Documentation
   - Establish the nature and extent of the alleged problem. For plagiarism cases, this means printing out internet sources or providing photocopies of material from printed sources.
   - If you are pressed for time, identify enough to show the student what is problematic, and OSAI will do the rest.

2. Interview the Student (The meeting need not be lengthy)
   - Contact the student and invite him/her to meet with you to discuss your concern. We recommend giving the student at least two chances to meet with you. You can indicate that if you do not hear from him/her by a specified date, you will assume s/he does not wish to meet with you, and will forward the case to the dean’s office via the chair.
   - Take notes. If possible, have someone present to take notes who can also verify what happens during the meeting.
   - Show the student what you have discovered, why it is of concern, and ask for an explanation in a non-confrontational manner. This meeting shouldn’t be an interrogation and you don’t need to get an admission of guilt (although getting one is always helpful because it shows that the student is taking responsibility for his/her actions early in the process).
   - Be wary of the following inadequate explanations:
     - “I didn’t know.” Under the Code, “not knowing” does not excuse a student. It is what a student “ought reasonably to have known” that is critical for determining whether an offence has occurred. The University expects students to know the Code and understand basic skills like avoiding plagiarism. In other words, if there is plagiarism, an offence has been committed regardless of the student’s expressed intent or any extenuating circumstances which s/he may raise. Intent or extenuating circumstances may, however, be relevant for sanctioning.
     - “I accidentally submitted a rough draft.”
• Please for mercy of any kind. Be sympathetic to whatever challenges they are facing, but remember that most students today are in similar situations and have found legitimate ways to complete their work (e.g., handing things in on time, asking for an extension, going to a writing centre, etc.).

• If, after the interview, you believe that no offence has been committed, no further action is required. Because intent is not a factor in determining whether an offence has occurred, this should occur only rarely.

• If, however, based on your meeting with the student and the supporting documentation, you continue to believe that an academic offence has been committed, continue to Step 3.

• Please remind the student that s/he is not permitted to drop the course while the matter is under investigation or after a sanction has been imposed.

• These situations can be awkward. You may find it helpful to explain to the student that you are required by the Code to report all allegations of academic misconduct to your chair, and to fail to do so would make you responsible for committing an offence under the Code.

• If the student appears to be in difficulty of some kind, refer him/her to his/her college registrar for academic advice and personal counseling.

• If the student has questions about procedures and/or sanctions, refer him/her to the Code and the student’s college registrar. Please do not advise the student of possible sanctions.

• If in doubt about anything, please call OSAI for advice. We can check if the student has committed other offences and advise on how to manage a difficult or unusual situation.

3. Submit the Case to the Chair

• Submit to the chair (or chair’s designate) the case submission cover page (http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/facultyandstaff/downloadable-templates/forms/academic-offense-submission-cover-sheet-saveable-version.pdf/view), a brief summary of the allegation, details of the student interview, relevant documentation, course syllabus, and any grades earned by the student to date.
  o If the assignment is worth 10% or less, the associate chair can assign a maximum sanction of zero for the offence and s/he will report the incident to OSAI so that we can enter it into our central database.
  o If the assignment is worth more than 10%, the chair will forward the case to OSAI for resolution.

• If the case is forwarded to OSAI, you have the option to attend the decanal meeting with the student. You are not required to attend this meeting if you do not wish to: indicating your preference with the submission of the case is a much appreciated help with scheduling. There may, however, be specific circumstances where your attendance and input at the meeting are essential, in which case we will encourage you to attend.

For more detailed information: http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/instructors/resolution

If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us.
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http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai