

# **Academic Integrity Policy**

*Ashoka University, Office of Academic Affairs (OAA)*

(version May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, approved by AC/BOM; small amendments on Sep 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021)

Academic research, exchange of ideas, and the evaluation of student work is governed by shared values and norms, including honesty, fairness and responsibility. Academic integrity is a matter of maintaining and upholding these norms and values by applying them in one's academic work by being honest, being fair to others, and by taking responsibility for one's work and for how it depends on the work conducted by others.

It is the University's responsibility to award credit only for academic work that has been produced in ways that display academic integrity, and it is the students' responsibility to ensure that they demonstrate academic integrity in all their academic work. This Policy reflects the University's intent to promote academic integrity among its students and to detect and manage academic misconduct. It specifies the nature of academic integrity, resources available to students, and the procedures Ashoka University follows in assessing and adjudicating alleged cases of academic misconduct.

All students doing coursework or research and thesis work at Ashoka University or in courses delivered in partnership with other Universities, students undertaking work, internships, or placement at a third party organization as part of their studies, or who work with one of the University Centers, fall into the scope of this policy.

Here and throughout, 'faculty member' refers to the person who is in charge of assessing the student's work. Typically, this will be an Ashoka faculty member, but as per the specification of the scope, it may also be a faculty member at a partner University or the student's line manager in a relevant third party organization or at one of the University's Centers.

## **I. Academic Integrity and Violations Thereof**

1. **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY** is a matter of honest and responsible scholarship. Students are expected to submit original work and give credit to other peoples' ideas. Maintaining one's academic integrity crucially involves, but is not limited to:
  - 1.1 creating and expressing one's own ideas in course work;
  - 1.2 acknowledging all sources of information used;
  - 1.3 completing assignments independently and, where applicable, acknowledging collaboration;
  - 1.4 accurately reporting results when conducting one's own research, with respect to one's lab results or that of one's team;
  - 1.5 honesty during examinations.
2. Academic integrity is an important and necessary element of one's academic success. Holding oneself to the highest standards of academic integrity is a quality Ashoka students must internalize since expressing original ideas, citing sources properly, working independently, and reporting results accurately and honestly are traits that will carry them beyond their academic career.
3. **VIOLATING THE STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY** is a matter of failing to maintain such integrity. Violating these standards not only deprives the student of valuable learning experiences, it is also a very serious offence. It is deeply unethical

and incompatible with the academic values by which faculty members and students at Ashoka University are bound to abide and that the former seek to imbibe in the latter. Examples of such violations include (but are not limited to):

- 3.1. cheating of any kind;
- 3.2. misrepresenting one's own work;
- 3.3. taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, including and especially *plagiarism* – which is a matter of producing academic work that borrows, without acknowledging, from another person's work;
- 3.4. facilitating violation of academic integrity;
- 3.5. the fabrication of information;
- 3.6. any other such violation that faculty deem necessary to report.

## II. Resources

4. The **CENTER FOR WRITING AND COMMUNICATION (CWC)** helps students understand the difference between citation and paraphrase and how to adopt standard academic norms of referencing.
  - 4.1. For **undergraduate students**, completing a CWC-run workshop on academic integrity is an integral and mandatory part of their first semester.
  - 4.2. Beginning in the academic year 2022-23, every student from the second year onward must complete a *mandatory refresher course* on academic integrity at the beginning of each academic year, which will be available online.
  - 4.3. **Post-graduate students** such as YIF students, MLS students, MA students, or Ph.D. students will be expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of academic integrity or take relevant courses as per the specific policies governing their respective programmes.
5. The Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) provides an introduction on Academic Integrity as part of the Orientation Week at the beginning of each academic year.
6. Ashoka University encourages students to explore *plagiarism.org*, an excellent website that helps understand plagiarism, and also do a first-level self-check.
7. Ashoka University encourages students to have conversations with their faculty members regarding what is expected in terms of working with source materials, marking collaborations, and other aspects of academic integrity.

## III. Default Expectations

8. By default, it will be assumed that students are the sole authors of all coursework and other evaluable materials (quizzes, problem sets, online contributions, test papers, lab work, etc.) they submit, whether for a grade or not, and that it has not been submitted for credit in another class without the faculty member's permission. Images, ideas, data, code, audio clips, or phrases borrowed from others must be fully acknowledged by standard procedures for doing so. Permitted collaborations with others must be acknowledged as well.
9. Faculty members may submit student work to software screenings such as, e.g., *turnitin*, to track plagiarism or ask students to submit their work to such software.
10. Students are expected to actively familiarize themselves with the norms governing academic integrity laid out above and conveyed via the CWC, the AIC, and faculty. Ignorance of such norms will not be accepted as defence of any violation.

#### **IV. Academic Integrity Committee**

11. The Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) is a standing committee of the University. Its main task is the examination of charges brought against students, where such charges or the sanctions imposed are being disputed or where such charges have been levelled against the student repeatedly, the determination of all relevant facts, and the provision of guidance to faculty members and departments with respect to both the issuance and the implementation of sanctions.
12. All 7 AIC members from the faculty body are appointed by the Vice Chancellor, one of them as Chair, and serve for a period of two years.
13. The faculty members must include faculty representatives from the natural sciences, from the humanities, and from the social and economic sciences.
14. The AIC Chair is in charge of convening meetings as required and of communicating with the various parties.
15. The AIC must have one member from the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), appointed by the Dean of Academic Affairs, typically for the duration of two years.
16. Beginning Monsoon 2021, the AIC must have three student representatives, not all of the same gender, who are full voting members and have a tenure of 1 year each:
  - 16.1. 1 UG student who has completed two years of the programme;
  - 16.2. 1 ASP student;
  - 16.3. 1 MA/YIF/MLS/Ph.D. student.
  - 16.4. Representation will be organised through an electoral process. Students will submit their nominations to the Office of Student Affairs (OSA). Each nomination will be vetted by the OAA, following which OSA will facilitate the elections as per University procedures.
17. The quorum for any given AIC meeting is 5 members, at least three of whom must be faculty members.
18. If a faculty member or student involved in a pending case is a current member of the AIC, they shall recuse themselves from the committee for this particular case.

#### **V. Adjudication of Reported Violations of Academic Integrity**

*Violations of academic integrity standards are addressed as per the procedure specified below. This procedure involves the student, the faculty member, the OAA and may involve the Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) and the student's faculty mentor or academic advisor.*

Cases of alleged violations of academic integrity are to be treated confidentially by all parties involved and at all times, i.e. before, during, and after the case has been processed.

19. Every reported violation of academic integrity will be treated in accordance with the procedure set out below. The University strongly recommends that all significant cases be reported, regardless of the severity of the case and the sanctions imposed, if any. The time for the processing of a case from the filing of the report to the decision by the AIC should not exceed 18 working days.

**NOTE:** In the future, many steps of the procedure outlined below will be made available online. Once that has happened, this policy will be updated accordingly.

## REPORTING AND SOLICITATION OF STUDENT RESPONSE

20. **Step 1:** The faculty member fills suitable parts of the Academic Integrity Violation (AIV) report form. The AIV form can be downloaded from the Information and Documents section on the **my.ashoka** portal ([here](#)). Parts to be filled by the faculty member include: data regarding the student, the faculty member, the course or activity during which the alleged violation occurred, a characterisation of the alleged violation and the proposed sanctions.
- 20.1. Proposed sanctions are determined by the faculty member.
  - 20.2. Proposed sanctions may consist, e.g., in any or several of the following: a simple reprimand, a requirement to redo and resubmit the assignment, a grade cut for the assignment in question, a failing grade for the assignment in question, a grade cut for the entire course, a failing grade for the course.
  - 20.3. Standards of sanctioning violations of academic integrity may vary between departments and individual faculty members. The AIC, in coordination with the OAA, may submit and regularly revisit a list of recommendations to provide general guidance to faculty.
21. **Step 2:** The faculty member informs both the OAA and the student about the allegation and the proposed sanction. This is done by filling the AIV and submitting it to the OAA, CCing the student, which ensures that the student is notified of the charge. The AIV form is added to the student's portfolio and kept confidential. Information about both pending and closed cases does not appear anywhere on a student's transcript and is to be treated confidentially by all parties involved.
22. **Step 3:** Within 5 working days after having been informed of the charges against them, the student must respond to these charges to the OAA in either of the ways listed below. If a student fails to do so, their case will be treated as per 22.1:
- 22.1. The student admits to the violation and agrees with the sanction.
  - 22.2. The student admits to the violation, but disagrees with the sanction.
  - 22.3. The student denies the allegation.

### DETERMINATION OF PRIOR VIOLATIONS

*The University is committed to treating violations of academic integrity both confidentially and very seriously (especially repeat violations). Cases of repeat violation will automatically be forwarded to the AIC, which will determine the severity of the case and may impose further sanctions.*

23. **Step 4:** Upon receiving the AIV form, the OAA determines whether the student has committed prior violations of academic integrity. If not, steps 5(a) or 5(b) apply. If the student has one or more prior violations on file, 5(c) applies.

### CASES INVOLVING NO PRIOR VIOLATIONS

24. **Step 5(a):** If the faculty member and the student agree both on the violation and on the sanction imposed by the faculty member, then
- 24.1. faculty and, where applicable, the OAA implement the sanctions as proposed by the faculty member – the AIC does not get involved;
  - 24.2. the OAA notifies the student, CWC, and the student's mentor or advisor that the student is advised to attend a CWC-run training on academic integrity;
  - 24.3. the OAA keeps track of whether students complete such trainings in the student's confidential student portfolio. Such information may be shared with the AIC in case of further violations.

- 25. Step 5(b):** If the faculty member and the student agree on the violation, but not on the sanction imposed, or if the student denies the allegation altogether, then
- 25.1. the OAA forwards the AIV form and relevant case materials to the AIC Chair, informs the student and the faculty member that the case is now with the AIC, and informs the student that they are not allowed to withdraw from the course in question unless and until they are either a) exonerated or b) given a sanction that is different from a terminal grade in the course. Both the student and the faculty member are to treat the case confidentially.
  - 25.2. The AIC determines the facts of the case. To do so, the AIC may request the student and, if needed, the faculty member to provide a statement or further evidence. The AIC may also convene a hearing with the faculty member or consult with the student's faculty mentor or academic advisor. The student must be offered the opportunity to present their case in a hearing.
  - 25.3. If within 5 working days after receiving the offer to present their case in a hearing, the student requests such a hearing, such a request must be granted and a hearing scheduled as soon as possible.
  - 25.4. If the student or faculty member fails to respond to the AIC's request for a statement, for further evidence, or to the offer to present the case in a hearing within 5 working days, the AIC may assess the case on the basis of the evidence available to them. The same holds if the student fails to attend the scheduled hearing.
  - 25.5. Since decisions regarding AIV may have important effects on a student's trajectory, course choices, or course adjustments, the AIC should strive to process cases within 12 working days of receiving the report.
  - 25.6. In particularly egregious cases, the AIC may impose sanctions that go beyond what has been proposed by the faculty member (see Art. 31 f. below).
  - 25.7. Once a decision has been taken on the case, the AIC must notify the student, the faculty member, and the OAA of the decision in writing. The AIC may recommend or mandate that the student attend a CWC-run refresher training on academic integrity.
  - 25.8. The OAA keeps track of the AIC's decision in the student's confidential student portfolio and notifies the student, the CWC, and the student's mentor or advisor in case the student has been advised or mandated to attend a CWC-run training on academic integrity.

#### AIV TRAININGS

26. Upon first violation of academic integrity, the AIC may recommend or mandate that the student in question attend a CWC-refresher training on academic integrity. The CWC schedules and runs such trainings and will group students so as to tailor their trainings to the various kinds of transgressions committed. The OAA will facilitate this process by providing the CWC with information about the general nature of the students' respective violations.
27. Mandatory trainings, initial ones, annual refreshers, or mandated refresher trainings, must be completed by the end of the second week of a semester. In the case of the first semester, they are to be completed as instructed by the CWC.
28. Undergraduate students who fail to attend the CWC-run workshop must take it at the next possible time, i.e., whenever the next course on academic integrity is offered by the CWC (the schedule of the workshops is shared by the CWC on university platforms).

- 28.1. If an undergraduate student fails to attend a CWC-run workshop or refresher that for them is mandatory, their ability to register for courses in the following semesters will be blocked until they have cleared the requirement.
  - 28.2. Students whose status is *blocked* only get to register for courses once all other students have registered.
  - 28.3. Students for whom the completion of a mandatory training or refresher is pending cannot graduate unless it has been completed.
29. The OAA keeps track of students who attend trainings in collaboration with the CWC and marks the successful completion in the students' respective portfolios.

#### CASES INVOLVING PRIOR VIOLATIONS

30. **Step 5(c):** If the OAA determines that the student has prior violations of academic integrity on file, then
- 30.1. regardless of its details, the case will be submitted to the AIC Chair, along with an intimation of the nature of the previous violation(s) and sanctions imposed. The AIC Chair may request details of such previous violations from the OAA. Such details should be divulged to other AIC members only to the extent required to determine appropriate sanctions.
  - 30.2. The OAA informs the student and the faculty member that the case is with the AIC, and informs the student that they are not allowed to withdraw from the course in question unless and until they are either a) exonerated or b) given a sanction that is different from a terminal grade in the course.
  - 30.3. Where necessary, the AIC will process the case as per 25.2-25.6 above. In doing so, the AIC will also look at the previous violation(s) on file and may then decide to suggest further sanctions (see below). In any event, the AIC will notify the student, the faculty member, and the OAA of their decision. The latter will keep track of the AIC's decision in the student's portfolio, which remains confidential.

#### FURTHER SANCTIONS

31. Further sanctions that the AIC can impose may involve any combination of the sanctions listed in 20.2, but they may also go beyond them. Unless the violation is especially egregious, further sanctions will typically be considered only for students who have been reported repeatedly. In particular,
- 31.1. the AIC may determine that the student should be barred from receiving, for a given period of time, a *No Objection Certificate* that may be required, for example, for taking on various positions of responsibility at the University, or that the student should be removed from such positions if the student already occupies them;
  - 31.2. the AIC may determine that a student's repeated violations of academic integrity are so egregious that the student will be suspended for a specified duration;
  - 31.3. the AIC may recommend to the Vice Chancellor that a student's violations are so numerous, egregious, or both that the student should be expelled from the University.
32. The AIC may create, publicise, and occasionally revise a catalogue of such further sanctions to provide guidance to students.
33. In case the AIC recommends expulsion, the decision on the recommendation lies with the Vice Chancellor of the University.

34. If an expulsion has been recommended, the student will be offered a hearing, convened by the Vice Chancellor.
35. Following the AIC's decision, recommendation, or the Vice Chancellor's decision (as the case may be), the OAA coordinates the administrative procedures with all relevant offices.

## **VI. Appeals**

36. Students have the right to appeal the decision issued by the AIC or VC within 5 working days of being informed of it in writing. Such appeals will be considered only if either
  - 36.1. important new evidence is available that was not available when the case was processed; or
  - 36.2. the student can show that there were significant procedural errors involved in processing their case.
37. With respect to expulsions, the final appellate body is the Chancellor of the University.
38. With respect to suspensions and all other sanctions, the final appellate body is the Dean of Academic Affairs.

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### **Version update**

**Sep 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021:**

**Amendments made:** changes to clauses 4 and 28 as well as related paragraphs, especially

- annual requirement to complete a refresher as per 4.2 introduced
- refresher trainings on academic integrity not automatically mandatory after first offense; OAA can recommend, AIC can recommend or mandate that students complete such trainings (24.2; 25.7; 26)
- consequences in case of lack of compliance specified (27; 28)