Academic Integrity

GW Law Academic Integrity Code

It is the responsibility of each student to read and comply with the George Washington University Law School Academic Integrity Code and with the University Code of Student Conduct.

- [Academic Integrity Code](#)
- [Academic Integrity Committee Failure to Report Form](#)
- [University Code of Student Conduct](#)

Citing Responsibly: A Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism

This handbook was developed by The George Washington University Law School's Academic Integrity Committee. It is intended to inform students about the Law School's rules regarding plagiarism and to provide tips on how to avoid committing plagiarism.

- [Citing Responsibly](#)
- [Pledge of Honesty](#)

Integrity Q & A

Academic Integrity Code

Q. Where did this Code come from?
A. The Academic Integrity Code was adopted for the Law School by vote of the faculty in 1997 and was revised in 2018 with substantial student input.

Academic Integrity Committee

Q. What is the Academic Integrity Committee?
A. The Academic Integrity Committee comprises faculty members, administrators, and students. The mission of the Committee is to promote a culture of honesty, integrity, and professional responsibility throughout the Law School community and to educate members of the Law School community regarding their responsibilities under the Academic Integrity Code.

The Pledge of Honesty

Q. Does the pledge requirement apply to a draft of a paper that will later be submitted in final form?
A. The pledge requirement applies to “each item of written work submitted at the Law School for credit.” Code § 4.1. The pledge is required to be submitted only once per item of written work, and, in the opinion of the committee, drafts of a paper and the later-submitted final paper may best be regarded as a single item of written work for purposes of the pledge requirement.

Q. If the pledge is not required for a particular assignment, does that mean it’s OK to cheat?
A. No. This brings out an important point about the policy and the pledge requirement: All students are bound by the Code independently of the pledge requirement. The pledge exists to serve as a reminder and an affirmation of the
importance of academic integrity, it does not “trigger” the application of the Code. The Code applies wherever it applies, regardless of whether it requires the pledge for a particular assignment and regardless of whether a student in fact signs the pledge for a particular assignment.

Q. When should the pledge be signed?
A. It is best if a student signs the pledge after completing the work to which the pledge relates. The pledge certifies that the student has not received improper aid in completing the work, which is implies that the work has been completed at the time the pledge is signed.

Academic Dishonesty
Q. The definition section of the policy includes discussion of intent related to acts of academic dishonesty. Does that mean that a student, in order to have committed academic dishonesty, must have intended to violate the Code, or only that the student must have intended to do the thing that constitutes a violation of the Code?
A. The latter. The “mens rea” of academic dishonesty is the intention to do the act that is the “actus reus” of academic dishonesty, not the intention to commit academic dishonesty. The following example clarifies this point:

A student submits a paper for credit that contains a paragraph that is paraphrased from a book. The student knows that the paragraph is paraphrased from a book but fails to include a citation to the book. The student sincerely (but mistakenly) believes that principles of legal citation require citation only for direct quotations and therefore that no footnote is required for this paragraph. Analysis: The student has committed academic dishonesty. The student intentionally did the forbidden act, which is to submit the paper without a citation for the paragraph. The student’s ignorance of the principle that requires the citation is irrelevant.

Plagiarism
Q. I’m a foreign student. In my home country, the rules of legal citation are different than they are here. Must I follow U.S. rules of legal citation for my assignments here? Will it be plagiarism if I submit a paper in a form that would be acceptable in my home country but that constitutes plagiarism under U.S. notions of plagiarism and legal citation?
A. All students, including foreign students, are bound by U.S. concepts of plagiarism and U.S. rules of legal citation for all assignments submitted at GW Law School. An assignment submitted at GW Law School, that contains plagiarism as defined under U.S. concepts of plagiarism, can lead to a charge of plagiarism, and be penalized by all penalties applicable to charges of plagiarism, regardless of whether the paper would be acceptable in the student’s home country.

Examinations
Q. When time is called for an examination, is it permissible to finish writing the sentence one is writing at that moment?
A. No. The rule at GW Law School is that students must cease all writing, typing or filling in Scantron sheets immediately when time is called, without even finishing the sentence they may be writing at that moment.
Charges of Academic Dishonesty

Q. Why are records of charges and their disposition permanently retained? Why isn’t there a procedure for expunging records after some period of years?
A. Law students are adults. They have reached the stage in life when dishonesty can no longer be forgiven as a youthful indiscretion. Law school is professional school and law students are expected to act honorably, as befits those who seek to enter an honorable profession. Permanent retention of records reflects the serious nature of academic dishonesty. It also provides an appropriate deterrent to academic dishonesty.

Q. Why are charges of academic dishonesty permanently retained on a student’s record, even in cases in which the charged student is found not to have committed academic dishonesty? Does this practice unnecessarily require students to report innocent matters to bar authorities?
A. This point was extensively discussed at the time the policy was adopted. Some state bar authorities require bar applicants to state whether they have ever been charged with academic dishonesty, regardless of the disposition of the charge. If a student is applying for admission to a bar that asks this question, then the student must answer truthfully. The duty to report charges is therefore created by state bar authorities. This duty would exist whether or not the Law School retained records of charges. The duty to report charges to state bar authorities also explains another important reason for the Code’s rule of permanent retention: to avoid confusion as to what a bar applicant must report. If a student truthfully reports that he or she was charged but found not to have committed academic dishonesty, then the bar authorities will ask for an explanation of what happened, but the matter will not typically be a substantial obstacle to bar admission. If, however, a student thinks, “the records of this charge were discarded, so it doesn’t exist any more and I don’t have to report it,” then the student is making a grave error that could land him or her in serious trouble. If bar authorities discover that the student was charged and failed to report it, then the student may not be admitted to the bar.

Reporting Academic Dishonesty

Q. I know that a particular student cheated and I want to report it, but I don’t want to give the student’s name. Can I do that?
A. No. If you have information that a particular student cheated, you must report the student by name. It is very difficult to investigate claims that "someone" cheated. In order for cheating to be properly punished, the names of students who have cheated must be reported.

Q. I am willing to give the name of the student who cheated, but I would like to withhold my own name and report the cheating anonymously. Can I do that?
A. The policy can be properly implemented only if persons reporting academic dishonesty provide their own names. Anonymous reports of academic dishonesty are very difficult to investigate and result in the absence of sufficient evidence upon which to base a charge of academic dishonesty.
If you have other questions about the Academic Integrity Code, please submit them to any member of the Academic Integrity Committee, or to academic_integrity@law.gwu.edu.